



<b>Agenda Item 4</b>
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## PLANNING COMMITTEE

Date: 24 February 2016

### APPLICATIONS FOR PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT DEVELOPMENT OR TO DISPLAY ADVERTISEMENTS (PC 12/16)

Schedule by Head of Planning and Coastal Management

Number of items: 6

FOR THE PURPOSE OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT, 1985 THE RELEVANT BACKGROUND DOCUMENT IN RESPECT OF EACH ITEM IS THE PLANNING APPLICATION FILE, INCLUDING SUBMITTED PLANS, CONSULTATIONS AND LETTERS OF COMMENT, BUT EXCLUDING INFORMATION EXEMPTED UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF THE ACT AND IDENTIFIED AS SUCH. ANY REPRESENTATIONS AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION SUBMITTED AFTER THE PREPARATION OF THIS SCHEDULE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN 24 HOURS PRIOR TO THE COMMITTEE MEETING WILL BE REPORTED VIA THE ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS REPORT CIRCULATED AT THE MEETING.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE ORDER OF THE ITEMS LISTED MAY BE CHANGED AT THE MEETING TO ACCOMMODATE PUBLIC SPEAKING.

SHOULD ANY OF THE FOLLOWING APPLICATIONS BE SUBJECT TO A SITE VISIT, THIS WILL NORMALLY TAKE PLACE ON THE SECOND MONDAY FOLLOWING THE DATE OF THE MEETING.

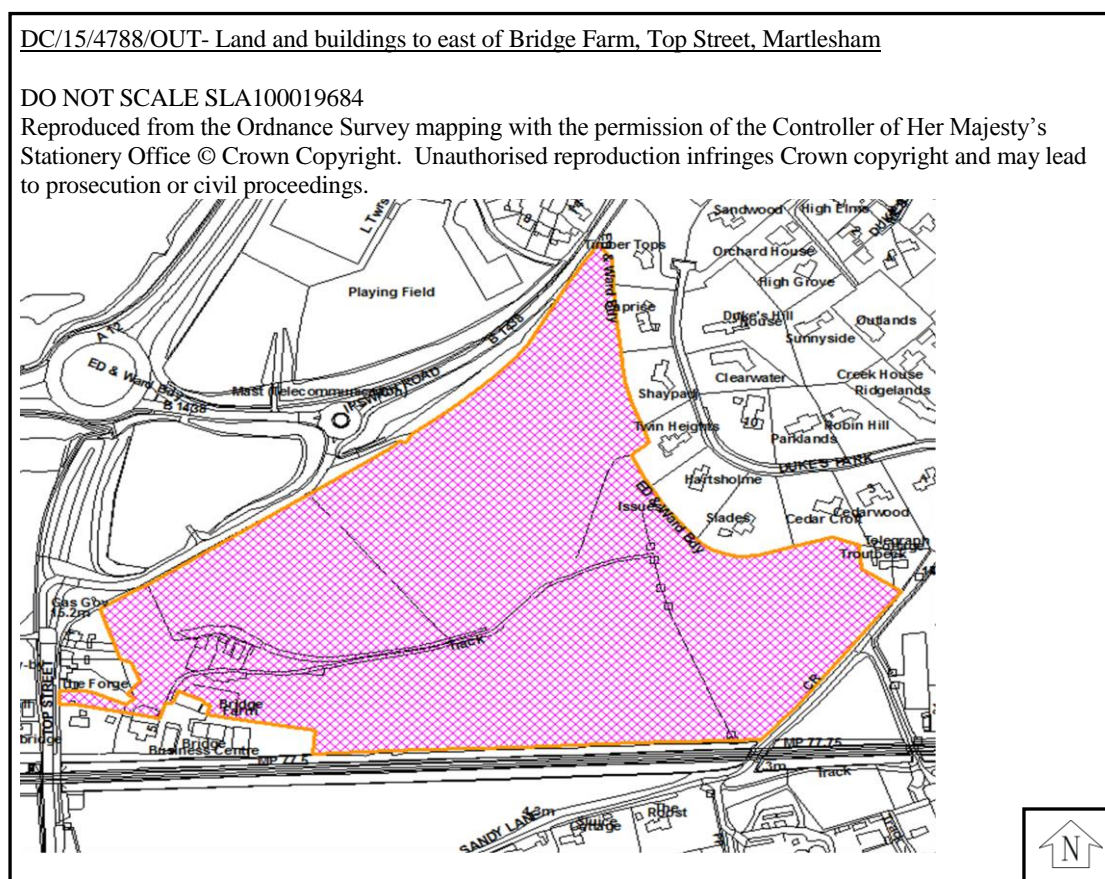
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3. **MARTLESHAM - DC/15/4788/OUT – Outline planning application for up to 215 residential dwellings (including up to 33% affordable housing), a Convenience Store (Use Class A1, up to 400sq.m gross/280sq.m net) with associated car parking. Demolition of existing structures, introduction of structural planting and landscaping, informal public open space and children's play area, surface water flood mitigation and attenuation, vehicular access from Ipswich Road and Top Street and associated ancillary works. All matters to be reserved with the exception of the site access. Land and buildings to east of Bridge Farm, Top Street, Martlesham, Suffolk, IP12 4RB for Gladman Developments Ltd.**

**Case Officer: Phil Perkin**

**Expiry Date: 21 March 2016**



**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Planning permission is sought for a residential led scheme to the southwest of Woodbridge, located outside of the defined settlement boundary in an area designated as countryside. The application is made in outline form with all matters reserved except access which is proposed off both Ipswich Road and Top Street.

The application is presented to the Development Management Sub Committee due to the size and significance of the scheme and because the development is EIA development.

Members of the Committee will note the objections received in relation to this application, including those from the Parish Council and the Highways Authority.

The application is contrary to a number of policies which seek to retain the site in its undeveloped form in order to prevent the coalescence of Woodbridge and Martlesham. The site is also very close to the AONB and Deben Estuary SPA. Development would harm the setting of the AONB and could disturb wildlife within the SPA although negotiations with Natural England

are ongoing. The application has been considered in the light of the principles of sustainable development, but for the reasons set out in this report, concluded that the adverse impacts of allowing the development significantly and demonstrably outweigh the identified benefits that would arise.

For the reasons set out in the report the application is recommended for refusal.

## **1. SITE DESCRIPTION**

- 1.1 The 12.67 hectare (31.3 acre) site lies in open countryside and is located on the south western edge of Woodbridge between Woodbridge and Martlesham. The northern extent of the application site is defined by the urban edge of Woodbridge. The A12 runs north to south along the western edge of Woodbridge and bypasses the site to the west. Adjacent to the north of the site is Ipswich Road and Top Street. Ipswich Road heads north east into Woodbridge and west connecting into the A12. Top Street links into Ipswich Road adjacent to the northern boundary of the site and heads south connecting into Martlesham. The site is located in the Parish of Martlesham.
- 1.2 The site itself is bound to the north east by large residential properties and their spacious gardens on Dukes Park; to the east by Sandy Lane; to the south by small business uses and the East Suffolk railway line; and to the west by the B1438 (Ipswich Road) and Top Street. From the northern part of the site, adjacent to Ipswich Road, the site slopes down wards towards the railway line.
- 1.3 The site currently comprises primarily of grassland and is bounded by hedgerows interspersed with scattered mature trees. A hedgerow runs roughly north to south in the central part of the site.
- 1.4 The Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB and the Deben Estuary Special Protection Area are located to the south of the site and the Special Landscape Area (SLA) is located to the west of the site.

## **2. PROPOSALS**

- 2.1 The application seeks outline planning permission for a residential and retail development with all matters reserved for future determination with the exception of the site access. The application proposes up to 215 dwellings over the site including up to 33% affordable housing. Vehicular access to the site is proposed from two main points. The first is off Ipswich Road in the northern part of the site. The second access point is to the south west off Top Street. To support the development proposals, two new bus stops are proposed along Ipswich Road. The proposed convenience store would have a floor area of approximately 280 sqm with 10-14 car parking spaces.
- 2.2 The application is supported by an illustrative Development Framework which gives an indication of how the could be developed, but this is for illustration purposes only and is not a fixed layout for determination at this stage. The Development Framework shows a total of 7.70ha of residential land. A site for a proposed convenience store of 400sqm together with car parking is shown in the northernmost part of the site, adjacent to the proposed access road off Ipswich Road. The proposed development includes the provision of green infrastructure running through the centre of the site to include new tree planting, woodland, grassland, footpaths and a central open space.
- 2.3 The cable route for the East Anglian Offshore Wind Farm (EAOW1) crosses the site from east to west, requiring a cable corridor width of 75m. The Development Framework shows a linear proposed informal open space (total area 3.16ha) following the route of the cable corridor and the permanent easement that will be required once the cables are laid. Located centrally within the site, adjacent to the informal open space/easement is a proposed play area with an area of 0.25 ha. The Development Framework shows an attenuation basin in the eastern part of the site adjacent to Sandy Lane and a proposed woodland in the western part of the site adjacent to Top Street.

2.4 An Environmental Statement (ES) accompanies the application in accordance with the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations 2011, to assess the potential impacts of the proposal, including:

- Landscape and Visual Impact
- Ecology and Nature Conservation
- Drainage
- Traffic and Transportation
- Air Quality
- Cultural Heritage
- Noise and Vibration
- Cumulative Effects

2.5 The application is also accompanied by the following reports and assessments:

- Design and Access Statement
- Planning and Affordable Housing Statement
- Transport Assessment (including access Travel Plan)
- Ecological Report and Reptile Survey
- Arboricultural Report
- Phase 1 Environmental Report
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Foul Drainage Analysis
- Air Quality Report
- Noise Impact Assessment
- Archaeological Assessment
- Heritage Statement
- Statement of Community Involvement
- Affordable Housing Statement
- Information for Habitat Regulation Assessment
- Socio-Economic Sustainability Statement
- Sequential Site Assessment
- Sustainable Construction and Energy Statement
- Waste Management Statement
- Play and Open Space Strategy

### 3. CONSULTATIONS

3.1 The overall consultation period was extended beyond the statutory 21 days, so it expired at 9am on 18 January 2015 (39 days after the site notices were posted) in recognition of the significant interest in the application and also to reflect the holiday period. All comments received during the consultation period are summarised below.

3.2 The full text versions of the comments received have been uploaded to the Councils Website. They can be viewed online:

- by typing in the reference number (DC/15/4672/OUT) in the application search engine at: <http://planningpublicaccess.waveney.gov.uk/online-applications/search.do?action=simple&searchType=Application> ,
  - then selecting the documents tab,
  - Clicking on 'view associated documents',
- and
- Clicking on the underlined reference number on the row for each document you wish to view.

