

PLANNING STATEMENT

Former Chambers Bus Depot,
Bures St Mary, Suffolk



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PLANNING STATEMENT

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SECTION ONE

Introduction

1.1 The Application

This Planning Statement forms part of a full planning application for the former Chambers bus depot site on Bridge Street in Bures St Mary. The application seeks the redevelopment of a vacant, brownfield site for a mixed use of residential and commercial. In addition to a full pack of architectural and highway drawings, the application is supported by the following information and which this statement should be read in conjunction with:

- Archaeological Evaluation by Colchester Archaeological Trust (December 2022)
- Bat Activity Survey by Geosphere (September 2021)
- Building Works Method Statement by Rose Builders (December 2023)
- Covering letter
- Design and Access Statement by Rose Builders (February 2024)
- Financial Viability Assessment by Pathfinder (January 2024)
- Flood Risk Assessment & Foul and Surface Water Drainage Strategy by Rose Builders (February 2024)
- Heritage Impact Assessment by Purcell (February 2024)
- Phase 1 Ground Investigation Report by Compass Geotechnical (September 2021)
- Phase 2 Ground Investigation Report by Compass Geotechnical (June 2022), including Supplementary Geotechnical Investigation report (August 2022) and Derivation of Remediation Targets for Groundwater Contamination (April 2023)
- Planning application form
- Planning Statement by Rose Builders (February 2024)
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Bat Scoping Survey by Geosphere (August 2021)
- Report on Ongoing Groundwater Monitoring by Compass Geotechnical (January 2023)
- Report on Ongoing Groundwater Monitoring by Compass Geotechnical (June 2023)
- Structural Report by Horwitz Associates (January 2022)
- Structural Condition Report by Richard Jackson (January 2023)
- Transport Assessment by Ardent (February 2024)

1.2 Purpose of the Document

This Planning Statement is written to support the proposal and its consideration by Babergh District Council (the Local Planning Authority). It sets out the site context (site characteristics, planning history and planning policy) and then discusses the various material planning considerations, explaining why the proposal should be approved by the council.

SECTION TWO

The Site

2.1 Site Description

The application site is 0.32 ha (0.78 acres) and is comprised of buildings and yard associated with the former use of the site as a bus depot. Primarily this includes the main, metal-framed large bus depot building. There is also a small, single storey building on its northern edge that forms part of the former depot. On the southern side of the former depot building is a 3-storey, brick, residential dwelling. The remainder of the site is comprised of concrete hardstanding and is flat. There are no trees or shrubs on the site, although there is a row of evergreen trees just outside the eastern boundary of the site. The rear yard includes some outbuildings in various states of repair. Alongside the southern edge of the existing house there is a wide vehicular access to the highway at the junction of Bridge Street and Church Square. None of the buildings on the site are listed.

Different configurations of buildings have existed on the site for many centuries. A key part of the history of the site started in the late 1870s/ early 1880s when HC Chambers & Sons started running a saddlery from the site and then a bus company. Accordingly, the main buildings at the front of the site date from the 19th and 20th century. The oldest elements front the main road with more modern elements added to the rear. A full summary of the site's history is set out in the Heritage Statement that forms part of this planning application.

2.2 Site Context

Bures St Mary is within the county of Suffolk, but is conjoined with Bures Hamlet of Essex. The Essex/Suffolk county boundary follows the course of the river Stour between Bures St Mary and Bures Hamlet. While the county boundary and river separates the two parts, the village is experienced as one village and hereafter is referred to simply as "Bures" unless specific attention is drawn to a particular part of the village.

The site forms an important part of the centre of the village and is prominent as the B1508 winds through the centre of Bures. The site forms part of the Bures St Mary conservation area and there are several listed buildings nearby. This includes the Grade I listed church of St Mary opposite the site. The Heritage Statement depicts all the nearby listed buildings that form part of the site context.

