

# **Design & Access Statement**

Proposed Erection of 1 Dwelling (Full)  
at  
The former plant/garden centre  
Dembleby

## Introduction

This application comprises a completely new design to previous applications (17/1082/FUL & 18/0764/FUL). Even though the proposed site is in Dembleby, a Hamlet in accordance with LP2 of CLLP we have listened to the Planning Officers comments & we have submitted a design which is fully compliant with the NPPF sections on Rural Housing in the Countryside. The scale of the proposed dwelling has also been substantially reduced in accordance with the Planning Officers' report.

## Context

As stated in the 'Introduction', this application is a totally new design to the noted previous applications. The methodology contained in The National Design Guide & The National Model Design Code, along with local context & planning officers' reasons for refusal of the previous applications & relevant case law were all held at the forefront when evaluating & determining a new design for this application. Each reason for refusal is addressed below:

1. **“Dembleby by virtue of its small scale & form of development represents ‘countryside’ when assessed against the settlement hierarchy set out within Policy LP2 of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan. The proposed erection of a new dwelling in this rural location would represent an unsustainable form of development that would fail to maintain or enhance the environmental quality of the area. No special circumstances have been put forward to justify the need for a new dwelling in the countryside or why it cannot be located in a settlement. In the absence of any overriding justification therefore, the proposed provision of additional housing in this rural location would represent an unwarranted form of unsustainable residential development in the countryside contrary to the provisions of policies LP1, LP2 & LP55 of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan & to the advice contained within the National Planning Policy Framework, in particular at paragraphs 7, 14, 17, 55 & 197.”**

As illustrated in the 'Dembleby' section of this statement, Dembleby is a hamlet in accordance with policy LP2 of the CLLP & as such policy states a single dwelling infill development will be supported in principle. However as planning officers argue that Dembleby is 'countryside', & following officers advice, this new design is fully compliant with paragraph 80 (formerly 55) of the NPPF relating to building in the countryside.

The 'Design' section of this statement illustrates how the proposed design is of exceptional quality & the finished dwelling will be a truly outstanding & ecologically innovative home, which will enhance its immediate setting whilst also being sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area & raising its environmental quality.

Sustainability is at the forefront of the **Design** & integrated at all levels in line with LP1 & LP2 of the CLLP & paragraphs 8 & 11 (formerly 7 & 14) of the NPPF.

- **The Construction Process** - With all the natural materials being sourced locally reducing transportation miles. From the stone which will come from Ancaster Quarry, just 8 miles away to the straw which will be sourced from local farms. When the footings are excavated the waste clay will even be used to plaster the straw walls internally. The tiles are also natural clay & the cruck frame is of FSC certified timber.
- **The Life of the Building** - The straw & timber actively sequester atmospheric carbon. The density of the compacted straw creates a high thermal mass & Passivhaus-standard insulation to achieve a high performance thermal envelope, reducing the energy needed to heat & cool the house. Combined with the dual technologies of the ground source heat pump & the photovoltaics along

with the infrastructure for solar batteries there will be minimal energy requirements & even the capability to store & generate energy. The result being a low carbon building with little embodied energy, a truly 'green' sustainable home.

- **Environment** – As illustrated in the above 2 points, in the 'Design' section & in The Combined Energy Efficiency & Environmental Impact Report, this home will be energy efficient & carbon conscious thereby protecting the greater environment. (See full report – Appendix 1)  
There will also be an immensely positive impact on the Local Environment. There is great potential net gain to biodiversity, achievable by reclaiming the site from its current status, removing the old glass houses, polytunnel, hard standing & concreted areas. Landscaping the site with plants rich with pollinator friendly species for example Mahonia Japonica, Foxgloves, Scabious & Verbena Bonariensis, additional native deciduous fruiting tree species for example Crab Apple, Rowan, Wild Cherry & Alder Buckthorn, along with the addition of a natural pond, will hugely increase the site's value to wildlife, attracting, for example birds, frogs, toads & insects. Existing hedges & trees bordering the site will remain & additional hedges will be planted making an ideal site for nesting birds. Open countryside behind & beyond the site provides plentiful habitat for the wildlife too. All inline with LP17, LP18 & LP21 of the CLLP.
  - **Location** - Dembleby is a sustainable location (see response to Refusal point 2)
2. **“The proposed development is located in a rural area which has no regular public transport provision, & furthermore the site is not served by adequate pedestrian facilities. The closest services & facilities comprise a public house in Newton (1.2 miles), public house & primary school in Osbournby (2.7 miles) & small convenience store in Folkingham (5 miles). These would be along narrow unlit lanes with no footpath & require the crossing of main roads (A15 & A52) all of which are subject to the national speed limit. As such the development would lead to increased vehicle movements to & from the nearest services & facilities thereby increasing the reliance upon the private car rather than more sustainable modes of travel. The development is therefore contrary to the provisions of policies LP1, LP2 & LP13 of the CLLP & the principles of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF, in particular paragraphs 17 & 197.”**

Dembleby is a sustainable location inline with LP1 & LP13 of the CLLP & paragraphs 8 & 11 of the NPPF. It is not isolated, with the other half of the parish, Aunsby, a large hamlet, being situated just 500 metres west of Dembleby & just 400 metres to the south of Dembleby is the A52, which links the market towns of Grantham to the west & Boston to the east. Just 2 miles to the east is the A15 running between the towns of Sleaford & Bourne then onwards to Lincoln & Peterborough. To the south of the A52 is the small village of Newton which has a public house & to the east on either side of the A52 are the larger villages of Osbournby (with public house, primary & nursery schools) & Folkingham (with local shops). There is also a footpath linking Dembleby to both Osbournby & Newton.

Timetabled bus services throughout North Kesteven are very limited, with small, medium & large villages, where the building of residential homes is supported, having little or no timetabled service. Policy LP13 (4.7.4) in describing timetabled bus services states **“outside of Lincoln services typically remain very limited in the evenings & at weekends”** and goes on to outline the accessibility of & encouragement to use, sustainable methods of transport including, in more rural areas, **“demand responsive ‘Call Connect’ services, providing pre-bookable, flexible feeder services to local centres & to onward connections to the larger urban centres”**, which can be easily accessed in Dembleby, along with a regular school bus service. Furthermore, the NPPF Glossary defines 'Sustainable Transport Modes' as **“Any efficient, safe & accessible means of transport with overall low impact on the environment including walking & cycling, low & ultra low emission vehicles, car sharing & public transport”** all of which are easily accessible in Dembleby. The installation of vehicular charging facilities in the design actively encourages & enables the use of very low emission vehicles & the close knit nature of such environments means car sharing is far more accessible than in larger settlements & is a regular occurrence in Dembleby.

Residents of Dembleby support existing local amenities in nearby villages, helping safeguard their future whilst creating a thriving rural environment inline with paragraph 79 of the NPPF.

3. **“The proposed dwelling by virtue of its scale & siting would have a harmful urbanising effect through the consolidation of scattered built form within this rural location. This would neither protect nor enhance the countryside, but instead will adversely affect its character & appearance contrary to policies LP1, LP2 & LP26 of the CLLP & paragraphs 7 & 55 of the NPPF.”**

As described above & below in ‘Design’, this application is for a totally new design, which as well as fulfilling all the requirements for building in a Hamlet, is also fully compliant with building in the Countryside. Inline with LP1, LP2 & LP26 of the CLLP & Paragraphs 8, 79 & 80 of the NPPF.