**Town/Parish Councils and neighbouring Local Planning Authority**

- 3.3 Martlesham Parish Council - Martlesham Parish Council strongly objects to Planning Application DC/15/4788/OUT on the grounds that it is contrary to or does not meet the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan & saved policies, the emerging Neighbourhood Plan and the ongoing Site Allocations & Area Specific policies consultation.  
Our specific objections are listed below.

*Note: there is no order of importance in the item numbering*

No	Relevant Policies	Reason for Objection
1	NPPF Paragraphs 11, 55 & 118 Sustainable Development	<p>“The presumption in favour of sustainable development”: it needs to be shown that this planning application meets economic, social &amp; environmental requirements. The Parish Council argues that it fails to do so.</p> <p>a) Economic: the development should contribute to “building a strong, responsive and competitive economy ..... including the provision of infrastructure”. The provision of a convenience store cannot be viewed as contributing to economic growth. This development may well have a negative impact on the local tourist economy by reducing the attractiveness of the area which is within the Fynn Valley and on the approach to Woodbridge. It would also add to existing infrastructure problems regarding traffic &amp; transport links.</p> <p>b) Social: There is no evidence to show that this development reflects the community’s needs and would “support its health, social &amp; cultural well-being”. The application would remove the open space between the communities of Martlesham &amp; Woodbridge, the enjoyment of which is a vital part of community well-being. The Martlesham community has made it clear through a Neighbourhood Plan survey in 2014 that maintaining the open space between Martlesham and Woodbridge is very important to over 80% of respondents.</p> <p>c) Environment: this includes protecting &amp; enhancing the natural environment. The proposed development fails particularly in this respect because it abuts an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), a Special Landscape Area (SLA), and is sufficiently close to the Deben Estuary SSSI and RAMSAR sites to have a negative impact on areas protected for their landscape &amp; beauty. Suffolk Coastal Local Plan policies recognise the environmental role of this site &amp; seek to protect it.</p>

2	Local Plan SP1 Sustainable development	The Local Plan echoes the requirements of the NPPF above & therefore this application is also contrary to policy SP1.
3	SP2 Housing Numbers & Distribution and SP19 Settlement Hierarchy	<p>The allocation for the Eastern Ipswich Plan Area (EIPA) is 29% of 7,900 new homes up to 2027. However 2,320 new homes have already been allocated. The addition of 215 new homes would increase that to 2,535 which is over 32% for the whole of the EIPA. Together with existing proposals for the Woodbridge Town Football Club site this increases to 34% and clearly becomes overdevelopment for the local area. The local infrastructure is not in place to support it.</p> <p>Settlement Hierarchy is a key tool with which the planning authority will achieve its Vision for the district in 2027. The site proposed is designated Countryside and therefore the application needs to meet the conditions of policy SP29, see below.</p>
4	SP8 Tourism	<p>This policy refers to area (c) Aldeburgh and Woodbridge. "Two small towns in sensitive locations within and adjacent to the AONB respectively. The protection of their settings will be of prime importance."</p> <p>As already stated, the area proposed is an extension of the Fynn Valley, links with the Deben Estuary protected area and forms a natural open space between Woodbridge and Martlesham. If coalescence between Woodbridge &amp; Martlesham were to take place it would detract from the setting of Woodbridge as a market town. The gap between the settlements was key for the siting of the railway and more recently the chosen route of the East Anglia ONE onshore cable line.</p>
5	SP11 Accessibility	<p>The site is not well connected to shops, schools, surgeries &amp; businesses without the use of a car. It is therefore not sustainable. Traffic problems would be exacerbated. There is the likelihood that traffic will make journeys via less suitable roads such as Main Road, Bealings Road &amp; Felixstowe Road to reach BT, Tesco &amp; Ipswich. Rat-running &amp; speeding on these roads is already an issue.</p> <p>The Transport Assessments included with the application largely ignore traffic impact on Martlesham &amp; focus on Woodbridge. It is unreasonable to assume that residents would mostly shop, work &amp; access services in Woodbridge and ignore Martlesham &amp; Ipswich.</p> <p>The Council has concerns about the safety of the accesses proposed with poor visibility splays and opportunities to join the traffic at busy times. It notes that the access in Top Street is over what used to be a 10-15 feet deep pit, now filled in to make an even slope. It is concerned in case the land is unstable. This access is also between 2 properties which would suffer from loss of amenity, noise and air pollution.</p>

6	SP15 Landscape & Townscape and saved policy AP212	<p>SP15 “This strategy will extend to towns &amp; villages where sites, gaps, gardens and spaces that make an important contribution to a particular location in their undeveloped form will be identified and protected where known; or <b>more generally avoided where development in these locations would lead to coalescence.</b> The location of such sites will be designated through the Site Allocations &amp; Area Specific Policies, Area Action Plan or Neighbourhood Development Plan.”</p> <p>Saved policy AP212 deals specifically with this area:</p> <p><b><i>Ipswich Fringe: Open character of land between Settlements</i></b>  13.16 <i>In defining the physical limits boundaries, the District Council supports the objective of Structure Plan Policy IP5 to retain the separate identity of the various Villages and settlements around the edge of Ipswich and prevent their coalescence with Ipswich, with each other or with Woodbridge. The District Council considers this to be a particularly important objective and will, therefore, also assess any applications for development against the following policy:</i></p> <p><b><i>POLICY AP212</i></b>  <b><i>Ipswich Fringe: Open character of land between Settlements</i></b>  <b><i>The District Council will seek to maintain the open character of the land which separates Villages on the Ipswich Eastern Fringe from each other and from Ipswich and Woodbridge, including Rushmere Street from Rushmere; Martlesham Heath from Martlesham; and Martlesham from Woodbridge.</i></b></p> <p>This application is clearly contrary to policies SP15 &amp; AP212 because it seeks to fill open space land between Martlesham &amp; Woodbridge.</p>
7	SP29 Countryside	<p>“The Countryside comprises an important economic, social and environmental asset within the district which it is important to sustain. The strategy in respect of new development outside the physical limits of those settlements defined as Major Centres, Towns, Key and Local Service Centres or in accordance with Policy SP28, is that it will be limited to that which of necessity requires to be located there and accords with other relevant policies within the Core Strategy (e.g. Policies SP7 or DM13); or would otherwise accord with special circumstances outlined in paragraph 55 of the NPPF.”</p> <p>The Council can identify no special circumstances or policies which would support this development outside the physical limits of the settlements.</p> <p>Furthermore the density proposed is out of keeping with adjacent properties which are in an area to be protected from development, saved policy AP28.</p>

8	DM3 Housing in the Countryside	This proposal for 215 houses does not meet the criteria for new housing in the countryside: (a) Replacement dwelling; (b) Sub division of a larger dwelling to meet local need; (c) Affordable housing on an exception site; (d) Conversions of existing buildings; (e) Minor infilling; or (f) development which would accord with special circumstances of paragraph 55 of the NPPF.
9	DM28 Flood Risk	The area downhill from the site is flood cell 12, which recently suffered flood damage to the north wall defence. The Council supports the comments of Suffolk County Council Flood & Water Management who find the layout of surface water drainage unacceptable.
10	Saved Policy AP214	<p>The land in question is the subject of this specific saved policy &amp; it is clear that development would be unacceptable:  <i>Ipswich Fringe: Ipswich Road/Sandy Lane, Martlesham</i></p> <p><i>13.23 The open land between the A12 and Sandy Lane is currently used for horticulture and agriculture, with two small groups of dwellings north of the railway bridge and at The Street, close to its junction with Sandy Lane. The land clearly forms part of the valley of the River Fynn, which is itself an extension to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The valley to the west has been designated as a Special Landscape Area and, if it were not for the presence of such intrusive features as sodium lighting columns and untidy horticultural and agricultural buildings, this particular area would be of a similar quality and designated as part of the Special Landscape Area. Nevertheless, it is important in visual terms, particularly in views from the adjacent AONB, and creates a significant open space barrier between Woodbridge and Martlesham. With some enhancement it could reach the same standard as the remainder of the Fynn Valley. Such enhancement could include general tree and hedge planting, the removal of lighting columns and the remains of the old A12, and the screening of eyesores.</i></p> <p><b>13.24 More development would not be appropriate as it would spoil the landscape further, be contrary to the general policy seeking to protect the Countryside (AP 8), and the policy which seeks to prevent the coalescence of Woodbridge and Martlesham (AP212).</b></p> <p><i>POLICY AP214  Ipswich Fringe: Ipswich Road/Sandy Lane, Martlesham  The land lying between Sandy Lane and the A12, as shown on the Proposals Map, is considered to be a prominent and essential component of the Fynn Valley, lying between the Special Landscape Area to the west and the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The District Council will encourage enhancement measures which improve the landscape of this area to the same quality as that to the west.</i></p>
11	Emerging Neighbourhood Plan (NP)	The boundary area for the NP was only established in May 2015 due to circumstances beyond the control of the NP team & despite having submitted a first boundary application in July 2013. Work began on the Martlesham Neighbourhood Plan in 2013; surveys, public meetings, other forms of consultation with parishioners & local businesses etc. have taken place. The NP is therefore in an advanced stage of completion which should be given due weight



		<p>in any planning decisions.</p> <p>Policies to preserve open spaces, the Countryside and prevent coalescence between Martlesham and Woodbridge are achieved by existing Local Plan saved policies. Suffolk Coastal District Council has given assurances that these will remain in force until the NP policies are finalised.</p> <p>The NP will seek to limit development in Martlesham to that identified in policy SP2 and will substantially maintain protection against further developments outside the designated village envelope.</p> <p>Over 80% of respondents to a NP questionnaire in 2014 considered it very important to maintain open space between Martlesham and Woodbridge. Therefore, the Neighbourhood Plan will not be allocating this land to housing development.</p>
12	Site Allocations & Area Specific policies	<p>In the SCDC consultation the only development identified in Martlesham (in addition to the 2000 homes south of Adastral Park) as 'suitable' by the planning authority was 9 houses in Black Tiles Lane and 72-112 houses on land at and surrounding Woodbridge Town FC. The SHLAA status for the Gladman Development site was "not suitable" on the grounds that it is an area to be protected from development, coalescence and poor access.</p>
13	Other considerations	<p>The high voltage underground power lines for the East Anglia ONE wind farm (and possible subsequent wind farms) will cross the site. The high voltage power cables will create an electromagnetic field which will be at its strongest immediately above the cables and adjacent to housing. The children's play area &amp; designated green space is likely to be sited directly over the power cables. There remains uncertainty over the health risks involved and it would therefore seem very unwise, without clear knowledge, to choose this site for dense housing.</p>

- 3.4 Woodbridge Town Council (neighbouring Parish Council) - We recommend REFUSAL The proposed site lies 390m from an Area Of Natural Beauty, Ramsar and Special Scientific Interest sites, thus impacting on the surrounding scenic landscape. The site provides a buffer zone of countryside giving Woodbridge and Martlesham their individual identities. It is CONTRARY to National Planning Policy Framework paragraphs 11, 55 and 118. It is also CONTRARY to the Suffolk Coastal District Council Local Plan Core Strategy Development Management Policies July 2013 policies SP1, SP15, SP19, SP29 and DM3. The supplementary planning document – The Deben Estuary Plan April 2015 should be taken on board as it is a material consideration. The Town Council also endorses the comments submitted by Councillor Holdcroft
- 3.5 Rushmere St. Andrew Parish Council - Although not a statutory consultee on this application Rushmere St Andrew Parish Council considers that it should comment on the basis that this application, should it receive approval, will place additional traffic loading on the A1214 Ipswich feeder road, which in its current condition will be unsustainable.