The nearby building scale is predominantly 2-storey, although there are several examples of 3-storey, such as at no. 8/9 Bridge Street, Queens House, the application site and the church which extends higher. Almost all the nearby buildings sit at the back edge of the pavement, again the church is an exception as it is surrounded by its grounds. The churchyard contains a number of trees alongside the church's boundary wall. However, in the immediate vicinity of the site there are almost no other trees or grassed areas in the public realm. As typical for an historic village centre, the buildings are traditional in appearance, reflecting the development of the village through the centuries.

There are bus stops opposite the site on both the eastbound and westbound sides of Bridge Street. The site is served by the 83, 754 and 756 bus services running between Colchester town centre and Sudbury. Bures railway station is approximately 5 minute's walk from the

site and it on the Essex side of the river in Bures Hamlet. Greater Anglia services run to and from Bures between Sudbury and Marks Tey, where it joins the mainline service between London Liverpool Street and Norwich. A journey from Bures train station to London Liverpool Street can take approximately 1 hour and 20 minutes.

Bures includes a range of services including two pubs, a post office, a convenience store, places of worship, a GP surgery and a school. It is categorised as a “core village” in the local plan.

2.3 Planning History

The site was historically used as a bus depot. Starting in the 19th century, this use pre-dates the introduction of the planning system. More recently planning permission was granted in March 2020 for “Change of Use from a mixed use of residential & bus depot/workshop (sui generis use) to mixed use of B1 (business) and residential -retention of”. This was granted subject to various planning conditions. In 2022, planning permission was granted for redevelopment of the site for a mixed use of residential and a convenience store. Before granting the 2020 permission, the council and applicant sought to address issues relating to excessive noise and disturbance from the site.

SECTION THREE

Planning Policy

3.1 Development Plan

The current development plan for the site contains the following:

- National Planning Policy Framework (2021) (“the Framework”)
- National Planning Practice Guidance (“NPPG”)
- Joint Local Plan –Submission Document (November 2023)
- Bures Conservation Area Appraisal SPD – November 2007
- Suffolk Guidance for Parking (2015)

3.2 National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

The Framework is an overarching document and sets out the national planning policy agenda focused specifically upon the delivery of sustainable development. It must be taken into account in the preparation of local and neighbouring plans and is a material consideration in planning decisions.

Paragraph 8 of the Framework specifically sets out the basis for the achievement of sustainable development in planning terms and defines three key objectives in the planning system:

- An economic objective
- A social objective
- An environmental objective

The Framework sets out the following points for consideration when assessing whether development is sustainable:

- Making it easier for jobs to be created in cities, towns and villages
- Moving from a net loss of bio-diversity to achieving net gains for nature
- Replacing poor design with better design
- Improving the conditions in which people live, work, travel and take leisure
- Widening the choice of high-quality homes

Furthermore, with regards to sustainable development, Framework Paragraph 10 states:

“So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development”.

To achieve sustainable development, economic, social and environmental gains should be sought jointly and it is clear that the creation of new homes has an important role to play. Residential development is recognised as being a major contributor to driving economic growth, with the planning system helping to deliver the new homes that will move the country forwards.

Planning law requires that applications for planning permission should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Housing Supply

At Paragraph 60 the Framework states that to significantly boost the supply of homes it is important that sufficient land can come forward where it is needed and that permission is developed without unnecessary delay. To determine the minimum number of homes, Paragraph 61 states that strategic policies should be informed by a local housing assessment conducted using the standard method unless exceptional circumstances justify an alternative which also reflects current and future demographic trends and market signals. Paragraph 73 sets out the various buffers that should be applied to housing numbers depending on past performance and the degree of housing choice.

Strong Economy

Paragraph 81 states that “significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development”. In terms of the rural economy, the Framework supports the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business, as well as the development of accessible community facilities such as open space.

Healthy and Safe Communities

Street layouts should allow for easy pedestrian and cycle connections within and between neighbourhoods. Such connections should be safe and accessible to encourage the active and continual use of public areas. Proposals should enable and encourage healthy lifestyles. This can be through layouts that encourage walking and cycling with links to local shops and green infrastructure.

