

## **Committee Report**

**Item No:** 8D

**Reference:** DC/21/02582

**Case Officer:** Mahsa Kavyani

**Ward:** Gislingham.

**Ward Member:** Cllr Rowland Warboys

---

## **RECOMMENDATION – GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION WITH CONDITIONS**

---

### **Description of Development**

Full Planning Application - Erection of 3 pairs of semi-detached dwellings, and garages including access.

### **Location**

Land west of Grange Road, Wickham Skeith, Suffolk

**Expiry Date:** 08/11/2021

**Application Type:** FUL - Full Planning Application

**Development Type:** Minor Dwellings

**Applicant:** Osborn Homes (East Anglia) Ltd

**Agent:** Mrs Sarah Roberts

**Parish:** Wickham Skeith

**Site Area:** 0.32ha

**Density of Development:** 19dph

**Details of Previous Committee / Resolutions and any member site visit:** None

**Has a Committee Call In request been received from a Council Member (Appendix 1):** Yes

**Has the application been subject to Pre-Application Advice:** Yes and the advice provided by Officers was positive

---

## **PART ONE – REASON FOR REFERENCE TO COMMITTEE**

---

The application is referred to committee for the following reason:

Ward member referral.

---

## **PART TWO – POLICIES AND CONSULTATION SUMMARY**

---

### **Summary of Policies**

NPPF - National Planning Policy Framework

---

CLASSIFICATION: Official

NPPG-National Planning Policy Guidance  
CL08 - Protecting wildlife habitats  
CS01 - Settlement Hierarchy  
CS02 - Development in the Countryside & Countryside Villages  
CS05 - Mid Suffolk's Environment  
GP01 - Design and layout of development  
FC01 - Presumption In Favour Of Sustainable Development  
FC01\_1 - Mid Suffolk Approach To Delivering Sustainable Development  
T09 - Parking Standards  
T10 - Highway Considerations in Development  
H16 - Protecting existing residential amenity  
H13 - Design and layout of housing development

### **Neighbourhood Plan Status**

This application site is not within a Neighbourhood Plan Area.

### **Consultations and Representations**

During the course of the application consultation and representations from third parties have been received. These are summarised below.

#### **A: Summary of Consultations**

#### **Parish Council (Appendix 3)**

##### **Wickham Skeith Parish**

The Parish Council of Wickham Skeith do not support this application for the following reasons:

##### **1. Previously raised objections**

Objections initially raised in WSPC's response to the outline planning application (DC/019/4389) still apply, and/or are exacerbated by the additional dwellings not included in the outline plan. These objections were:

"The application extends beyond the boundary submitted in the first phase of the Joint Local Plan Consultation, which followed consultation with residents, and may set a precedent for an increase in applications on land not included within the original submission."

"The application is for outline permission and there is concern that there could be an increase in the amount of proposed dwellings should approval be given and the next stage of detailed planning be applied for."

"The accumulative effect of permission being given to the following applications, as there will be a significant increase in traffic through such a small village, now being classified as a Hamlet village:

DC/19/04338 - 1 Grange Road

DC/19/04388 - Land adjacent to Bumbledown, Grange Road

DC/19/04389 - Land opposite 14-17 Grange Road

These applications, together with the recent approval of DC/19/0223, Land south of The Grange, Grange Road, represent potentially 8 new dwellings along Grange Road."

"Wickham Skeith is recognised as a non-sustainable village and there are not enough amenities to support this number of developments at this given time. There is mention of a bus service in the supporting documents, however, this no longer exists. The condition of Grange Road is already a concern to Highways as it is breaking away in sections and, with an increase in the amount of traffic through continued development at this end of the village, the highway itself will not be able to cope."

The concern about additional dwellings was well founded as this application is for 6 dwellings not 2 as in the previous application.

## 2. Traffic volume and road visibility

The application includes spaces to accommodate 18 vehicles. This will greatly increase the traffic volume in the village. The road visibility at the access road is inadequate as no provision is made within the plan to maintain the hedge so that 90 m visibility is always available. The road is not suitable at this point for on-road parking. There are 4 primary-school-aged children living opposite this development.

## 3. Infrastructure

Local primary schools have a very high level of student roll, and will come under increasing pressure as a likely result of the wider local development necessitating families transporting children to and from school in their cars each day. School transport is for one primary school and a high school.

Local healthcare provision is under pressure and facilities locally are limited.

There is no local bus service. The village is isolated from other forms of public transport.

