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Clerk to Kettleburgh Parish Council
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Dear Natalie,

DC/23/3265/FUL

Proposal: Construction of one x 2 bedroom and two x 3-bedroom bungalows with garages and associated boundary treatments, landscaping, and EV charging points for the occupation of people aged 55 and over.

Site address: Land Adjacent Chequers Public House, Easton Road, Kettleburgh, Suffolk, IP13 7JT

I write for and on behalf of Kettleburgh Parish Council.

The Council considered the above planning application at its meeting on 27/09/2023 and resolved to **object to it**. It has considered the relevant planning policies in depth and sees no leeway for this development to be permitted. Its evidence for this conclusion is highlighted by underlining in the detailed analysis that follows.

The application envisages building outside the Village Boundary, in the Countryside, on old pasture associated with the valley floor landscape, which contributes to the scenic setting of the B7 Deben Valley landscape character area. It is ostensibly for 3 bungalows, but the documentation shows that 5 were intended and this number may again come into play.

Planning Consent for housing on two sites adjacent to this proposal, has previously been refused by the Secretary of State mainly because the sites were outside the Village Boundary in the Countryside.

Council is also concerned for the future. Development on this specific site could provide the nucleus for future claims of a 'cluster'. The larger field next to the site could then be considered for more development in the Countryside.

You have already advised the applicant that his application was unlikely to be determined in his favour and Council now urges you to formally refuse consent and rule out any subsequent development in an important buffer zone.

Yours sincerely

[Signed electronically]

Sonia Frost
Clerk to Kettleburgh Parish Council
Encl. (none)



Detailed Analysis

1. Settlement Hierarchy Status and Spatial Location Compliance

Settlement Boundaries and Countryside are defined by the Local Plan. It would make no sense to define these in the Plan and then allow development with no consideration of context apparent in Countryside. The next residential property to the development site is over 1km away along the Easton road, all around which is undeveloped countryside. A cursory glance shows that the proposed location is not part of any cluster or wider built-up area.

Policy SCLP3.3 directs that new residential development will not be permitted in the countryside except where specific policies in the Plan indicate otherwise. There is therefore a clear specific policy that unless supported by specific policies elsewhere in the Plan, the countryside must be protected, and permission needs to be refused. There is no Area Policy supporting development on the proposed site.

Policy SCLP5.3 Housing Development in the Countryside reiterates the provisions of SCLP3.3: “The countryside ...[is] not considered to be [a] suitable location[s] as a focus for new development.” Therefore, outside of defined settlement boundaries, new residential development is limited to the exceptions outlined by this policy.

SCLP5.3 b) might support development within an *existing* cluster, as expanded upon by **Local Plan Policy SCLP5.4 Housing in Clusters in the Countryside**. But for SCLP5.4 to support the application, it is fundamental that there be an existing cluster. “A 'cluster' in the context of this policy: Consists of a continuous line of existing dwellings or a close group of existing dwellings adjacent to an existing highway; and Contains 5 or more dwellings.”

As there is no existing cluster on which this development would build, SCLP5.4 does not support it.

This application is looking to set up a *new* ‘cluster’ based on a perceived local need for ‘over 55s’ accommodation.

Even if there were an existing cluster, SCLP5.4 “does not intend to support development which would have an adverse impact upon the natural or historic environment or the landscape, but that can integrate with an existing cluster of houses, and the scale and design of schemes will be expected to not cause harm to the character of the cluster or the surrounding landscape.”

This development would have an adverse impact upon the natural environment and cause harm to the surrounding landscape.

It is worth noting that where more than three dwellings are proposed under SCLP5.4 b), applicants must be able to demonstrate that meaningful and effective community engagement has taken place in the development of the scheme and that the mix of dwellings proposed would meet locally identified needs. Our Clerk received no communications ahead of the application and is not aware of any community engagement that has taken place, other than an informal personal conversation with a neighbour.

This development is not supported by policy exceptions.



