

2 August 2011

Planning Department  
Mid Suffolk District Council  
High Street  
Needham Market  
Suffolk  
IP6 8DL

For the attention of Mr Ian Ward, Planning Officer

Dear Mr Ward,

**RE: Meadowcroft, Maypole Meadow, Rickinghall Superior – Erection of four bedroom house and garage – Ref:2242/11**

1. I am writing on behalf of the Suffolk Preservation Society (The Society) to submit objections to the proposed development at Meadowcroft. The Society wishes to submit that the development would serve to harm:

- (i) the character and appearance of the Botesdale Conservation Area;
- (ii) the setting of 'The Uplands' a grade II listed building immediately adjoining the application site;
- (iii) the residential amenities of 'Maypole Lodge', a single storey dwelling adjacent to the site.

2. In the opinion of the Society, the current application is deficient in terms of the analysis provided of the impact of the development upon the setting of heritage assets. Policy HE6.1 PPS5: Planning for the historic environment states that "Lpa's should require an applicant to provide a description of the significance of heritage assets affected and the contribution of their setting to that significance." HE6.2 continues "This information together with an assessment of the impact of the proposal should be set out in the application (within the design and access statement when this is required) as part of the explanation of the design concept. It should detail the sources that have been considered and the expertise that has been consulted."

### **Impact upon the character and appearance of the Botesdale Conservation Area**

3. In terms of the impact upon the character and appearance of the conservation area, no townscape analysis has been carried out to demonstrate that the scheme would serve to preserve or enhance. Paragraph 42 of the D & A statement fails to provide the requisite analysis from expert sources. We do not find the submitted street scenes reliable, robust or convincing. No verified photomontages and long sections are

submitted to support the sweeping assertions made in the Design and Access Statement. Whilst the importance of views across the site to the countryside beyond is acknowledged in the submission, the historic significance of this space is not considered via map regression etc. The extensive fenestration on the side elevation of the significant higher status house adjoining suggests that this site historically served as pleasure grounds to The Uplands and is thus an important greenspace. The submission does not acknowledge that it is the spaces between buildings in the conservation area that are of equal importance to the character of historic areas. Furthermore, the significant scale of the proposed dwelling would appear cramped and contrived on this modest area and alien in character to development in this part of the conservation area.

4. A detailed townscape appraisal of the area would give greater weight to the contribution made by the spaces between development (settlement morphology). Paragraph 2.2.15 of EH's 2011 guidance highlights the importance of this issue. Paragraph 2.2.2 of *Understanding Place* (English Heritage 2010) states: "*Character in the historic environment is a subtle compound of many ingredients . . . . Layout: parcel (field or plot) size, shape and land use; regularity and density of street pattern. . . . positioning of buildings in relation to plots and sight-lines; building scale and density, and their relationship to street width; and the size and, frequency and formality of the open space.*"

5. In this case, we believe that the site's contribution to the character and appearance of the area has not been given adequate consideration. In particular, the Society believes that the proposed development would have a demonstrably adverse impact upon the character and appearance of the conservation area contrary to the provisions of section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990. In our opinion this 'harm' is associated with the introduction of significant built form into an undeveloped space that contributes positively to the character of the conservation area.

### **Impact upon the setting of 'The Uplands'**

6. The Uplands is a significant grade II listed building whose setting is afforded statutory protection. The submission describes this building as "not a particularly prominent building". We refute this and the building is in our opinion very prominent in the streetscene, particularly when seen obliquely on the approach from Botesdale. Again, the submission fails to explore the significance of the site as part of the setting of adjacent listed buildings. In Rickinghall Superior there are a number of similar higher status village houses and these are typically set back from the street frontage within a garden setting. This marks out such dwellings within the social 'squirearchy' as being above the run of the mill homes of former cottagers. In this case, whilst the application site has been severed in ownership, nevertheless visually the open, undeveloped nature of the site still recalls the historic status quo and thus makes a

positive contribution to the setting of the adjoining listed building. In the language of PPS5, the site contributes to the significance of the listed building.

7. Furthermore, on a purely aesthetic level, 'The Uplands' is clearly designed to exploit this side aspect overlooking a private garden space from principal rooms. Additionally, open views are obtained of the long elevation of this property (arguably the principal elevation) from the village street. If development were permitted in the manner now proposed, this important public view of the listed building would be lost. In conclusion, in the Society's opinion the development would serve to harm the setting of this listed building contrary to section 85(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

### **Impact upon residential amenities of Maypole Lodge**

8. Maypole Lodge is a single storey dwelling sited in close proximity to the proposed development and set at a significantly lower level to the slab level of the proposed development. In our opinion, the substantial scale of the development, effectively two storeys plus basement, would appear overbearing and oppressive in such close proximity and would consequently materially harm the residential amenities currently enjoyed. Neither shadow diagrams nor Sunlight/Daylight calculations have been submitted to demonstrate that the habitable rooms of this property would not suffer an unacceptable adverse impact.

### **Detailed design considerations**

9. Paragraph 30 of the D & A statement asserts that "*a dwelling of more traditional two storey form and appearance will provide a more sympathetic and traditional solution*". This sweeping statement is a meaningless cliché that fails to explain how the design is informed by context. Notwithstanding our objections in principle and without prejudice, we submit that that the proposed villa is over-scaled and overly complex in form. Furthermore, a more modest cottage of one and a half storeys (of which there are many historic precedents in Rickinghall) set on the back edge of the pavement would be subordinate to the adjacent listed building and would allow greater views to be obtained across the site. The extent of cut and fill associated with the current scheme is extensive and could adversely impact upon the important False Acacia (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) in the adjacent garden. This tree makes a very positive contribution to the streetscene and must not be prejudiced by development. We note that no arboricultural report has been submitted to confirm the nature of the impact of development upon the well being of this important tree.

## Conclusions

10. In the opinion of the Society the proposed development would result in material harm contrary to statute, national policy in PPS5: Planning for the historic environment and local planning policies CS5 of the Adopted Mid Suffolk Core Strategy and 'saved' policies SB2, GP1, HB1, HB8, H13, H15 and H16 of the Adopted Mid Suffolk Local Plan. The council is strongly urged to reject these unsatisfactory proposals for these sound planning reasons.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon Cairns', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

**Simon Cairns**  
IHBC MRTPI  
**Director**

*CC: Botesdale with Rickingham Parish Council, Paul Harrison/Will Wall MSDC, Mid Suffolk SPS Committee, MSDC Councillor*