

Planning Statement

Full Planning application for the demolition of a vacant commercial unit,
works to relocate wall and the construction of 4no. residential dwellings
with associated infrastructure

Land at 1 High Street and 5-7 Valley Road, Leiston

Western House Developments

March 2024

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Planning Statement

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1 Introduction

1.1 Summary

1.1.1 Lanpro Services Limited ('Lanpro') have been instructed by Western House Developments ('the Applicant') to submit a full planning application to East Suffolk Council ('the Council') for the demolition of a vacant commercial unit, works to relocate wall and the construction of 4no. residential dwellings with associated infrastructure ('the Proposal') on Land at 1 High Street and 5-7 Valley Road, Leiston ('the Site').

1.1.2 This full planning application is supported by the following documents/drawings:

- Application forms
- Existing Site Survey
- Location Plan by Lanpro (4348-LAN-XX-XX-A-DR-0100 P01)
- Proposed Site Plan by Lanpro (4348-LAN-ZZ-XX-DR-A-0100 P04)
- Floor Plans and Elevations – Plot 1 by Lanpro (4338-LAN-01-XX-DR-A-0301 P03)
- Floor Plans and Elevations – Plot 2 by Lanpro (4338-LAN-02-XX-DR-A-0301 P04)
- Floor Plans and Elevations – Plot 3 by Lanpro (4338-LAN-03-XX-DR-A-0301 P03)
- Floor Plans and Elevations – Plot 4 by Lanpro (4338-LAN-04-XX-DR-A-0301 P03)
- Design and Access Statement by Lanpro (4348-LAN-XX-XX-RP-A-9100)
- Heritage Statement by Lanpro (March 2024)
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal by Practical Ecology (Version 1 - December 2022)
- Ecological Verification Survey by Lanpro (Dated 22nd March 2024)
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment by Tree Planning Solutions Ltd (TPSarb7751122 – Issue No.1) + AIA Appendix 1-6
- Transport Note by Caneparo Associates (CA5252-N01-DR-Transport Note (240327))
- Phase 1 Land Contamination Risk Assessment by Castledine Environmental
- CIL Additional Information Form

2 Site Context and Designations

2.1 Site Context

- 2.1.1 The Site comprises of approximately 0.2 hectares of land on the northern side of Valley Road, Leiston.
- 2.1.2 The Site consisted of a vacant commercial building and an unmanaged vegetated garden which contained unmanaged grassland, temporary structures (shipping containers, a summerhouse and a derelict caravan), unvegetated unsealed surfaces, and scattered trees. The Site was bounded by brick walls and wooden close boarded fences.
- 2.1.3 The Site is located on the northern edge of Leiston town centre, where this transitions from more mixed-use development towards a greater concentration of residential properties.
- 2.1.4 A wide range of shops and services are available, including Dentist, Pharmacy, Primary a Library, Supermarket, Cinema Public House, Recreation Ground, Restaurants and Takeaways. All of these are located within approximately 0.6 miles (a 15-minute walk) of the Site.
- 2.1.5 Bus stops are available close to the Site, with stops served by 521, 522 (Border Bus) and 64 (First Bus) The 521 and 64 services operate at an hourly frequency during peak times, while the 522 operates at a half hourly frequency during peak times.

2.2 Designations

- 2.2.1 The Site is located within the settlement boundary for Leiston, which is identified as a 'Market Town' under SCLP3.2: Settlement Hierarchy, the second tier within the hierarchy after 'Major Centre'.
- 2.2.2 The Environment Agency's Flood Mapping for Planning shows that the entire Site lies within Flood Zone 1 for flooding from rivers and the sea. Regarding surface water flooding the Site is considered to be 'low risk' with areas of 'high risk' located along Valley Road.
- 2.2.3 The majority of the Site is located within the Leiston Conservation Area, with 1 High Street and the land to the rear located within the designation and 5-7 Valley Road located outside.
- 2.2.4 The nearest listed building to the Site is 'Works House', which is Grade II listed and located approximately 45m to the south-west of the Site.
- 2.2.5 The Leiston Conservation Area Appraisal (LCAA) identifies the wall that separates 1 High Street and 3 Valley Road as an 'Important Wall/Railings'. The LCAA also identifies the land to the rear of 1 High Street as 'Important Open/Green/Tree space and important views along the front of the Site from west to east.

2.3 Planning History

- 2.3.1 Relevant planning applications found using the Council's online application portal directly relating to the Site have been provided below.
- 2.3.2 For the purpose of the planning application, part of the Site is referred to as No.1 High Street (& 5 – 7 Valley Road) to ensure consistency with previous applications and approvals, although it is recognised that this property is also referred to as Veldor House and 1 – 4 Valley Road, within the Leiston Conservation Area Appraisal.
- 2.3.3 As identified in the Officer's Report for DC/21/4527/FUL, the previous use of No.1 High Street was for a guesthouse. It is noted that the red line boundary for that application bisected the

Site, resulting in land to the rear not benefiting from a change of use. Therefore, the land to the rear, that is subject to this planning application, currently remains as garden area/amenity space used in connection with the former guesthouse.

