

# Planning Statement

## Land to the east of Dunmow Road, Keeres Green, Aythorpe Roding, Dunmow CM6 1PQ

Application for an entry-level exception site and the construction of 3 affordable residential dwellings together with associated access, parking and landscaping.

March 2021



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## 1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application for an entry-level exception site and the construction of 3 affordable residential dwellings together with associated access, parking and landscaping on land to the east of Dunmow Road, Keeres Green, Aythorpe Roding, Dunmow CM6 1PQ (herein after referred to as “the site”). The site is shown edged red on the accompanying Location Plan.

1.2 This statement describes the proposal and the site, provides a summary of relevant planning policies and assesses the proposal against relevant considerations. The details within this statement should be read alongside the submitted drawings and supporting documents including:

- Location Plan;
- Existing Site Plan;
- Proposed Site Plan;
- Existing and Proposed Levels;
- Proposed Elevations and Floor Plans;
- Existing and Proposed Section;
- Existing and Proposed Street Scene;
- Landscape Masterplan;
- Design and Access Statement;
- Low Impact Ecological Impact Assessment;
- Landscape Planning Statement;
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment;
- Transport Statement; and
- Flood Risk & Surface Water Management Statement.

## 2.0 Site and Surrounding Context

- 2.1 The site relates to land to the east of the B184 Dunmow Road, Aythorpe Roding. The extent of the site is as shown by the land edged red on the Location Plan submitted in support of this application and shown below in Figure 1. The site area equates to approximately 0.229 hectares.



Figure 1: Location Plan

- 2.2 The site is a narrow strip of land at the western edge of the village of Keeres Green, outside of a defined settlement boundary or any other designation for the purposes of planning policy. It is broadly rectangular in shape, laid to grass and bound by mature trees along its northern and southern boundaries. To the west lies another strip of land that is laid to grass. There are relatively new residential properties and older cottages to the east and south of the site and agricultural fields and open countryside to the north and west (beyond the B184 Dunmow Road).
- 2.3 Access to the site is gained off the country lane which runs along the southern boundary of the site, on the corner of the site's south-eastern boundary.

### Planning History

- 2.4 Planning permission for five residential dwellings with associated access and landscaping works on the site including the land outlined in blue in Figure 1 above ("the original application") was refused by the Local Planning Authority ("LPA") in July 2019 (reference UTT/19/0946/FUL) and subsequently dismissed at appeal. The appeal was dismissed due to the development's impact on the character and appearance of the site and surrounding area, and as a result of its location which the Inspector did not find to be accessible. In dismissing the appeal the Inspector put a lot of emphasis on Policies S7, despite this policy being out of date given the LPA's lack of an adequate 5 year housing land supply and its prohibitive rather than protective approach.

### 3.0 Description of the Proposal

- 3.1 This planning application seeks full planning permission for the construction of three detached residential dwellings as part of an entry-level exception site, as defined by paragraph 71 of the National Planning Policy Framework (“the Framework”), with associated access, parking and landscaping. The development comprises of two affordable 3-bedroom bungalows and one affordable 2-bedroom bungalow.
- 3.2 The bungalows are proposed to be of single storey height and are designed to Lifetime Homes Standard. They are positioned to face towards the road to provide an active frontage and benefit from adequate private amenity space and parking provision.



*Figure 2: Proposed Site Plan*

- 3.3 The majority of the existing mature tree and hedgerow planting along the boundaries of the site would be preserved and enhanced with additional soft landscaping features, which would aid in softening the impact of the proposed built development on the surrounding area.
- 3.4 Access to the proposed development is proposed to be taken from the country lane along the southern boundary of the site via a new shared access points, which would replace the existing informal field access into the site.