Sustainable Transport

Paragraph 104 highlights that transport issues should be considered at the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals. This is so that impacts can be addressed, opportunities can be realised, and that movement patterns are integrated into layout design. Paragraph 105 adds that significant development “should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes”. However, it adds that “opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making”.

Requiring Good Design

Chapter 12 of the Framework focuses on achieving high quality buildings and places, highlighting that good design is a key component of sustainable development. Paragraph 130 sets out the various elements that comprise good design including functionality, attractiveness, character, sense of place, development mix and places that are safe, inclusive and accessible. Paragraph 134 allows councils to refuse development of poor design that fails to take opportunities to improve the character, quality and functionality of an area. Conversely, where design accords with clear expectations in plan policies, such design should not be used as a reason for to object.

Flooding and Climate Change

The Framework supports the transition to a low carbon future. New development should avoid vulnerability to climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emission through location,

orientation and design. When determining planning applications, flood risk should not be increased elsewhere. To better understand this, a site-specific flood risk assessment is often necessary. Generally, sites should be located in areas of low flood risk. Major development schemes should incorporate sustainable drainage systems.

Natural Environment

The objective of chapter 15 is that policies and decisions contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. Paragraph 174 sets out the main elements for discussion, namely valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity/geological value, countryside character/beauty (including coastline), biodiversity impact, pollution and remediation.

Historic Environment

Planning applications should describe any impact on the significance of heritage assets affected, including their settings. Such description should include archaeological interest too. In assessing proposals, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Where proposals would lead to less than substantial harm, such harm should be balanced against the public benefits of the proposal.

National Planning Practice Guidance

The online National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) supports and informs existing policies within the Framework. It is to be considered in line with the Framework as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

3.3 Local Planning Policy

Set out below are short summaries of the relevant policies in the local development plan.

Joint Local Plan – Submission Document (November 2023)

SP01 – Housing Need. The Council will deliver at least 7,904 net new dwellings over the plan period. The mix of tenure, size and type shall reflect the District needs assessment.

SP02 – Affordable Housing. On brownfield sites of 10 dwellings or more, a 25% provision of affordable housing will be sought. Where it is convincingly demonstrated that the required provision of affordable housing is not viable, the council may agree to vary the requirement. An agreed viability assessment format will be required to demonstrate this.

SP03 – The Sustainable Location of New Development. The principle of development within settlement boundaries is established.

SP05 – Employment Land. Existing employment uses should be retained.

SP06 – Retail and Main Town Centre Uses. Town centre uses will be supported in identified town centres.

SP09 – Enhancement and Management of the Environment. All development will be required to protect and enhance biodiversity.

SP10 – Climate Change. All developments should take a proactive approach to the mitigation/adaptation of climate change.

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LP09 – Supporting a Prosperous Economy. Proposals for employment use must be sensitive to its surroundings, be of a high standard of design and be safe/suitable for all users.

LP11 – Retail and Town Centres. Proposals that include “above the shop” homes will be encouraged.

LP15 – Environmental Protection and Conservation. Proposals on previously developed land will be prioritised. Development should remediate land affected by contamination.

LP16 – Biodiversity & Geodiversity. All development should seek to enhance habitats and avoid impacts and mitigate against harmful impacts on biodiversity.

LP19 – The Historic Environment. A Heritage Statement will be required when there is the potential to affect heritage assets. The council will support proposals that contribute to local distinctiveness.

LP23 – Sustainable Construction and Design. All new development is required to adopt a sustainable approach to energy use. Development should also consider CO2 emissions, water efficiency, climate change adaptation/mitigation and minimise energy demands.

LP24 – Design and Residential Amenity. All new development must be of high-quality design. Proposals should respond to existing character, being compatible with its location and be appropriate in terms of scale, mass, form, siting, design, materials, texture and colour.

LP26 – Water Resources and Infrastructure. Development should consider its impact on water resources and show that it has consulted with the relevant water authorities.

LP27 – Flood Risk and Vulnerability. Proposals should show how on-site surface water is to be managed.