Reference	Description	Date of Decision	Outcome
DC/22/4952/FUL	Residential development, including the demolition of commercial building unfit for conversion and the erection of 2 dwelling houses and a small commercial office building.	3 rd April 2023	Withdrawn
DC/22/3660/FUL	3no. New Dwellings and 1no. Class E Commercial Unit.	9 th January 2023	Withdrawn
DC/22/2645/DRC	Discharge of Condition Nos. 3, 4, 5, 9 and 10 of DC/21/4527/FUL - Demolition of later addition to former guesthouse at No. 1 High Street ,Leiston and subdivision to create 2 x three bedroom dwellings plus new build three-bedroom dwelling to rear, private amenity space and car parking - external materials, hard surfacing, means of enclosure, schedule of repairs to Veldor House, flood proofing and mitigation, Construction Method Statement, contamination site investigation and remediation method statement	26 th August 2022	Approved
DC/22/1602/TCA	T1 Ash - fell, T2 Oak - Overall crown reduction by up to 1 metre and crown lift to 4.5 metres above ground level, T3 Hornbeam - fell, T4 Holly - fell, T5 Hawthorn - fell, T6 Yew - fell, T7 Sycamore - fell, T8 Sycamore - fell, T9 Sweet Chestnut - fell, T10 Sycamore - fell	27 th May 2022	No Objections
DC/22/0680/TCA	1 - Team to sever Ivy growing around 2x unidentified tree's, by 1ft around the circumference of the tree. G2 - Team to crown raise 2x Evergreen Oak to 5 metres from ground level to suitable growing points.	1 st April 2022	No Objections
DC/21/4527/FUL	Demolition of later addition to former guesthouse at No. 1 High Street ,Leiston and subdivision to create 2 x three bedroom dwellings plus new build three-bedroom dwelling to rear, private amenity space and car parking	2 nd February 2022	Approved
DC/21/3347/TCA	Removal of very large multi stem sweet chestnut tree overhanging and dominating the house.	19 th August 2021	No Objections

3 The Proposal

3.1 Summary

3.1.1 Full planning permission is sought for the demolition of a vacant commercial unit, works to relocate wall and the construction of 4no. residential dwellings. Further details have been provided below:

Demolition

3.1.2 Demolition of a vacant commercial unit at 5-7 Valley Road, previously occupied by 'Just e Bikes' who vacated the property in 2022.

Construction of 4no. residential dwellings

3.1.3 The construction of 4no. detached residential dwellings arranged as follows:

3.1.4 Plot 1 is located on the frontage of the Site, on the eastern side of where Valley Road meets the proposed access road. The dwelling is located on part of the Site where the current vacant commercial building is located. It is a 3-bedroom 6-person property across 2.5 storeys and provides 109m² of accommodation.

3.1.5 Plot 2 is located centrally on the eastern boundary of the Site, where the rear of the vacant commercial building is located. It is a 3-bedroom 5-person property across 1.5 storeys and provides 110m² of accommodation.

3.1.6 Plot 3 is located centrally on the western boundary of the Site. It is a 3-bedroom 5-person property across 1.5 storeys and provides 98m² of accommodation.

3.1.7 Plot 4 is located in the north-eastern corner of the Site. It is a 4-bedroom 8-person property across 1.5 storeys and provides 138m² of accommodation.

Other works

3.1.8 A new access road is proposed from Valley Road where the existing commercial building is located. Visibility splays of 26.5m (westwards) and 43m (eastwards) can be achieved with a 2m setback.

3.1.9 A Type 3 Turning Head, which has been tracked to demonstrate that a large refuse vehicle can enter and exit the Site in a forward gear. It is proposed that the access road up to the turning head is built to an adoptable standard but remains in private ownership with a management company created for long term maintenance of the road.

3.1.10 Each dwelling will include designated parking spaces for at least two vehicles, with a visitor space provided centrally within the Site. Each parking space will have an EV charging point.

3.1.11 Each dwelling will be provided with an Air Source Heat Pump, providing a renewable and decentralised source of energy for hot water and heating demand.

3.1.12 Bin stores and collection points have been shown for each property, please refer to the submitted 'Proposed Site Plan' drawing (4348-LAN-ZZ-XX-DR-A-0100 P04). A Bin store is proposed to be provided for the neighbouring property, 3 Valley Road, along the access road to ensure that visibility splays are not obstructed along the frontage of the Site.

3.1.13 A shed for cycle storage, in line with the Suffolk Guidance for Parking (2023), will be provided within the curtilage of each dwelling.

3.1.14 The wall fronting onto Valley Road, between 1 High Street and 3 Valley Road is proposed to be relocated, to enable the maximum available visibility splays to be achieved. It is proposed that the wall will be set back approximately 500mm.

3.1.15 Subject to further investigation, it is expected that surface water drainage for the Site will be achieved through a mains sewer or the use of soakaways/attenuation tanks located within the turning head.

Contributions

3.1.16 The East Suffolk Community Infrastructure Levy ('CIL') Charging Schedule as adopted at the Full Council meeting on 28th June 2023 and came into effect on 1st August 2023. The Site is located within the 'Zone 3 Mid Value' residential charging zone for the purposes of calculating CIL, which attracts a CIL liability of £107.32 per m² for 2024.

4 Planning Policy Context

4.1 Primary Legislation

- 4.1.1 Under Section 38 of The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 ('The 2004 Act'), the determination of planning applications must be in accordance with the approved development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.1.2 This chapter identifies the national and local planning policies that provide the framework against which an application would be determined against, together with any relevant material planning considerations.

