

**1-4 Church Close, Sproughton, Ipswich, Suffolk  
IP8 3BD**

ALTERATIONS AND EXTENSION OF EXISTING DWELLING  
HOUSES AND ERECTION OF NEW DWELLING HOUSE WITHIN  
CURTILAGE

**DESIGN & ACCESS AND HERITAGE  
STATEMENT**



September 2023

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This Statement has been prepared to inform design proposals for a planning and listed building consent application for proposed development at 1-4 Church Close, Sproughton, Ipswich. Proposals include a new subdivision, alterations and extension to the site's dwelling houses, and the erection of a new dwelling within the site.

1-4 Church Close is a grade II listed residential terrace building and lies on a generous plot. It is within the historic village core but not in a Conservation Area.

The design proposals have now been revised following the withdrawal of planning and listed building consent applications DC/23/00870 and DC/23/00871 following comments received from the Local Authority and Historic England.

Proposals have been carefully developed following a site survey, a review of primary and secondary sources of local history and a limited desk top study.

The report is generated in accordance with the relevant planning policy framework (the NPPF) and other applicable guidance with respect to heritage issues and sets out the following:

- A historical outline and description of the building and its curtilage structures.
- An assessment of the significance of the existing building and the contribution made by the setting.
- A description of design proposals.
- An assessment of the impact of the proposals on the significance of the relevant heritage assets.

## **2. PLANNING POLICY GUIDANCE AND LEGISLATION**

Proposals have been developed and considered against the information and recommendations contained in the following legislation and planning policy guidance:

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), July 2021.

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment, February 2019.

Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning, Historic England:

Planning Note 1: The Historic Environment in Local Plans.

Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment.

Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (second edition 2017).

Statements of Heritage Significance, Historic England Advice Note 12, October 2019.

Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment, English Heritage 2008 & Draft Consultation November 2017.

Babergh Local Plan 2006. Babergh Core Strategy 2014.

### **3. LOCATION & STATUTORY SITE**

The village of Sproughton lies directly to the west of Ipswich; its parish boundary joining the Ipswich boundary at several locations. The village was effectively divided by the building of the A14 to the south east in 1985.

The subject site lies within the historic core of the village and in close proximity to the All Saints Church (grade II\* listed) directly to the east and the Tithe Barn Community Centre (grade II listed) directly to the north. Further north east lies Mill House and beyond it the Mill (both grade II listed) and further north Sproughton Hall and Barn (both grade II listed). The Old Lodge, a non-designated heritage asset<sup>1</sup> lies opposite the southern boundary of the site, adjacent All Saints Churchyard on the east side of Church Lane.

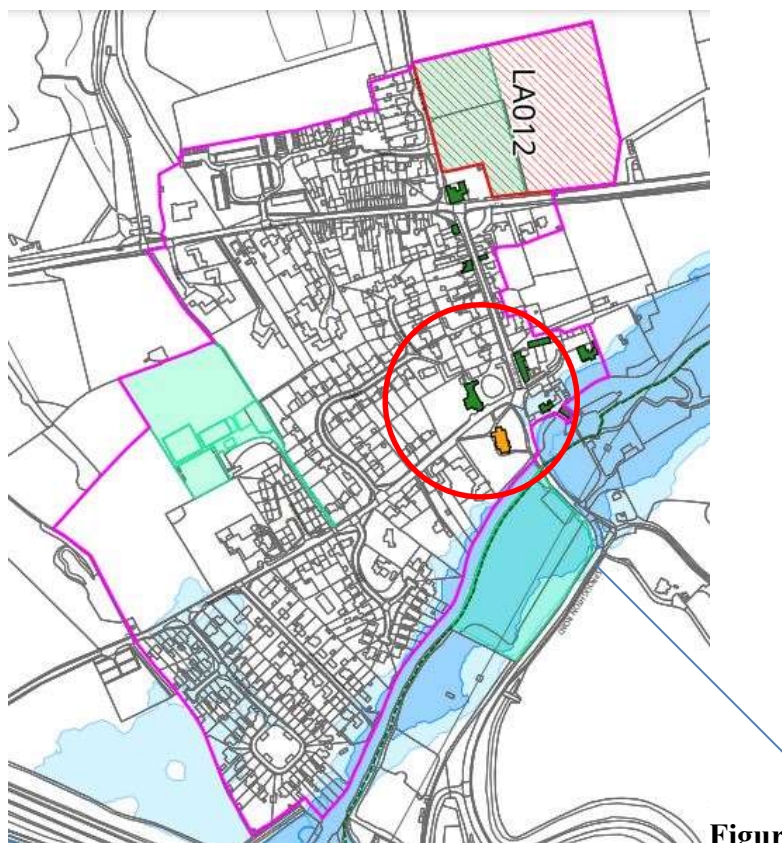
The site occupies a large area of approximately 1.2 acres with a range of four dwellings centrally placed and orientated east west and perpendicular to the adjacent Church Lane.