It’s scale has been reduced substantially from the previous application. The previous application had an overall footprint of 276 square metres whilst the footprint of the new design is only 124 square metres. The height of the new design is also significantly lower measuring 6.5m whilst that of the previously submitted design was 8.4m. Both of these factors mean the views beyond are far more visible & there will be much more open space left on the site supporting Bio & Geodiversity. There will also be more space between the dwellings on either side.

Dembleby has 15 dwellings with the majority of them forming a clustered core only separated by their gardens, garages & the road, the proposed site being the only ‘gap’ in the core, a clear ‘infill’ which as such policy LP2 of the CLLP states **“will be supported in principle”**, therefore there is no ‘scattered built form’ to consolidate at this location.

The design for this application was specifically chosen to enhance the location & the character of this former Medieval settlement, grounded in an understanding & evaluation of the area’s defining characteristics inline with NPPF Para 127, whether defined as ‘Hamlet’ or ‘Countryside’.

This contemporary interpretation of the Medieval vernacular, realised as an energy-efficient dwelling through carbon conscious construction will shine in the centre of Dembleby.

## Planning History

- **2001** - ‘Beckside’ was built after planning permission was granted (01/0397/FUL), as it had been demonstrated that a dwelling was needed to support ‘Dembleby Plant Centre’, a rural-based business located on the site on Village Street. An occupancy restriction was placed on ‘Beckside’ for the management of the plant centre. (After a spate of burglaries & ill health, ‘Dembleby Plant Centre’ closed down in 2007 & in 2014 the occupancy restriction was removed from ‘Beckside’(14/0895/VARCON)).

Since ‘Beckside’ was built, 4 more applications for dwellings in Dembleby have been approved, none of which had Occupancy Restrictions placed on them:

- **2001** - Planning permission for a dwelling next door to ‘Beckside’ on Village Street was granted with no occupancy restrictions (01/0558/FUL) & ‘The Barns’ was built.
- **2007** - Planning permission for a dwelling on the opposite side of the road to ‘Beckside’ on Village Street was granted with no occupancy restrictions (07/0361/FUL) & ‘The Oaks’ was built.
- **2008** - Planning permission for a further dwelling on the opposite side of the road to ‘Beckside’ on Village Street was granted with no occupancy restrictions (07/1507/FUL) & ‘Horse Shoe Cottage’ was built.
- **2020** – Planning permission was granted for a bungalow on the site of a small farm office on Green Lane with no occupancy restrictions & no special circumstances. The design is not outstanding nor will the dwelling be of exceptional quality. (19/0213/FUL)

## Case Law

In March 2018 the case of Braintree BC v SCLG (EWCA Civ 610) was heard in the Court of Appeal. Braintree Borough Council sought to challenge the Inspector's appeal decision to overturn the Council's Planning Application Refusal.

The key point in the case was the interpretation of paragraph 80 (formerly 55) of the NPPF – **“local planning authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside”** unless there are special circumstances, which it goes on to describe. The main point for the court therefore related to the use of the word **“isolated”** in this context.

The Court noted that Paragraph 79 states housing should be located **“where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities”** though the concept of **“vitality”** of such a community is wide & undefined & as such is not limited to the consideration of **“services”** alone.

Taken in context, the two paragraphs promote housing within a settlement, rather than **“isolated”** in the sense of being separate or remote from a settlement.

The meaning of the adjective **“isolated”** was the key focus of the argument before the court. It is a very familiar commonly used word, defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as – ‘placed or standing apart or alone; detached or separate from other things or persons; unconnected with anything else; solitary.’

In Lindblom LJ's view, in the context of the policy, the word **“isolated”** in the phrase **“isolated home in the countryside”** simply connotes a dwelling that is physically separate or remote from a settlement. Whether a proposed new dwelling is or is not **“isolated”** is a matter of fact & planning judgement for the decision-maker in the particular circumstances of the case in hand. He goes on to state a settlement is undefined in the NPPF & there are no specified minimum number of dwellings or population.

In Lindblom LJ's view, a settlement would not necessarily exclude a hamlet or cluster of dwellings, without for example a shop or post office of its own, or a school or community hall or public house nearby, or public transport within easy reach. Again whether a group of dwellings constitutes a settlement or a **“village”** for the purposes of the policy will be a matter of fact & planning judgement for the decision-maker. He notes the policy acknowledges that development in one ‘village’ may **‘support services’** in another. It does not stipulate that to be a **‘village’** a settlement must have any **‘services’** of its own, let alone **‘services’** of any specified kind.

The Court was satisfied that the Inspector's reading of the policy in paragraph 55 (currently 79 & 80), fits the broader context of the policies for sustainable development in the NPPF. In Lindblom LJ's opinion, the language of the paragraph 55 is entirely unambiguous & there is therefore no need to resort to other statements of policy, either in the NPPF or elsewhere, that might shed some meaning. The Court did not accept the Council's argument that the word **“isolated”** in paragraph 55 must be understood as meaning either (a) **“physically isolated”** or (b) **“functionally isolated”** or **“isolated from services or facilities”** & that if a proposed development was either separate or remote from other dwellings or separate or remote from services & facilities, it offends the policy.

The Court stated this would be a strained & unnatural reading of the policy. In Lindblom LJ's view, it is neither necessary nor appropriate to gloss the word **“isolated”** by reading an additional phrase into paragraph 55 whose effect would be to make the policy more onerous than the plain meaning than the words it actually contains. No such restriction is apparent in the policy, or implicit in it.

There was no need for **“special circumstances”** to be identified to justify **“new isolated homes in the countryside”**. This was not such a development. The Court therefore concluded that the inspector did not misinterpret or misapply the policy in paragraph 55 of the NPPF. His understanding of the policy was accurate & his application of it impeccable.

Based on this Case Law & the detailed descriptions of both Dembley & the proposed site, neither can by any means be described as **“isolated”** and as such there is no need for **“special circumstances”** to be put forward as justification. Moreover Dembley is a **“settlement”** which supports services in nearby villages helping them to thrive too.

## The National Design Guide & National Model Design Code

The revised NPPF (2021) continues to place strong emphasis on the creation of 'high quality, beautiful & sustainable buildings & places', stating this is fundamental to what the planning & development process should achieve. There is continued reference to the importance of design expectations & with the recent publication of the National Design Guide (2019) & National Model Design Code (2021), it is not surprising there is enhanced reference made to the roles of the guides & codes in the development process.

NPPF para 129 emphasises that design guides & codes carry weight in decision making.

The National Design Guide describes good design as fit for purpose, durable & bringing delight, that benefit people & communities whether living there or passing through, ensuring quality of detail, materials & construction. A well-designed building comes about when there is a clearly expressed 'story' for the design concept & its evolution. It may draw its inspiration from the site, it's surroundings or a wider context & may also introduce new approaches to contrast with, or complement its context.

The Guide also highlights as a consequence of Climate Change, the emergence of advanced technologies including innovative materials & construction techniques along with off-site production methods & an increase in self & custom-build.

