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Mr Nick Ward
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For the attention of Graham Chamberlain, Planning Officer

Dear Mr Ward

RE: Former Rushbrooks Nursery, The Street, Monks Eleigh – Planning and listed building consent applications ref: 11/01025 & 11/01026 for the demolition of existing barn and erection of new dwelling and detached garage

1. I am writing on behalf of the Suffolk Preservation Society ('the Society') regarding the proposed redevelopment of the existing timber framed barn and the erection of a large new detached house.
2. Monks Eleigh must rank amongst the first division of conservation areas in the county. The village retains both a wealth of historic buildings, and of equal significance, the historic morphology of the village remains legible. It is for these reasons that the Society is concerned regarding the impact of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the conservation area together with the setting of listed buildings.
3. Whilst the Society acknowledges that the demolition of the barn on the site frontage has previously been granted conservation area consent (89/1894 & 00/00064) nevertheless in our opinion the loss of the barn would fail to preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area. The barn appears on the tithe map of 1724 and has been confirmed by Philip Aitkens to date from c1600 (incorporating fabric reused from a medieval backhouse). As such the barn has intrinsic interest as an undesignated heritage asset in its own right, and moreover is of great significance to the character and appearance of the conservation area (designated heritage asset). Furthermore, no robust justification has been advanced to justify the demolition of the building. The former PPG15 set out that the demolition of a *positive* building in a conservation area should be subject to the same rigorous tests as would be applied in the case of a listed building. PPS5: Planning for the historic environment states at HE9.1 that "Loss affecting any designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification." In this case no efforts have been made to secure the future of the barn by other means and in the opinion of the Society the application is thus premature and unjustified.
4. The Heritage Statement accompanying the application is anonymous and the weight that should be afforded to the unattributed statements must therefore be negligible. The report includes selected quotes from a report upon the barn apparently carried out by the respected architectural historian Philip Aitkens. These excerpts do not include

any examination of the townscape contribution made by the building nor qualitative evaluation of the intrinsic merits of the structure. The Heritage Report, if based upon a detailed report by Philip Aitkens, should include the **whole** report rather than selected extracts. Furthermore, it is essential that any assessment of the building extends to an evaluation of the townscape contribution of the building to the character and appearance of the area together with an evaluation of the contribution made to the significance of the conservation area as an area of 'special architectural and historic interest' derived from the sum of its parts. The report does acknowledge "*there is a certain value of the barn in the streetscene*". In our opinion this is a gross understatement given the considerable presence of the building in the streetscene and its considerable group value with adjacent vernacular buildings.

5. The impact of the scheme upon the conservation area also needs to be fully explored. The morphology of Monks Eleigh is distinctive with strong building lines and twin nodes of development, variously focused on the parish church and bridge (once recognised as an independent settlement). The loss of mature planting on the site frontage together with the removal of the substantial historic built form and its substitution by a detached house set more deeply into the site represents a considerable change in character. The submission fails to explain how this change could reasonably be interpreted as serving to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area as required by statute (s.72(1) PI (Lb & Ca) Act 1990.

6. In summary, the Society has fundamental concerns regarding the demolition of the historic barn on the site frontage and the erection of a substantial house set more deeply within the site. The Society believes that the scheme will fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. Furthermore, in our opinion the submission lacks any justification for the demolition of the barn nor the requisite analysis of the impact of the proposals on the character and appearance of the conservation area. We find this unacceptable and contrary to national policy in PPS5: Planning for the historic environment.

Yours sincerely



Simon Cairns
IHBC MRTPI
Director

CC: Michael Munt – Historic Areas Advisor - English Heritage, Elaine Byrne SPAB caseworker, Andora Carver SPS Babergh Chair, Monks Eleigh PC