A linear Outbuilding occupies the north of the site defining the boundary to Lower Street and the south of the site is undeveloped and open grassland garden.

To the west of the site lies modern residential development of predominantly detached houses.

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<sup>1</sup> Sproughton Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2037 Appraisal of Non-designated Heritage Assets – August 2022.



**Figure 1** – Site indicated by red circle within the Sproughton settlement boundary – Extract from Babergh Joint Local Plan 2019 Place Map.

### **3.1 List Description**

The building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended, for its special architectural or historic interest:

Heritage Category:

Listed Building

Grade:

II

List Entry Number:

1036923

Date first listed:

22-Feb-1955

Date of most recent amendment:

29-Jan-1988

Statutory Address 1:

1-4, Church Close, Church Lane

County:

Suffolk

District:

Babergh (District Authority)

Parish:

Sproughton

National Grid Reference:

TM1246144997

Details

TM 1245 and TM 1244 5/36 and 6/36

SPROUGHTON CHURCH LANE Church Close, Nos 1-4,

(formerly listed as Church Close)

22.2.55

GV II House, formerly the Old Rectory, divided into four houses and flats 1961. Late C15, C17, c1836. Timber framed, rendered, lined as ashlar, brick, some colourwashed, plain tile roofs. Complex plan, gable to road.

A long range, of late C15 end jettied range and jettied crosswing, C17 range, with early C19 wing at right angles, and wing to rear of c1836, partially on line with medieval crosswing. One and a half, two and two and a half storeys, cellars. Late C15 range. Three first floor leaded casements. Brick porch in Flemish bond, painted, parapet of c1836 reuses c1500 carved spandrels in arch. C20 door. Blocked doorway to left. Crosswing. Horned sash, and C19 door reset from rear of house, replacing C19 window. First floor three-light timber casement. C17 range. One and a half and two storeys, timber framed, encased in brick, rendered and lined as ashlar. Scattered fenestration of C19 and C20 casements and one horned sash. Three half-dormers with casements beneath carved bargeboards. One leaded casement. Two C20 doors, that to right beneath porch incorporating cusped brattishing in the gable, carved spandrels and tall octagonal crown post with moulded cap and base and two braces, probably from the earlier range and set up c1836. Painted brick two storey range to right, of scattered fenestration. Axial stacks of grouped polygonal shafts with moulded caps mostly C19 and later, including one between hall and crosswing, one to left of C17 range, one inserted in jettied roadside gable.

Rear: two first floor leaded casements, one an C18 cross casement, one as those to front. 1836 brick wing, two storeys. Three first floor leaded casements one probably early C18, reset.

Interior: late C15 range of two unequal bays, crosswing of two or three curtailed bays (now part of No 2). Mutilated crown post roof with one octagonal post with embattled cap, and longitudinal braces. Crosswing. Open truss with renewed braces, probably renewed c1836. 1836 stair of stick balusters, wreathed handrail, turned newel. Two six-panel doors with egg and dart moulding to raised and fielded panels. Cellar beneath crosswing and 1836 wing said to have early brickwork.

Roof not inspected but described from photograph.