2. Landscape Harm

The proposed site is about 0.6ha of undeveloped old pasture. Its setting is quiet and leafy. There are unspoiled mature hedges and trees along the boundary. There is no vehicular opening onto Easton Road, and woodland to the south. The site is located very close to the River Deben, (associated with the Deben Estuary SSSI designated area). It is near the historic Watermill House, and the Kettleburgh Pound, which may become a designated heritage asset in the future. It could hardly be more 'countryside'.

The proposal would not comply with NPPF174 because it would fail to recognise the intrinsic beauty and character of the affected countryside. It is not sensitive to its surroundings and would therefore also fail to meet SCLP4.5 c) as it would result in an adverse impact to the landscape character ('River Valley Landscape' within the Suffolk Coastal Landscape Character Assessment [SCLCA] and Settlement Sensitivity Assessment), where the site lies in a sensitive landscape and is not previously developed land.

Landscape Character Policy SCLP10.4 clearly states that development will not be permitted where it will have a significant adverse impact on rural river valleys. It requires that proposals be informed by, and sympathetic to, the special qualities and features as described in the SCLCA.

The B7 Deben Valley landscape character area is comprised of valley floor and valley side landscapes. Your professional landscape report notes that it is "a remote, sparsely settled, and quiet landscape, 'made scenic by the combination of old pastures, gently rolling farmland and historic settlement clusters'."

The professional advice is clear that the proposed site: "provides an important buffer between the sensitive river valley to the west and existing village infrastructure to the north-east"; and "helps to soften the settlement edge and provide an effective rural/urban transition." Also, that "development would negatively affect the character of the rural river landscape".

The uneven nature of the site means that the developer needs to use ugly gabion retaining walls. This with other inevitable outcomes of development means a lot of ugly structures. Not at all in line with the "light touch approach" that might have supported an exception, given the site's status as a pleasant river valley buffer.

3. Ecology

The NPPF and NERC Act s40 require you to conserve and enhance biodiversity in and around developments and to "have regard...to the purpose of conserving biodiversity". *Biodiversity* is not confined to habitats and species of principal importance but *refers to all species and habitats*.

It is concerning that the applicant appears to have little grasp of the natural environment and value of his ancient undisturbed site to wild flora and fauna.

It is equally concerning that your professional advice in this area appears somewhat 'light' and formulaic, being perhaps overly concerned with Great Crested Newts.

Council believes that considering the long-term undisturbed nature of the site and its surroundings, a thorough 'on the ground' ecology assessment is essential if the authority is minded to give consent.



4. PRow and Road User Visual Amenity Harms

It is unlikely that, given the hard realities of construction, existing boundary vegetation to the north, south and west would be retained - and even if it were, the view from the adjoining Footpath 26 that runs along the river side of the site into the site would be ruined in terms of amenity value. The Landscape report notes that the new view would be of the rears of the bungalows and “look directly onto hard gabion infrastructure and close board boundary fencing. New scattered tree planting may help to filter views but would not provide meaningful mitigation.”

The need for a very substantial visibility splay, given the nature of the adjoining highway, would mean that “a large area of the existing hedgerow would need to be removed along Easton Road, opening up views into the site along this boundary and eroding the contained rural character of the road.”

The professional advice also tells us that “existing development in the countryside nearby comprises scattered houses and farmsteads, usually with long rural access drives. The proposed development would create a linear street scene, characteristic of within [sic] the existing settlement, but less appropriate for the rural edge.”

There are no proposals for protecting or enhancing the PRow network or for adding public green space.

The proposal would cause serious injury to visual amenity as it would result in a dwelling being sited in attractive countryside, thus forming a prominent feature, which would detract from the character of the locality. Previous development adjacent to the current site was refused for this reason.

5. Highway Safety

There is no Travel Plan or transport assessment as required by NPPF 113.

A resident in his submission has pointed out that “The approach to the entrance of the proposed site is subject to the 60mph National limit, on a steep gradient, with the road both narrowing and curving near to the crest of a hill...the Highway is a Class III Road being a narrow lane having near vertical hedges and no footway...many large agricultural vehicles pass along this road. These large vehicles are almost the full width of the carriageway.”