4.2 Suffolk Coastal Local Plan

- 4.2.1 The Suffolk Coastal Local Plan covers the former Suffolk Coastal District Council Area which was amalgamated within Waveney District Council to form East Suffolk Council. The Local Plan applies to the part of the East Suffolk Council area formerly covered by the Suffolk Coastal local planning authority area until such time that it is replaced. The Local Plan was adopted in September 2020 and provides a vision for the area up to 2036.
- 4.2.2 Policies from the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan which are considered to be of relevance are:
- SCLP3.1: Strategy for Growth
 - SCLP3.2: Settlement Hierarchy
 - SCLP3.3 Settlement Boundaries
 - SCLP5.7: Infill and Garden Development
 - SCLP5.8: Housing Mix
 - SCLP7.1: Sustainable Transport
 - SCLP7.2: Parking Proposals and Standards
 - SCLP9.7: Holistic Water Management
 - SCLP10.1: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
 - SCLP10.3: Environmental Quality
 - SCLP10.4: Landscape Character
 - SCLP11.1: Design Quality
 - SCLP11.2: Residential Amenity
 - SCLP11.3: Historic Environment
 - SCLP11.4: Listed Buildings
 - SCLP11.5: Conservation Areas
 - SCLP11.6: Non-Designated Heritage Assets

4.3 Leiston Neighbourhood Plan

- 4.3.1 The Neighbourhood Plan for Leiston-cum-Sizewell Parish represents one part of the development plan for the parish over the period 2015 to 2029, the other part being the 2020 Suffolk Coastal Local Plan .

4.3.2 Policies from the Leiston Neighbourhood Plan which are considered to be of relevance are:

- Policy PL1: Leiston Town Physical Limits Boundary
- Policy H3: Residential Density and Design
- Policy TM3: Residential Parking Standards
- Policy FL1: Addressing Localised Flooding Matters

4.4 National Planning Policy

4.4.1 National planning policy is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework'), this document was originally published in 2012, but has since undergone consultation and review. A revised document was published in December 2023 and now forms the new Framework within which regional and local policy is set. The publication of the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) in March 2014 gives further guidance to the provisions of the Framework and is consistently being updated. The parts which are considered of particular relevance to this proposed development are detailed below.

4.4.2 Paragraph 7 states that *'The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, including the provision of homes, commercial development, and supporting infrastructure in a sustainable manner. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own need'*.

4.4.3 Paragraph 8 states *'Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives)'*. These objectives are economic, social and environmental.

4.4.4 Paragraph 9 states *'These objectives should be delivered through the preparation and implementation of plans and the application of the policies in this Framework; they are not criteria against which every decision can or should be judged. Planning policies and decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area'*.

4.4.5 Paragraph 60 states that *'To support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed...'*

4.4.6 Paragraph 70 states that *'Small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area, and are often built-out relatively quickly'*.

4.4.7 Paragraph 109 states that *'The planning system should actively manage patterns of growth in support of these objectives. 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. This can help to reduce congestion and emissions, and improve air quality and public health'*.

4.4.8 Paragraph 115 states that *'Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe'*.

- 4.4.9 Paragraph 123 states that *'Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions'*.
- 4.4.10 Paragraph 124 states that planning policies and decisions should *'give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs...'*.
- 4.4.11 Paragraph 131 states that *'The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities'*.
- 4.4.12 Paragraph 136 states that *'Trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments, and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible'*.
- 4.4.13 Paragraph 195 states that *'Heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance, such as World Heritage Sites which are internationally recognised to be of Outstanding Universal Value. These assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations'*.
- 4.4.14 Paragraph 200 states that *'In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant 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'*.
- 4.4.15 Paragraphs 205-207 consider the impact of development proposals upon the significance of designated heritage assets. Paragraph 205 states that where a development is proposed that would affect 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 this weight should be)'*. Paragraph 208 emphasises that *'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 scheme, bearing in mind the great weight highlighted in Paragraph 205.

5 Planning Assessment

5.1 The Principle of Development

- 5.1.1 Policy SCLP3.3 states that *'new development within defined settlement boundaries will be acceptable in principle, subject to consideration of other relevant policies of the development plan'*. The Site is located within the defined settlement boundary for Leiston, as defined in the Leiston Neighbourhood Plan and therefore the Proposal complies with Policy SCLP3.3.
- 5.1.2 Policy SCLP5.7 states that proposals for infill development or residential development within existing gardens will be supported where they would not result in harm to the street scene or character of the areas, well related in scale and design to adjacent properties, not result in significant harm to residential amenity, have sufficient curtilage space and accord with other housing policies of the Local Plan.
- 5.1.3 At present, the street scene of the Site is dominated by the single storey flat roof building of 5-7 Valley Road, since 'justebikes' vacated the property. The property is in poor condition and is of a design which is considered unsympathetic to Leiston and adjacent Conservation Area, resulting in a very poor street scene.
- 5.1.4 The brick wall positioned immediately east of the Veldor House is proposed to be carefully taken down brick by brick and re-erected with a greater set back from the road. The structure will be photographed prior to its removal and individual bricks marked so as to accurately re-construct.
- 5.1.5 The Proposal seeks to create an access road from Valley Road, with a new high-quality mews dwelling of 2.5 storeys located adjacent, providing an architectural focal point/gateway at the front of the Site. The dwelling provides presence and additional interest within the street scene, especially when looking along Valley Road to the east. This is achieved by using high-quality traditional materials and quality detailing, including brick arches, brick dentil course to gable/dormers, brick band course, sash windows, stone cills and aluminium rainwater goods. The proposal also provides a dedicated bin store for the adjacent No.3 Valley Road, removing the clutter of bins from the existing street scene.
- 5.1.6 The proposals will require some physical change to the conservation area, specifically within the back plot of Veldor House (which sits within the conservation area boundary), where three new dwellings will be constructed, along with a paved access route and space for car parking. The buildings have been designed with an appropriate material palette that responds to the prevailing material use in the conservation area; including red brick construction, gabled pitch roofs, brick surrounds and slate roofs. The buildings have been sited around the perimeter of the plot to retain a sense of central open space.
- 5.1.7 The position and appearance of the buildings has also been purposefully designed to be reminiscent of outbuildings, as would have been present within the rear plot of Veldor House historically and would have been present in many of the other rear gardens of buildings within the conservation area. As such, although there will be some physical change to the conservation area from the proposals, the character and appearance of the conservation area will be sustained by the proposals.
- 5.1.8 The Proposal has been designed to assimilate into the surrounding town and to be of an appropriate scale and design which respects the amenity of existing development adjacent to the Site. The scale of the dwellings transition from the front of the Site, where Plot 1 is 2.5 storeys, to the rear of the Site where Plots 3 and 4 are 1.5 storeys. This takes into account the topography of the Site, which rises by approximately 2m from the front to rear of the Site.