Listing NGR: TM1254144987



**Figure 2** – *View of the main house looking south.*

## **3.2 Additional Information**

Pevsner's Guide to The Buildings of England includes the following description:

Former rectory. Late C15 timber-framed and plastered house with jettied gable towards the road and a gabled and jettied crosswing. Brick porch with reused carved spandrels. Then a C17 extension. Altered and further enlarged by John Whiting, 1836. Subdivided 1961.

## **3.3 Curtilage Listed Buildings**

Although not included in the list description, the outbuilding to the north of the site and those outbuildings to the immediate west of the house are considered as curtilage listed structures having been associated with the main house prior to 1st July 1948.



#### 4. MAP REGRESSION



Figure 3 – OS 1881 6 inch map extract.

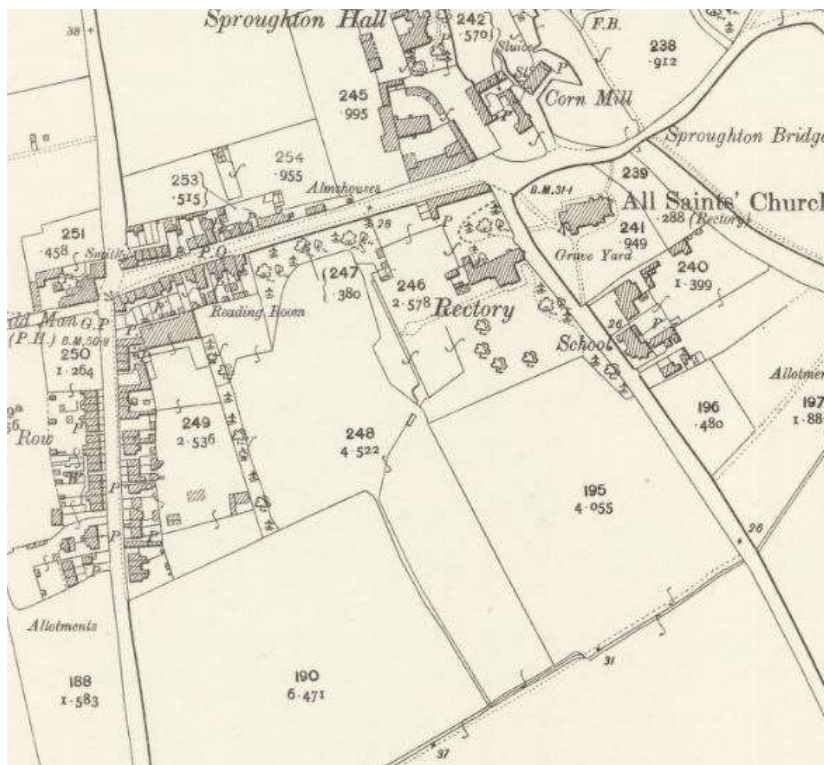
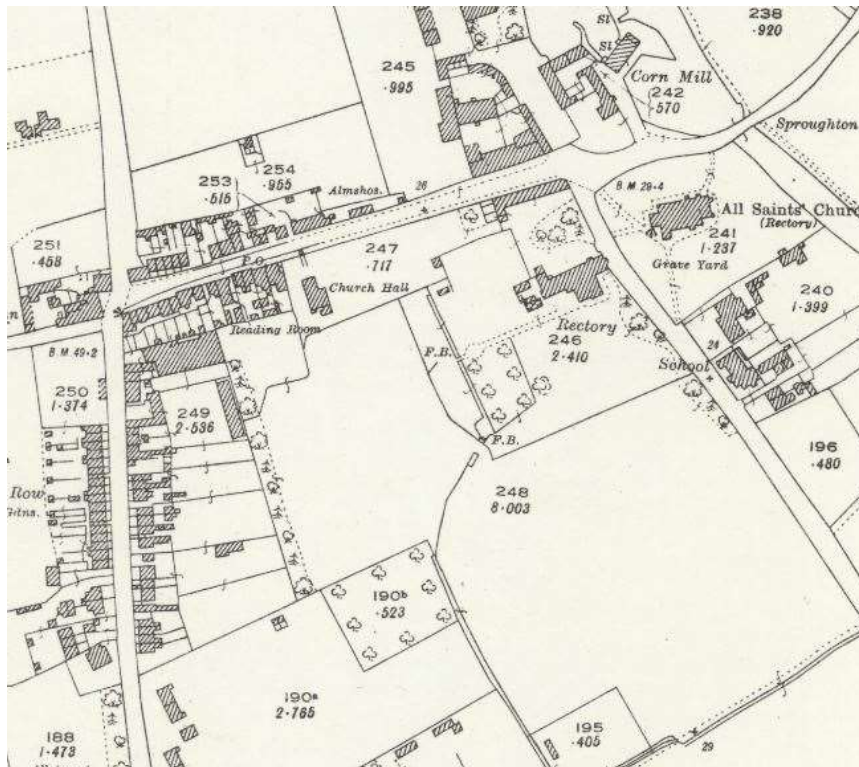