#### **4.0 Planning Policy Context**

- 4.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that decisions should be made in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan for Uttlesford comprises of the Adopted Uttlesford Local Plan 2005, the Essex Minerals Local Plan 2014 and Essex Waste Local Plan 2017.
- 4.2 The Framework (February 2019) and the Planning Practice Guidance are also significant material considerations.
- 4.3 Uttlesford District Council have adopted the following Supplementary Planning Documents that are relevant to the site:
- Essex Design Guide
  - Essex Planning Officers Association (EPOA) Parking Standards 2009
  - Uttlesford Local Residential Parking Standards

#### **National Planning Policy Framework**

- 4.4 The Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied.

#### **Achieving sustainable development**

- 4.5 Paragraphs 7 to 10 set out that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and that there are three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways:
- a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
  - b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and

- c) an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

4.6 The Framework is clear that these objectives need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives. The Framework adds that the planning system should play an active role in guiding development to sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area.

#### **The presumption in favour of sustainable development**

4.7 Paragraph 11 explains that at the heart of the Framework is the “*presumption in favour of sustainable development*”, described as a golden thread running through Plan-making and Decision-taking. For decision-taking this means approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay, or where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless any adverse impacts of doing so will significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole or where specific policies in the Framework indicate development should be restricted.

#### **Decision-making**

4.8 Paragraph 38 is generally relevant to the determination of planning applications, stating that “*Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way (...) and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible*”.

#### **Delivering a sufficient supply of homes**

4.9 A key objective of the Framework is to significantly boost the supply of homes (paragraph 59). Paragraph 68 elaborates that “*Small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area, and are often built-out relatively quickly*”. Local planning authorities are therefore encouraged “to

*support the development of windfall sites through their policies and decisions – giving great weight to the benefits of using suitable sites within existing settlements for homes”.*

- 4.10 Paragraph 71 requires Local Planning Authorities to support the development of entry-level exception sites, suitable for first time buyers (or those looking to rent their first home). These sites should be on land which is not already allocated for housing and should comprise of entry-level homes that offer one or more types of affordable housing as defined in Annex 2 of the Framework and be adjacent to existing settlements, proportionate in size to them, not compromise the protection given to areas or assets of particular importance in the Framework, and comply with any local design policies and standards.
- 4.11 Paragraph 73 requires Local Planning Authorities to supply specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years’ worth of housing against their housing requirement. However, it is worth noting that the most recent monitoring report (dated April 2020) shows that the LPA is only able to demonstrate a supply of 3.11 years with the necessary buffer. The consequence of this is that paragraph 11 of the Framework directs that policies for the supply of housing are to be considered “out of date” (as set out in footnote 7) and accordingly, the Framework requires that planning permission be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.

#### **Achieving well-designed places**

- 4.12 Section 12 of the Framework highlights that the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built development adding at paragraph 124 that *“Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities”.*
- 4.13 Paragraph 128 of the Framework adds that *“Applicants should work closely with those affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot”.*



### Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

- 4.14 Paragraph 170 of the Framework requires planning policies and decisions to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan); recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside; maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast; minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity; preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability; and remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

### Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

- 4.15 Paragraph 193 states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting.
- 4.16 Paragraph 196 of the Framework requires that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this is to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

### Adopted Uttlesford Local Plan 2005

- 4.17 The proposed development does not involve mineral or waste development and the Minerals Local Plan and the Waste Local Plan are therefore not relevant to this application.
- 4.18 The following paragraphs deal with those Adopted Uttlesford Local Plan 2005 policies that are relevant to the current proposal.
- 4.19 Policy S7 (The Countryside) specifies that the countryside will be protected for its own sake and planning permission will only be given for development that needs to take place there or is appropriate to a rural area. Development will only be permitted if its appearance protects or enhances the particular character of the part of the countryside within which it is set or there are special reasons why the development in the form proposed needs to be there. Any development will need to comply with this policy.