The Guide sets out 10 characteristics of beautiful, enduring & successful places:

- **Context** - The proposed dwelling enhances its surroundings. It is grounded in an understanding & evaluation of the area's defining characteristics, being well designed to complement its surroundings without the need to copy them. Elements have been appropriately introduced which reflect how we live today, including innovative & sustainable features, so important in this time of climate & environmental change.  
The design is sensitive to the history & heritage of the site; the Medieval history of the site is incorporated into the 'Cruck' design.  
See the 'Context', 'Design' & 'Sustainability' sections of this report for details of how this will be achieved.
- **Identity** - The proposed dwelling is attractive & distinctive, it will delight its occupants & passers-by. The built form & appearance of this design will add character & difference to Dembleby, whilst the materials, construction details & planting are all selected with care for their context & local distinctiveness. They are attractive but also practical, durable & affordable & contribute to visual appeal & create a memorable sense of place.  
The guide describes how new character may arise from a response to how lifestyles & climate change could evolve in the future, this response is demonstrated in the 'Design' section & throughout the report.
- **Built Form** - The built form of this Huff Puff Design strengthens the local character of Dembleby. The layout, scale & built form of the proposal together with the exceptional design & well considered materials, whilst drawing on historical local rural typologies with a contemporary interpretation, will all help add to local distinctiveness. The 'Design' & 'Context' sections in particular, describe how the scale, location & siting of the dwelling have all been given special consideration & there will be no negative impacts on, for example, views, sight lines, sunlight, daylight, overshadowing or wind.
- **Movement** - The Guide notes that a successful development depends upon a movement network that makes connections to destinations, places & communities.  
As described in detail in the 'Dembleby' & 'Context (Location)' sections, the site has easy access to main routes, being situated just 400m from the A52 & 2 miles from the A15. There is a footpath linking Dembleby to both Osbournby (with public house, primary & nursery schools) & Newton (with public house), which also allow for cycling. Car sharing is also easily accessible in this close-knit community.

Dembleby has a daily school bus service & regular on-demand buses, which are the main type of public transport in North Kesteven, even in settlements classified as 'Villages'.

The proposal also incorporates electric vehicle charging facilities.

- **Nature** - Should be enhanced & optimised. The proposal offers great potential net gain to biodiversity, achievable by reclaiming the site from its current status, removing the old glass houses, polytunnel, hard standing & concreted areas. Landscaping with plants rich with pollinator friendly species, additional native deciduous fruiting tree species & the addition of a natural pond, hugely increase the site's value to wildlife. All the hedges & trees bordering the site will remain, any diseased trees will be replaced with healthy ones & additional hedges will also be planted. All the above measures which will enhance & optimise nature are explained in full in the 'Context (environment)' section. Open countryside behind & beyond the site provides plentiful habitat for the wildlife too.
- **Public Spaces** - There are several footpaths routes out of Dembleby for public use & enjoyment leading to neighbouring villages, schools & pubs.
- **Uses** - New development reinforces existing places, facilities & community services maximising their potential use. The 'Dembley' & 'Context (Location)' sections illustrate how new residents of Dembleby will support the struggling church in Dembleby & resources & amenities in nearby villages, helping safeguard their future whilst promoting social interaction & integration in rural communities.
- **Homes & Buildings** - Should be functional, healthy, accessible & sustainable. Well-designed, successful homes are attractive, stimulating & positive places for all with good quality internal & external environments & relate positively to the private, shared & public spaces around them. Good design promotes quality of life for the occupants, are efficient & cost effective to run. They help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by incorporating features that encourage sustainable lifestyles. This unique, low carbon, sustainable home meets all of these criteria, which are described in detail in the 'Design' & 'Sustainability' sections & throughout this plan.
- **Resources** - Well-designed places & buildings conserve natural resources & the impact of climate change by being energy efficient & minimising carbon emissions & flood risk. Materials should be used & technologies adopted to minimise environmental impact. These factors are the essence of the design & are covered in detail throughout the report. Looking forward, this design could offer the opportunity to set future trends & be a template for affordable ecological rural building.
- **Lifespan** - The building should be made to last, to sustain its beauty over the long-term, be robust & easy to look after. This Huff Puff House will be built using high quality, long lasting sustainable materials. The local stone & natural clay tiles will age gracefully & along with the maturation of the new planting schemes, further establish a sense of belonging. The house will be set for future change with innovative ecological building methods, materials & heating technologies; vehicular charging facilities & infrastructure for solar batteries. The 'Design' & 'Sustainability' sections provide further details.

## The Design



The proposed 3 bedroomed dwelling is a Huff Puff House inspired by Medieval Cruck Houses & is sensitive to the history of Dembleby which was built on the remains of a Medieval settlement. Created by engineer & inventor Brian Waite, the unique shape of the Huff Puff House is formed by 'Crucks' & infilled with straw bales. 15 pairs of deep curved composite wooden "I" beams, serve as both rafters & studding, set on a plinth wall. The straw bales are sandwiched between these beams, which are like "ribs", that continue the length of the building. Paired together the beams form a bowed "A" frame that creates its inherent strength. The gentle curved shape allows the straw bales to rise seamlessly to the ridge thereby insulating the whole building. The outside of the bales are then rendered with a breathable lime plaster; after allowing a ventilation space, the outside is battened & tiled with terracotta coloured clay tiles.



The Cruck frames give the building a more substantial structure with every bale individually held, thereby eliminating any possibility of settlement. A particular feature of the Crucks is the spectacular vaulted ceiling they create on the first floor.

Another aim of the design is to reduce moisture levels within the bales in the UK climate. The design for the Huff Puff House allows the roof tiles to completely cover the bales, which not only protects them, but exploits the natural stack effect, created by different pressures at different heights, to draw air under the tiles & over the exterior of the lime-rendered bales.

Sustainability is at the forefront of this design & integrated at all levels.

Natural materials would be locally sourced to reduce transportation miles, with stone for the plinth & the walls coming from Ancaster Quarry & the straw that comprises the mass of the walls, from local farms. Internally the straw would be plastered with clay excavated during the construction process & the external cladding would be clay tiles. The primary structure, the ribs of the cruck frame, would be constructed of FSC certified timber. As naturally derived materials, all are readily recycled at the end of their useful life. During use, the straw & timber actively sequester atmospheric carbon.

The density of the compacted straw results in high thermal mass & Passivhaus-standard insulation to achieve a high performance thermal envelope, reducing the energy needed to heat & cool the house. Combined with the dual technologies of a ground source heat pump & the on-site photovoltaics, the proposed dwelling would have minimal energy requirements.

This methodology results in an ultra low carbon construction with little embodied energy, minimal transportation miles & low energy heating & cooling requirements. Furthermore the SAP Assessment suggests that by using accurately modelled psi values the EER & EIR would pass the 100 threshold & officially recognise the dwelling as ZERO CARBON.

The inclusion of vehicular charging facilities actively support & encourage the use of low & ultra low emission vehicles, thereby again protecting the environment.

The design is of exceptional quality & the finished house will be truly outstanding & Ecologically innovative. It will reflect the highest standards in architecture raising standards of design in rural areas & will significantly enhance its immediate setting whilst also being sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area, including external materials chosen to reflect its neighbours, all in line with NPPF 80.

As the homes we live in account for 20.8% of all Carbon Emissions in the U.K. & in NKDC this figure is far higher at almost 30%, exceptional quality design & architecture is not only about the visuals, just as important or even more so now, is how design can reduce the environmental impact buildings place on the planet. This design has the potential to be a template for affordable ecological rural building, helping to tackle the climate emergency we are facing.

Policy LP26 of the CLLP 'Design & Amenity' was given full consideration when putting together this application. The need to meet the aspiration for quality & sustainability in the design & layout enabling the occupants to live in a more sustainable way. Having regard for its local context whilst making a positive contribution to the character & appearance of the environment in which it is located & with no negative impact upon the amenity experienced by neighbours.