This will in turn force additional traffic onto the Playford Road 'rat run' and subsequently through to the village part of Rushmere St Andrew.

There are also concerns regards the sufficient provision of primary and secondary education

places given that local schools are at saturation point.

The point we are trying to make is that the whole infrastructure of the area requires upgrading before further additional housing schemes can be considered.

- 3.6 Ipswich Borough Council - Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above planning application in respect of up to 215 dwellings and a convenience store on land East of Bridge Farm, Top Street, Martlesham. Ipswich Borough Council would like to make the following comments.

**Suffolk Coastal Development Plan**

The proposed development should be considered through the development plan process, which we understand is through a neighbourhood plan in this instance. The appropriate infrastructure needs can then be considered in the context of the emerging development plan documents, and also any requirements in respect of Habitats Regulation Assessment mitigation.

**National Statutory Consultees**

- 3.7 Environment Agency – We have no objection to the application as submitted. The proposal is supported by an Environmental Impact Assessment, however, there are constraints to development that fall within our remit. The site is not at risk from tidal or fluvial sources. The assessment of the management of the risk from surface water flooding is a matter for Suffolk County Council.
- 3.8 Natural England – (Comments summarised) Natural England advises that further information is required to rule out a likely significant effect on the Deben Estuary Special Protection Area.

**Impacts on the Deben Estuary SPA/R, SSSI**

**Visits by foot**

The development is within 390m of the Deben Estuary SPA. At this range residents would be expected to regularly visit the SPA on foot (up to 1.3km), and by car (up to 8km), particularly for dog walking, thus contributing to increased recreational pressure and disturbance to birds on the Deben SPA (See Landscape Partnership, 2011).

It is notable that the development is closer than the 1km threshold used in the core strategy appropriate assessment to guard against recreational visits by foot to designated sites from new developments. In order to prevent direct access by foot, the IHRA states that the corner of the development adjacent to the Deben Estuary will be fenced and screened so that a direct route is no longer available. Removing the available access point onto Sandy Lane from the application site provides a ready and effective way of reducing direct impact by increasing the distance that people will need to walk to gain access to the SPA. However, a mechanism needs to be in place to monitor effectiveness and carry out maintenance in perpetuity, and further detail of how this would be achieved needs to be provided before Natural England can agree as to whether this mitigation proposal would enable a conclusion of no likely significant effect to be reached.

**Visits by car**

The HRA does not discuss the potential for recreational visits by car. The SCDC Core strategy recognises that housing developments can result in regular recreational visits to Natura 2000 sites within 8Km drive by car, for dog walking. For this development, busy and well used car parks next to the Deben at Woodbridge, Martlesham, and Waldringfield are within range. The IHRA should therefore consider how many additional visits are likely to these car parks, alone or in-combination with other proposals, and assess their likely impact on Natura 2000 features. (see the SCDC Core Strategy Appropriate Assessment for details).

**Green Infrastructure Provision**

In order to reduce regular visits to SPAs for developments within 8km, the Core Strategy AA recommends that improvements are made to convenient local green space for routine use, thus reducing the demand for visits to designated sites. In this case significant potential for local green space provision is described, including green infrastructure within the site, and connections to local rights of way and surrounding green space. However, the detail of how this would be designed to provide suitable and attractive routes for dog walking and thus an

attractive alternative to visits to the SPA, is not stated. This information could be provided by reference to the guidelines in Jenkinson (2013), along with a consideration of the numbers of people already using the local green space from surrounding housing, and the additional numbers as a result of this development. The overall aim is to provide dog walking routes which are likely to be suitable and attractive (for example, with dog bins, off lead areas, route of at least 2.6km) for regular on site walking. There should also be provision for monitoring and if necessary adjusting the routes to ensure they are effective.

### **Residual impact**

While the availability of local green space is likely to reduce visits to car parks on the Deben SPA to an extent, in our opinion there is likely to be a component of regular visits to the SPA as it is within the 8km zone within which car visits are likely, and because of the draw of attractive coastal locations. The car parks around the Deben Estuary are particularly sensitive to increased recreational use because much of the development in the core strategy is close to the estuary and the limited number of access points are likely to be used by visitors from multiple developments. An estimate of the likely residual recreational disturbance impact should therefore be provided.

### **Visitor Management Plan**

The Deben Estuary is highly sensitive to recreational impacts from housing developments within 8km driving distance. Given this sensitivity, it is Natural England's advice that, in line with the requirements of the Core Strategy Appropriate Assessment, where developments are likely to result in residual impacts on designated sites, wardening and visitor management measures should be established, guided by a visitor management plans, to manage and monitor recreational access and birds on the site. We consider that such a plan, led by SCDC, should be established for the Deben Estuary; developments resulting in residual impact on the site should make a proportionate contribution to the provision of these measures.

- 3.9 Historic England – Our specialist staff have considered the information received and we do not wish to offer any comments on this occasion.

### **Suffolk County Council Departments**

- 3.10 Suffolk County Council Highway Authority – (Summarised comments) Suffolk County Council, in its capacity of Highway Authority for this location, does not have an in principal objection to a development of this scale at this location. The site has potential for sustainable transport choices as the bus services in the area are reasonably frequent and serve several key employment and education centres. The existing bus stops on Top Street have been recently upgraded and new stops are proposed on Ipswich Road. With some site specific mitigation measures there are deliverable options for providing improved pedestrian and cycle links to the employment, retail and education facilities in Woodbridge. An uncontrolled crossing with a pedestrian refuge is proposed to enable pedestrians from the potential site to access the footway link towards Woodbridge.

However we do have significant concerns regarding the layout of the proposed development, the accesses proposed onto Ipswich Road and Top Street and the interaction between the two accesses.

**Therefore on the basis of the information provided at this stage we would recommend that the Local Planning Authority refuses the current application, pending a revised layout being submitted.**

### **Access and Layout**

Our preference would be for a single access for this development to be taken direct from the B1438 junction with Top Street roundabout; this will provide the easiest access to the B1438 and the A12 and will reduce the impact of the development on unsuitable minor roads in the vicinity of the site. The site extents appear to share a boundary with the highway boundary so this option should be deliverable. We have previously indicated that this would be our preference.

If the roundabout access is not deliverable for other reasons we have concerns about the layout and access arrangements as shown on the application details. It has been proposed that the Top Street access will only serve a small proportion of the site, with the majority and the proposed retail unit being served from the alternative access onto Ipswich Road (B1438). It has also been indicated to us that there will be vehicular access between the two sites and therefore both access will be fully connected. It is our view that in peak conditions a higher than anticipated proportion of the site traffic will exit via the Top Street access, rather than onto the B1438. As this traffic would have to turn right to access the Top Street / B1438 roundabout, and onto further afield destinations via the A12, we feel it is likely that a higher proportion will turn left out of the site to use minor roads such as Main Road, Bealings Road and Felixstowe Road to access local employment destinations such as Martlesham (BT and Tesco) and Ipswich. Therefore should the development proceed on the basis of the two accesses proposed there should be no general vehicular access between the two areas of the development. The link over the green margin shown on the plan ('Informal Green Space') should be available to pedestrians, cyclists and emergency vehicle access only.

The Transport Assessment makes the case that the retail unit proposed will generate very few trips as the use could be considered to be internal to the development or 'pass by'. However given the location very close to the A12 and on the main link from the A12 to Woodbridge we have concerns that this will be a popular trip generator and we feel that this aspect needs further analysis to determine the specific transport impact and the cumulative affect with the residential use.

However, if the site layout is amended and the transport issues highlighted above can be addressed by a revised Transport Assessment we would be happy to re-assess our current position. Should the development proceed in a revised form we would require that a Section 106 agreement is in place to deliver site specific mitigation measures. We would also require a set of standard highway conditions to ensure that the junction and internal details are correctly detailed.

In addition to the above comments the Highway Authority also commented in detail on the submitted Travel Plan and have requested some amendments to it.

- 3.11 Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service – Requests that adequate provision for fire hydrants is made.
- 3.12 SCC Flood and Water Management - The layout of the surface water drainage system is not accept as we believe the attenuation basin is located incorrectly on a slope, on the eastern boundary of the site and consequently would be very deep.

The drainage system does not follow best practise for SUDs or our local SuDs Guidance. We also feel that the drainage system has not follow best practise for water quality and there is no indication of how the surface water will be treated prior to discharge to the watercourse.

Therefore, we believe the site layout should be revised and resubmitted.

- 3.13 SCC Public Rights of Way - As a result of the anticipated use of public rights of way network, the SCC Rights of Way team would be looking for funding to improve and enhance the following routes:
- The internal layout should provide a new pedestrian link from Ipswich Road onto Top Street. The Parish Council are keen on a safe link as the derestricted part of Top Street has no footway and is considered to be dangerous for pedestrians
  - Improve the footpath link (FP11 & FP50) through Sluice Wood to Church Lane
  - Improve footpath link (FP8) alongside the tributary to the River Fynn. This will require surface and bridge improvement works
  - Improve footpath link (FP9A) from Top Street at the nursery, along Brock Lane and then under the A12. This will require surface improvement works

- Creation of a new path on the Highway verge at the base of the bank on the north side of the A12 making the connection to Seckford Hall path and connecting two sections of FP10, previously severed.
- With the proposed pedestrian access onto Sandy Lane, then there will need to be safety improvements along Sandy Lane by the railway bridge for Non-Motorised Users to access the river via the footpath down by the Sewage works or by bike along Sandy Lane.

It is estimated that the total cost of this work would be £80,000.