Figure 4 – OS 1902 25 inch map extract.





**Figure 5**– OS 1924 25 inch map extract.

## **5. BRIEF HISTORIC INFORMATION & BUILDING'S DESCRIPTION**

1-4 Church Lane is believed to date to the late 15<sup>th</sup> century originally taking the form of a timber framed linear range perpendicular to Church Lane and with a corresponding jettied end and jettied crosswing.

The building was extended and modernized in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and likely included the re-fenestration of elevations and the sub-division of internal areas to create greater privacy and possibly the installation of a new first floor within the late mediaeval former open hall.

Further extension and a substantial interior re-modelling took place in the 1830's in association with the building's continued use as the parish rectory. By the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, changing social and economic circumstances had made such large rectory's increasingly difficult to justify and operate and by 1961 the building's use as a rectory had ceased and it was redundant and derelict. It was at this time the building was sold and the historic curtilage developed and the house subdivided to create four units (two houses and two flats).

These works caused further external changes to fenestration patterns and door openings and internal alterations to walls and the addition of a staircase within the 15<sup>th</sup> century part of the building. In addition, it would appear significant internal joinery was also lost as a consequence of these works.

The general phases of the building's historic development or *morphology* have been investigated in order to better inform proposals and is indicated in figure 6 and drawing nos. 21106/100/PL3.



**Figure 6** Morphology of the building's general historic development.

## 6. ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

In reference to planning matters and the historic environment, the term 'significance' is defined in the glossary of the NPPF as *'the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. For world heritage sites, the cultural value described within each site's statement of outstanding value forms part of its significance'*.

The revised Historic England Conservation Principles Consultation Draft 2017 now closely aligns with the NPPF and identifies heritage values as Archaeological, Historic, Architectural or Artistic. In accordance with these publications and current guidance, the significance of 1-4 Church Close is considered under the following descriptive headings:

### 6.1 Archaeological Interest (Evidential Value)

*"Evidential value derives from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity"* (Conservation Principles 2008 Paragraph 35).

*"Evidential value derives from the physical remains or genetic lines that have been inherited from the past. The ability to understand and interpret the evidence tends to be diminished in proportion to the extent of its removal or replacement"* (Conservation Principles 2008 Paragraph 38).

*"There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially may hold, evidence of past human activity that could be revealed through investigation at some point"* (Conservation Principles 2017 Paragraph 38).

The building's early development during the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and its subsequent extension in later centuries, all suggest the potential for archaeological and above ground evidential value in the form of physical deposits or artefacts. The considerable extent to which the original building has been altered and extended, including in the twentieth century is likely, however, to have lessened or obscured such potential, although a closer examination of the building's wider interior – including the areas the subject of this application – will most likely yield some further evidence as to the building's construction, its evolution and how it functioned and was previously used.

The Suffolk Heritage Explorer data base records no specific archaeological field finds on the site itself, although that part of the setting of the All Saints Church burial ground nearby will hold considerable archaeological interest.

Archaeological interest is therefore considered **low** for the site and **high** for the setting comprising the All Saints Church burial ground.

## **6.2 Historic Interest (Communal Value)**

*“Historical value derives from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present. It tends to be illustrative or associative”* (Conservation Principles 2008 Paragraph 39).