The design principles are met in accordance with LP26

- a) Effective & efficient use of the land is made. This dwelling will replace the derelict former plant centre, bringing new life back to this under-utilised Brownfield site.
- c) The existing topography, landscape, character & identity of the site will be respected. In terms of the siting, height, scale & massing of the proposal; whilst the site measures approximately 4120m squared, the proposed dwelling is only 124m squared. The plot is approximately 37m wide by 115m deep whilst the proposed dwelling is only 9m wide by 15m deep, with its height measuring only 6.5m. It's siting ensures it will not be close to either of its neighbouring properties, neither will it over look either of them.

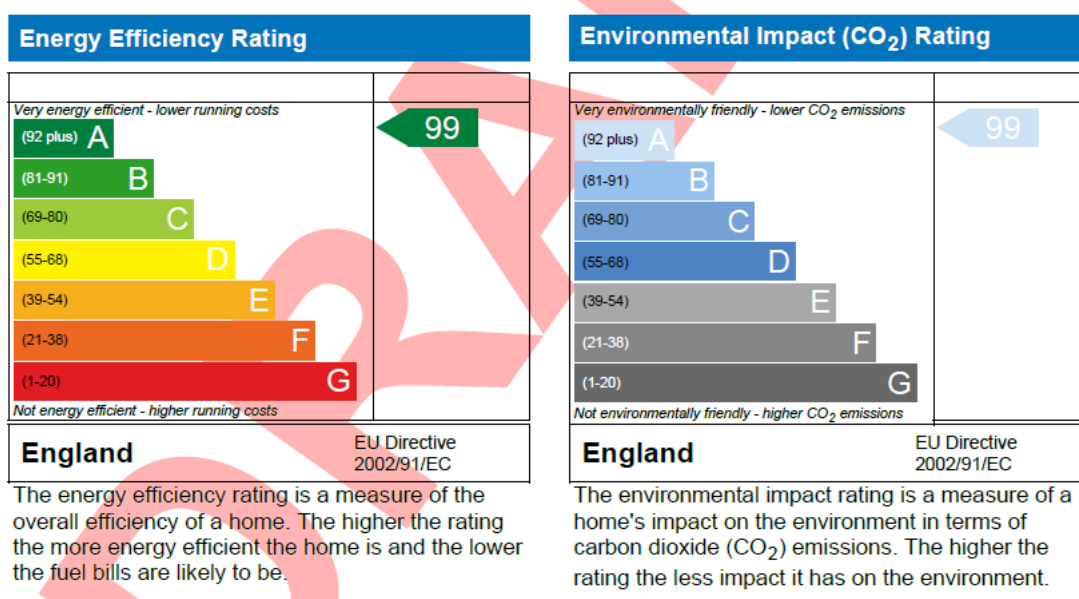
The topography of the landscape will be respected as only the unsightly structures will be removed, whilst the trees, shrubs & natural features will remain. The modest scale of the dwelling means views beyond the site are still visible whilst Bio & Geodiversity are supported.

- d&e) No visual or physical coalescence with any neighbouring settlement will result, as the proposed site

is a single dwelling infill & the only gap in the clustered core in the heart of Dembleby. Nor will it result in a ribbon development or extend the linear features of the settlement, but instead retain & consolidate a tight village nucleus.

- f,g,h) All the natural features will be retained & have been incorporated into the proposal including the existing trees, shrubs & hedgerows. The site will be reclaimed from its current status, removing the old glass houses, polytunnel, hard standing & concreted areas. The gardens will then be landscaped with plants rich with pollinator friendly species, additional native deciduous fruiting tree species & the addition of a natural pond. All the landscaping will be well designed & of a high standard reflecting the function & character of the development & its surroundings.
- j&k) The Huff Puff house is a unique low carbon sustainable home. Only 3 other Huff Puff Houses have been built, each one individually tailored to suit the specific constraints & opportunities of its context. The use of high quality locally sourced materials including stone from the local quarry & clay from the site itself, ensures local distinctiveness of colour & texture will be reinforced & enhanced. This Cruck house whilst embracing innovative design & new technologies, draws its inspiration from Medieval architecture, so duly reflects the history of its local surroundings. Its curved form is organic not stark as some modern architecture can be. This outstanding building has been specifically adapted to sit sympathetically in its location in Dembleby.

**An initial energy assessment, completed to the approved SAP2012 methodology, predicts Energy Efficiency and Environmental Impact Ratings of 99 using default thermal bridging (psi) values. The SAP assessment suggests that by using accurately modelled psi values the EER and EIR would pass the 100 threshold and officially recognise the dwelling as Zero Carbon.**



**The below images show the 3 Huff Puff homes at different stages of their development:**

The first 3 photographs are of the original Huff Puff home, located in Cumbria, showing the earlier stages of the construction process. It was designed & constructed by Brian Waite.

The 4th & 5th photographs are of the third Huff Puff home, nearing its completion. This home is located in a village in Dorset with traditional bungalows neighbouring it.

The final photograph is of the completed second Huff Puff home located in the Western Highlands of Scotland.



## Innovation in North Kesteven

Before submitting this proposal for this innovative Huff Puff home, research was carried out in the local area to gain understanding of what types of building would be welcomed in the North Kesteven district. Research concluded that North Kesteven District Council are very forward thinking in their approach to innovation in building & many such homes have been built locally in recent years.



Innovative home in Aunsby (in the same parish as Dembleby, approx 700m from the proposed site) (15/1266/FUL)



Straw Built Council Housing in Ruskington (13/0321/FUL)



Evedon



Evedon (10/0934/FUL)



Evedon (05/1379/FUL)



Swaton (17/0544/FUL)



Walcot (18/1372/FUL)

## The Site

The applicant owns the site, which was occupied by the former 'Dembleby Plant Centre', a retail outlet which bought plants from wholesalers in the local area & further afield. These plants were then sold to the general public, who visited the site & had full access to all of the outside areas, glass houses & poly-tunnels, where the plants were displayed for sale, along with other gardening items. Plants were not grown on the site, only tended to until they were sold. Much of the site is still covered in glass houses & poly-tunnels which are in various states of disrepair & are unsightly, along with much hard-standing & concreted & areas, all of which has been out of use for a number of years now & will need to be removed to allow for the development of this Brownfield site.



Located to the North of the site is 'Beckside'.

'Dembleby Plant Centre' opened in 1999 & in 2001, after becoming firmly established, permission was granted to build 'Beckside'(01/0397/FUL). Permission was granted as 'Dembleby Plant Centre' was a rural-based business, where it had been demonstrated that a dwelling was needed to support the business. An occupancy restriction was placed on 'Beckside' for the management of the plant centre.

After a spate of burglaries & ill health, 'Dembleby Plant Centre' closed down in 2007 & in 2014 the occupancy restriction was removed from 'Beckside'(14/0895/VARCON).

To the west, opposite the site, there are 5 two-storey dwellings, which are built of stone & brick, old & new in style & age. Adjacent, to the south there are a further 2 dwellings & another to the north, forming this central core group of dwellings on either side of Village Street. The site frontage & northern boundary is screened by mature trees & hedges. The eastern boundary at the rear of the site is open farmland fields with views of the main A52 road. To the south the adjacent property is well screened by tall hedging with the remaining part also open to farmland. The northern & eastern boundaries are demarked by post & wire fencing & hedging is to be planted.

The site measures approximately 37 metres wide by 112 to 115 metres deep.