LP29 – Safe, Sustainable and Active Transport. All development are to maximise the uptake in sustainable and active transport. Proposals should incorporate pedestrian route, cycling facilities and improved public transport measures.

LP32 – Developer Contributions and Planning Obligations. Developers are obliged to provide Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions.

Bures Conservation Area Appraisal (November 2007)

The Bures St Mary Conservation Area Appraisal sets out and explains the characteristics of the conservation area and key components of its historical importance. Of most relevance for the application site are the importance and proximity of listed buildings as well as non-designated heritage assets. While the site does not contain any listed buildings, the appraisal mentions “the local bus company’s yard and sheds being very much part of the street scene” (page 19). It also mentions that “the bus shed’s roof and gables were apparently originally asbestos sheeting, but could be upgraded to a more traditional material.”

Suffolk Guidance for Parking (November 2015)

This document requires 1 no. vehicle parking space for each 1-bed unit, 1.5 no. spaces for each 2-bed unit, 2 no. spaces for each 3-bed unit and 3 no. spaces for each 4-bed unit. There should be a total of 1 no. visitor parking spaces for every 4 no. dwellings. The guidance document sets out minimum size requirements for garages of 7m x 3m, although 6m x 3m can

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be acceptable where alternative provision for bin and cycle storage is supplied. Surface car parking spaces should be no smaller than 5m x 2.5m and parallel parking spaces should be 6m x 2m.

SECTION FOUR

Proposal

4.1 Description of Development

The proposed development is “Demolition of outbuildings and in-filling of former vehicle inspection pits. Substantial demolition of former bus depot and house to allow construction of 47 sqm commercial unit and 14 apartments/houses (a net increase of 13 dwellings) and associated drainage, parking, hardstanding, fences/walls and other infrastructure”.

4.2 Demolition and Conversion

A structural report forms part of the planning application pack and gives a detailed structural assessment of the existing buildings. The bus depot currently includes a roof of asbestos sheeting. The front façade is of poor condition and offers little or no thermal or acoustic insulation. The brick house has evidence of subsidence and water damage. The proposal includes the demolition of most of the bus depot. The submitted demolition plans show the extent of works to the front elevation, including retention, renovation and replacement of various elements. The remainder of the bus depot element will then be rebuilt to accommodate the proposed new uses. It is proposed that the front and side façade of the brick house will be retained up to where the rendered section starts. Some minor works are also envisaged to the fenestration of the brick house to make it watertight and insulated. The existing Gross Internal Area (GIA) of these two buildings totals 849 sqm. The site also includes outbuildings (GIA 219 sqm) associated with the former use of the site as a bus depot and will be demolished.

4.3 Commercial

The proposal includes the provision of 47 sqm (506 sqft) GIA of floorspace for commercial use. This use falls under planning use class E and could comprise a shop, office or café. It is intended to keep this classification broad to enable more scope for future tenants. The proposal includes associated storage, refuse and parking for vehicles and bicycles/motorbikes.

4.4 Residential

The proposal is that the depot frontage will be redeveloped to provide 5 houses. It would also include an apartment sited above the commercial unit, occupying the retained corner brick building. The remainder of the site would provide 4 further houses, 3 chalet bungalows and a “FOG” (Flat Over Garage). The chalet bungalows are 1½ storey height. The corner brick building is 3 storeys in height and is being converted. The remainder of the site is 2 storeys height. The residential mix is set out below in Table 1. The apartments and houses include private amenity space, parking spaces and bin stores.

Table 1: Proposed Accommodation Schedule

Type	Bedrooms	No.
Flat	2	2
House	1	1
House	2	3
House	3	5
Chalet Bungalow	3	3
Total		14

SECTION FIVE

Appraisal

5.1 Principle of Development

As detailed above, the site was historically used as a bus depot for about a century in the centre of Bures. The site currently has the benefit of planning permission for B1 and residential use. The Local Plan classifies Bures as a “core village”. The principle of the redevelopment of this brownfield site is supported by the local development plan. The 2022 permission is very similar to the latest proposal and is extant. In light of all these factors, the principle of development for residential and commercial use is established.