- 4.20 The Council acknowledges that the Local Plan is out of date in this respect. Consequently, a Compatibility Assessment to establish whether Local Plan Policies were compliant with the Framework was carried out by Ann Skippers Planning for the Council and the findings were subsequently adopted by Cabinet for Development Management Purposes in September 2012. This Assessment found that Local Plan Policy S7 is only partly compliant with the NPPF in that:

*“The protection and enhancement of natural environment is an important part of the environmental dimension of sustainable development, but the NPPF takes a positive approach, rather than a protective one, to appropriate development in rural areas. The policy strictly controls new building whereas the NPPF supports well designed new buildings to support sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas.”*

- 4.21 Policy GEN1 (Access) sets out various requirements in relation to access, including that the access to the development and the surrounding road network must be capable of safely accommodating the traffic likely to be generated by the development. Furthermore, the design of the development must not compromise road safety, must take account of the needs of all road users and encourage movement by means other than the car.
- 4.22 Policy GEN2 (Design) requires development to be compatible with the scale, form, layout, appearance and materials of surrounding buildings.
- 4.23 Policy GEN4 (Good Neighbourliness) seeks to protect the amenity of neighbouring existing and future occupiers, together with the amenity of the locality and surrounding area. It specifically states that development will not be permitted where it would cause materially harmful impacts to nearby occupiers due to noise, smell or other pollutants.
- 4.24 Policy GEN6 (Infrastructure Provision to Support Development) states that development will not be permitted unless it makes provision at the appropriate time for community facilities, school capacity, public services, transport provision, drainage and other infrastructure that are made necessary by the proposed development.
- 4.25 Policies GEN7 (Nature Conservation), ENV7 (The Protection of the Natural Environment) and ENV8 (Other Landscape Elements of Importance for Nature Conservation) jointly seek to protect nature conservation, and habitats that would support wildlife as well as certain landscape elements, including hedgerows, linear tree belts and green lanes and special verges amongst others. Development likely to affect

protected species or local areas of nature conservation significance will require measures to mitigate and/or compensate for the potential impacts of development.

- 4.26 Policy GEN8 (Vehicle Parking Standards) seeks appropriate vehicle parking to be provided having regard to the Council's adopted standards.
- 4.27 Policy ENV2 (Development Affecting Listed Buildings) requires development affecting a listed building to be in keeping with its scale, character and surroundings.
- 4.28 Policy H1 (Housing Development) seeks to plan, monitor and manage a supply of housing land on allocated sites, however, the Council accepts that this policy is out-of-date.
- 4.29 Policy H2 (Reserve Housing Provision) states that sensitive infilling of small gaps in small groups of houses outside development limits but close to settlements will be acceptable if development would be in character with the surroundings and have limited impact on the countryside in the context of existing development.
- 4.30 Policy H9 (Affordable Housing) states that the Council will seek to negotiate on a site to site basis an element of affordable housing of 40% of the total provision of housing on appropriate allocated and windfall sites, having regard to the up to date Housing Needs Survey, market and site considerations.
- 4.31 Policy H10 (Housing Mix) requires development to include a significant proportion of market housing comprising small properties.

### **Emerging Local Plan**

- 4.32 A new Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State in 2019, however Uttlesford District Council withdrew its local plan from examination on 30 April 2020 after inspectors cited 'significant concerns in relation to the soundness of the plan'. The 2005 Adopted Local Plan therefore still remains the most significant document for development and planning within the District, and the emerging plan is considered to have very little weight for decision-making.

## 5.0 Assessment of Proposal

### Principle of Development

- 5.1 The site is located outside of a defined settlement boundary or village envelope as defined within the Local Plan and therefore is classed as being within open countryside where Local Plan Policies S7 (The Countryside) and H1 (Housing Development) seek to impose a general restriction on development, including housing. It should however be noted that Policy S7 is inconsistent with the Framework by laying down too strict a set of parameters by seeking to prohibit development in the countryside rather than protect and enhance the natural environment and can therefore only be attributed limited weight.
- 5.2 The Council's latest housing trajectory and 5-year housing land supply calculation<sup>1</sup> confirms that as of 1 April 2020 the district has 3.11 years of housing supply for the 2020-2025 5-year period. Notwithstanding this, it is of importance to note that recent appeal decisions (dated January and February 2021) which have reconsidered the Council's 5-year housing land supply position suggest that the supply is as low as 2.68 years<sup>2</sup>. This does not appear to have been contested by the LPA. Consequently, Policy S7 is not only out of date by virtue of its incompatibility with the Framework, but also due to the Council's shortfall of a deliverable 5 year housing land supply. As a result of this, the tilted balance as set out in paragraph 11 of the Framework needs to be applied to any housing development outside a defined settlement boundary.
- 5.3 This application however comprises an entry-level exception site which needs to be considered differently. Paragraph 71 of the Framework states:

*“Local planning authorities should support the development of entry-level exception sites, suitable for first time buyers (or those looking to rent their first home), unless the need for such homes is already being met within the authority's area. These sites should be on land which is not already allocated for housing and should:*

- (a) comprise of entry-level homes that offer one or more types of affordable housing as defined in Annex 2 of this Framework; and*

<sup>1</sup> Available via the Council's website <https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/article/7051/Houseing-Trajectory-and-Five-Year-Land-Supply> (last accessed 5<sup>th</sup> March 2021)

<sup>2</sup> APP/C1570/W/20/3259894 dated 18<sup>th</sup> February 2021, APP/C1570/W/20/3252121 dated 29<sup>th</sup> January 2021, APP/C1570/W/20/3257946 dated 14<sup>th</sup> January 2021 and APP/C1570/W/20/3242024 dated 11<sup>th</sup> January 2021

*(b) be adjacent to existing settlements, proportionate in size to them, not compromise the protection given to areas or assets of particular importance in this Framework, and comply with any local design policies and standards.”*

- 5.4 Footnotes 33 and 34 provide clarification on the above, stating that entry-level exception sites should not be larger than one hectare in size or exceed 5% of the size of the existing settlement (33) and that they should not be permitted in National Parks (or within the Broads Authority), Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty or land designated as Green Belt (34).
- 5.5 The site is not currently allocated for housing and is under 1ha in size (being 0.229ha). It lies directly adjacent to and opposite of existing residential dwellings forming part of the Keeres Green settlement, is proportionate in size to the settlement and not in an area that benefits from special protection. The proposed development comprises of three dwellings (one 2-bedroom bungalow and two 3-bedroom bungalows), all of which would be affordable as per the definition in Annexe 2 of the Framework, thus resulting in a scheme that would provide 100% affordable housing.
- 5.6 Given the Council’s significant under provision of housing, it would be difficult to argue that the LPA is able to meet the current demand for affordable housing, specifically with regards to housing suitable for first-time buyers or renters in this instance, in the area.
- 5.7 This is supported by the fact that the Emerging Local Plan, which would have set out the housing strategy for the district over the Plan period, has recently been withdrawn and a new call for sites is currently in process to identify new sites across the district for housing purposes to meet the needs of current and future generations over the new Local Plan period.
- 5.8 With a new evidence base having to be built up for the new Local Plan, the adoption of this is a few years off and the LPA therefore has to rely on the current adopted Local Plan. The explanatory text to Policy H9, which deals with affordable housing, acknowledges that there may *“be smaller sites within the rural areas which could provide a useful contribution to the Council’s supply of affordable housing”* and requests that *“all developments on a site of 3 or more homes must include an element of small 2 and 3 bed homes, which must represent a significant proportion of the total,*

*for those households who are able to meet their needs in the market and would like to live in a new home.”* The proposed development would comply with this request.