- 5.1.9 Design is assessed in section 5.2. however, it is considered that the proposal is considered to be well relates in design to adjacent properties, as required by SCLP5.7.
- 5.1.10 Amenity is assessed in section 5.8, however, it is considered that proposal would not result in significant harm to residential amenity, as required by SCLP5.7.
- 5.1.11 Each dwelling has sufficient curtilage for the placement of a shed (for bike and other storage), a bin store, general private amenity space and for the location of an Air Source Heat Pump. The majority of dwellings also have their car parking within their curtilage, except for Plot 1 which is located on the other side of the access road.
- 5.1.12 Overall, it is considered that the Proposal complies with each of the individual elements identified within Policy SCLP5.7 and that the principle of the development in relation to its location within the settlement boundary for Leiston is established, subject to compliance with other policies of the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan.

5.2 Design

- 5.2.1 SCLP11.1 states that *'the Council will support locally distinctive and high-quality design that clearly demonstrates an understanding of the key features of local character and seeks to enhance these through innovative and creative means'*. Permission will be granted where proposals support inclusive design, demonstrate a clear understanding of local character, respond to local context, take account of any important landscape or topographical features, amongst others.
- 5.2.2 A Design and Access Statement has been produced by Lanpro Services which accompanies the planning application and demonstrates how a high-quality residential development can be achieved. A summary has been provided below.
- 5.2.3 The Proposal responds sensitively to specific Site constraints and opportunities by taking design references from the context, conservation area setting and the materiality present in historical residential development within Leiston.
- 5.2.4 House types within the development have been designed with reference to the local vernacular and materials contextual to the conservation area. The proposed palette of materials includes red brick and slate. The designs feature external detailing to the elevations which further the contextual references and also evoke a sense of craftsmanship to the development.
- 5.2.5 The house types address typical archetypes of traditional village typologies, such as: bay window to plot 1 (site gateway), arched window heads, dormers, sash windows and traditional entrance porches.
- 5.2.6 The overall design of the layout has been carefully considered to maintain the *'open and green'* character of the conservation area, by providing generous gardens to the new dwellings, along with the positioning and scale of the dwellings; this allows vision of sight from the conservation area, in order to maintain the sense of openness and greenery across the Site and wider setting.
- 5.2.7 The existing oak tree on the Site provides a centre point to the development, and its retention has been a key consideration which has informed the design of the Proposal.
- 5.2.8 The retention of features such as the northern boundary wall with Plot 4 offset from the wall to remain visible and appreciable.

- 5.2.9 Overall, it is considered that the development has been designed with an understanding of the opportunities and constraints of the Site and Proposal reflects the local character and wider context of the Conservation Area and town of Leiston. Given the above, it is considered that the Proposal complies with Policy SCLP11.1.

5.3 Historic Environment

- 5.3.1 Policy SCLP11.3 – 11.6 set out the Council’s considerations to Historic Environment, Listed Buildings, Conservation Area and Non-Designated Heritage Assets. The overall approach set out by the Council is that it *‘will work with partners, developers and the community to conserve and enhance the historic environment and to ensure that where possible development makes a positive contribution to the historic environment’*.

- 5.3.2 Lanpro have provided a Heritage Statement, which accompanies the planning application. A summary of the Statement has been provided below but please refer to the Statement for full details.

Heritage Assets

- 5.3.3 The majority of the Site is located within the Leiston Conservation Area. The impact of the proposed development on the special interest of the conservation area will be assessed. The Leiston Conservation Area Appraisal also records one non-designated heritage asset within the study site as a positive contributor to the conservation area: Veldor House at 1-4 Valley Road.

- 5.3.1 There are eight Listed Buildings within the surrounding 250m search area. However, due to the nature of the urban context which screens the site from many of these listed buildings, only two are considered relevant to this assessment and will be considered within this report. These comprise:

- Works House (Grade II listed, NHLE 1216390)
- High Green (Grade II listed, NHLE 1287630)

- 5.3.2 In addition to the designated heritage assets, the Suffolk County Council HER and the Leiston Conservation Area Appraisal also record non-designated heritage assets within the surrounding 250m search area. The Suffolk County Council HER records the non-designated Congregational Chapel built on High Street in 1866, c.175m south of the site. The Leiston Conservation Area Appraisal records 19 non-designated built heritage assets within the search area (not including Veldor House within the study site) as positive contributors to the conservation area. Of these, eight are located within close proximity to, and share some intervisibility with, the study site. These comprise:

- 4 Valley Road
- 3-7 High Street
- Barclays Bank (19 Main Street)
- Council Offices
- 13-14 Dinsdale Road
- 17 Dinsdale Road
- 11-12 Dinsdale Road
- 15-16 Dinsdale Road

- 5.3.3 The remaining non-designated built heritage assets are screened from the study site by intervening built forms and vegetation which forms the urban context of Leiston.