5.2 Commercial

Upon commencing the development strategy for the site, a review was undertaken of suitable land uses. This considered the characteristics of the site and the village within the context of the local development plan and initial feedback from local land agents. This led to the mixed use of residential and retail. As part of this initial strategy phase, approaches were received via a local land agent from two convenience store providers who were keen to enter into a lease to operate from the site. Unfortunately, during the course of the previous two years, this interest has rescinded due to a changing business model by the prospective tenant and national economic factors. On this basis, the design was changed to reduce the extent of commercial floorspace. While much smaller, the proposal will still deliver local jobs. It will also provide a service to the village.

The application seeks a Planning Use Class E designation for this small unit. Class E covers a broad range of uses, including those that were previously classed under A1 (shop), A2 (financial/professional services), A3 (café/restaurant), B1 (office or research/development), D1 (clinic/creche) and D2 (gym/indoor recreation). These are all typical town (or village) centre uses and are generally compatible with such centres. Any negative impacts on residential amenity should be benchmarked against the previous use of the site as a bus depot.

The matter of retail need was raised as part of the public exhibition and other community engagement in the latter part of 2021. Respondents at this more recent event showed a more even 50/50 split between those who were for or against a new store on the site. Since that date, commercial interest in the larger convenience store proposal has rescinded. The proposal still allows for a retail store, albeit much smaller. Core villages, like Bures, will be the main focus for retail uses in the district as they will contribute to the local economy. Such an approach will increase the sustainability of the core villages. The policy requires that proposals should be of appropriate scale, character and nature to their locality. The scale of the proposal would be comparable to other nearby high street uses in Bures. The character and nature of a local convenience store will also generally accord with the character of Bures and specifically with this particular brownfield, employment site. Therefore, the community engagement shows that there is still demand for a store. Other ideas were also discussed at the public exhibition and this proposal now envelopes these other high street uses. Based on all of these factors, it is considered that the commercial element of the proposal will accord with the local plan.

5.3 Employment

Reference to employment density guidance estimates that a 47sqm commercial premises would generate approximately 2-4 new jobs (dependent on specific use), which would be an increase on the current provision of zero at this vacant site. Such job creation forms a strong component of sustainable development and is supported by national and local planning policy.

5.4 Housing Provision and Mix

In terms of the residential element, Local Plan policy SP01 support the provision of new housing within defined settlement boundaries. Bures is classed as a core village. Settlements of this category generally have a good range of services and facilities and can accommodate sustainable development.

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (May 2017) along with an update in 2019, gives the most recent update on housing need for the area and shows the housing need by home size. While averaged over only 14 units, the proposal relates to that SHMA need as follows:

Table 2: Housing Need and Proposed Mix

Unit Size	SHMA Need	Proposed Number	Proposed Mix
1-bed	9%	1	7%
2-bed	31%	5	36%
3-bed	32%	8	57%
4-bed (or more)	28%	0	0%

As discussed above, the principle of residential development is supported by planning policy. The proposal includes a range of unit sizes, as shown in Table 1. This reflects the characteristics of the site and anticipated levels of local need and will deliver a balanced community.

5.5 Heritage and Archaeology

Paragraph 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework (“the Framework”) requires applicants to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. Such information is set out fully in the Heritage Statement that forms part of this planning application.

The site is located within the Bures St Mary Conservation Area. The site contains no listed buildings, although it will form part of the setting of nearby listed buildings, including the Grade I listed church to the west and a Grade II* Malthouse to the north.

Conservation Area and Listed Buildings

The Council’s Conservation Area Appraisal (2007) sets out the main buildings, spaces and routes through the village that help to establish the character of the conservation area. The site is located centrally within the conservation area and plays a role. Not only do the frontage

buildings enclose the street, but they also reveal the former industrial use of the site. The materials used accord with the rich heritage of the village centre and its uses.