- 5.9 The West Essex (including Epping Forest, Harlow and Uttlesford) and East Hertfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (“SHMA”) Affordable Housing Update July 2017 (which was published as an update to the affordable housing analysis undertaken from the original SHMA that was published in September 2015) is also relevant and this identifies at paragraph 3.62 (page 34) that over the full plan period 2011-2033 the overall affordable housing need for Uttlesford is 2,600 dwellings.
- 5.10 The original SHMA that was published in 2015 identified that of the 2,724 households requiring affordable housing in Uttlesford, 14.5% need a 1 bed, 40% need a 2 bed, 36% need a 3 bed and 9% need a 4 bed house for affordable rent. Of those requiring intermediate affordable housing, 4% need a 1 bed, 47% need a 2 bed, 43% need a 3 bed and 5% need a 4 bed. This shows that there is a clear need for 2 and 3 bedroom dwellings for affordable homes. This highlights again the fact that the biggest demand for affordable homes in the district relates to 2 and 3 bedroom dwellings.
- 5.11 In addition to the above, the LPA published its Housing Strategy 2016-21 in December 2015 and this states (page 21):
- “Affordability is still a problem in Uttlesford; this is measured by affordability ratios. These show the relationship between income and house prices. Data shows that average house prices in Uttlesford are almost 11 times the average income. Mortgages are calculated on 3.5 times household so this shows how unaffordable property is for those on an average income.”*
- 5.12 The Council also publishes quarterly reports (Uttlesford Housing Market Report) which is intended to give *“a snapshot of house price data at ward level [...] designed to provide information on the current housing market pressures within the District.”*
- 5.13 Based on the latest reports, it is noted that High Easter & The Rodings, the ward within which Keeres Green falls, consistently ranks high with regards to the average price for 2, 3 and 4 bed houses. The reports also show that affordability which is based on the amount of deposit required to purchase a 2 bed house on the open market by ward is lower in High Easter & The Rodings, meaning that a higher deposit is required to be able to purchase a 2 bed home in this area compared to other wards.

- 5.14 The above provides clear evidence that there is a significant need for affordable housing within the district, especially with regards to 2 and 3 bed homes, but also that there is a need for affordable homes in the High Easter & The Rodings ward as affordability within this ward is low. The proposed development would address both of these needs as it would provide affordable 2 and 3 bed homes as per the definition of the Framework which would enable first time buyers (or those looking to rent their first home) to acquire a new home in an area where affordability is low.
- 5.15 It has therefore clearly been demonstrated that the proposed development would be supported in principle by the Framework (paragraph 71), subject to other material planning matters relating to local design policies and standards being satisfied. The following paragraphs provide an assessment of the design aspect of the proposed development and demonstrate that the proposal would be acceptable in any other respect which may not be considered relevant to the determination of this application given that only local design policies and standards are applicable in the determination of entry-level exception sites according to paragraph 71 of the Framework.

### **Design**

- 5.16 Good design is central to the objectives of national and local planning policy and a key aspect of sustainable development. Policy GEN2 provides guidance on the quality and design of housing developments and specifies a number of criteria aimed at achieving good design.
- 5.17 Details of the evolution of the proposed design is set out in the submitted Design and Access Statement (“DAS”). This demonstrates that the design approach ensures compliance with Policy GEN2 and the Framework by proposing a scheme that sits comfortably within the local architectural language and respects its rural setting and the setting of nearby listed buildings. The DAS includes an analysis of the local architectural character and shows where inspiration was taken from to ensure that the design of the proposed development suitably responds to its surroundings. It also includes a summary of the comments made by the Inspector as part of the recent appeal decision for the original application on the wider site and demonstrates how this current application responds to those comments.
- 5.18 In summary, it has been demonstrated that the proposed layout reflects the existing pattern and form of housing in the immediate vicinity of the site, which comprises detached and semi-detached houses of traditional Essex vernacular appearance, in terms of its style, form, size and choice of materials. The building line is set back from



the country lane, to maintain a generous landscaped buffer to both the front (south) and rear (north) of the site which allows for additional landscape features to soften the impact of the built development on the surrounding area, respect the site's rural location and increase biodiversity. The development has deliberately been kept to single storey height to form a transition from the edge of the settlement into the more built up area and benefits from a single shared access off the country lane which would minimise any impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding area.

- 5.19 Overall, it is held that the supporting information demonstrates that the proposed development has been well designed, taking into account the characteristics of the site, its immediate surroundings and the wider rural area. On that basis, it is concluded that the development complies with local design policies and standards as required by paragraph 71 of the Framework.