- 3.14 SCC Archaeology – River valleys have been shown to be focuses of historic activity. The land subject to this application occupies a prominent position overlooking the River Fynn. Indeed, the extensive tidal mudflats to the east suggest that, in antiquity, this point on the river may have been the first significant crossing point inland from the coast. This is further supported by the construction of sea banks (WBG 038) at this point, between the 16th and 19th centuries. A large curvilinear bank or lynchet bisects the proposed development site. This feature is around 3m high in places, and may be a remnant of a naturally occurring sea/river cliff. Its form, however, is suggestive that this feature has been modified/respected by human action. This is supported by the geophysical survey submitted as part of the application which identified a substantial ditch of similar curvilinear form, running parallel.

There has been little systematic archaeological investigation in the vicinity. However, a number of artefact finds, and the results of small scale archaeological investigations, held on the County Historic Environment Record, suggest Prehistoric (MRM 030, MRM 023, MRM 022, MRM 029), Roman (WBG 015, WBG 007, MRM 022, MRM 029, BEG 007) and Medieval (WBG 007, WBG 031, BEG 007) occupation in the surrounding area.

The geophysical survey report (GSB Survey Report No. G1446, Land off Dukes Park, Woodbridge, Suffolk) submitted in support of the application states that: *“The results from the magnetic survey have not detected any anomalies of definite archaeological interest; a few trends of uncertain origin have been recorded. Former field boundaries can be seen which are shown on old mapping.”* This is in marked contrast to the results of the recent archaeological evaluation of a corridor through the site undertaken in advance of the East-Anglia One cable route. This investigation identified a number of significant features of later prehistoric date, including thick lozenges of buried topsoils that are archaeological in origin, and may represent the remains of barrows. Many of these archaeological features correspond to anomalies interpreted as *“geological”* in the geophysical survey, and additional features were identified by field evaluation which were not picked up by the geophysical survey.

Further archaeological investigation is required prior determination of the application, in order to have greater confidence that heritage assets will not present a constraint on development as proposed. If the application is approved as it stands, there may be a need for extensive mitigation in the form of excavation to compensate for loss of heritage assets, which will have significant time and cost implications for the development. There may also be heritage assets present which will require preservation in situ under NPPF139 etc.

*“139. Non-designated heritage assets of archaeological interest that are demonstrably of equivalent significance to scheduled monuments, should be considered subject to the policies for designated heritage assets.”*

Suffolk County Council Archaeology Service recommends that, in order to manage this risk, an initial archaeological trial trench evaluation is carried out, at a minimum 3.5% of total area, to ‘test’ the reliability of the geophysics, and provide evidence on the date and quality of non-designated heritage assets present. The results of this evaluation, in conjunction with the results of the geophysical survey, can then be used to inform the layout of the development, identifying areas where preservation in situ of archaeological remains would be the preferred/required option. Amendments to the masterplan which allowed for preservation *in situ* at this stage would be encouraged. This approach would reduce risk to the developer and help speed up archaeological assessment requirements through the detailed planning application stage.

Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service do not object to the principle of development of the site, but clearer reference to the significance of likely heritage assets (NPPF, 128), and further archaeological investigation, is required to guide the issues which will need to be resolved as part of the planning application process. The earlier that assessment work can be carried out, the less risk that development is delayed by the need for localised redesign to allow for preservation of finds in situ.

3.15 Suffolk County Council Planning Obligations Manager – (Comments summarised) Following the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) the following contributions are to be requested through CIL:

- £1,124,728 for 22 primary school places and 46 secondary school places.
- £134,002 for 22 pre-school places.
- £46,440 for library provision.
- £10,965 for waste disposal

Contributions towards transport including travel plan, pedestrian and cycle provision, public transport, rights of way and highway provision will be dealt with via planning conditions and Section 106 agreement as appropriate, and infrastructure delivered to adoptable standards via Section 38 and Section 278.

#### **Suffolk Coastal District Council Departments**

3.16 SCDC Environmental Health Officer – No objection subject to conditions addressing dust mitigation, constructional noise and vibration, mitigation of noise from the construction of the EAOW1 cable project, ground contaminants, street lighting and site access and public safety

3.17 SCDC – Economic Services: have no comments to make on the application

3.18 SCDC – Housing Services: No comments received

3.19 SCDC – Private Sector Housing: No comments received

3.20 SCDC - Waste Services Manager: No comments received

#### **Other Service/Utility Providers**

3.21 Deben Estuary Partnership - The proposed development is within some 450 metres of the Deben Estuary. It spreads across the high ground on the northern side of Martlesham Creek, bringing major development into an otherwise rural area. It is adjacent to the AONB and clearly visible from the Special Landscape Area of the Deben Estuary.

The Deben Estuary is relatively small but provides a high quality landscape of great diversity. The estuary landscape is highly valued for its rural peace and tranquillity. and despite the proximity of the built-up areas of Kesgrave and Martlesham, its mostly wooded skyline allows only glimpses of urban development. The proposed development is over and above the requirements of the Local Plan and presents acceptable impact on the visual integrity of a sensitive and special landscape.

The visual intrusion of the development will have a major impact on the riverscape and the landscape of the Deben Estuary as seen from the river. ( None of the 'view points' noted in the application were from the water – or from the Sutton shore.) Planting within the site is addressed but does not offer any substantial woodland belt that would be needed to screen the visually intrusive new buildings from Martlesham Creek and from the main river channel at Kysoin Point.

The Deben Estuary Plan refers to '*high standards for the built environment, ensuring new build is sensitive to the estuary topography, is unobtrusive and sits comfortably within the riverscape*'.

The landscape quality and immediate estuary countryside is an important social and economic asset which enhances the wider area. It is evident that the income that visitors bring to the area is being driven by the characteristics of the environment. It is undoubtedly the combination of the special landscape, interesting places to visit, pleasant accommodation and opportunities for quiet recreation that generates the tourist economy. By allowing development which materially detracts from the special landscape quality of the estuary its value to the wider visitor economy will be threatened.

As a part of the AONB the Deben Estuary is a category 4 protected area as recognised by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). It is of international importance for the breeding, wintering or the migration of rare and vulnerable species of birds found within European Union countries and is part of the Natura 2000 network.

The Estuary is designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA), a Ramsar site - for regularly supporting internationally important numbers of wintering birds. It is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) - for populations of overwintering waders and wild fowl. In addition the estuary is notable for its special estuarine habitats – it contains 40% Suffolk's saltmarsh – and it attracts nationally important numbers of migratory waterfowl. Many of the birds associated with the surrounding farmland are listed as Suffolk Priority Species and also classed as Species of Conservation Concern.

The proximity of the development means that estuary paths, particularly along river walls on either side of Martlesham Creek, will attract many daily walkers, with or without dogs. The recurring presence of people, constant disturbance – movement along the top of the wall, dogs running across saltmarsh - will have a considerable, negative impact on feeding and roosting birds. The present vulnerability of some designated sites will be further undermined - sites in a poor ecological condition are likely to suffer further deterioration as a result of additional disturbance.

Retention and conservation of this environment is of great importance, not only for local, Suffolk people but at a national and international level. The Deben Estuary Partnership wish to express grave concern that this proposal will have a major, detrimental impact on the Deben Estuary.

- 3.22 AONB Unit - Setting of the AONB - The site is located adjacent to the Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), with views of the proposed development would be clearly visible from within the AONB, in particular from public viewpoints along Martlesham Creek including the Long Distance Walk, The Sandlings Walk. We have considered how the development relates to the local landscape character and the potential impacts that a development of this scale could have on the special qualities of this nationally designated AONB. Reference should be made to the Statutory AONB Management Plan, the report detailing the Special Qualities of the AONB and the AONB Partnership's Position Statement in relation to development within the setting of the AONB. When determining this application, regard should be given to the primary purpose of the AONB: to conserve and enhance natural beauty.

Potential Landscape Impact - The landscape is of the rolling valley farmland character type and the Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment Guidance Notes point out that the spatial relationship of this landscape to the adjacent valley floor means that change and development here can have a profound visual impact on the adjoining valley floor landscape type. Settlement extension in a valley side landscape is likely to have a significant visual impact and adversely affect the character of the landscape, including that of the adjoining valley floor. We consider this to be very much the case at this site. The submitted Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment identifies that without mitigation the impact of the development would be major. This poses the question of whether the proposed mitigation is deliverable and likely to be effective. The proposed landscape buffer to the immediate north of the railway line is unlikely to have any significant benefit in terms of screening the development from views taken from the public viewpoints at Martlesham Creek. The landscaping strip through the centre of the site, which appears to be determined by the routing of the East Anglia One cable corridor, has serious limitations which would reduce the

effectiveness of any planting scheme, such as restrictions of the type of planting. This is crucial, given the sloping nature of the site and the desirable mature height of the landscaping required to be effective in screening what would be a highly visible new “roofscape” on the side of the valley. We note that the photographs used within the LVIA are taken when trees and hedgerows are in leaf and would recommend that the applicant provide winter photographs and assessment of views to give an accurate representation of the visibility of the site.

We consider that the major adverse impact upon the AONB likely to be caused by this development. We do not consider that the proposal in its current form is acceptable, or able to effectively mitigate the predicted major landscape effects. We do not consider that the proposal contributes to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty and consider it is likely to have a significant adverse landscape impact on the AONB.

Potential impacts on nearby designated sites - Almost the entire Deben estuary carries International, European and National environmental designations protecting important habitat, wintering birds and local wildlife. The proposed development site is within close proximity of the Deben Estuary Special Protection Area (SPA), Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Ramsar. The Deben Estuary Plan identifies current pressures on the estuary and notes that Martlesham Creek is already a well-used area for recreation. The addition of c. 215 dwellings within a very short walk of the estuary will undoubtedly lead to increased recreational disturbance on the estuary. This is of particular concern here, with the SPA features. The Deben Estuary Plan policy 3.6.60 states:

Seek to minimise and put in place measures to mitigate pressure and disturbance within the estuary area.

Promote and facilitate the adoption of a range of mitigation measures which are appropriate to particular sites and levels of disturbance. A number of suggested measures to minimise disturbance are also identified in the Deben Estuary Plan. Should the Local Planning Authority be minded to approve the proposal, it is essential that mitigation measures are determined, secured by condition and implemented in consultation with the relevant bodies and that their predicted effectiveness is fully understood at an early stage, prior to the determination of this application.

Given the close proximity of important designated habitats, we do not consider that the proposal in its current form will be able to mitigate the impacts of increased pressures on the estuary effectively.

3.23 Suffolk Wildlife Trust - Thank you for sending us details of this application, we have the following comments:

We have read the ecological survey reports (Ecological Appraisal, FPCR, Nov 2015; Reptile Survey, FPCR, Nov 2015 and Information to Inform a Habitats Regulations Assessment, Ecology Solutions, Nov 2015) and we note the conclusions of the consultants.