Even with a substantial safety splay, visibility exiting the site would be inadequate. Vehicles entering it would need to slow almost to a stop, with other vehicles coming over the crest or up the hill having little to no time to slow sufficiently. Even without development, there has been at least one fatal accident on the section. There is no provision for visitor parking and ‘in a rush’ delivery vehicles (we have all observed this) would be very likely to remain on the narrow highway while they deliver. ‘Over 55’'s leaving the proposed development on foot or by Motability vehicle would be at immediate risk with no pavements or grass verges, and hemmed in by steep banks, no escape route.

The Highways Authority has placed a holding objection on the application. From its in-depth on the spot knowledge, Council considers the highway risks serious and insurmountable.

There will be a material increase in the number of vehicles having reason to enter and leave the classified road in a situation where visibility both along the road and at the access point is substandard and would thus be detrimental to the interests of road safety. Earlier development on the affected section of road was refused for this reason.



6. 'People over 55 years of age'

The application states that there is a high demand for 'over 55s' single storey housing.

The East Suffolk Older Persons Housing Strategy Survey 2021 found that only 18% of the target age group wished to live in a small village: the vast majority wanted a Market Town. Taking into account single storey buildings only, currently there are two Housing Association bungalows in the Village. When one became empty recently, no local people could be identified as future tenants.

Agreed proposals further to SCLP12.53 Land North of the Street, Kettleburgh, provide for two bungalows. You saw no need to restrict occupation to a specified age group. Application DC/23/2355/FUL would add a further local bungalow.

Possibly the applicant's specification of 'over 55s' relates to **Local Plan, 'Housing Mix' 5.50** and/or **Strategic Housing Market Assessment [SHMA] 2017** Table 6.2a footnotes. But reliance on these potential lines of policy support for the application would be misplaced.

LP5.50 states that "Opportunities should be taken to integrate older persons housing into the community, in order to address potential issues of isolation and to promote inclusivity. For example older persons housing on sites that are well related to schools, community centres or other focal points can help to create integrated communities. There is a particular need for older and vulnerable people to have opportunities to access sustainable transport and modes of travel other than the car."

The proposed development is in an isolated area, is not well related to schools, community centres or other focal points and provides no opportunities to access sustainable transport and modes of travel other than the car. This application is not supported by LP5.50.

The potential policy exception indicated by SHMA 2017 is restricted to sheltered accommodation or care homes, which have on-site warden support and communal social areas and activities. The requirement for 3478 "houses" is restricted to that type of unit of accommodation. The proposed properties' design does not particularly tailor them for 'over 55s'. This application is not supported by SHMA 2017.

There is a lack of supporting infrastructure and community facilities for older people locally. The current sewage system is at capacity. At Framlingham surgery, the wait for a doctor's appointment is currently over 1 month and this will be exacerbated by substantial new building in the town. Taxi services to the Surgery in Framlingham are at full capacity, requiring the Framlingham Town Council 'Hour Community' to procure further resources.

7. Flooding

Flood zones 2 and 3 are located to the west of the site, although the proposed site area lies outside of these areas.

Kettleburgh has a history of floods, the latest being in 2019, when four houses were internally flooded and several badly affected. Two residents had to move out for many months whilst necessary renovations took place. Only recently has further flood mitigation work been completed under the guidance of ESC. The area to the rear of the Chequers Public House was flooded in recent years. Council has completed a Feasibility Study for a community Flood Management Plan and is in the process of developing it, to increase the resilience of the village to such events. ESC granted funds in



2021 to enable the ESIDB to adopt the watercourse from the T-Junction to the Deben, and complete annual maintenance.

Climate change and the nature of the watercourse that previously led to flooding means that risk cannot be eliminated. Excavations, construction of buildings and removal of rough pasture, trees and hedgerows are planned.

That will mean removing features (especially the hedgerow abutting the road, which is probably preventing run-off down the hill along the road edge) that absorb water and reduce the rate of run-off from the higher ground envisaged for this development - and adding features that increase the rate of run-off. This could increase the risk of flooding the property severely affected in 2019.

This development will increase risk for the previously flooded area below and that risk needs to be professionally assessed if the authority is minded to give consent.