Impact of Development

- 5.3.4 Due to the location of the proposals, partially within the boundary of the Leiston Conservation Area and within proximity to a number of heritage assets, the proposals have been designed with regard to both the conservation area and relevant nearby heritage assets.
- 5.3.5 The proposals will require some physical change to the conservation area, specifically within the back plot of Veldor House (which sits within the conservation area boundary), where three new dwellings will be constructed, along with a paved access route and space for car parking.
- 5.3.6 However, although this will represent a physical change, the proposals have been designed to reflect the character of built form with the conservation area and retain as much green space and foliage as possible. To this end the buildings have been designed with an appropriate material palette that responds to the prevailing material use in the conservation; including red brick construction, gabled pitch rooves, brick surrounds and slate rooves.
- 5.3.7 The buildings have been sited around the perimeter of the plot to retain a sense of open space. The position and appearance of the buildings has also been purposefully designed to be reminiscent of outbuildings, such as would have been present within the rear plot of Veldor House historically and would have been present in many of the other rear gardens of buildings within the conservation area.
- 5.3.8 The study site has been identified as an “open/green/tree” space within the conservation area appraisal. However, in its current form, the study site has very little green space and is not maintained. Notwithstanding this, the design of the proposals has incorporated landscaping within a large proportion of green space that seeks to retain extant trees where possible, whilst still enabling car access to the proposed dwellings. In this way, the proposed scheme aims to be of benefit to the conservation area, by enhancing the quality of the green space.
- 5.3.9 The proposed demolition of the commercial premises facing south onto Valley Road will have a beneficial effect on the way the conservation area is appreciated. Currently, the building has a negative effect on the appreciation of the conservation as it is approached from Valley Road, as the building is relatively prominent, uncharacteristic, unattractive and vacant. Its removal can be considered beneficial.
- 5.3.10 The proposed new dwelling that will sit in this location had been designed to respond positively to the character and composition of other buildings along Valley Road. For instance, the building has a doorway and gable end facing out south directly onto Valley Road. The building’s south elevation will sit in line with the property line established by the existing buildings to its east. The position and height of the proposed new dwelling in this location will have the added benefit of obscuring the west elevation of the adjacent building, which does not contribute positively to the setting of the conservation area.
- 5.3.11 The proposed materials will correspond to the prevailing materials within the setting of the conservation area including red brick and slate. Although the proposed new scheme will introduce a new opening into the street scape, this is not unusual along Valley Road and overall, the proposed new dwelling can be considered a positive contribution to the approach into the Leiston Conservation Area.
- 5.3.12 The brick wall positioned immediately east of the Veldor House is proposed to be carefully taken down brick by brick and re-erected with a greater set back from the road. The structure will be photographed prior to its removal and individual bricks marked so as to accurately re-

construct. This will ensure that, although there will be some physical change to the conservation area, it can be limited as far as possible and so this element of the proposals will not negatively affect the appearance of the conservation area.

- 5.3.13 The proposals will have no impact on the nearby listed building described above. There will be no direct intervisibility between the listed buildings and the proposed development, and as such the significance of the listed buildings will be sustained.
- 5.3.14 The brick wall positioned immediately east of the Veldor House is proposed to be carefully taken down brick by brick and re-erected with a greater set back from the road. The structure will be photographed prior to its removal and individual bricks marked so as to accurately re-construct. This will ensure that, although there will be some physical change to the conservation area, it can be limited as far as possible and so this element of the proposals will not negatively affect the appearance of the conservation area.
- 5.3.15 There may be some glimpsed views of the proposed development from Dinsdale Road (where most of the non-designated heritage assets in proximity to the site are located), however, if there are glimpsed views, they will be consistent with the existing views. The majority of trees within the study site will be retained and will enable the study site to continue to be red as open space in those glimpsed views from the surrounding area. The proposed new dwellings to the rear of Veldor House, being only one and half stories will not be prominent in these views. As such, this will not have an impact on the experience or appreciation of any of the non-designated heritage assets on Dinsdale Road or on High Street, beyond that change in the nature of the conservation area described above.

Conclusion

- 5.3.16 The proposed works have been sensitively designed to limit the impact on the Leiston Conservation Area as far as possible, whilst enabling the construction of four new dwellings within the study site.
- 5.3.17 The design mainly comprises the removal of the commercial property, the construction of four new dwellings and the retention of a large proportions of the open space that currently forms the garden to Veldor House at the centre of the rear plot to Veldor House. The new dwellings have been designed to be appropriate to this location within the setting of the conservation area, both in terms of form (massing, scale and footprint) and materiality. In the case of the proposed two and half storey building, the design incorporates features that will activate the street frontage and will emphasises continuity with street scene along Valley Road.
- 5.3.18 In the case of the proposed two and half storey building, the design incorporates features that will activate the street frontage and will emphasises continuity with other buildings along Valley Road. Although it is acknowledged that the proposals will introduce a degree of physical change into the conservation area, the design, which is intended to respond positively to the character of the conservation area and provide beneficial effects where possible.
- 5.3.19 Although it is acknowledged that the proposals will introduce a degree of physical change into the conservation area, the design is intended to respond positively to the character of the conservation area and provide beneficial effects where possible. For instance, the designs will improve the condition of the open space, which is currently an overgrown garden, to the rear of Veldor House and provide a better street frontage to Valley Road. Overall, although the proposals will constitute a physical change to the conservation area, the contribution made by the study site to the character and appearance of the conservation area will be sustained.
- 5.3.20 As a result of the heritage led design, there will be no impact on the significance of any of the designated and non-designated assets identified above and so their significance will be sustained by the proposals.