### **Landscape**

- 5.20 A core principle of the Framework is to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Paragraph 170 of the Framework states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes.
- 5.21 The site is not subject to any landscape quality designation. The site, nor the immediate landscape, contains any rare or unusual landscape features and the site does not therefore comprise a valued landscape.
- 5.22 The application is supported by a Landscape Planning Statement ("LPS") and a Landscape Masterplan, prepared by Guarda Landscape. These demonstrate that the aim of the proposed development is to retain as much of the existing vegetation as possible and this has been achieved except for the length of hedgerow which is proposed to be removed to accommodate the vehicular access into the site. Otherwise the boundary vegetation is proposed to be retained and enhanced, with infill planting to the northern and southern boundary where there are gaps and additional hedgerow tree planting to ensure a dense and well-defined edge.
- 5.23 The LPS has identified that the hedgerow along the northern boundary of the site is gappy, as a result of which there are views through into the site, although these are filtered by the existing trees and shrubs. Consequently, as set out above, this hedgerow is proposed to be infilled with native planting to form an effective edge to the site and this would screen the proposed development from views across the farmland.



It should however be noted that housing is not incongruous in views from the north, as the houses at the former Keeres Green Nursery development (to the east of the site) are clearly visible (with very little vegetation along the northern boundary). Other buildings on the edge of the village are also visible. The strengthening of the hedge is simply proposed to provide an enhancement to the existing landscape features and biodiversity on the site and provide an effective boundary to the proposed development.

- 5.24 The western boundary of the site is proposed to be provided with a new hedgerow to define the field and development boundary. This offset and additional planting, along with existing vegetation, would effectively screen the proposed dwellings from Dunmow Road, at the entrance of Keeres Green, and so the quality and character of this view when travelling towards the hamlet of Keeres Green from the west would not change or be diminished. The existing Crest House, located on the corner, is open, with no screening around it and this would form the dominant urbanising feature in this view. The substation and layby (part of the old Windmill Works site development to the south of the site) also form incongruous elements in the landscape, at the entrance to Keeres Green.
- 5.25 The proposed dwellings are proposed to face towards the road to provide an active frontage, where views are experienced. Close board fencing is not proposed along any boundaries as this would be inappropriate in this rural situation, even though it is prevalent in the old Windmill Works site development. Instead, the boundaries would consist only of hedgerows and hedgerow trees.
- 5.26 To enhance the hedgerow habitats it is proposed to add some woodland bulb and wildflower planting which would add interest and provide a greater variety of species. They would also be managed to ensure future healthy and robust growth.
- 5.27 The landscaping within the site is proposed to be kept relatively low-key and informal to maintain a rural character. However, there would be pockets of shrub and perennial planting to provide a welcoming frontage. The character of the planting would be traditional English garden to reflect the style of gardens in the village.
- 5.28 The submitted Landscape Masterplan clearly shows how the boundaries of the site would benefit from strengthening and the positive impact the proposed landscape enhancements would have on the surrounding area and views towards the site.

- 5.29 Taking the foregoing factors together, it is concluded that the proposed development would provide significant landscape enhancements to the site and its surroundings and would therefore not be harmful to the character and appearance of the (undesignated) landscape or local countryside.

### **Residential Amenity**

- 5.30 Every effort has been made to ensure the proposed development would not cause any adverse impacts on neighbouring occupiers as a result of overlooking, overshadowing or visual intrusion between existing dwellings within Keeres Green and the proposed dwellings. The development comprises of three bungalows which are of single storey height only and this therefore greatly reduces any perceived impact on neighbouring occupiers in terms of overlooking.
- 5.31 Section 4 of the accompanying DAS includes section drawings which clearly demonstrate that the position of and distance between the proposed bungalows and neighbouring dwellings would not cause any materially harmful impact on the amenities of neighbouring occupiers by way of appearing overbearing on their outlook, loss of light or loss of privacy. Furthermore, the proposed enhanced soft landscaping features along the existing site boundaries would offer an attractive enhanced screening between properties and further obscure inter-visibility, even at ground floor.
- 5.32 In addition to the above, it is of importance to note that when determining the original application, which comprised of 1½ storey dwellings, the LPA concluded that the amount of spacing between the built forms and arrangement of the development would not have caused any adverse impact on neighbouring properties and the development was in compliance with Policies GEN2 and GEN4. The current proposal comprises of single storey bungalows which have been set back further from the southern boundary of the site. On that basis, it is held that the development would continue to meet the aims of Policies GEN2 and GEN4 and therefore be acceptable in terms of its impact on the amenities of neighbouring occupiers.