From the Development Framework Plan (drawing 6106-L-01-P) it is unclear whether the hedgerows currently present on the site are to be fully or partially retained, or whether they are proposed to be removed. In particular hedgerow 1 along the northern boundary of the site has been judged as of ‘moderately high’ ecological value in the Ecological Appraisal. We recommend that as many of the existing hedgerows as possible should be retained and beneficially managed as part of the proposal. Where retention is not practical compensation planting must be provided.

Surveys have identified that the site supports a ‘Good’ population of common lizard and it is understood that habitat which supports this species will be lost as part of the proposed development. The Reptile Survey report identifies translocation to an onsite receptor area as the appropriate mitigation technique. Whilst in principle this appears an acceptable mitigation method, it must be ensured that the proposed receptor area is suitable to support translocated animals. It must also be ensured that the proposed eventual use for the land in which the receptor area is located is compatible with its long term maintenance as suitable reptile habitat.



We would recommend that the details of the required reptile mitigation and habitat management measures are detailed in a Reptile Mitigation Strategy, secured via condition, should permission be granted. Given the legal protection afforded to reptiles, it is essential that all mitigation measures have been fully implemented prior to any development works (including vegetation or ground clearance) taking place on site.

It is noted that the Ecological Appraisal concludes that the site provides suitable habitat for nesting skylark. However, no survey work has been undertaken to quantify the number of territories of this species which are likely to be present. It is not therefore possible to accurately determine the impact of the proposed development on the distribution of this species in the district or the county. Skylark is a UK and Suffolk Priority species and is listed as 'Red' on the Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) list. Compensation for the loss of habitat suitable for nesting skylark should therefore be secured, should planning consent be granted. This could be achieved through the creation of skylark nesting plots on nearby arable land.

The Ecological Appraisal also identified that the site provides some suitable habitat for both hedgehog and brown hare, both of which are UK and Suffolk Priority species. It should therefore be ensured that, should consent be granted, the Construction Management Plan includes suitable methodology to ensure that these species are not harmed during construction. It should also be ensured that the final design of any development on the site incorporates garden boundaries which are permeable to hedgehogs, particularly through the use of gaps under garden fences.

The site is also considered suitable for foraging and commuting bats, although no surveys have been undertaken to quantify any levels of such activity. Any development at this site should incorporate a sensitive lighting strategy, based on the Suffolk County Council lighting strategy, to ensure that dark corridors are available across the site for nocturnal species.

The Development Framework for the site (drawing 6106-L-01-P) shows the proposed development including a considerable amount of open space and landscape planting, including areas to be managed to enhance their biodiversity value and support protected species. In order to ensure that these areas are maximised for biodiversity an appropriate long term habitat management plan is required. The production and implementation of such a plan should be secured, via planning condition, should consent be granted. The Suffolk rare plant Common Cudweed was also recorded in part of the site; management of the proposed greenspace should incorporate conditions suitable for this species.

Notwithstanding the matters set out above, we request that the recommendations made within the reports are implemented in full, via a condition of planning consent, should permission be granted. We recommend that all the necessary ecological mitigation and compensation measures are detailed within an Ecological Management Plan.

#### Habitats Regulations Assessment

The site of the proposed development is less than 500m from the Deben Estuary Special Protection Area (SPA) and the Deben Estuary Ramsar site, these sites are designated for their European nature conservation importance. We note that Natural England have previously provided the applicant with advice on this matter as part of their Discretionary Advice Service (DAS). We note the concerns raised by Natural England at the time of their DAS comments and therefore recommend that they, as the statutory nature conservation organisation, are consulted for further advice on this matter.

From the information provided by in the application it appears that, whilst an attempt has been made to quantify the likely increase in dog walkers accessing the Deben Estuary (and therefore the likely increase in disturbance from this activity), no similar assessment has been undertaken for other potentially damaging activities, including walkers without dogs. We also query the screening out of likely significant effects on the Sandlings SPA due to it being 4.2km from the application site. The findings of the South Sandlings Living Landscape Project Visitor Survey Report<sup>1</sup> indicated that 75% of dog walkers visiting the survey locations lived with 10km and half

of all visitors by car to the SPA came from over 8km away. The application site is within these distances of the Sandlings SPA and we therefore believe that the reason for discounting this site from the HRA should be revisited.

In addition, the HRA should also consider cumulative and in-combination impacts arising from other plans and projects. Given the importance of these designated sites, we consider that the above issues are significant and must be addressed prior to the determination of this application.

- 3.24 Scottish Power Renewables – No comments received
- 3.25 Anglian Water – (Comments summarised) No objection subject to a condition requiring a foul water strategy to be agreed.
- 3.26 Suffolk Preservation Society – (Comments summarised) The Suffolk Preservation Society ('the Society') objects to the above outline application for up to 215 new houses on a greenfield site which lies in countryside outside the physical limits boundaries of both Woodbridge and Martlesham, where policies of restraint apply. The Society objects as the site, in its undeveloped form, currently prevents the coalescence of Martlesham and Woodbridge and allows views across the Coast and Heaths AONB to the East.
- 3.27 Woodbridge Society Planning Group - There was a very strong and unanimous agreement in the group that the access from the proposed development onto Ipswich Road would be dangerous given the poor visibility particularly in the direction of Woodbridge due to the curve in the road. Although Ipswich Road has a 30mph speed limit the busy traffic is travelling downhill and in reality is often accelerating.

### **Third Party Representations**

- 3.28 76 letters of objection have been received raising the following matters:
- The site lies in open countryside outside the defined physical limits for Woodbridge.
  - Contrary to SCDC Local Plan Policies DM3, SP19, SP15 and SP29.
  - Unsustainable development contrary to the NPPF.
  - The Council has a 5 year supply of housing land
  - Visually detrimental to the AONB and the setting of the AONB.
  - Impact on the Deben Estuary Special Protection Area, SSSI, RAMSAR and Special Landscape Area.
  - Coalescence between Woodbridge and Martlesham.
  - Increased traffic and highway safety on already congested roads (in addition to other planned development).
  - Will overload existing infrastructure and school provision locally.
  - Loss of green and open space.
  - Overdevelopment of the site.
  - The site for the convenience store is inappropriate.
  - Impact on wildlife.
  - Increased risk to walkers and cyclists.
  - Light pollution
  - Loss of views
  - Limited employment opportunities in the area.
  - Sandy Lane is unsuitable for more traffic.
  - There is a lack of parking along Top Street.
  - Land in Martlesham for large scale development has been identified.
  - Loss of quality of life for existing residents.
  - Negative impact on the quality of the built environment.

#### **4. RELEVANT POLICIES**

4.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compensation Act 2004 states that applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this instance, the development plan for the purpose of this application is the Suffolk Coastal District Local Plan, Core Strategy and Development Management Policies (July 2013) together with any 'saved policies' from the Local Plan (Incorporating First and Second Alterations 2001 and 2006).

4.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a material consideration when determining applications.

4.3 Suffolk Coastal District Local Plan – Core Strategy and Development Management Development Plan Document (adopted July 2013) policies:

SP1 – Sustainable Development  
SP1A – Presumption in favour of sustainable development  
SP2 – Housing Numbers and Distribution  
SP3 – New Homes  
SP9 – Retail Centres  
SP15 – Landscape and Townscape  
SP16 – Sport and Play  
SP17 – Green Space  
SP18 – Infrastructure  
SP19 – Settlement Policy  
SP26 – Woodbridge  
SP29 – The Countryside  
DM2 – Affordable Housing on Residential Sites  
DM3 – Housing in the Countryside  
DM20 – Travel Plans  
DM21 – Design: Aesthetics  
DM22 – Design: Function  
DM23 – Residential Amenity  
DM24 – Sustainable Construction  
DM26 – Lighting  
DM27 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity  
DM28 – Flood Risk

4.4 Relevant 'Saved' policies from the Local Plan are as follows:

AP212 – Ipswich Fringe: Open character of land between settlements  
AP214 – Ipswich Fringe: Ipswich Road/Sandy Lane, Martlesham

#### **5. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

##### **Principle of Development**

5.1 Policy SP1A of the Core Strategy and the NPPF (paragraph 49) promote the presumption in favour of sustainable development and details that those applications which accord with Local Plan policies will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Policy SP1A goes on to state that where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise – taking into account whether:

- Any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole; or
- Specific policies in that Framework indicate that development should be restricted.

- 5.2 Paragraph 115 of the NPPF confirms that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks and AONBs, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.
- 5.3 The application site is greenfield land and is located outside (but adjacent to) the existing physical limits boundary of Woodbridge and completely outside the physical limits for Martlesham. As such in policy terms the site is regarded as “countryside”. Policy SP29 is generally restrictive of new development in the countryside unless it can be demonstrated that the nature of the development necessitates its location outside a physical limits boundary, or that the development would otherwise accord with the special circumstances outlined in paragraph 55 of the NPPF.
- 5.4 Policy DM3 – Housing in the Countryside – also seeks to direct new housing to those settlements for which physical limits boundaries have been defined. In addition to those special circumstances outlined in the NPPF, where new housing is proposed, Policy DM3 states that this will be allowed only where it comprises one for one replacements, subdivision of existing units, affordable housing on ‘exception’ sites or minor infilling within existing clusters. None of these criteria are applicable to the application site.
- 5.5 Furthermore, development on this site, outside any physical limits boundary and immediately adjacent to an Area to be Protected from Development at the edge of Woodbridge, could risk a coalescence between Woodbridge and Martlesham contrary to the approach advocated in Policy SP15. Saved policy AP212 similarly seeks to maintain the open character of land which separates Martlesham from Woodbridge.
- 5.6 Saved Policy AP214 specifically relates to the application site. Paragraph 13.23 and 13.24 state:
- 13.23 The open land **between the A12 and Sandy Lane** is currently used for horticulture and agriculture, with two small groups of dwellings north of the railway bridge and at The Street, close to its junction with Sandy Lane. The land clearly forms part of the valley of the River Fynn, which is itself an extension to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The valley to the west has been designated as a Special Landscape Area and, if it were not for the presence of such intrusive features as sodium lighting columns and untidy horticultural and agricultural buildings, this particular area would be of a similar quality and designated as part of the Special Landscape Area. Nevertheless, it is important in visual terms, particularly in views from the adjacent AONB, and creates a significant open space barrier between Woodbridge and Martlesham. With some enhancement it could reach the same standard as the remainder of the Fynn Valley. Such enhancement could include general tree and hedge planting, the removal of lighting columns and the remains of the old A12, and the screening of eyesores.
- 13.24 More development would not be appropriate as it would spoil the landscape further, be contrary to the general policy seeking to protect the Countryside (AP 8), and the policy which seeks to prevent the coalescence of Woodbridge and Martlesham (AP212).
- 5.7 Policy AP214 itself states:  
The land lying between Sandy Lane and the A12, as shown on the Proposals Map, is considered to be a prominent and essential component of the Fynn Valley, lying between the Special Landscape Area to the west and the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The District Council will encourage enhancement measures which improve the landscape of this area to the same quality as that to the west.
- 5.8 The NPPF is clear in that it seeks to boost significantly the supply of housing. The Core Strategy makes provision for at least 7,900 new homes up until 2027, of which 5,260 will comprise new housing allocations (Policy SP2 and Table 3.3). Of these the Market Towns will be expected to provide 1,520 new homes of which 940 will be through new allocations.
- 5.9 In accordance with the NPPF the Council is working to boost the supply of housing within a plan-led system and is currently taking forward residential sites allocations through the Site Allocations and Area Specific Policies Development Plan Document (Preferred Options Consultation carried out from October – November 2015). Pre-submission publication is

expected in April/May 2016 with subsequent examination by the Planning Inspectorate later in 2016. Upon adoption the Site Allocations and Area Specific Policies will provide a range of deliverable and developable sites which accord with national policy, the Core Strategy and will have been considered against Sustainability Appraisal objectives and been through numerous rounds of public consultation. The range of sites will guide future growth and development in the district in a plan-led way.