The bus depot and subsequent commercial use is now vacant and the building is redundant. The brick house is still occupied as a dwelling. Care must be taken that the building does not decay further and respectful redevelopment of the site can achieve this. The proposal seeks the retention of a commercial and residential use and in doing so will rejuvenate the site. In accordance with planning policy, redevelopment should preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. The recreation of bustling uses on this site would accord with the former uses of the site and the character of the centre of the conservation area. The proposed building works largely seek to retain the front and side façade of the building, which are so prominent from nearby listed buildings and the streetscene as a whole. In doing so, the character can be preserved. Indeed, with the undertaking of the necessary repair works an enhancement can be achieved.

Archaeology

Archaeological trenching was undertaken pursuant to the extant planning consent for the site and the concluding evaluation report has been produced (December 2022).

5.6 Visual Appearance

The general scale, form and mass of the front part of the site is retained. Repair and renovation work to the main front buildings will have a positive effect on the streetscene. Further visual enhancements can be achieved through the demolition of unsympathetic rear elements of the depot. While the bus depot will no longer be in operation, the proposed design retains the aesthetic to acknowledge the 20th century history of the site. The main depot doors will be renovated and in doing so will retain the same doors that have existing here through the life of the depot.

The consented design included a new large spanning gable of an extra metre of height. The latest proposal no longer needs this extra height and as such, the gable size will be unaffected. This represents a visual improvement on the consented design. Furthermore, the existing asbestos sheeting on the front gable will be replaced. It is proposed to use a metal standing seam sheet. These metal sheets will echo the verticality of the asbestos sheets and the commercial use. The standing seam sheets will appear much smarter than existing. The frontage is also improved upon the consented design by the active use of the current small shopfront. This will help enliven the frontage with more activity. A small amount of highway build-out is proposed here to make this access safer in relation to highway traffic.

The consented design includes some minor fenestration adjustments to the side (southern) elevation. These adjustments are no longer needed. Therefore, the latest proposal will result in less change to the existing design than consented southern elevation. The side elevation includes a new dwelling (unit 6). The architectural appearance of this unit 6 chimes with the rear elevation of the former depot, with an industrial appearance, finished in brick. Detailing is provided through window arches, brick piers, roundels, tax windows and detailed brick verges. This is a high quality finish.

The middle part of the site is primarily used for car parking. This area is passively surveyed by plots 6, 7, 8 and 14. Residents at the rear of the site will also pass through this zone, so too will residents of units 1 to 4.

The new houses at the rear of the site form a separate, residential zone to the site. Entrance to this zone is marked by plots 8/9 and 13. A collection of 3 chalet bungalows is provided at the rear of the site. These gatekeeper plots also include a high level of detailing through brick piers, window arches and roof finials. The chalet bungalows provide an attractive vista stop to the site generally, and to the rear part specifically. High quality features include brick plinths, window detailing, dentil courses, roof finials and ornate chimneys. These houses and bungalows provide an attractive and welcoming environment and delicately bind the industrial with residential.

5.7 Residential Amenity

Residential amenity is an important aspect of any proposal. The adjacent dwellings provide a constraint which is not untypical of any central site. The proposal allows the removal of unsightly shed outbuildings and the replacement with the covered carports and FOG. This will provide an outlook improvement to the adjacent Queens House. The proposal also removes the rear element of the depot building which will provide an outlook improvement to Willow House, sited to the north.

Care was taken to ensure that new houses do not provide any significant overlooking of adjacent rear gardens. While the chalet bungalows do include first floor, rear windows, these windows serve bedrooms, are set in from the boundary and are shielded by boundary trees. The site level is also lower than properties on Friends Field. The position of plots 8, 9 and 13 broadly match those of the consented design and are therefore deemed to have an acceptable relationship with adjacent properties. Plot 14 only has a landing window that faces Willow House at first floor level. This can be of obscured glass if necessary.

The new dwellings themselves would have a good level of residential amenity. As discussed above, all of the new apartments will have access to a private sitting out space and the new houses will have rear gardens. Residents will also have access to nearby public walks along the river Stour.