*“The historical value of places depends upon both sound identification and direct experience of fabric or landscape that has survived from the past, but is not as easily diminished by change or partial replacement as evidential value. The authenticity of a place indeed often lies in visible evidence of change as a result of people responding to changing circumstances. Historical values are harmed only to the extent that adaptation has obliterated or concealed them, although completeness does tend to strengthen illustrative value”* (Conservation Principles 2008 Paragraph 44).

*“A heritage asset is most commonly valued for its historic interest – because of the way in which it can illustrate the story of past events, people and aspects of life (illustrative value or interest). When these stories become enmeshed with the identity of a community, in addition to the asset’s historic interest it can be said to hold communal value”* (Conservation Principles 2017 Paragraph 28).

1-4 Church Close is an important Suffolk example of a late mediaeval timber framed building that functioned for a long period of time as a rectory undergoing significant alteration and extension throughout the centuries as a result.

Twentieth century alterations illustrate, if nothing else, the transforming effects of a severance from the church and the subdivision of the building into separate residential units. Despite this, however, the wider curtilage still retains considerable value as the historic setting despite its reduction in size and the encroachment of modern residential development to the south and west as a result.

The building’s long standing former use as a rectory to the All Saint’s Church means it will feature in the collective memory of a proportion of the local community providing a degree of associative historic communal value.

Historic/Communal interest is therefore considered as **medium**.

## **6.3 Architectural & Artistic Interest (Aesthetic Value)**

*“Architectural and artistic interests derive from a contemporary appreciation of the asset’s aesthetics”* (Conservation Principles 2017 Paragraph 42).

*“Aesthetic value derives from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place”* (Conservation Principles 2008 Paragraph 46).

*“Aesthetic values can be the result of the conscious design of a place, including artistic endeavour. Equally, they can be the seemingly fortuitous outcome of the way in which a place has evolved and been used over time. Many places combine these two*

*aspects...Aesthetic values tend to be specific to a time and cultural context, but appreciation of them is not culturally exclusive” (Conservation Principles 2008 Paragraph 47).*

*“Design value relates primarily to the aesthetic qualities generated by the conscious design of a building, structure or landscape as a whole. It embraces composition (form, proportions, massing, silhouette, views and vistas, circulation) and usually materials or planting, decoration or detailing, and craftsmanship” (Conservation Principles 2008 Paragraph 48).*

1-4 Church Close’s architectural and artistic merit lies chiefly in its original historic timber frame construction and the resulting character and appearance of its cumulative form when viewed from the surrounding setting.

Clearly a building of some status, its early linear form has readily allowed for adaptation and aggrandizement – perhaps most notable in relation to the early nineteenth century works and the brick projecting ranges on the south side in particular.

The building’s architectural interest thus lies in a mixed aesthetic exhibiting both its early vernacular styling and later, more conscious, design pretensions. The outbuildings to the north and west of the house also contribute to this interest with the northern outbuilding providing a higher degree of significance than the western outbuildings on account of age, size and relative level of historic completeness.

Architectural and artistic interest, is considered **medium-high**.

## **6.4 Cultural Values/Interest Summary**

The primary significance of the site lies in the character and appearance of the main house and its former use as a rectory – its ‘architectural’ and ‘historic’ interest. That part of the setting - considered to be the entire site surrounding the house and including the northern Outbuilding and the Tithe Barn Community Centre and All Saint’s Church to the east - is considered to make an important contribution to the significance of the listed building. The western Outbuildings are considered to provide a low level of significance generally given the extent of alteration and modern building fabric. The immediate adjacent modern residential development to the south and west, in so far as it forms part of the setting, is considered to make only a neutral contribution to significance.



## **7. PROPOSALS & IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

The current revised proposals have been developed following a pre-application consultation in July 2022 (ref: DC/22/02786) and written response dated 4<sup>th</sup> August 2022, and the subsequent submission and withdrawal of planning and listed building consent applications DC/23/00870 and DC/23/00871, following comments received from the Local Authority and Historic England.