The proposed development is a single dwelling infill within the developed footprint & within an otherwise continuous built up frontage of dwellings in the very core of Dembleby.

The application is a full proposal for the erection of 1 three bedroomed house. The access to this dwelling will be from the county highway, namely Village Street, which runs through Dembleby via the existing access that served both the applicant's parents' dwelling and the former plant/garden centre. The access will now only service the new home following the approval & construction of a new access to 'Beckside' to the north.

The existing trees & hedging will remain. These will help screen & soften the site to allow the new dwelling to be unobtrusive & blend into its location & the surrounding landscape, thereby avoiding any negative visual impact on the landscape, instead the removal of the derelict buildings & the addition of this ecologically innovative & outstanding home will only enhance the village of Dembleby.

In reclaiming the site from its current status, there is also a huge potential net gain to biodiversity. Landscaping with pollinator friendly species & native deciduous fruiting trees along with the addition of a natural pond will greatly increase the site's value to wildlife, attracting insects, birds, frogs, toads and much more.

The current structures which are on the site cover an area of 800 square metres along with further concreted areas. In comparison the proposed dwelling will only cover an area of 124 square metres.

Utilities are already on site so there will be no disruption to the highway during the construction process.

The proposed building will be a Self-build & the applicant is registered on the Custom & Self-Build Register for North Kesteven (reference no.1715) & has recently expressed interest to stay on the Register when it is updated. As such this would be a material consideration in the Council's planning decision process.

The site is also on the recently updated HELAA register - site reference NK/AUN/001 (Old reference no. CL1034)

On the HELAA Site Data Sheets, Location type is stated as being 'Brownfield' with Capacity stated as being '12'.



**The derelict former plant centre cleared of its unsightly buildings, now home to this outstanding, ecologically innovative Huff Puff house & landscaped gardens, enhancing its immediate setting & the core of Dembleby.**

# Dembleby

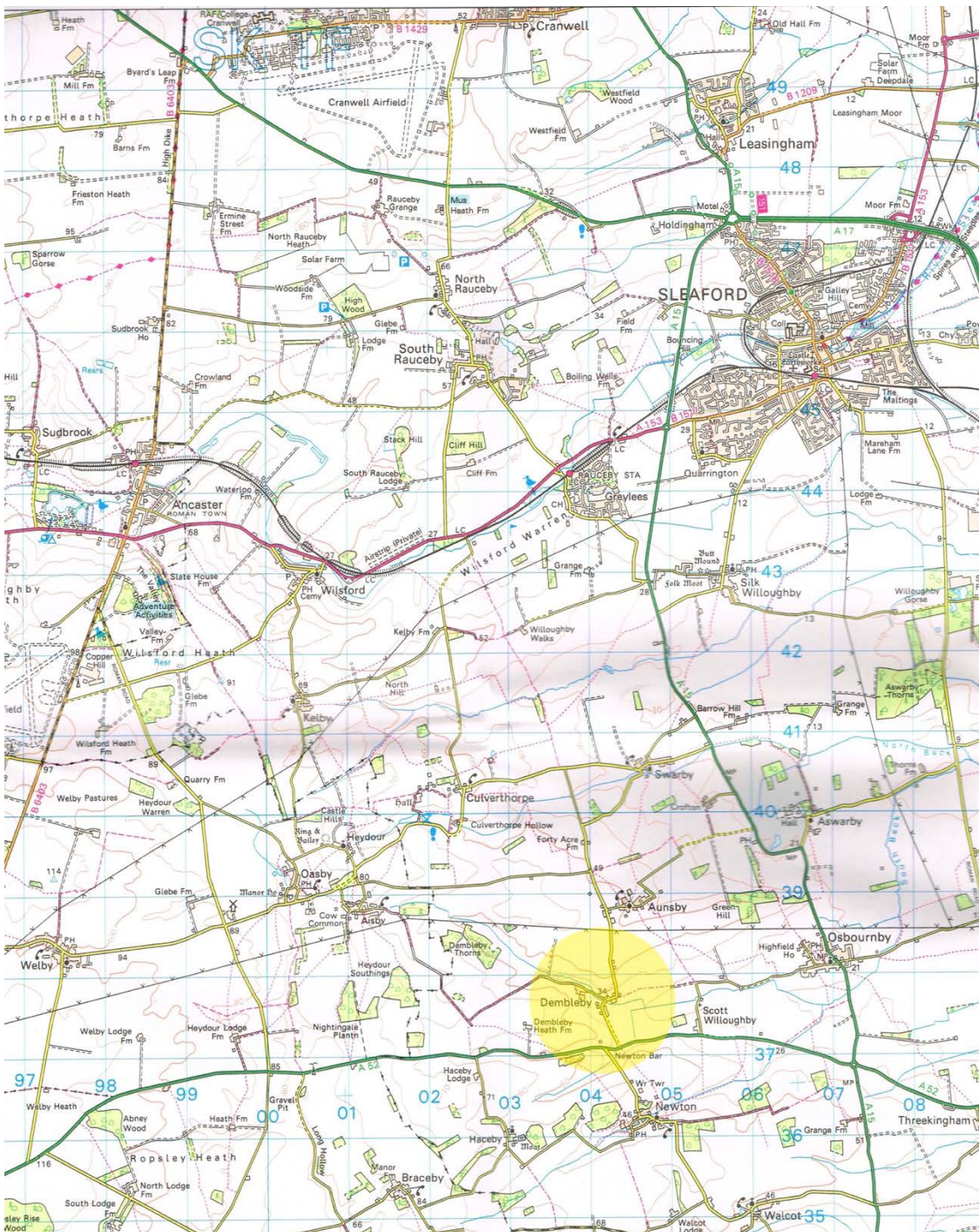
Dembleby is a Hamlet which forms part of the Parish of Aunsby & Dembleby.