- 5.3.21 Overall, although the proposals will physically change the nature of this portion of the Leiston Conservation Area and its setting, the considered design will avoid impacting the character and appearance of the conservation area, or the significance that any of the identified designated and non-designated heritage assets derive from their surroundings. The Proposals are considered to preserve the Conservation Area and found to be in compliance with local and national policy, including Local Planning Policies SCLP11.1, SCLP11.3, SCLP11.4 and SCLP11.6.

5.4 Transport

- 5.4.1 Policy SCLP7.1 states that *'Development proposals should be designed from the outset to incorporate measures that will encourage people to travel using non-car modes to access home, school, employment, services and facilities'*.
- 5.4.2 Policy SCLP7.2 states that *'Proposals will be expected to have regard to the parking standards contained in the Suffolk Guidance for Parking (including subsequent revisions)'*.
- 5.4.3 Caneparo Associates have provided a Transport Note to consider the transport and highway implications associated with the Proposal, which has been submitted alongside the application. A summary has been provided below.

Site Context

- 5.4.4 Valley Road is a 20mph road, with a 30mph to 20mph transition located approximately 15 metres to the west of the Site, where Valley Road meets High Street. Double yellow line marking restrictions are present in the vicinity of the Site along Valley Road.
- 5.4.5 Given the available shops and services, it is considered that there is significant scope for residents of the Proposal to travel to a wide range of amenities and services by foot or cycle.
- 5.4.6 Bus stops are available close to the Site, with stops served by 521, 522 (Border Bus) and 64 (First Bus) The 521 and 64 services operate at an hourly frequency during peak times, while the 522 operates at a half hourly frequency during peak times.
- 5.4.7 Given the Site's location in close proximity to a range of local amenities, services and public transport facilities, it is considered that the Site is ideally located for residential development.

Design/Proposal

- 5.4.8 The proposed development would be accessed via a new 4.8m access road off Valley Road.
- 5.4.9 Visibility splays of 26.4m (westerly) and 43m (easterly) can be achieved with a 2.0m set back. Caneparo state that the Proposal can demonstrate unobstructed SSDs of 25m and 43m, as set out in the Manual for Streets ('MfS'). It is recognised in the MfS that a minimum set back figure of 2m might be considered in some 'very lightly-trafficked and slow-speed situations'. In this circumstance, it is considered acceptable, especially as the Proposal will result in a low level of traffic.
- 5.4.10 To minimise the potential for the visibility splay to the west to be obstructed, a new bin storage area for No. 3 Valley Road is proposed along the new access road set back from the back of footway. No.3 Valley Road do not have a separate access to their rear garden, so bins are stored immediately in front of the dwelling. The proposed bin store will protect visibility splays, as well as improving the street scene.
- 5.4.11 A type 3 turning head has been provided within the Site. A large refuse vehicle has been tracked within the Site, which confirms that there is sufficient space for manoeuvring and entering and exiting the Site in a forward gear.

- 5.4.12 It is proposed that the internal access road would be built to an adoptable standard but remain private with residents being responsible for the maintenance of the internal access arrangements.
- 5.4.13 The proposal provides 2x parking spaces for Plot 1, 2 and 3, 3x parking spaces for Plot 4, and a single visitor parking space, in line with the minimum parking standards set out in the Suffolk Guidance for Parking. All parking spaces will have electric vehicle charging.
- 5.4.14 Covered and secure cycle storage is being provided in the form a shed in each of the rear gardens, complying with the requirements set out in the Suffolk Guidance for Parking.
- 5.4.15 Overall, it is considered that the Site is ideally located to encourage people to travel using non-car modes to the wide range of local shops and services available in Leiston. Car parking and cycle parking have been provided to meet the proposed in line with policy requirements. It is considered that the access provided sufficient visibility splays and the proposal would not result in an unacceptable impact on highways safety, in reference to Paragraph 115 of the NPPF. Overall, it is considered that the Proposal complies with Policies SCLP7.1 and SCLP7.2

5.5 Water

- 5.5.1 Policy SCLP9.7 states that all new development will be expected to incorporate water efficiency and re-use measures to maximise the opportunities to reduce water use.
- 5.5.2 Due to the stage of the proposals, exact details relating to the incorporation of water efficiency and re-use measures have not been specified, however, it is considered that an appropriate worded condition would secure the requirement with the Proposals then considered to be compliant with Policy SCLP9.7.

5.6 Ecology and Trees

- 5.6.1 Policy SCLP10.1 seeks new development to secure ecological enhancements as part of its design and implementation and Policy SCLP10.4 seeks for protect and enhance distinctive landscape elements including trees.