### **Highways**

- 5.33 The matters around transport and accessibility are considered in detail as part of the Transport Statement (“TS”) prepared by Ardent Consulting Engineers. This confirms that the proposal would provide safe access, that there is capacity within the local highway network to accommodate three additional dwellings and that the site has

reasonable accessibility to non-car modes of transport (bus, cycle and walking) when needed.

- 5.34 Access to the residential development is proposed to be taken from the country lane to the south of the site via a new shared access point, replacing the existing informal field access into the site which would be closed and no longer used. Traffic changes as a result of the development proposals are expected to have a negligible impact on the surrounding highway network.
- 5.35 When determining the original application, the LPA accepted that the development would lead to an uplift of traffic, however due to the relatively small number of proposed dwellings (5), such an increase would be acceptable. The current proposal is for three dwellings, which would evidently result in less vehicle movements to and from the site than the original application. Having concluded that the provision of five dwellings is acceptable in terms of highway safety and efficiency, it is clear that the proposal for three dwellings would be equally acceptable.
- 5.36 In terms of parking, the Council's parking standards require 2 and 3 bedroom dwellings to provide two parking spaces each. All three dwellings would benefit from two designated off street parking spaces, with sufficient space for visitor parking provided within the site.
- 5.37 Having regard to the above, and the LPA's conclusion that the previous application was acceptable with regards to highway and parking matters, it is held that the current proposal fully complies with the aims of Policies GEN1 and GEN8.

### **Ecology**

- 5.38 Hybrid Ecology Ltd have been appointed to undertake an ecological review of the site. The site was surveyed based on an extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey methodology, which includes a site visit and detailed assessment of habitat.
- 5.39 The report finds that the site as a whole is considered to have low biodiversity value. However, the site through its hedgerows, small areas of scrub and brush piles which are proposed to be retained and reinforced as part of the development, are likely to attract nesting birds between March and August inclusive. Hedgerows along the southern and western boundaries qualify as being Priority Habitat. Under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006), LPAs have a duty to conserve and enhance such habitat. One access is proposed to be created in the southern boundary

hedgerow. As a compensatory measure, the northern boundary hedgerow would be infill planted to create a continuous feature.

- 5.40 There are several opportunities for ecological enhancement on site. It is recommended that boundary hedgerows are managed to conserve their biodiversity value. Bat and bird boxes should be installed on external boundary walls of new properties. Where possible (and relevant), property fences should be made penetrable to nocturnal mammals, particularly hedgehog. These proposed ecological enhancements would contribute to Government aims under paragraph 170(d) of the Framework which requires all development to contribute to biodiversity enhancement where possible.
- 5.41 It is therefore considered that any potential impact from the proposed development can be mitigated while new areas of planting and habitat boxes for nesting birds and roosting bats would increase wildlife interest post-development.
- 5.42 In addition to the above, it is worth noting that the assessment of the original application to provide five dwellings on this site agreed with the findings of the submitted ecological review (which has been updated to reflect the current proposal) and concluded that no ecology objection is raised to the proposal with regards to Local Plan Policy GEN7.

### **Heritage**

- 5.43 A core principle of the Framework is to conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance. Paragraph 194 of the Framework requires clear and convincing justification for any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting). Paragraph 195 and 196 deal with substantial harm and less than substantial harm respectively. Where less than substantial harm is caused to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
- 5.44 There are a number of listed buildings within close proximity of the site (as shown in Figure 3 below), including:
- A cluster of Grade II listed houses including Beadles Cottage, Pavitts, Lattice Cottage adjacent to the south east;
  - Grade II listed Keeres Farmhouse and Barn, both approximately 200m to the north east; and
  - Grade II\* Judds Cottage, situated approximately 200m to the east.