## 4. Flooding

The council does not believe that the soakaway provided in the plan is sufficient. The plan shows no outflow for excess water in the soakaway, and concerns are held as to where this will go, as Grange Road has been subject to persistent flooding in recent years (as notified to the County Council by the parish council).

## 5. Ownership and management of hedgerows

There is no plan for the management of the hedges east and southern side of the site, after the site is handed over. This will quickly and detrimentally affect the road visibility at the access point.

The parish council is concerned about the retention and maintenance of oak, ash, and veteran apple trees within the eastern boundary. The oak shows signs of dead branches at the higher level which could be cause for concern for safety of road users and pedestrians, and there is no obvious provision for future maintenance.

## 5. Missing Objections and Consultee Reports

The parish council notes there are known letters of objection from parishioners not displayed on the District Council's planning portal. There are also missing reports from consultees. The parish council have acted in good faith looking at what has been provided, but does not believe this to be the complete set of information which should be available to us.

## 6. Environmental Officer's Report

The parish council notes with concern that the report on land contamination report says 'the simplified Envirocheck-type report and Land Contamination Questionnaire is not considered appropriate for a development of this scale'.

## **County Council Responses (Appendix 4)**

## Highways

No objection subject to conditions.

## Internal Consultee Responses (Appendix 5)

### Arboricultural Officer

I have no objection to this application. However, the line of tree protective fencing shown on the block plan should be annotated and include a specification in order for it to be effective.

This should then be made subject to condition

### Environmental Health - Land Contamination

Having reviewed the application and supporting Phase I report by Geosphere Environmental (reference: 5788, DS/DESK/G, HS/2306.21) dated 23/6/2021 I can confirm that I have no objection to the proposed development from the perspective of land contamination.

### Environmental Health - Noise/Odour/Light/Smoke

No objection subject to conditions.

## Other

### Suffolk Wildlife Trust

No response.

## B: Representations

At the time of writing this report at least three comments have been received. It is the officer opinion that this represents three objections and one neutral representation. A verbal update shall be provided as necessary.

- Objections raised under the outline application
- Traffic volume and road visibility
- Strain on infrastructure
- Flooding risk
- Ownership and management of hedgerows.

(Note: All individual representations are counted and considered. Repeated and/or additional communication from a single individual will be counted as one representation.)

## PLANNING HISTORY

<b>REF:</b> DC/19/04389	Outline Planning Application (All Matters Reserved) - Erection of 2no. dwellings	<b>DECISION:</b> GTD 13.11.2019
<b>REF:</b> DC/20/00848	Submission of details under Outline Planning Permission DC/19/04389 - Access, Appearance, Landscaping, Layout and Scale for erection of 2no. dwellings	<b>DECISION:</b> GTD 22.04.2020

---

## PART THREE – ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATION

---

## **1. The Site and Surroundings**

- 1.1. The site is located on the western side of Grange Road, at the southern end of Wickham Skeith. The site comprised meadow land and is screened on all sides by mature trees and hedgerow and has a post and wire fence around the perimeter with an unused gateway onto Grange Road.
- 1.2. Semi-detached residential properties are opposite the site, on the eastern side of Grange Road. To the north are dwellings, to the south and rear (west) is open countryside.
- 1.3. The site is not in a Conservation Area. There are no listed buildings in the vicinity of the site.
- 1.4. The site is outside the adopted Wickham Skeith settlement boundary. It is inside the emerging Joint Local Plan proposed settlement boundary.
- 1.5. The site benefits from extant planning permission for two five-bedroom dwellings.

## **2. The Proposal**

- 2.1. The application proposes the erection of six dwellings, comprising three semi-detached pairs accessed via shared arrangement from Grange Road (the same access as previously approved). The dwelling mix comprises 2 x 2 bedroom units and 4 x 3 bedroom units. The pairs of dwellings are sited centrally on the site and orientated such that principal aspect from living areas is to the rear, as per conventional/modern living arrangements.
- 2.2. All dwellings are double storey, incorporate pitched roofs and are finished in facing red brick and uPVC joinery.
- 2.3. A shingle finished shared access incorporating an 8m x 8m turning area is proposed to the front of the dwellings. A communal bin collection point is proposed at the site entrance.
- 2.4. Existing perimeter vegetation, including hedgerows, is retained and supplementary landscape planting proposed. A 1800mm close boarded fencing is proposed to internal boundaries to the rear of dwellings.
- 2.5. The plans detail ecological enhancements including bat boxes, hedgehog shelter, hedgehog friendly fence design and beehive shelters.
- 2.6. Approximate proposed density is 19 dwellings per hectare.

