

SPS response to the West Suffolk Local Plan – Regulation 18 Issues and Options Consultation - December 2020.

Part 2 – Local Issues

Protection of Landscape and Landscape Features

Although the ‘River Stour Valley’ is mentioned as being sensitive to development (para 8.9), reference should be included to the ‘Stour Valley Project Area’, an area of landscape which lies partially within the West Suffolk area. Although the Project Area does not benefit from the same statutory protection as the AONB, parts of it are considered to exhibit similar qualifying characteristics as the nationally designated AONB and it is therefore considered a Valued Landscape. There has been a long-term aspiration to extend the AONB designation into the Project Area and the Area’s special qualities should be properly considered at the plan making and planning application stages.

Part 3 – Settlements

SPS has carried out a desk-based assessment of sites contained within the 2020 SHEELA which forms part of the evidence base for the local plan review. We have limited our assessment to sites which may impact upon historic settlements. We have the following comments which we ask to be taken into account by the decision makers before going forward as preferred sites:

3.2 Clare

WS073 – the site is extensive and will result in a significant intrusion into the countryside surrounding Clare within the Stour Valley Project Area. It is on rising ground and any development on the higher levels will be visually prominent. A much smaller site restricted to the lower part of the site and adjacent to existing development would result in a lower level of heritage harm.

WS074 – the indicated site is excessive and is within the Stour Valley Project Area, on rising ground and will be highly prominent on the approach to the village from the East. The site surrounds an historic barn complex, including Clare Hall Barn which is currently in an isolated position on the East edge of Clare. Development of the site will result in coalescence of the barns with the built-up edge of the village.

WS071 – the indicated site is within the Stour Valley Project Area and will be very prominent in landscape views of the Stour valley when approaching village from the East and also from the dismantled railway footpath walk to the south of the site.

5.6 Freckenham

WS084 – this is a prominent site within the village. It is partly within the Freckenham Conservation Area and is immediately adjacent to The Dell (grade II listed). The conservation area appraisal suggests it might have been the site of the former village pond. It is currently wooded and forms part of more extensive woodland which is characteristic of the immediate area and we therefore consider that this site should be removed.

WS083 – the site abuts the Freckenham Conservation Area on North Street. It contains a number of mature trees across the site, as noted on the conservation area appraisal map. It is also opposite designated heritage assets, Lavrock House and Street Farmhouse (both grade II listed), and forms an important part of their original rural setting which would be lost if this site was developed. Accordingly, this site should be removed.

5.9 Horringer

WS593 – this site is within the Horringer Conservation Area and next to Horringer Manor and The Gables (both grade II listed). There is the potential that development of the site could impact the setting of these assets. Moreover, any development should be in line with the surrounding context of very low density detached housing in order to protect the character of the conservation area.

WS595 and WS111 – these adjacent sites are opposite The Cottage (grade II listed) and abut the Horringer Conservation Area. There is therefore potential for these heritage assets to be impacted and any proposals for development should take their setting into account.

WS112 – the scale of this site is excessive; it is not well related to the village and its development would be incongruous to the prevailing single dwelling depth development pattern. Accordingly, this site should be reduced.

4.9 Hundon

WS116 – this site is an open space in the heart of the Hundon Conservation Area. Whilst a limited amount of development may be appropriate, any development should preserve and enhance the character of the conservation area including its open feel and the retention of allotments. The site also forms part of the setting of The Croft (grade II listed) which must be taken into account.

WS117 – this is an open site in the heart of the Hundon Conservation Area next to the village hall. Any development should preserve and enhance the character of the conservation area including its open feel. The site also forms part of the setting of The Croft (grade II listed) which must be taken into account. Thatchers Hall (grade II* listed) is located to the west of the site and whilst its garden and trees create a separation from the site and impact on its setting needs to be carefully considered.

WS115 – this is a very large site on rising land. It would form an incongruous intrusion into the countryside and would be prominent within the landscape. Any development of this site must be very limited and restricted to the southern portion of the site.

WS200 – development of this site will harm the significance designated heritage assets on Mary Lane which currently retains their rural setting remote from the village (White Horse, Tranters, Clare House and barn to Clare House, all grade II listed). Their setting will be impacted by the development of this site, as the assets will be incorporated into the built-up part of the village, thereby harming their significance. Moreover, it is a rising site and any development on the higher parts of the site will be prominent within the landscape.

5.13 Pakenham

WS151 – development of this site to the south of The Street would be incongruous, not relating well to the development pattern of the village Accordingly this site should be removed.

5.15 Stoke by Clare

WS174 - this is a very sensitive site, lying wholly within the Stour Valley Project Area, a valued landscape, and adjacent to the Stoke by Clare Conservation Area and listed buildings (The Vicarage, 7, 8, 9 School Green - all grade II listed - to the NW and Church of St John the Baptist - grade I listed - and Stoke Collage - grade II* listed - to the south). Any development of this site is likely to harm the significance of these designated heritage assets through development within their setting. Accordingly, this site should be removed.

4.13 Wickhambrook

WS191 – any development on this site must respect the setting of Boyden End Stables, High Barns and Boyden End Cottages (all grade II listed) which could be achieved by restricting the development to the eastern portion of the site

WS195 and WS190 – the development of these sites will infill the agricultural land between the designated heritage assets Gaines Hall and Gaines Cottage (both grade II listed). Any historical connection between these two heritage assets would need to be understood before an assessment of the impact of developing this site can be made.

Higham

WS354 – it is unclear from the consultation documentation whether this mixed-use site is being brought forward as it is not within Part 3 Settlements document but is retained within the SHLEAA which is part of the evidence base for the local plan. SPS would register its objection to any significant development of this site beyond a very limited amount immediately adjacent to the A14. The site as indicated encompasses part of the Higham Conservation Area and a number of listed buildings (30 Pages Lane, Barn associated with Lodge Farmhouse, Higham War Memorial and Toll House Cottage – all grade II listed) and many non-designated heritage assets. Moreover, the site surrounds St Stephens Church and the Vicarage (both also grade II listed). The settings of these designated heritage assets as remote within an agricultural landscape will be significantly impacted and SPS objects to the inclusion of this site due to the heritage harm which will result.

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