The revised proposals set out below and described on the drawings accompanying this application have been developed and shaped paying due cognisance to the historic significance of both the listed building and its setting.

Overall, proposals seek to both conserve and provide a long-term future for the site, its listed buildings and essential landscape character, by managing change in a way which delivers sustainable development.

Currently, the site's assets are underutilized and the contrived manner of the house's configuration into four units – 2 houses and 2 flats with numerous flying freeholds – is no longer attractive to purchasers or commercially viable and suffering long standing marketing problems as a result. The building has also been marketed unsuccessfully as a single dwelling, on account of its size.

The proposal, therefore, now provides for a simpler subdivision of the main house into two equally sized dwellings, each with a scale and balance of accommodation appropriate for this location. The position of the sub-division is carefully chosen to cause minimal disruption to the layout, such that the 1836 extensions and the general layout of the house at that time can be largely respected and appreciated in one dwelling. This, however, leads to an unequal division of the accommodation with the dwelling to the west being disproportionately small for this location; the proposed extension to the west is required to restore a balance.

Additionally, the north outbuilding is retained unaltered and the southern most part of the site developed with a new detached house - important to facilitate the overall project's economic viability.

The level of potential impact, including the cumulative impact of the various elements of proposed works on the determined significance of the heritage assets, is considered below. Proposals may have an impact on:

- The built fabric of the heritage asset
- The setting of the heritage asset
- The character and appearance of the heritage asset

Descriptive terms are employed based upon guidance within the NPPF and relevant Historic England publications.

*Scale or intensity of impact on heritage value/s can be considered:*

- *Negligible* - an impact having no material effect

- *Minor* – an impact having a minimal effect
- *Moderate* – an impact having a sizeable effect
- *Substantial* - an impact having a fundamental effect

*Resulting effect of impact on heritage value/s can be considered:*

- *Neutral*
- *Beneficial*
- *Adverse*

The level of determined impact on the special interest of the heritage assets also takes into account whether the proposals cause no harm, ‘less than substantial’ or ‘substantial’ harm to the assets by altering or eroding authenticity and the heritage values identified in the significance assessment (Architectural & Artistic Interest, Historic Interest or Archaeological Interest). Refer to Section 9 (NPPF Considerations).

### **Main House**

The Heritage Team pre-application response states, ‘*the principle of altering the current subdivision....from 4 dwellings to 2 is considered acceptable subject to details of design and potential loss of historic fabric*’. Furthermore, ‘*the ‘dividing line’ currently proposed ..appears appropriate and would require minimal disruption to the layout...*’

<sup>2</sup> It is contended the proposed subdivision and alterations and extension to the main house could be undertaken with minor intervention in significant historic fabric. Much of the fabric to be affected would date from the 1960’s and be of no historic significance. The replacement of modern windows and part re-fenestration of elevations, as shown on the design drawings, would represent considerable enhancement to the listed building.

The new extension to the house’s west end elevation is a significant addition to the listed building but important to allow the creation of two similarly sized and balanced dwellings with equivalent accommodation and befitting their individual generous plots. The extension would necessitate the part demolition of the existing single storey adjacent Outbuildings – the retained north range, however, being the earliest (showing on the 1881 OS map) and most historically complete and therefore significant element. The west range comprises much late 20<sup>th</sup> century fabric, with a part-modern timber roof and concrete floor slab with an early 20<sup>th</sup> century brick courtyard facing external wall. The age of the high south brick wall to which the greenhouse is attached is unclear but could possibly date to the 1836 works although it is not shown on the 1881 OS map.

The greenhouse first appears on the 1902 OS map and was originally a proprietary three quarter span greenhouse by Boulton & Paul Ltd. A close inspection reveals the greenhouse was extensively rebuilt in the 1960’s such that the primary structural timber frame and miscellaneous internal fittings only remain from the original structure: the

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<sup>2</sup> Pre-application consultation ref: DC/22/02786 - 4<sup>th</sup> August 2022, page 7.

brick plinth walls, all windows and glazing and exterior rainwater goods and decorative external fixtures are all modern dating to the rebuilding.