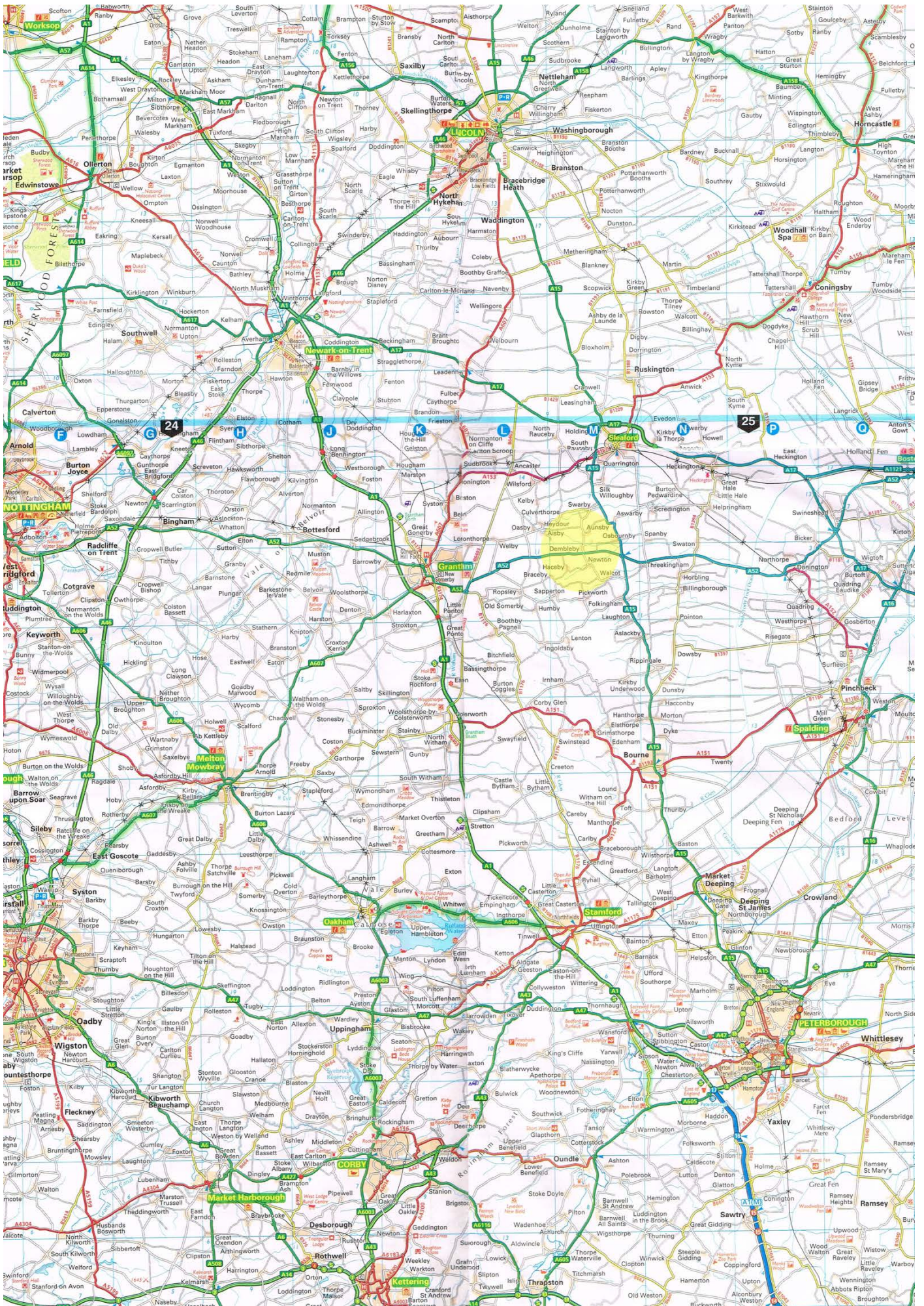
The site is located on the east side of the highway which runs through Dembleby joining the A52 just 400 metres to the south, linking the market towns of Grantham to the west & Boston to the east. Just 2 miles to the east is the A15 running between the towns of Sleaford & Bourne then onwards to Lincoln & Peterborough. To the south of the A52 is the small village of Newton which has a public house & to the east on either side of the A52 are the larger villages of Osbournby (with public house, primary & nursery schools) & Folkingham (with local shops). Both of which are on a main bus route. There is a footpath linking Dembleby to both Osbournby & Newton.

As illustrated above & by the attached maps, Dembleby is not an isolated location.

The other half of the parish, Aunsby, is a large Hamlet situated just 500 metres to the west of Dembleby.

Dembleby is also a sustainable location, with residents supporting existing local amenities in the nearby villages & helping safeguard their future. There are regular on-demand buses visiting Dembleby & a daily school bus.



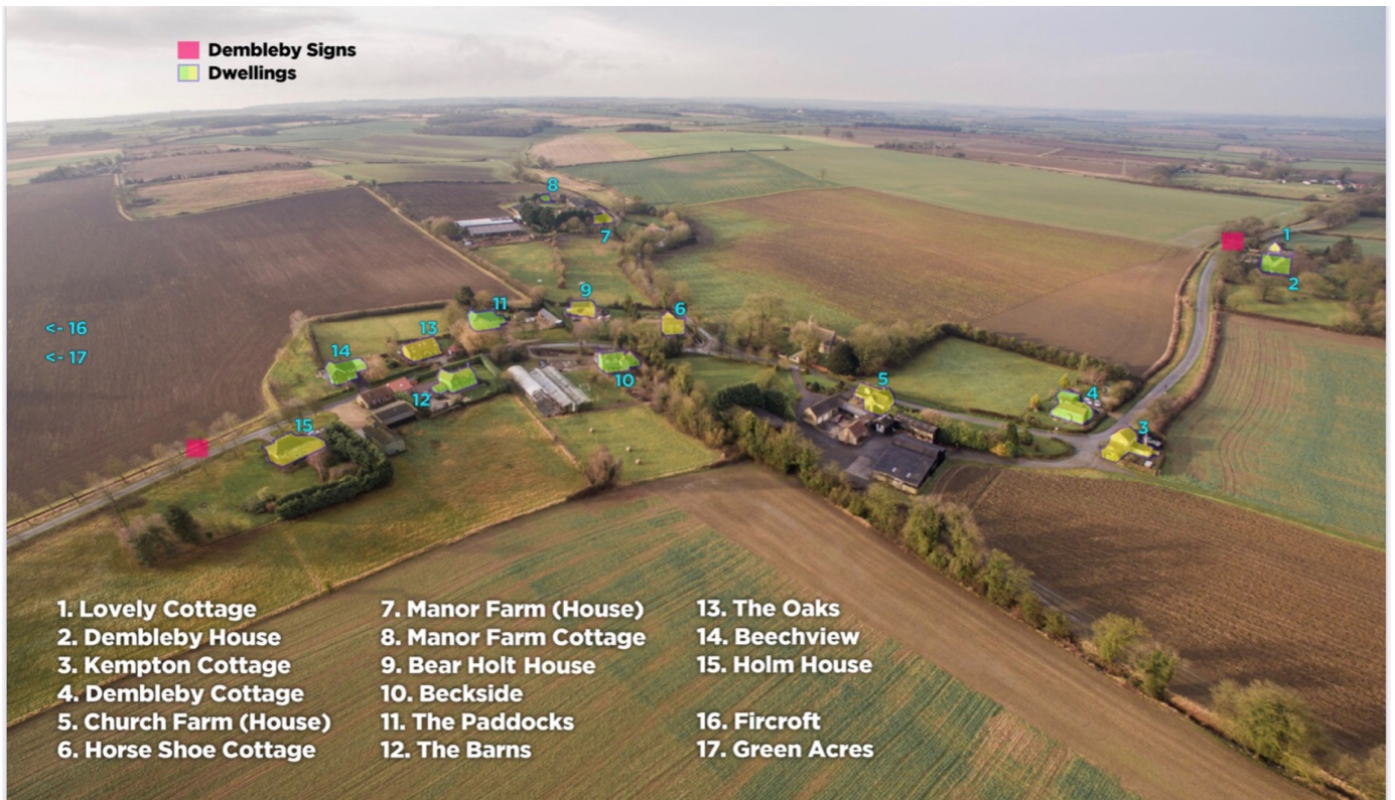




Dembleby is a Hamlet in accordance with policy LP2 of the CLLP. It has a dwelling base of 15 houses (as at April 2012), within the curtilage, between the Dembleby signs, which are only 0.5 miles apart. It has dwellings which are clearly clustered together to form a single developed footprint, as the majority of the dwellings in Dembleby are clustered together forming a developed footprint or defined central core, with the dwellings separated only by their gardens, garages or the road.

(As well as the 15 dwellings between the signs there are 2 further dwellings just outside the signs, but still with Dembleby addresses).

Furthermore Planning Permission has recently been granted for another dwelling in the village, a bungalow on the site of a small farm office, without occupancy restrictions or special circumstances. The design is not outstanding & the dwelling will not be of exceptional quality.