5.8 Community Infrastructure Levy and Affordable Housing

A Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contribution was made as part of the consented design. The proposal includes a further contribution to cover the additional residential floorspace proposed. These contributions are managed by the council and cover items from the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, such as education and healthcare.

In terms of Affordable Housing, Policy SP2 allows developers to submit a viability assessment of their projects. If such assessment convincingly shows that such projects cannot meet the normal Affordable Housing provision for reasons of project viability, then the policy allows the Council to vary the requirement.

In this instance, such a viability assessment is submitted with this application to support the notion that the site cannot be brought back into use with the provision of affordable housing. There are many factors that underpin the conclusion of the viability assessment. Brownfield sites are notoriously more expensive to bring forward for development, especially when existing buildings are converted, rather than demolished. This former bus depot site also has extensive ground contamination. The full extent of this contamination (and the remediation it entails) only became fully understood after exploratory ground investigation works were undertaken. The reallocation of floorspace originally set-aside for the convenience store has meant that the site now delivers a net increase of more than 10 units, which makes a financial impact on site development. Wider economic forces have also negatively impacted on the project. These include reductions in housing prices, increases in material costs and extra borrowing costs. These factors all affect the viability of the project.

5.9 Access, Highways and Parking

New residents would have good access to sustainable and active modes of transport. This is provided by way of the bus service along the Colchester to Sudbury route. There is also the nearby railway station providing a service from Sudbury to Marks Tey and onto London. There is also National Cycle Network route 13 that passes through Bures Hamlet. These factors help to deliver a sustainable location for development and give residents and customers viable alternatives to the private motorcar.

The site currently has access to the highway at the junction of Bridge Street and Church Square. Historically this would have been the main access point for buses (and associated staff) to access the site, although it is thought that some buses would have directly accessed the main depot building from the front. This historic use would have generated a certain level of traffic at this junction. While exact figures cannot be obtained, the flow of traffic would be likely to follow the pattern from an example at a nearby bus depot as shown in Table 2.

Table 3: Typical Bus Depot Traffic Profile

Time of day	In	Out
Early morning	Drivers arrive for early shifts	Buses leave to work regular services
Morning peak period	Office staff and day shift drivers arrive	Buses leave to operate school services
Mid morning	Buses arrive back after operating school services	
Early afternoon	Late shift drivers arrive	Early shift drivers depart for home, buses depart to operate school services
Evening peak period	Buses arrive back after operating	Office staff and day shift drivers depart for home
Early evening	Buses move around depot while being cleaned and maintained	
Evenings		Late shift drivers and evening shift maintenance/cleaning staff depart for home

The proposal will retain the existing point of access to and from the highway. It is acknowledged that the character of this traffic will change slightly. It is anticipated that the proposal will generally have more vehicle movements, but not involve large, slow-moving

buses. The Transport Statement shows that the proposal will not cause a significant impact on the local highway network. Indeed, the impact will be less than the consented design. The proposal includes provision for cycle parking for new residents.

Minor improvements can be made to the junction as shown in the accompanying highway works drawings. They show an improvement to the vehicular visibility splays when leaving the site, as well as the alignment of the road to give a better relationship between Bridge Street and Church Square. Clearly these improvements are made within the context of an historic village centre, with roads and buildings built to pre-modern standards. The most significant of these other improvements would benefit pedestrians. This is achieved through “build-outs” and tactile paving. The build-outs provide much better inter-visibility between pedestrians and motorists. They also reduce the carriageway width, making crossing times slightly shorter.

To achieve the build-outs requires the loss of two on-street parking spaces on Church Square. This will put a pressure on those who own a car in the historic village centre, but is less impactful than the consented design. Furthermore, as shown, the works will create improvements for pedestrians. This applies whether they are accessing the site or making journeys to other destinations in the village, such as the church, school or other services. Improvements to sustainable and active modes of transport chime with recent government changes to the highway code to give greater priority to pedestrians. It also chimes with planning policy which requires that all development should maximise the uptake in sustainable and active travel and that all proposals should incorporate pedestrian route, cycling facilities and improved public transport measures. In March 2019 and July 2019, Suffolk County Council and Babergh District Council respectively declared a climate emergency. Improvements set out above help these councils to respond to this global challenge and should be strongly supported.