- 5.10 The application site was considered as part of the 2014 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). The site, referred to as site 453, was considered unsuitable for the following reasons: the Area to be Protected from Development policy; coalescence of Martlesham and Woodbridge; and poor access. On this basis the site has not been included within the draft Site Allocations DPD.
- 5.11 It is also of note that the proposal includes an A1 retail convenience store. The size of the proposed unit is 280sqm and therefore below the threshold in the Framework which requires a formal retail impact assessment to be undertaken (2500sqm). In the absence of any alternative locally agreed thresholds such an assessment cannot be insisted on. Members will be aware that the site is some distance from the retail centre of Woodbridge and indeed Martlesham and therefore the application site is some considerable distance from retail stores to meet the functional requirements of new and existing residents. Albeit there is an objection in principle to the development of the site for residential purposes, there can be argued to be some merit in providing an additional facility for local residents. Notwithstanding, Members will need to be satisfied that this inclusion is acceptable in terms of the principle and also highway considerations with it becoming a designation store.

### **Five Year Land Supply**

- 5.12 As required by the NPPF the Council has identified a 5.12 housing land supply (against a requirement of 5 years + 5%. This is set down in the 2015 Housing Land Supply Assessment published in June 2015 and which covers the five years from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 to 31 March 2021.
- 5.13 The Applicant, in the Planning Statement which accompanies the application, disputes that the Council has a five year supply and instead contends that the housing land supply is in the region of 2.4 years or below, and references some recent appeal decisions. As such the Applicant is of the view that in accordance with paragraph 49 of the NPPF relevant policies concerning the supply of housing land cannot be considered up to date and the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in paragraph 14 of the NPPF is engaged. Notwithstanding the applicants view on this issue it is maintained that the Council does presently have a 5 year supply of housing land and therefore is not required in order to meet the housing needs of the District.

### **The Principles of Sustainable Development**

- 5.14 The principle of sustainable development is a key theme running through the NPPF and the Local Plan accordingly. The NPPF, in paragraph 7, states that there are three dimensions to sustainable development:
- An economic role – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;
  - A social role – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well being; and

- An environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.

5.15 Policy SP1A of the Core Strategy states that when considering development proposals the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development. This policy was added as a modification by the Planning Inspector via his report dated 6 June 2013, whereby he states:

*“The inclusion of such a policy (SP1A) does not of itself ensure that the plan as a whole will promote the presumption. Other changes to the CS are considered elsewhere in this report but the inclusion of the policy provides a clear starting point within the development plan for consideration of planning applications in accordance with this policy aim. The modification to achieve that is therefore justified on the basis of ensuring that the plan is consistent with national policy”.*

5.16 Policy SP1 of the Local Plan sets out the strategy of sustainable development in the District. It is important therefore that the application is tested against the criteria as set out in this policy.

(b) Relate housing development to employment services, transport and infrastructure. To achieve this a defined settlement hierarchy, itself based on sustainability principles, has been created and applied.

It is considered that the proposal fails to comply with this criterion. The strategy for Woodbridge is set down in Policy SP26 of the Local Plan which seeks to balance opportunities with the acknowledged physical and environmental constraints, (notably the Deben Estuary with its nature conservation and landscape designations to the east, the A12 to the west, areas at risk from flooding, and its high quality built environment) in order to maintain and enhance its roles as the principle market town within the district, an employment centre and tourist destination. The strategy is therefore to consolidate the town. SP26 states that further significant expansion of Woodbridge will be sympathetically considered having regard to the local character and key physical thresholds.

5.17 As mentioned in paragraph 5.10 above the application site was considered as part of the 2014 SHLAA but was considered unsuitable as an Area to be Protected from Development policy; coalescence of Martlesham and Woodbridge; and poor access. On this basis the site was not included within the draft Site Allocations DPD.

5.18 It is acknowledged that the proposed convenience store as shown on the indicative development framework would provide some, albeit limited, employment opportunities and would be of some benefit to the occupiers of any new housing in this location. However the majority of the services and facilities in Woodbridge are located some distance from the site and relatively isolated in terms of connectivity, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists.

5.19 It is therefore considered that the proposal would not consolidate the town but would extend it into an area which has long been protected from development in order to prevent the coalescence of Martlesham and Woodbridge and as an essential component of the Fynn Valley and the setting of the AONB.

(c) Achieve a local balance between employment opportunities, housing growth and environmental capacity

5.20 It is considered that the proposal fails to meet this criterion in that it would extend development into open countryside beyond the defined physical limits for Woodbridge. Whilst it is acknowledged the site itself is not within any national landscape designations it is prominent in views from the adjacent AONB immediately to the south. It is considered therefore that development on the site would be harmful to the setting of the AONB.

5.21 Policy SP15 of the Local Plan relates to landscape and townscape and acknowledges that “spaces which make an important contribution to a particular location in their undeveloped form will be identified and protected where known; or more generally avoided where development in these locations would lead to coalescence”. The application site is considered to fall within this description. As previously stated development on the site would lead to the coalescence of Woodbridge and Martlesham. Furthermore it would extend the town of Woodbridge into the countryside in a location that is relatively isolated from the facilities and services in the town centre.

(d) Ensure the provision of the appropriate infrastructure in order to support existing and proposed communities

5.22 Following the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) infrastructure requested by Suffolk County Council will be met through CIL. However it will be noted above that the Highway Authority do have significant concerns regarding the proposed access into the site and the impact on minor roads in the vicinity of the site and at this stage would recommend that the application be refused. Furthermore SCC Flood and Water Management also have concerns regarding the proposed surface water drainage proposals and SCC Public Rights of Way have also requested improvements. Whilst it is acknowledged that it may be possible to satisfactorily address these issues they remain outstanding at the present time. Consequently it is considered that the proposal does not comply with this criterion.

(e) Give priority to re-using previously developed land and buildings in and around built-up areas, where possible ahead of greenfield sites.

5.23 The application site is a greenfield site and therefore fails to meet this criterion. However in meeting the housing needs of the district it is acknowledged that greenfield land may need to be released for residential development. Notwithstanding this it is considered that development on this greenfield site would not be appropriate in view of its landscape impact and impact on the setting of the AONB.

(f) Promote the use of sustainable methods of construction, including materials, energy efficiency, water recycling, aspect etc

5.24 Any reserved matters application could adequately deal with these matters in a way which is acceptable and on that basis there is not considered to be a conflict with this criterion.

(g) Reduce the overall need to travel but where travel is necessary, to better manage the transport network to enable it to function efficiently

5.25 As mentioned previously the site is fairly isolated in terms of connectivity particularly for pedestrians and cyclists wishing to access services and facilities within Woodbridge town centre. Furthermore the Highway Authority are concerned about the impact of the development on minor roads.

(i) Enhance accessibility to services

5.26 As mentioned previously the site is fairly isolated although it is acknowledged that the provision of bus stops and crossing points would aid accessibility.

(j) Conserve and enhance the areas natural historic and built environment.

5.27 There is one grade II listed building adjacent to the site (1 Top Street) although a substantial landscaped buffer is proposed in this part of the site and the Environmental Statement assesses the impact as a negligible indirect impact on the significance of this asset. At the time of writing no response had been received from SCC Archaeological Team and so it is not yet possible to determine whether there would be any potential harm to assets of archaeological interest. The submitted Archaeological Statement (AS) states that a geophysical survey recorded no anomalies of archaeological interest although isolated finds have been found on the site. The AS found that the site has moderate to good potential for

further finds and should further archaeological assessment be required by SCC this could be secured by planning condition.

- 5.28 The proposed development will result in the loss of a significant area of open and attractive countryside on the valley sides of the River Fynn and in the immediate setting of the AONB. It will therefore be highly prominent in views from the AONB and as such detrimental to its setting.

(k) Maintain and enhance a sense of place

- 5.29 The indicative development framework provided for a substantial amount of green infrastructure within the site largely due to the easement for the cable route for the East Anglia Offshore Windfarm. Provision is also made within the site for open space, woodland and walking routes with potential to connect to public footpath in the vicinity. If the site were to be developed it could be an attractive and pleasant place to live.

- 5.30 However, whilst the development itself could be attractive, it would not for the reasons outlined above, relate particularly well to the existing community, extending as it would Woodbridge into open countryside on a sloping site in the immediate setting of the AONB. It is therefore considered that it would not accord with the principles of sustainable development and the strategy for Woodbridge which is to consolidate the town.

(l) Create and promote inclusive and sustainable communities in both urban and rural locations

- 5.31 For the reasons outlined above, it is considered that the application fails to meet this criterion.

**Landscape and Visual Impact**

- 5.32 The Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB and the Deben Estuary Special Protection Area and located to the south of the site and the Special Landscape Area to the west. A Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) is included within the Environmental Statement (ES) accompanying the application which assesses the potential landscape and visual impacts of the proposed development on the local and wider area. The LVA considers the proposed development from a total of 18 viewpoints and assesses the scale and significance of any effects that will remain after the proposed mitigation/design measures are applied.