Ecology

- 5.6.2 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report was undertaken by Practical Ecology, which was submitted to support a previous planning application at the Site. A verification survey has since been undertaken by Lanpro, which sought to compare the existing habitat and protected species suitability with that reported in Practical Ecology's December 2022 report, ensuring that the assessment is robust.
- 5.6.3 The habitats and protected species suitability on-site largely remained the same as reported in 2022.
- 5.6.4 The Site consisted of a derelict commercial building and an unmanaged vegetated garden which contained unmanaged grassland, temporary structures (shipping containers, a summerhouse and a derelict caravan), unvegetated unsealed surfaces, and scattered trees. The Site was bounded by brick walls and wooden close boarded fences. Tipped building waste was scattered across the Site and a spoil pile of soil was present towards the north of the Site.
- 5.6.5 Scattered trees included a veteran English oak (*Quercus robur*) on the eastern boundary, a mature ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) on the western boundary, and a semi-mature sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) in the north-eastern corner. A large mature blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) was also present in the north-east corner.

- 5.6.6 The veteran oak had two main stems, one of which was almost entirely decayed and one of which was intact with very little decay. The decayed limb was so decayed that it had very limited suitability for roosting bats, as the rotten areas were open to the elements. The intact limb had lifted bark and ivy covering, which overall had roosting suitability for individual bats only ('PRF-I').
- 5.6.7 The ash tree had a covering of ivy and had roosting suitability for individual bats only ('PRF-I'). Other scattered trees had no bat roosting suitability.
- 5.6.8 The derelict commercial building appeared similar to the previous assessment based on the survey from the exterior. Human access into the western wall had been recently created (winter 2023/4) which had only been partly covered with steel hoarding. A large gap was present above the hoarding. As such, this allowed suitable access for bats and birds into the interior of the building and increases the suitability of the building from negligible to low. However, as the gap had been created very recently and outside of the bat active season, and as the subsequent bat active season has not yet commenced, there is no reasonable likelihood that bats will have found and started to use the building as a roosting site.
- 5.6.9 The summerhouse was a derelict wooden structure with glass windows. A majority of the felt roof coverings had come away leaving the single skin wooden boards underneath exposed and the interior open to the elements. The doorway was left open. The corners of the structure had rotted near to the ground but in general the tongue and groove planks were tightly overlapping. All potential roosting features (e.g. areas of rot) were inspected with a torch and no evidence of roosting bats was found. The structure was classed as having no more than low suitability for roosting bats. The caravan was classified as having negligible suitability for roosting bats and the shipping containers as having no suitability.
- 5.6.10 No development will occur within 15m of the veteran oak tree and no lighting is planned adjacent to the tree. Aside from tree protection measures and the measures detailed within the tree survey report, there are no additional recommendations.
- 5.6.11 The ash tree in the north west corner will be removed to facilitate the development. It is recommended this is section felled under a precautionary working method statement. The summerhouse and commercial building should also be demolished under a precautionary working method statement, aligned with paragraph 5.2.44 of the bat survey guidelines (Collins 2023). For the summerhouse, this would include a licensed bat worker being present on the day of demolition to remove the damaged / rotten features by hand. It is not safe for an ecologist to be present during the demolition of the commercial building. The demolition contractor should be provided with a toolbox talk regarding roosting bats and nesting birds and to stop works and contact an ecologist if any evidence of either is found.
- 5.6.12 The 2022 report should be referred to for further assessments and recommendations regarding other protected species and habitats.

Trees

- 5.6.13 An Arboricultural Impact Assessment has been prepared by Tree Planning Solutions Ltd to support the planning application.
- 5.6.14 The Site was surveyed on 2nd December 2022 and again on 8th February 2024. Four individual trees were surveyed as part of the assessment, which could potentially be affected indirectly or directly by the construction of the proposed development. The report provides the following information and data in accordance with the criteria provided within BS 5837 2012 'Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction recommendations'.

- 5.6.15 the site to be situated on bedrock of Crag Group - Sand and superficial deposits of Lowestoft Formation- sand and gravel. Sand and gravel soil texture is likely to offer a deeper rooting environment than that of clay as the roots can easily penetrate and explore sandy soils with little resistance, clay like soils tend to restrict root exploration.
- 5.6.16 Of the four trees assessed, 3 of the trees (identified as T2, T3 and T4 within the report) were assessed as being Category grade C1, with a single tree (identified as T1 within the report) was assessed as being an A2/3.
- 5.6.17 T4 was identified as having a lapsed pollard with veteran associations (decay column, fungus, deadwood). 1 Pollard stem (north side) has failed (historical) resulting in large tear wound and decay within stem. Old decayed fungal fruit body within pollard head and at base, likely *Fistulina hepatica*, evidence of cubical brown rot. Low epicormic / lower crown. Recent high pollard / crown reduction, good vigorous regrowth at pruning point, good inner crown as a result of crown reduction. Ivy clad stem.
- 5.6.18 The visual amenity of the trees was identified as being limited due to the position to the rear of the Site and built form which prevent views of the trees from public vantage points.
- 5.6.19 T1 provides good landscape value, helping to reduce the built form of the area by reducing the visual impact of the surrounding development and roof lines. Whilst not providing high visual amenity, T1 is of an age which where it is part of the historical landscape and offers landscape value and is synonymous with the surrounding historical town/associations.
- 5.6.20 T1, T2 and T3 are proposed to be retained, however, T4 is removed to be removed to facilitate the Proposal. The 'Proposed Site Plan' demonstrates opportunities for new tree, hedge, scrub planting across the Site, which will help to mitigate the loss of a single Category C1 Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*. Full details of the planting proposals can be secured via a suitable worded condition.
- 5.6.21 T1 is identified as having a Root Protection Area (RPA) of 19.2m, but capped to 15m, in line with British Standard 5837. Land within the RPA is largely characterised by existing type 1 aggregate and compacted soil, with the vacant commercial building (5-7 Valley Road) located within the south-eastern corner of the RPA. Previous
- 5.6.22 The Proposal seeks to limit any built form within the RPA of T1 as much as possible, with a section of the proposed no-dig access located on the outer edge of the RPA and limited hard landscaping (shed bases, paths and fences) for Plot 2 located within the RPA.
- 5.6.23 Plot 2 is entirely located within the footprint of the existing vacant commercial building and is therefore considered that the foundations of the building would have likely dissuaded any root incursion into the commercial plot and therefore unlikely that Plot 2 would result in any roots to be harmed.
- 5.6.24 Construction methods for the proposed infrastructure would include hand excavation /surface level preparation within the RPA using handheld tools only (50mm) for the construction of the no-dig access. Hand excavation is proposed within the RPA for the construction of the patio, shed base and post holes for the fencing posts.
- 5.6.25 The proposal seeks to improve upon the existing by creating permanent soft surface for the majority of the capped 15m RPA. Recommendations prior to development and installation of the protective barriers is for the 15m RPA be de-compacted using air injection. However, all submitted drawings have used the 19.2m RPA area as a guide for development.
- 5.6.26 Overall, it is considered that the Proposals retain, protect and preserve distinctive land features such as the T1 Oak Tree and the ecology report and verification survey set out that no