## **3. Policy Context**

- 3.1. The proposal is an intensification of the approved residential use and therefore the principle of residential intensification must be assessed on its merits.
- 3.2. Paragraph 11 of the NPPF explains that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development which comprises economic, social and environmental objectives. It indicates that where the development plan is absent, silent or policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, planning permission should be granted unless any adverse effects of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies of the NPPF as a whole; or unless specific policies in the NPPF indicate that development should be restricted.

- 3.3. In view of advice in paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF, it is necessary to consider how consistent the most important policies in the development plan are with the NPPF, to assess what weight should be attached to them. The Midsuffolk District Council has over 9 years housing land supply (HLS), notwithstanding this, not all development plan policies can be given full weight. Paragraph 213 explains that due weight should be given to relevant policies according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF, the closer the policies in the plan to those in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given.
- 3.4. The development plan for the area comprises a combination of the Core Strategy 2008, the Core Strategy Focused Review 2012, and 'saved' policies of the Local Plan 1998. The Joint Local Plan is emerging. In accordance with the requirements of Paragraph 48 of the NPPF, limited weight is attached to the emerging Joint Local Plan in consideration of the merits of the proposal, given the preparatory stage of the document.
- 3.5. Having regard to the absence of a balanced approach as favoured by the NPPF, the policies most important for determining the application are deemed out-of-date, a position well established by the Inspectorate in recent Mid-Suffolk appeals. This conclusion is reached irrespective of Council's five year housing supply position. As a result, the weight to be attached to these policies has to be commensurately reduced and the default position at paragraph 11d of the NPPF is engaged, that is, granting permission unless:
- (i) the application of policies in the NPPF that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development or
  - (ii) the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.
- 3.6. Turning first to (i), footnote 7 at NPPF paragraph 11d states that the policies referred to at 11d are those in the NPPF relating to: habitats sites and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast; irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets; and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change. None of these matters are relevant to the scheme. The application therefore meets this test.
- 3.7. This leaves the second 'limb' of the paragraph 11d test, requiring an assessment of the adverse impacts and benefits of the proposal, and the associated balancing exercise. In this context, and noting the application is made in full, the key issues are:
- The sustainability credentials of the location;
  - The impact on the character and appearance of the area;
  - The impact on residential amenity;
  - The impact on highway safety;
  - The impact on local biodiversity values; and
  - Drainage and flood risk.

#### **4. Sustainability of the Location**

- 4.1. Adjacent to neighbouring dwellings to the north and east, the site is not isolated in the terms of NPPF paragraph 80.
- 4.2. The site lies approximately two miles to the north of a good range of services and facilities offered in Mendlesham, including two Public Houses, Shop, Bakery and Post Office, Church, Primary

School, Pre-School, Community Centre, Health Centre, Fish & Chip Shop and Hair Studio. Given the distance to these services, absence of footpaths and lack of alternative transport modes to the private motor vehicle, it is reasonable to conclude that accessing the Mendlesham services will be made by private vehicle. The outcome is a development that will lead to not insignificant vehicle movements, given the quantum of six dwellings proposed.

- 4.3. The fallback position, comprising two five-bedroom dwellings, also generates a not insignificant number of vehicle movements and must be factored in when assessing the sustainability of the site's location. The additional dwelling number proposed by the application will increase vehicle movements and lead to greater air quality degradation than if the approved scheme was implemented, and although the increase in degradation would not be substantial, the additional harm nonetheless constitutes an adverse impact weighing negatively in the planning balance.
- 4.4. Strategic Housing Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) has identified the subject site suitable for residential development for 5 dwellings. This document forms part of the New Joint Local Plan and forms an allocation for this site for 5 dwellings. Whilst the new JLP currently has limited material weight, its findings with regards to sustainability of the site cannot be reasonably disregarded. As a result, this weighs in favour of the proposal and given some material weight.