The site itself provides a total of 32 no. parking spaces. This comprises 1 allocated space for the 1-bed apartment. All other dwellings have 2 allocated spaces each. The scheme includes an allocated space for the commercial unit too. A total of 4 spaces (one of which is a disabled bay) are also provided for residential and commercial visitors.

5.10 Trees, Landscaping and Private Amenity Space

The existing site contains no existing green space or landscaping. There is a row of conifer trees outside the eastern edge of the site. They currently offer a soft, evergreen barrier between the houses on Friends Field and the site.

The proposal offers an opportunity to introduce some further greenery, even on this relatively small, central site. The proposed houses will all have rear gardens. Where possible, small green strips for planting have been provided, including by the main parking area. The river Stour forms a key component to Bures and offers numerous walks along its pleasant banks. Such amenity would be accessible for new residents within a couple of minutes from the site.

5.11 Biodiversity

An ecological assessment has been prepared and shows that the existing buildings could provide a nesting opportunity for birds and bats. Therefore, any demolition should ideally

happen outside of the bird nesting season or allow for an inspection prior to any works. A specialist bat survey found that the main brick building has high bat roost potential. Therefore, demolition work will need to be done under an appropriate licence from Natural England. Bat and bird boxes should be incorporated into the proposed design. External lighting should also be controlled to avoid unnecessary disturbance to bats. It is suggested that this is controlled by a suitable planning condition.

5.12 Flood and Drainage

The site is located in Flood Zone 1, which is an area of low flood risk. Currently the site is almost entirely covered in hardstanding. The provision of private gardens will reduce the amount of hardstanding on the site, which will provide a benefit to the local surface water drainage network and help to reduce off-site flooding. Furthermore, initial designs show the introduction of underground attenuation crates. This will temporarily store surface water during storm events before allowing a discharge on to existing networks. This too will be of benefit to the local drainage network.

5.13 Contamination and Ground Conditions

A Phase 1 and Phase 2 Ground Investigation report has revealed the ground pollutants on the site. The redevelopment of the site for residential purposes will require this brownfield site to be cleaned up. The Remediation Method Statement (RMS) sets out the process by which such clean up would happen. Such work will improve the local soils, providing a benefit for the local ecosystem and new residents alike. Implementation of the RMS can be controlled by a suitable planning condition.

SECTION SIX

Conclusion

6.1 Conclusion

The brownfield site is at a prominent part at the centre of Bures. The former industrial uses have ceased and the site is now redundant. Most of the buildings are in a poor state of repair and are becoming an eyesore. This effect is magnified given its position in a conservation area and within the setting of various listed buildings. Redevelopment of the site is supported by the local plan and the vast majority of the public who attended a public exhibition on the project as a precursor to the, now consented, planning permission.

The ability to deliver new jobs and housing are positive aspects that will renovate the site and this part of the village. There is a range of housing types and sizes provided, but all will have an attractive setting. A high-quality design will preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. The proposal will also remove the industrial and noisy uses that have blighted the amenity of neighbours and clean up the site. The commercial element will provide jobs and a service to the village.

The site will use the existing means of access used by the former bus depot and close off the former depot doors. Improvements are proposed to the highway to make it safer for pedestrians to cross Church Square. This will serve all pedestrians, not just those accessing the site. Small changes to the road alignment will also help highway safety for vehicles too. These changes have been verified by an independent road safety audit. The site will provide bicycle parking as well as vehicle parking, for both the commercial and residential elements of the site.

In light of all the material planning considerations, which include heritage, highways, housing employment and design, it is evident that the proposal will constitute sustainable development and bring a redundant and prominent site back into use. Accordingly, it is considered that the proposal accords with the local development plan and in such instances the 1990 Planning Act stipulates that the planning permission should be granted.