These outbuildings have thus had a chequered history during the twentieth century giving a generally low level of significance with the north range remaining the most significant element of the group.

The Heritage Team pre-application response notes, '*that modern alterations have been made to some of the outbuildings, however there is the potential that elements may be considered curtilage listed*'.<sup>3</sup>

The extension design has been revised following the pre-application advice and its mass reduced. In addition, the full length of the outbuilding west range outer facing wall is retained and incorporated into the extension in the form of a single storey lean-to element. The earlier north range is also retained while the south facing high wall is largely demolished and the greenhouse demolished being replaced by the new extension. The essential L shaped form of the single storey Outbuilding range will, however, remain clearly visually discernible.

The extension's mass is generally subservient to that of the main house, with the new range located perpendicular to the main building's east west orientation and recalling but not copying the projecting ranges further east on the building's south side. This new range is connected to the existing building via a linking structure housing the new staircase. The form and materiality of the extension will harmonise with the vernacular style of the host building and not contrast or compete with it.

In summary, the existing building is considered such that it can accommodate a sympathetic additional extruded linear form – albeit including a cross wing – without unbalancing or negatively effecting its essential architectural characteristics.

### **North Outbuilding**

The existing Outbuilding will remain as existing and unaltered and functioning as vehicle garages serving the two dwellings (plots 1&2).

Externally, the open landscape character of the garden area between the houses and outbuilding would be preserved with the oval lawn feature surrounded by gravel and mature trees all retained as existing. This area would provide a shared garden serving the houses (plot 1&2) in this way requiring no physical plot subdivision.

Importantly, '*the current intervisibility between the former rectory and the church*'<sup>4</sup> will be maintained and not unacceptably altered by the proposals described above.

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<sup>3</sup> Pre-application consultation ref: DC/22/02786 - 4<sup>th</sup> August 2022, Page 7.

<sup>4</sup> Pre-application consultation ref: DC/22/02786 - 4<sup>th</sup> August 2022, page 8.

### **New Dwelling (plot 3)**

The south of the site is considered to afford potential for new development and a detached sensitively designed dwelling is proposed with a new access from Church Lane.

The impact of the plot severance could be considered moderate / adverse and minor / adverse on the significance of the listed building's current setting and on the significance All Saint's Church derives from its wider setting respectively, although this must be tempered given the rectory's historic plot was considerably reduced with its change of use to residential in the mid-twentieth century and *post* the building's listing in 1955. Moreover, the '*historical functional association*'<sup>5</sup> between Church and Rectory and possible former glebe land is already fundamentally altered and diminished on account of the plot changes highlighted.

### **Design Statement**

The design of the new dwelling has been revised in light of the pre-application advice given and is now conceived in a contemporary manner to avoid any possible '*false narrative*' instead harmonising with its twentieth century neighbours in a complementary way. The building's scale is justifiably considered commensurate to – and not simply '*subservient*' to – neighbouring detached dwellings and its mass mitigated by the one and a half storey height of the east front elevation to Church Lane.

It is further considered the proposed dwelling would not unacceptably affect the important contribution the setting makes to the significance of the heritage asset or the significance All Saint's Church derives from its wider setting, but the new arrangement would preserve those essential characteristics which contribute to that significance (the rolling open lawn landscape character, peripheral soft planting and surrounding low density housing). The planting of strategic new trees within the site and beech hedging to the boundary and the removal of the twentieth century vehicular access adjacent the listed building to Church Lane, would all provide a level of mitigation against the perceived impact and low level of resulting harm.

In NPPF terms, however, the collective proposals can be considered as causing '*less than substantial harm*' to the determined significance of the heritage asset. As this is a deliberately broad term encompassing varied levels or magnitudes of perceived harm, further consideration is given in the next section of this statement.

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<sup>5</sup> Pre-application consultation ref: DC/22/02786 - 4<sup>th</sup> August 2022, page 8.