The above aerial visual compared with the previous aerial photograph clearly illustrates how the derelict brownfield site will be enhanced by this ecologically innovative Huff Puff House & accompanying landscaping. The new dwelling is well screened by existing & additional trees & hedges & fits sympathetically in its location in the heart of Dembley.

## Hamlet

**LP2 “For the purposes of this Local Plan, a hamlet is defined as a settlement not listed elsewhere in this policy and with dwellings clearly clustered together to form a single developed footprint\*\*\*. Such a hamlet must have a dwelling base of at least 15 units (as at April 2012). Within such hamlets, single dwelling infill developments (i.e. within the developed footprint\*\*\* of the village and within an otherwise continuous built up frontage of dwellings) in appropriate locations\*\* will be supported in principle” \*\*\*the term ‘developed footprint’ of a settlement is defined as the continuous built form of the settlement and excludes: a) individual buildings or groups of dispersed buildings which are clearly detached from the continuous built up area of the settlement; b) gardens, paddocks and other undeveloped land within the curtilage of buildings on the edge of the settlement where land relates more to the surrounding countryside than to the built up area of the settlement; c) agricultural buildings and associated land on the edge of the settlement; and d) outdoor sports and recreation facilities and other formal open spaces on the edge of the settlement.**

This definition states that the dwelling base of the hamlet must be at least 15 units. As illustrated in the 'Dembleby' section, Dembleby clearly has a dwelling base of 15 within the curtilage, between the signs & another having been granted planning permission.

It also says 'with dwellings clearly clustered together to form a single developed footprint'; however it does NOT say "with ALL OF THE dwellings clustered together", it does NOT even say "with THE dwellings clustered together". With the omission of these words, the policy is not saying that the 15 units must all be clustered together, just that there should be a cluster of dwellings. Again, as illustrated in the 'Dembleby' section, the majority of the houses in Dembleby are clustered together forming a developed footprint or defined central core, with the dwellings separated only by their gardens, garages or the road.

Therefore Dembleby is a Hamlet as defined by LP2 of CLLP & in which case infill development should be supported.

## **Brownfield**

The site is a Brownfield site; **"Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure"**

It is the former 'Dembleby Plant Centre', which was a retail business buying from wholesalers & selling to the general public. The customers had access to the whole site; all of the outside areas, the glass houses & the polytunnels where the plants & other related items were displayed for sale. Plants were not grown, just tended to until they were sold.

The Business Plan which the Officer refers to was written in 1997/8 with much input from 'Business Link'. As land to the rear of the site had originally formed part of the package of land for sale, which would have tripled the business's space, initial consideration had been given to growing niche products for the wholesale market. However as this additional land was removed from the sale & further negotiations to buy it separately failed, the business developed into that of a retail outlet. As planners will be aware, an application was made to install a road sign on the A52, to inform the public of the location of the Plant Centre; however permission to erect this sign was refused.

The nature of the business can be verified by the Plant Centre's registered Bookkeeper who completed the accounts for the business from its inception to its closure. She will confirm that the business was retail and was never wholesale. (See attached letter – Appendix 2)

As the business was retail in nature, not agricultural, it was liable for Business Rates, for which bills were issued & duly paid, & therefore the site complies with the definition of 'previously developed land' which throughout the NPPF, the building of new dwellings on, is encouraged, with particular note to NPPF 69a which states 10% of the housing requirements should be built on sites of this type measuring less than one hectare.

Wording in reports written by the Agent employed by the Council concerned with the removal of the restrictions or terminology in Pygott & Crone's advert, are just that, words. They do not change the nature of the business, which was a Retail Plant Centre, selling plants & other related items to members of the public.

The site is also Brownfield in appearance. The majority of the site still being covered in glass houses & polytunnels which are in various states of disrepair & are unsightly. There are also large areas of concrete hard-standing bases & breeze block walls.

Furthermore NKDC HELAA Site Data Sheets advise the site is Brownfield.

# Sustainability

As described earlier in the statement, sustainability is at the forefront of the design & integrated at all levels.

- **The Construction Process** - With all the natural materials being sourced locally reducing transportation miles. From the stone which will come from Ancaster Quarry, just 8 miles away to the straw which will be sourced from local farms. When the footings are excavated the waste clay will even be used to plaster the straw walls internally. The tiles are also natural clay & the cruck frame is of FSC certified timber.
- **The Life of the Building** - The straw & timber actively sequester atmospheric carbon. The density of the compacted straw creates a high thermal mass & Passivhaus-standard insulation to achieve a high performance thermal envelope, reducing the energy needed to heat & cool the house. Combined with the dual technologies of the ground source heat pump & the photovoltaics along with the infrastructure for solar batteries there would be minimal energy requirements & even the capabilities to store & generate energy. The result being a low carbon building with little embodied energy, a truly 'green' sustainable home.
- **Location** – Dembleby is a sustainable location. It is not isolated, just 400 metres to the south of Dembleby is the A52, which links the market towns of Grantham to the west & Boston to the east. Just 2 miles to the east is the A15 running between the towns of Sleaford & Bourne then onwards to Lincoln & Peterborough. To the south of the A52 is the small village of Newton which has a public house & to the East on either side of the A52 are the larger villages of Osbournby (with public house, primary & nursery schools) & Folkingham (with local shops). There is also a footpath linking Dembleby to both Osbournby & Newton. The other half of the parish, Aunsby, a large hamlet, is situated just 500 yards west of Dembleby. Residents of Dembleby support existing local amenities in nearby villages, helping safeguard their future whilst creating a thriving rural environment.
- **Transport & Highways** - There will be vehicular charging facilities incorporated into the build to allow for the use of low or no fossil fuel vehicles, again protecting the environment. The possible small increase in vehicles in Dembleby due to the addition of one new home is minor in comparison to the high number of cars & delivery vehicles which visited the Plant Centre on a daily basis when it was in operation & which would again visit if a similar business was to reopen on the site. There will be no impact to the Highway & no need for the formation of a new access. The existing vehicle access which served as the access to the Plant Centre, will now only serve the proposed dwelling & is directly on to 'Village Street', the county maintained highway through Dembleby. The site is spacious & the design has been developed so vehicles can enter & exit the site in forward gear. There are regular on-demand buses servicing Dembleby, as well as a daily school bus. Both nearby Osbournby & Folkingham are on main bus routes.

- **Wildlife** – There will be no negative impact on wildlife in the area, quite the opposite, there is great potential net gain to biodiversity, achievable by reclaiming the site from its current status, removing the old glass houses, polytunnel, hard standing & concreted areas. The gardens will then be landscaped with plants rich with pollinator friendly species, additional native deciduous fruiting tree species & with the addition of a natural pond, the proposal will hugely increase the site's value to wildlife, attracting, for example birds, frogs, toads & insects. All the hedges & trees bordering the site will remain, any diseased trees will be replaced with healthy ones & additional hedges will also be planted making an ideal site for nesting birds. Open countryside behind & beyond the site provides plentiful habitat for the wildlife too.
- **Trees** – No trees are negatively impacted by the development.  
A full Arboricultural Constraints Survey of the site to assess any impact on the Trees in relation to Design, Demolition & Construction, was carried out on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2021 by East Midlands Tree Surveys Ltd in line with BS5837:2012 (Report attached). All trees on the site will remain or be replaced & be protected as per the Arboricultural report & recommendations.  
In relation to the previous applications (17/1082/FUL & 18/0764/FUL), the Tree Officer's submission stated 'No objection in principle'.  
All of the Officer's recommendations & conditions will also be followed to preserve & protect existing trees & with the addition of new trees which have amenity value & contribute to the character & appearance of the area.