- 5.33 The LVA acknowledges that the development will result in an obvious and permanent change to the character of the site, however the visual envelope of the proposed development is relatively small and limited predominantly to short sections of PRow and glimpses from Long Distance Footpaths located due south of the site. The LVA considers that the proposed structural planting will ensure that a buffer is maintained adjacent to the properties located along Top Street to the west and the AONB to the south, which will ensure the quality and the character of the AONB, Martlesham, riverside and the Deben Estuary are maintained. Consequently the LVA concludes that the proposed development will result in an overall moderate effect in terms of landscape character and visual resources and has the potential to successfully integrate into the local surroundings without any unacceptable landscape or visual effects.

- 5.34 The Landscape and Arboricultural Manager has given detailed consideration to the submitted Design and Access Statement and LVA and comes to a significantly different conclusion to the conclusion of the LVA in terms of the visual impact the proposal will have on landscape character. In view of the close proximity of the AONB it is considered that impact on landscape character is a key consideration in the determination of this application. As such it is considered appropriate to include the Landscape and Arboricultural Managers comments in full:

**“SPECIFIC POLICY MATTERS**

Of specific relevance is the document endorsed by the AONB Partnership in December 2015 entitled:



## **Developments in the Setting of the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB**

The following extracts are of direct concern:

The Partnership considers the setting, including the views into and out of the AONB, to be the area within which development and land management proposals, by virtue of their nature; size; scale; siting, materials or design can be considered to have an impact, positive or negative, on the natural beauty and special qualities of the nationally designated landscape.

The Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Management Plan 2013-18 identifies the following objectives:

*There is a consistently high standard of development control decision making. This will prevent significant adverse impact on the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework*

*The special qualities of the AONB are consistently taken into account and enhanced by the planning process.*

The Partnership considers that development in the setting of the AONB that would have a significant adverse impact on the natural beauty and special qualities of the area should not be supported.

The Partnership takes this position as:

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1. Paragraph 115 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides specific planning guidance for plan makers and decision takers in relation to AONBs and confirms that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks and AONBs, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.

2. Paragraph 113 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities should set criteria based policies against which proposals for any development on or affecting protected wildlife or geodiversity sites or landscape areas will be judged. The phrase "or affecting" landscape areas supports the need for setting as a consideration in policy making.

3. Paragraph 116 of the NPPF notes that applications for major development should be refused in designated areas except in exceptional circumstances and applications should include an assessment of any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.

4. Within Section 85 (1) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 there is a duty on all relevant authorities to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect land in AONBs. This Duty of Regard requires all public bodies, down to parish council level, to consider the AONBs nationally protected status in any land use related decisions. This includes planning applications and the formulation of Local and Neighbourhood Plans.

### **Context**

The setting of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB does not have a geographical border.

The character, location, scale, materials or design of a proposed development or land management activity will determine whether it affects the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB.

A very large development may have an impact even if some considerable distance from the AONB boundary. As such, each proposal should be assessed on its own merits and where there is potential to adversely affect the protected landscape, this impact should be assessed.

### **Examples of adverse impacts will include:**

- Development not appropriate to the landscape setting of the AONB

- Blocking or interference of views out of the AONB particularly from public viewpoints
- Blocking or interference of views of the AONB from public viewpoints outside the AONB
- Loss of tranquillity through the introduction of lighting, noise, or traffic movement
- Introduction of an abrupt change of landscape character

## **MATTERS ARISING FROM EXAMINATION OF THE DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT**

The Design and Access Statement included with the application, in outlining its vision for the proposed development, claims that it will deliver a *distinctive and high quality place reflecting the qualities and character of the Suffolk Coast and Heath AONB*. Whilst this is a very broad brush statement, it is possible to test the proposal against this objective because a Suffolk Coasts & Heaths AONB Special Qualities document has recently been drawn up, primarily in relation to the Sizewell C development, but available for wider application. Having reviewed this application against that document, it is hard to see where any of the special qualities of the AONB are reflected in this proposed development.

The Design and Access Statement notes that SCDC policy SP1 requires development to *maintain and enhance a sense of place*. This policy does not seek the creation of a sense of place, but the maintenance of a sense of place i.e. the one prevailing before development takes place. Therefore the existing character of the site will be an important informant. At present the site comprises recently farmed land on a sloping site that overlooks Martlesham Creek. Its sense of place is one that captures the transition away from a built up area and a busy road, towards a much more peaceful place around a river inlet with low tide mud flats, reed beds and woodland. I do not consider that the proposed development can possibly maintain the *status quo*.

The section of the Design and Access statement on landscape impact claims:

- *That visual impact is limited to public rights of way and long distance footpaths*. However it should be realised that such receptors are considered to have High sensitivity in LVIA terms, and they are, in this instance, located in an AONB. Such visual impact may be fairly limited in extent, but its significance where it exists needs to be fully realised.
- *That buffer planting will ensure the quality and character of the AONB and 'estuary' are maintained*. Given that the site slopes down towards the Creek (and AONB), and that much of this buffer planting is shown adjacent to the railway (described there as woodland planting) which may not be wholly acceptable to Network Rail, such buffer planting may not be as effective as seems to be anticipated. The applicant will need to demonstrate that such planting is not a problem to Network Rail.
- The proposal is a *well considered approach to the landscape and village context of the site that has the potential to successfully integrate into the local surroundings without unacceptable landscape and visual effects*. I do not consider that the site currently has a village context (and even if it did, there are few if any aspects of this proposal that reflect the character of Martlesham), and even first impressions suggest that there is little about the proposal that responds well to the landscape context of the site, which is that of a rural valley side site that leads down to Martlesham Creek. The use of the word potential is telling in itself. To some it may come across as a lack of conviction in their claim.
- (It's a minor point but the second photo on page 31 is not viewpoint 2, but viewpoint 9.)
- That the site layout includes a *high quality landscaped corridor*. This is based on the East Anglia 1 corridor route and is likely to have significant restrictions on what can be planted there and so the high quality landscape cannot necessarily be delivered as anticipated. The applicant will need to demonstrate that none of their planting proposals, and especially those which they rely on as mitigation, is in conflict with cable route restrictions.

- That *it is essential that suitable street trees grown for urban locations are specified, narrow, compact form and medium height.* It is notable that elsewhere in the landscape assessment, the ‘maturing of landscaping at ten years’ is relied upon to mitigate visual impacts of the development. Whilst the provision of specific street trees is a rather obvious point, and accepted, the claim of maturity of landscaping in general in ten years is far fetched and unrealistic. Plot shrub planting will mature in that time, but the critical buffer planting and other structure planting trees will have nothing like maturity in that timespan and so cannot be relied on as effective mitigation in this situation.

With regard to these matters of mitigation, it is worth noting GLVIA3 guidance on the matter (paras. 4.38 and 4.39) – *It is essential to demonstrate that any measures included as part of the mitigation proposed to respond to adverse landscape and visual effects can be delivered in practice. This may be considered a part of the assessment of effects and taken into account by decision makers.*

Also,

*If mitigation or enhancement measures are material factors likely to influence the outcome of a project proposal then a judgement needs to be made about whether they are technically achievable, practically deliverable and likely to be sustainable in the future.*

With this guidance in mind I question whether the applicant’s anticipated 10 year maturity to their new planting is realistic (certainly not in the case of tree planting which is the most effective contributor of mitigation) and therefore effective in mitigating adverse visual impacts. The issue of planting woodland trees next to the railway needs advice from Network Rail. If they object and have a power of veto as a nominal statutory undertaker, then that landscape mitigation cannot be delivered.

## LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

### LANDSCAPE EFFECTS

The submitted assessment contains a section on potential effects of the proposal without mitigating measures and concludes that it would have major adverse effects on the surrounding character, especially the setting of the SC&H AONB, The Deben Estuary SPA and the nearby SLA. There would be moderate adverse effects on adjacent residential properties.

In the light of the tenuous effectiveness of proposed landscape mitigation as described above, this is a frank and revealing admission.

The construction phase is assessed as having a major/moderate adverse effect on landscape, but for a limited time duration and over only a localised area. Such impacts may be localised and short term, but they will extend over the very sensitive Creek area.

Once complete, the assessment considers effects on the landscape at a variety of scales, from the National Landscape Character Assessment (Low scale of change given the extent of the Suffolk Coasts and Heaths LCA), although in a localised sense the overall effect is considered High given the close proximity of the AONB designated land around the Creek. However, the overall effect is rated to be a Low magnitude of change because of the relatively enclosed nature of the site and the development will not be visible from the wider landscape. There seems to be some confusion in the assessment in para. 6.7.7 between various scales of effect, and the separation of landscape impacts and visual impacts. The applicant should clarify that paragraph in particular.

Para. 6.7.8 considers the impact on the local County LCT and concludes that across the LCT as a whole, the magnitude of change is only Medium, leading to Moderate effects in the short term across the localised 0.5km radius local area. But to assess magnitude of change across the whole LCT, but effects on only the immediate locality seems unrealistic. You shouldn't have two different scales of magnitude/effects in the same assessment. The magnitude of change on the immediate locality I consider to be High resulting in a Major landscape effects.

The overall conclusion is that there will be no discernible effects on local landscape character overall. Although short term effects may be Major/Moderate, it is claimed that the benefits from the proposed new landscape planting will offset this. I do not consider this to be a realistic conclusion and I believe that the character of the Martlesham Creek area will be significantly changed with the presence of residential development cascading down the northern slopes from the edge of the Woodbridge built up area.

## VISUAL EFFECTS

Critical visual impacts arise for receptors in the Martlesham Creek area and especially users of the Fynn Valley long distance walk and other PROWs which passes through the area. In particular Viewpoints 7, 8, 9, 11 and 12 are critical (and to a slightly lesser extent, 10 & 13). The assessment rightly rates these receptors as having high sensitivity, but considers effects to be largely Moderate (although Major/Moderate in the case of VP9) and remaining so into the long term. All the supplied viewpoint photos are summer shots with existing tree and hedge cover in full leaf. At the time of my writing (January 2016) the leaves are off the trees and the site is much more visible from these important viewpoints. For much of the Martlesham Creek area I consider the visual effects to be Major and therefore significant considering the AONB status of the locality. Longer term residual effects are down rated for most viewpoints where there is significant visibility, but again, this assessment relies on the proposed mitigation planting and especially the cable corridor route open space. If there are restrictions on planting in this area, we need to know in case that mitigation cannot be delivered. In addition, it needs to be noted that this corridor route will be a very contrived line in terms of the character of the local landscape if it is emphasised by being central to the proposed open space. If the site were to remain an agricultural field, its line would not be discernible.

## CONCLUSION

The landscape submission concludes by saying that the proposed development *will result in an overall Moderate Adverse effect in terms of landscape and visual resources. Overall it is considered the development proposal demonstrates a well considered approach to the landscape and context of the site and appropriate development of the site has the potential to successfully integrate into the local landscape surroundings without any unacceptable landscape or visual effects.*

I cannot agree with this conclusion mainly on the following counts:

- The significance of effects on the Martlesham Creek area has been downplayed by partly considering impacts over a wider and not relevant area.
- Winter impacts have not been considered.
- Relied upon mitigation measures may not be as effective as is claimed for the reasons I have stated in this report.