## **5. Design, Layout and Landscape Character**

- 5.1. NPPF paragraph 130(c) states that planning decisions should ensure that developments are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting. The NPPF states that local authorities should take account of the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
- 5.2. Local Plan Policy GP01 calls for proposals to, amongst other matters, maintain and enhance the character and appearance of their surroundings. Local Plan Policy H13 expects a high standard of design and layout for housing developments. Local Plan Policy H14 encourages a variety of house types and designs to cater for different accommodation needs, and to avoid undue uniformity.
- 5.3. Policy CS5 of the Core Strategy seeks to protect and conserve landscape qualities taking into account the natural environment and the historical dimension of the landscape as a whole rather than concentrating solely on selected areas, protecting the District's most important components and encouraging development that is consistent with conserving its overall character. Policy CS5 requires development to be of a high-quality design that respects the local distinctiveness and the built heritage of Mid Suffolk, enhancing the character and appearance of the district.
- 5.4. The site is not in an area of special character designation such as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Special Landscape Area. Nor is the site adjoining, or in proximity to, any designated landscape areas of special significance. The site is not affected or has the potential to impact any designated heritage assets.
- 5.5. The site is visually well contained, with vegetation to all site boundaries, including a 4 plus metre high hedgerow to the southern boundary and significant frontage planting, providing effective visual screening from all vantage points along Grange Road. Its topography is flat and not elevated above neighbouring land. The site sits adjacent established linear residential development. Developing the site for dwellings would result in landscape change, owing to its undeveloped state, however this change would be entirely localised, and the dwellings would read as a continuation of the linear development pattern. Given the site can be already developed with

two large five-bedroom dwellings, the proposal cannot be considered an unacceptable intrusion into open countryside.

- 5.6. The density is greater than that the two previously approved or the five allocated for but, at 19 dwellings per hectare it is far beyond the current policy requirement for 30 dwellings per hectare, but commensurate with neighbouring dwelling density. The layout, comprising three double storey semi-detached pairs of dwellings, essentially mirrors the post-war housing opposite, which also comprises double storey semi-detached pairs. The width of the plots is not dissimilar to the width of the plots opposite. Like the neighbouring dwellings, the subject dwellings are well set back into the respective plots, sited comfortably and centrally on each plot. Meaningful separation between the dwellings offers good visual relief, and importantly, a built form rhythm/spacing that follows the neighbouring development pattern. The generous setbacks from the road and between dwellings retains the semi-rural character of the area.
- 5.7. The design and form of the dwellings is uncomplicated and traditional. There is a variation in scale and design treatments, providing visual interest and avoiding the undue uniformity referred at Policy H14.
- 5.8. The frontage hedgerow is to be retained, as are the significant trees on the site most notably to the front and rear boundaries. Tree protection measures form part of the proposal to ensure tree retention. The Arboricultural Officer does not object to the scheme. The single access point to be shared by all dwellings, rather than providing each dwelling with an access, limits the streetscene change, maintaining the verdant character. Supplementary landscape planting will reinforce local landscape character. Hard landscaping includes visually softer design elements, such as the shingle accessway and permeable brick weave private drives and hardstand areas. All of these measures combine to provide for a site responsive landscape character outcome.

## **6. Site Access, Parking and Highway Safety**

- 6.1. Local Plan Policy T10 requires the consideration of a number of highway matters when determining planning applications, including; the provision of safe access, the safe and free flow of traffic and pedestrian safety, safe capacity of the road network and the provision of adequate parking and turning for vehicles. Policy T10 is a general transport policy which is generally consistent with Section 9 of the NPPF on promoting sustainable transport, and therefore is afforded considerable weight.
- 6.2. The proposed access arrangements is unchanged from that already approved. The level of proposed on-site parking provision and the dimensions of all spaces comply with the Suffolk Guidance for Parking 2019. There is ample cycle storage space. Electric vehicle infrastructure for each dwelling is specified in the supporting statement and details can be secured by planning condition. The Highways Authority does not object to the six dwelling scheme. Waste storage areas are easily provided for each dwelling and collection will be from the roadside as elsewhere along Grange Road.
- 6.3. Objectors and the Parish Council are concerned with the increase in traffic resulting from the development and its impact on the local road network and potential for highway safety harm. For the reasons above the scheme is considered to comply with Local Plan Policy T09 and T10. In light of this compliance, and the absence of an objection from the Highways Authority, officers do not consider that there are sufficient highway safety related grounds to withhold planning permission.

## **7. Residential Amenity**



- 7.1. The NPPF sets out a number of core planning principles as to underpin decision taking, including, seeking to secure a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings. Policy H13 of the Local Plan seeks to ensure new housing development protects the amenity of neighbouring residents. Policy H16 of the Local Plan seeks to protect the existing amenity of residential areas.
- 7.2. The rear and southern adjacent land is undeveloped and therefore the interface to this land is not sensitive in amenity terms. The development is set in sufficiently from the northern site boundary as to not impinge visually on the amenity of the northern neighbour at 7 Grange Road. There are no habitable windows in the northern flank elevation of the dwelling nearest to the northern boundary, preventing overlooking of 7 Grange Road.
- 7.3. Each dwelling is provided with adequate private open space to the rear. The internal amenity levels for future occupants, for each dwelling, are acceptable.
- 7.4. The proposal accords with Policy H13 and H16 in respect to amenity.