**\*\* The initial energy assessment, completed to the approved SAP2012 methodology by Mike Andrews of 'Energy Saving Experts' predicts Energy Efficiency and Environmental Impact Ratings of 99 using default thermal bridging (psi) values. The SAP assessment suggests that by using accurately modelled psi values the EER and EIR would pass the 100 threshold and officially recognise the dwelling as Zero Carbon.**

## **Planning Committee Meeting 10<sup>th</sup> October 2017** (17/1082/FUL)

1. It was stated that 'Dembleby Plant Centre' was a wholesale nursery seeking to supply garden centres, with only incidental sales.  
This is untrue. It was a retail outlet which bought plants from wholesalers & then sold them along with other gardening items to the general public, who had full access to the site & visited for the purpose of buying plants & taking them away.  
Plants were not grown on the site, only tended to until they were sold.
2. Officers stated that 'Beckside' came about in order to support an agricultural enterprise & therefore the business was agricultural.  
This is incorrect. The occupational restriction stated the resident must manage The Plant Centre OR work locally in agriculture.
3. Officers stated, on more than one occasion, that there are not 15 dwellings in Dembleby.  
This is untrue. Between the 'Dembleby' signs, which are only 0.5 miles apart, there are 15 dwellings, as well as 2 further dwellings also with Dembleby addresses, just outside the signs. Policy LP2 section 7 clearly states that a Hamlet must have a dwelling base of 15 units, with dwellings clearly clustered together to form a single developed footprint. In the Policy it does NOT state that ALL 15 dwellings must be clustered together. In addition, earlier this year, planning permission for a further dwelling was granted (19/0213/FUL).
4. Officers also stated that Dembleby has no defined core & that houses are not clustered together. Also that dwellings are separated by paddocks & farm buildings.  
This is incorrect. At the heart of the Hamlet, by the church, the majority of the dwellings in the Hamlet are clustered in a group to form a developed footprint & defined core, with the dwellings only separated by their gardens, garages & the road, including Bearholt, which the officers stated had paddocks on either side, when they are in fact gardens.
5. At the committee meeting, we noted & later brought to the attention of officers, that dwellings had been removed from the slide of the map of Dembleby shown to Committee members; even though they were on the Agenda Location Plan. This combined with the officers repeated statement that there were not 15 dwellings in Dembleby was, at the very least misleading.
6. Finally, officers advised members that if they were to approve this application, which the officers believed to be against policy, it would have to be advertised as a departure from the plan, that they would not be able to make a decision & the GOEM would call it in.  
We feel members should have been able to interpret the policies as they understood them & we believe the evidence we produced showed there were policies to support this application, removing any likelihood of the GOEM calling it in.

## Conclusions

1. This proposal is in line with current local & national planning policies. In particular: policy LP2 (7) Hamlets, of the CLLP & policies 79 & 80 Rural Housing, of the NPPF.  
With 15 dwellings in the curtilage, Dembleby is a Hamlet in line with LP2(7); furthermore the proposed design is of exceptional quality reflecting the highest standards in architecture, raising standards of design in rural areas. The finished dwelling will be a truly outstanding & ecologically innovative home which will enhance its immediate setting whilst also being sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area & raising its environmental quality in line with paragraphs 79, 80 & 127 of the NPPF.
2. Sustainability is at the forefront of this proposal & integrated at all levels. The Design of the dwelling complies with local & national planning policies relating to sustainability, namely LP1 & LP2 of the CLLP & paragraphs 8 & 11 of the NPPF & Dembleby is a sustainable location in line with LP1 & LP13 of the CLLP & paragraphs 8 & 11 of the NPPF.
3. Policy LP26 of the CLLP 'Design & Amenity' was given full consideration when putting together this application & the design principles are met in accordance with this policy. Including making effective & efficient use of the land, respecting the existing topography, landscape, character & identity of the site; creating no coalescence with neighbouring settlements; protecting the natural features whilst using high quality, locally sourced materials & ensuring local distinctiveness will be reinforced & enhanced.
4. The proposal is in line with policy LP17 of the CLLP.  
The intrinsic value of the landscape of Dembleby will be protected & enhanced in the redeveloping of this brownfield site in the centre of the village. The proposal is for a characterful dwelling which draws on the history of the settlement, whilst respecting the topography of the land, existing trees & hedgerows. The addition of further trees, hedges & gardens in keeping with the character of the local landscape will further enhance this site & define its local identity.
5. The proposal is in line with policy LP18 of the CLLP; Climate Change & Low Carbon Living being key issues addressed in the Design, Construction, Use & Life of this truly 'Green' Sustainable home.  
The development enables occupants to minimise their energy & water consumption; takes opportunities to use sustainable materials in the construction process, avoiding products with a high embodied energy content & using prefabrication to minimise construction waste. The use of site based decentralised or renewable energy infrastructure lessens demand on the grid, whilst vehicular charging facilities maximise opportunities for sustainable modes of travel.  
The initial Combined Energy Efficiency & Environmental Impact Assessment predicts Energy Efficiency and Environmental Impact Ratings of 99 using default thermal bridging (psi) values. The SAP assessment suggests that by using accurately modelled psi values the EER and EIR would pass the 100 threshold and officially recognise the dwelling as Zero Carbon.
6. The proposal is in line with policy LP21 of the CLLP.  
There is great potential net gain to Geo & Biodiversity, achievable by reclaiming the site from its current status, removing the old glass houses, polytunnel, hard standing & concreted areas. Landscaping the site with plants rich with pollinator friendly species & additional native deciduous tree species, along with the addition of a natural pond, will hugely increase the site's value to wildlife.

Hedges & trees bordering the site will remain & additional trees & hedges will be planted making an ideal site for nesting birds. Open countryside behind & beyond the site provides plentiful habitat for the wildlife too.

7. The proposal follows & is in line with The National Design Guide (2019) & National Model Design Code (2021), which according to NPPF para 129, carry weight in decision making.
8. The proposed site is a Brownfield site inline with NPPF guidelines.  
It is Brownfield by its use, it is the site of a former retail business & is Brownfield in appearance, the majority of the site being still covered in derelict glass houses & polytunnel along with large areas of hard standing concrete & breeze block walls.  
NKDC HELAA Site Data Sheets advise the site is Brownfield.
9. The site in 'Infill' in line with CLLP guidelines.  
The proposed development is a single dwelling infill within the development footprint & within an otherwise continuous built up frontage of dwellings in the very core of Dembleby. As illustrated in the attached aerial photographs, the site is the only gap in the cluster of dwellings in the heart of the village.
10. The erection of this 'Self-Build' dwelling will help NKDC meet their housing stock target guidelines, which currently are not being met; in line with NPPF 60. Also in line with NPPF 62 which supports 'Self-Build' & 69/69(a) which states small & medium sites are an important contribution, as can be built-out relatively quickly & that at least 10% of their housing requirements should be on sites no larger than one hectare.
11. In the last few months Planning permission was given for the erection of a bungalow in Dembleby under paragraph 55 of the NPPF.
12. This Outstanding Design has the potential to be a template for affordable ecological rural building, helping to reduce NKDC's carbon emissions from homes which currently stands at 30% of all emissions & in turn helping to tackle the climate emergency we are all facing.

**“This contemporary interpretation of the medieval vernacular, realised as an energy-efficient dwelling through carbon conscious construction will shine in the heart of the village of Dembleby”**