## **8. NPPF CONSIDERATIONS**

### **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF- July 2021)**

The NPPF superseded Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS5) in 2012 and now sets out the Government's planning and heritage policy vision for the whole country. The NPPF must be taken into account by Local Authorities in the preparation of their local and neighbourhood plans, and is a material consideration in planning decisions. The following section discusses the proposals for 1-4 Church Close in relation to key relevant clauses within the NPPF (Section 16 Conserving & enhancing the historic environment).

**NPPF Paragraph 197.** *In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of: a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.*

**Reply;** It is contended proposals would, by providing a viable residential use in the manner described, sustain the significance of the site and its heritage assets providing both enhancement to the character and appearance of the buildings and an improved stewardship of the extensive gardens and soft landscaping including the trees. The new dwelling would make a positive contribution to the local character and its distinctiveness on account of its high quality and understated contemporary design.

**NPPF Paragraph 199.** *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). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.*

**Reply;** The proposed design for the site has sought to minimise harmful impact on the identified heritage assets, including the significance All Saints Church derives from its wider setting. Key to this has been the location of the extension to the main house being adjacent the far western boundary away from Church Lane and such that there would be only a negligible to minor visual impact on the wider setting to All Saint's Churchyard. Similarly, the understated design for the new dwelling to the south of the site would, although acknowledging a low level of harm to the setting, be a self-referential contemporary neighbour importantly maintaining the sizable open lawn character that strongly defines the wider site.

**NPPF Paragraph 200.** *Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:*

*a) grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional;*



*b) assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II\* listed buildings, grade I and II\* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.*

**Reply;** The impact on 1-4 Church Close and its setting and the wider setting of All Saint's church has been determined as causing a low level of '*less than substantial harm*'. The sites historic building's have been investigated and the design proposals formulated to minimise harmful impact on significant fabric while preserving the essential heritage characteristics of the whole site without causing undue harm. The proposed buildings sub-division from four to two dwellings was considered acceptable at pre-application and the benefits to the buildings heavily subdivided plan and elevations were also highlighted. The design of the western extension is cognisant of the western outbuildings and their low level of heritage significance.

**NPPF Paragraph 202.** *Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm 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.*

**Reply;** Acknowledging a low level of '*less than substantial harm*' to the heritage assets significance the public benefits that would result from the combined proposals are considered to be:

- the securing of an optimum viable and sustainable residential use for the site and all its structures, thereby supporting the long-term preservation and conservation of the heritage asset through use and maintenance.
- the improvement of the main house's character and appearance when viewed from Church Lane, in particular, and in accordance with paragraph 197 (c) of the NPPF, the existing listed building and new dwelling each making a positive contribution to the local character and distinctiveness of the area.
- making an improved use of an under-utilised site, providing a high-quality village development to community benefit and noting paragraph 69 of the NPPF, '*small..sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area*'.
- the improved land management and better stewardship of the site, enhancing biodiversity and including additional beech hedging and additional tree planting along the eastern site boundary to Church Lane thereby improving the natural environment.

**NPPF Paragraph 206.** *Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.*

**Reply;** Proposals are considered to represent high quality design which will provide sustainable development, on balance improving the essential character and appearance of the listed building, whilst maintaining those important qualities of the landscape and setting that contribute to the asset's significance.

The public benefits highlighted above would collectively mean the proposal achieves and delivers sustainable development as defined in Section 2 of the NPPF, providing economic, social and environmental gains and, in accordance with paragraphs 202 and 206, outweighing the low level of '*less than substantial harm*'.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

Proposals for 1-4 Church Close, Sproughton, have been carefully formulated taking due account of the sensitive nature of the site, its historic significance and the particular character and appearance of the historic village core.

The proposals are considered to accord with Historic England and the NPPF's definition of conservation as the process of 'managing change' in a manner which sustains and, where appropriate, enhances significance. It is contended proposals, by adopting a comprehensive yet balanced and sympathetic design approach to the site, achieve this objective.

The low level of '*less than substantial harm*' resulting from proposals is considered outweighed by the public benefits highlighted above and applicable to the whole site; key to this being the new build dwelling and its capital generating role.

It is concluded the proposed works can be considered to accord with national and local planning policies and conservation and wider heritage principles and should, therefore, be favourably received by the Babergh Mid Suffolk District Council.