further surveys are required, with recommendations made on mitigation and how further works should be carried out.

5.6.27 It is considered that the Proposal complies with Policies SCLP10.1 and SLCP 10.4.

5.7 Biodiversity Net Gain

5.7.1 Policy SCLP10.1 states that new development should provide for biodiversity net gain.

5.7.2 The proposed development meets the thresholds of a non-major development as defined by Article 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. Therefore, the planning application is exempt from statutory Biodiversity Net Gain requirements of 10% until 2nd April 2024, under the temporary exemption for non-major developments. As such, the biodiversity gain condition would not apply. However, the submitted Ecology Report does set out how an overall biodiversity net gain could be achieved on the Site, as required under SCLP10.1.

5.8 Amenity

5.8.1 Policy SCLP11.2 states that when considering the impact of development on residential amenity, the Council will have regards to a range of considerations including privacy, outlook, access to daylight and sunlight, noise, the physical relationship with other properties and security amongst others. Development will provide for adequate living conditions for future occupiers and will not cause an unacceptable loss of amenity for existing or future occupiers of development in the vicinity.

Existing development

5.8.2 Each plot has been designed to respect the existing neighbouring development to ensure there is not an unacceptable loss of amenity.

5.8.3 Plot 1 has been designed to face out to the west and southern boundaries, presenting a blank façade to the east where it would abut the adjacent 1-4 Valley Court. The depth of Plot 1 has been designed to match that of the adjacent to prevent any significant overshadowing, resulting in a typical terrace relationship. The rear of 1-4 Valley Court comprises of a parking court and therefore would be no concern of overlooking into this area. The small rear courtyard of No 3 Valley Road is currently hemmed in on all sides by existing buildings. The demolition of the buildings will result in a much more pleasant space. Plot 1 would partially overlook the courtyard, largely limited to window of a single bedroom.

5.8.4 Plot 2 is located approximately 24m from any dwelling to the east, providing sufficient separation distance. 1-4 Valley Court is located at an acute angle from the proposal, and it is considered that this would not result in an unacceptable loss of amenity.

5.8.5 Plot 3 has been offset from the boundary and limited to 1.5 storeys with windows on the first-floor boundary limited to roof lights, with these serving a bathroom and landing, rather than any habitable rooms.

5.8.6 Plot 4 has been offset from the boundary to increase the distance from properties located on Kitchener Road and again limited to 1.5 storeys with windows on the first-floor boundary limited to roof lights. To the north, a single roof light for a bedroom is proposed whilst the separation distances to the west are considered acceptable.

Proposed Development

- 5.8.7 Future residents would benefit from a high standard of internal living conditions with all dwellings meeting the Nationally Described Space Standards. The properties would also benefit from good sized windows for natural light and good sized private external amenity space.
- 5.8.8 In terms of noise and activity, the proposal is for a residential use in an area occupied by other residential development, so it is considered to be a compatible use. The main noise generating issue is likely to be the movement of vehicles. The proposed level of parking is low, and the level of movements are likely to be similarly low.
- 5.8.9 Overall, it is considered that the Proposal complies with Policy SCLP11.2.

6 Conclusion

6.1 Summary

- 6.1.1 Lanpro have been instructed by the Applicant to submit a full planning application for the demolition of a vacant commercial unit, works to relocate a wall and the construction of 4no. residential dwellings with associated infrastructure on land at 1 High Street and 5-7 Valley Road, Leiston.
- 6.1.2 The Site is located within the settlement boundary for Leiston and is considered to be a suitable infill/garden development in a highly sustainable location. NPPF Paragraph 124 states that planning decisions should give substantial weight to the value of suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes.
- 6.1.3 The Proposal has been carefully designed to reflect the local character and wider context of the Conservation Area and town of Leiston. Although the proposals will physically change the nature of a portion of Leiston Conservation Area and its setting, the Proposal is considered to preserve the special historic character of the conservation area and maintain its '*open and green*' character, including the protection of an important Category A tree.
- 6.1.4 The submitted plans demonstrate the opportunities and constraints of the Site and how a suitable development can be achieved, given the surrounding context of the Site.
- 6.1.5 Overall, the proposal is considered to accord to with the policies of the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan and no material considerations have been identified which would preclude the development of the Site for the proposed development. Accordingly, it is request that the Council approve the application without delay.