## **8. Biodiversity Values**

- 8.1. Biodiversity enhancements are proposed in the form of bat boxes, hedgehog shelter, hedgehog friendly fence design and beehive shelters. The proposal will result in biodiversity net gain in accordance with relevant legislation and the NPPF.

## **9. Land Contamination, Flood Risk, Drainage and Waste**

- 9.1. The Environmental Health Land Contamination Officer, having reviewed the supporting Phase I report by Geosphere Environmental, does not object to the scheme.
- 9.2. The site is in Flood Zone 1 where there is a very low level of flood risk. Drainage details can be adequately addressed by planning condition, there is nothing about the site context to indicate that these details should accompany the application.

## **10. Economic and Social Benefits**

- 10.1 Six dwellings increases the local housing supply. This is consistent with NPPF paragraph 60, which sets out the aim of significantly boosting the supply of homes. The benefit associated with the increase in the District's housing stock is however moderated by the fact the district has a five plus year housing supply, nonetheless, it is a social benefit of some substance.
- 10.2. The development provides two smaller, two bedroom units and four three bedroom units. The approved scheme provides two five bedroom units. The current scheme therefore offers a greater variety in dwelling types, increasing local housing choice and affordability, better responding to the district's identified needs. This is a significant social benefit to the public and a distinct advantage of the scheme over the approved development.
- 10.3. Although relatively short lived, a six dwelling development generates local jobs and local spend during construction, an economic benefit to the local community. As acknowledged in the NPPF, a development in one village may support services in a nearby village. That is the case here, with the development benefitting the services in Mendlesham.

## **11. Parish Council Comments**

- 11.1. The concerns of the Parish Council are acknowledged and have been considered and addressed throughout this report.

---

## **PART FOUR – CONCLUSION**

---

### **12. Planning Balance and Conclusion**

- 12.1. The most important development plan policies for determining the application are out-of-date, notwithstanding the 9-year HLS position. This engages two tests: (a) NPPF paragraph 11(d)(i) - determining whether the proposal offends NPPF policies that protect particular assets of particular importance to a degree the application should be refused; and (b) NPPF paragraph 11(d)(ii) – determining whether the adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.
- 12.2. The proposal does not adversely affect any particular assets sought for protection by the NPPF, the first test is met.
- 12.3. SHELAA has identified the subject site suitable for residential development for 5 dwellings. This document forms part of the New Joint Local Plan, whilst the new JLP currently has limited material weight, its findings with regards to sustainability of the site and its allocation for residential development, cannot be ignored. As a result, this weighs in favour of the proposal and given material weight.
- 12.3. The adverse impacts of the proposal relate primary to the environmental harm associated with vehicle trips generated by the six dwellings. This will cause air quality degradation. Landscape harm is extremely low and therefore does not contribute in any significant way to the proposal's environmental harm.
- 12.4. Turning to the benefits, these principally relate to social matters, with the addition of smaller dwellings increasing the variety in homes on offer, responding more effectively to the district's housing needs than the previous 2 x five-bedroom scheme. The development will offer more affordable housing. Economic benefits are more modest but nonetheless tangible and positive in planning balance.
- 12.5. Many aspects of the scheme attract neutral weight, including highway safety and residential amenity. Matters such as flood risk and ecology are either acceptable or are able to be managed effectively by way of planning conditions.
- 12.6. Chapter 11 of the NPPF sets out the need to make effective and efficient use of land. With an increased development intensity, the current proposal offers a more effective and efficient use of the land than the previous development. This is delivered by way of a well designed and attractive development that does not compromise the area's prevailing character, amenity or wider environment.
- 12.7. Noting the above, the adverse impacts of granting permission would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. The second test at NPPF paragraph 11(d) is met. In such instance the NPPF directs that planning permission is to be granted. In accordance with that direction, planning permission is recommended.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That authority be delegated to the Chief Planning Officer to GRANT planning permission subject to the following conditions and informatives:

### **Conditions**

- Standard time limit (3yrs for implementation of scheme/Outline/Reserved/Section73?)
- Approved Plans
- Biodiversity enhancements agree prior to occupation
- Landscaping scheme implemented as approved plans
- Protective tree fencing specifications to be agreed
- Highways Authority conditions (as set out by SCC)
- Swift boxes installation scheme to be agreed
- Construction Management Plan to be agreed.
- Removal PD Rights for extensions and alterations

### **Informatives**

- Proactive working statement
- SCC Highways notes
- Support for sustainable development principles