Figure 3: Map showing listed buildings near the site

- 5.45 The proposal has been designed so as to minimise harm to the character and appearance of the setting and the special characteristics of the listed buildings. This includes, where possible, to retain and strengthen existing landscaping within the site. The proposed buildings are to be constructed of materials that are in keeping with the character and appearance of the area, and the form and height of the proposed buildings is reduced to minimise any impact on the locality.
- 5.46 Of the listed buildings detailed above Beadles Cottage, Pavitts and Lattice Cottage are sited the closest to the site and therefore arguably have the most potential to be affected. However, these buildings are located on the opposite side of the country lane where the site is screened by an existing landscaped boundary, which is proposed to be retained and strengthened. It is also important to note that the buildings are located directly to the east of the residential development at the former Windmill Works site and opposite the former Keeres Green Nursery site. When assessing the residential development of these two sites (references UTT/13/0571/FUL and UTT/14/0779/FUL), no harm to the listed buildings or their settings was identified. More importantly, the LPA when determining the original application did not raise any objection to the development on heritage grounds. There are no justifiable reasons to come to a different conclusion when assessing the impact of the current proposal given that this is of a reduced density and height and includes additional landscaping features.
- 5.47 Consequently, it is concluded that the proposed development would not cause any harm to the nearby listed buildings including their setting. Should the decision maker however disagree with this assessment (and that made for the original application on

the site), it should be noted that any harm that may be identified would certainly be outweighed by the benefits of the proposal, which includes a 100% affordable housing provision. As a result, the proposal is in compliance with the requirements of the Framework as well as Policy ENV2.

### **Flood Risk**

- 5.48 The site is situated within a Flood Zone 1 area and the developable area is less than one hectare. A residential scheme located in a Flood Zone 1 area is deemed to be suitable for development, as defined by the Framework.
- 5.49 Policy GEN3 requires development outside flood risk areas to not increase the risk of flooding through surface water run-off.
- 5.50 This application is supported by a Flood Risk & Surface Water Management Statement (including SuDS strategy) and this confirms that:
- i) The redevelopment scheme and its occupants would not be at an increased risk of flooding;
  - ii) The redevelopment scheme would not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere;
  - iii) A sustainable drainage scheme can be implemented.
- 5.51 Consequently, it is demonstrated that the proposal is consistent with the aims of the Framework and its Planning Practice Guidance. This was previously accepted as part of the original application, where the LPA accepted that the implementation of a sustainable drainage scheme would ensure that flood risk is not increased elsewhere and no objection to the development was raised on this basis.

## 6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 This application is for an entry-level exception site and the construction of 3 affordable residential dwellings together with associated access, parking and landscaping.
- 6.2 Paragraph 71 of the Framework provides support in principle for entry-level exception sites subject to certain criteria being met and the development complying with local design policies and standards.
- 6.3 This statement demonstrates that the development complies with the requirements of paragraph 71 to be considered an entry-level exception site. The development comprises one 2 bedroom bungalow and two 3 bedroom bungalows, all of which are proposed to be affordable and suitable for first time buyers (or those looking to rent their first home), as defined in Annex 2 of the Framework. The information within this statement demonstrates that there is a clear need for such affordable homes in the High Easter & The Rodings ward as well as the wider district.
- 6.4 It has also been demonstrated that the proposed development is of a high design standard that takes into account the characteristics of the site and its surroundings. Enhanced landscaping features within and around the site are proposed which would improve the landscape setting of and biodiversity on the site. The development is therefore in compliance with local design policies and standards and thus fully complies with the requirements of paragraph 71 of the Framework. Consequently, there are no material considerations that would suggest that the proposed development for an entry-level exception site on this site would not be acceptable. As such, it is respectfully requested that the Council approve the application.

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