They cannot claim that the development can be achieved without any unacceptable landscape or visual effects. There will be such effects and I do not consider that they can be successfully moderated.”

- 5.35 The expert advice of the Arboricultural and Landscape Manager is that the application would have a significant effect on the setting of the AONB.

### **Built Heritage**

- 5.36 There are three Grade II listed buildings close to the site: Creek Farm, Sluice Farmhouse and No. 1 Top Street. The Council's Senior Design and Conservation Officer has considered the submitted Built Heritage Statement (BHS) and does not consider that the proposal would impact significantly on either Sluice Farmhouse or Creek Farmhouse due, in part, to the intervening railway line. No. 1 Top Street is much closer to the application site and has an established relationship to the open farmland surrounding it that forms its setting. It is considered that loss of part of those surroundings by the proposed development will impact on the setting of this listed building. However it is considered that the harm, in this case, is less than substantial. The Senior Design and Conservation Officer agrees with the findings of the BHS in that the proposed woodland planting will mitigate some of the impact of the proposal, although it could perhaps be extended further. Accordingly therefore it is considered that the proposal will not have a significantly adverse impact on No. 1 Top Street.

### **Ecology and Nature Conservation**

- 5.37 Ecology and Nature Conservation issues are dealt with in detail in the ES and the Ecological Appraisal. The site does not fall within the boundary of any statutory designated site of international, national/regional or local conservation importance. It is however close to the Deben Estuary Special Protection Area (SPA), the Deben Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and the Deben Estuary RAMSAR which are located approximately 390m to the south of the site. Consideration needs to be given to the impact of the proposed development on these sites of international importance.
- 5.38 As will be noted from Natural England's response above the SPA is highly sensitive to recreational impacts from housing developments and they would expect residents from the proposed development to regularly visit the SPA, particularly for dog walking. A number of initiatives are proposed to reduce the likelihood that new residents will regularly access the SPA. These include the provision of onsite open space and footpaths and connections to wider public footpaths in the vicinity of the site. It is also proposed to restrict access from the site directly onto the adjacent Sandy Lane, thus increasing the minimum walking distance from the site to the designated site and reducing the attractiveness of the SPA as a recreational destination.
- 5.39 Natural England acknowledge that the availability of on-site local green space is likely to reduce visits to the Deben SPA to an extent but consider that there is likely to be a component of regular visits to the SPA in view of its close proximity to the site. On the basis of the information submitted with the application Natural England are unable to rule out a likely significant effect on the SPA. It is understood that the applicants Ecological consultants are currently liaising with Natural England to address this issue and any updates received will be provided in the Update and Additions Report.
- 5.40 As detailed within the Ecological Appraisal a number of surveys were carried out across the site for the presence of protected species. The most significant findings from these surveys is the presence of a good population of common lizard and in the absence of mitigation there are potential adverse impacts on this population. The ES concludes that retaining the majority of hedgerows and trees and providing on site open space and habitats, in addition to translocating reptiles, will ensure there are no adverse impacts overall. Suffolk Wildlife Trust have also considered the Ecological Appraisal and make a number of recommendations including the provision of a Reptile Mitigation Strategy and Ecological Management Plan. It is considered that these measures would be sufficient to ensure that there would be no significant impact on protected species, subject to being secured by planning condition should planning permission be granted.

### **Emerging Neighbourhood Plan**

- 5.41 As will be noted from Martlesham Parish Council's comments above work began on the Neighbourhood Plan in 2013 and is at an advanced stage. The neighbourhood Plan will seek to maintain protection against further developments outside the designated village envelope. Consequently the Parish Council state that the Neighbourhood Plan will not be allocating this site for housing development. Although not adopted it is considered that some weight can be attached to the emerging Neighbourhood Plan and the views expressed by the Parish Council.

### **Benefits versus Adverse Impacts**

- 5.42 Whilst it will be noted above that there is significant local opposition and objection to the scheme and that the proposal is considered contrary to a number of policies with regards to the principle of development in this location, it is right and proper to draw attention to the benefits that would arise if planning permission is granted.

#### **Social Benefits**

- 5.43 The proposal would deliver a range of housing sizes and styles as required by Policy SP3. Whilst the Council can currently demonstrate a 5 year land supply plus a buffer of 5% the proposal would add to the housing land availability within the District.
- 5.44 The proposal would deliver 33% (approximately 72) affordable dwellings in accordance with Policy DM2. The Affordable Housing Statement submitted with the application suggests a mix of 1, 2 and 3 bed properties as a starting point for negotiations. In terms of viability the Statement also confirms that there are few grounds to conclude that the scheme would be unable to deliver the full affordable housing requirements as well as the CIL requirements.
- 5.45 The proposal would provide 4.87ha (38%) of new public open space in accordance with policies SP16 and SP17.

- 5.46 The proposed convenience store would benefit the local community.

#### **Economic Benefits**

- 5.47 The application is accompanied by an Economic Statement which sets out the economic benefits including 90 jobs in construction over five years, up to 10 jobs in Suffolk Coastal, continued viability of local businesses and demand for local services and facilities and £1.62m of New Homes Bonus over six years.

#### **Environmental Benefits**

- 5.48 The provision of new planting to provide green infrastructure, ecology and wildlife benefits.

#### **Adverse Impacts**

- 5.49 Paragraph 5.14 of this report has assessed the application against key criteria on Policy SP1 of the Local Plan, and this assessment is considered to be important given the presumption in favour of sustainable development promoted not only through the Local Plan but also by the NPPF. Paragraphs 49 and 14 of the NPPF are therefore of particular relevance. Paragraphs 5.40-5.44 have considered the benefits of the scheme which is a key requirement of paragraph 14 of the NPPF.
- 5.50 The test therefore is to assess the harm against the benefits and reach a conclusion on the application, bearing in mind that only where the harm is significant and demonstrable should permission be refused.
- 5.51 It has been detailed in this report that the proposal does not accord with the strategy in the Local Plan, and the site was discounted in the SHLAA as being but was considered unsuitable as being within an Area to be Protected from Development; coalescence of Martlesham and Woodbridge; and poor access.

- 5.52 The Core Strategy seeks to consolidate the town of Woodbridge whereas the proposal extends the town into an attractive area of open countryside which is relatively isolated in terms of connectivity to existing services and facilities. The importance of retaining the site in its undeveloped form to prevent the coalescence of Woodbridge and Martlesham and as part of the valley of the River Fynn and setting of the AONB is recognised in adopted and 'saved' policies. The development also has the potential to impact on archaeological features and further archaeological investigation is required to establish heritage assets will not present a constraint on development.
- 5.53 The latest Housing Land Supply Assessment (2015) shows that the Council currently has a 5 year supply of housing land (5.12 years) in the period up to 2021. As such the release of this site is not required in order to meet the identified housing needs of the District. Prior to 2015 it was accepted that the Council did not have a 5 year supply of housing land and as a consequence planning permission was granted on a number of sites identified in the SHLAA that represented sustainable development. That is not considered to be the case with the application site.
- 5.54 Even if it was accepted that the Council does not have a 5 year supply of housing land it does not follow that planning permission should be granted on all sites that come forward for consideration. Case law has determined that, in the absence of a 5 year supply of housing land, the presumption in favour of sustainable development is outweighed if the adverse impacts of the proposal would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits in terms of increasing housing supply.
- 5.55 It is considered that the proposal represents a clear conflict with the Local Plan. 'Saved' Policy AP214 recognises the site as a prominent and essential component of the Fynn Valley and 'saved' Policy AP212 seeks to maintain the open character of land which separates Martlesham from Woodbridge. Policy SP15 seeks to protect sites that make an important contribution to a particular location or where development would lead to coalescence.
- 5.56 The AONB lies immediately to the south of the site and therefore the site forms the setting to this part of the AONB. The NPPF at paragraph 115 states that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in the AONB, which has the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. There can be no question of the importance the NPPF places on the protection of national important landscape. As will be noted in paragraph 5.33 above such consideration will extend to the impact on the setting of an AONB.

### **The Balance**

- 5.57 The NPPF states that there are three dimensions to sustainable development, economic, social and environmental, and that these should not be undertaken in isolation because they are mutually dependent. To achieve sustainable development economic, social and environmental gain should be sought jointly and simultaneously through the planning system.
- 5.58 As has been stated previously in this report, there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The application has been tested against the principles of sustainable development as contained in the Local Plan and also the benefits arising from the scheme have also been identified, rightly so. Notwithstanding such, in this instance Officer's are of the opinion that the harm arising from permitting the development is so significant and demonstrable so as to outweigh any benefits arising.
- 5.59 The application site has already been considered to be unsuitable for residential development in the SHLAA due to coalescence and within an area to be protected from development. The application as presented does not overcome this concern. Furthermore it is evident that the proposal would have a significant impact on the setting of the AONB.
- 5.60 The proposal would extend Woodbridge into open countryside identified for its importance as a buffer to prevent coalescence with Martlesham and within the setting of the AONB.

Furthermore the site is not considered to be particularly well located in terms of connectivity and distance to the services and facilities within Woodbridge town centre.

- 5.61 Whilst the proposal would give rise to some benefits including particularly the provision of affordable housing and through the provision of construction jobs and a convenience store, it is considered that these benefits would not outweigh the clear harm that would be caused to the setting of the AONB, a nationally important landscape designation, and potentially the internationally important Deben Estuary SPA.
- 5.62 Accordingly therefore it is considered that the proposal fails to meet the environmental role of sustainable development. This shortcoming would amount to an adverse impact sufficient to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies of the NPPF as a whole having regard to the requirements of paragraph 14 of the NPPF.

### **S106 Matters and Community Infrastructure Levy**

- 5.63 The applicant has accepted that a S106 Agreement will be needed for the provision of onsite open space, public transport improvements, highways contributions, a Travel Plan and affordable housing provision. As will be noted above SCC Public Rights of Way have requested improvements to existing routes and Natural England have requested contributions towards visitor management in within the Deben Estuary. These matters have not been discussed with the applicant. However, given the objection in principle to development, the lack of a S106 Agreement will form an additional reason for refusal.
- 5.64 The application site is located within the medium charging zone for CIL. Assuming an average property size of 90m<sup>2</sup>, the CIL yield for the residential element would be £1,158,300 (£90/zqm x 200 units (affordable discounted)) and £28,000 for the A1 convenience store. The total yield therefore could be in the region of £1,186,300 of which a proportion would go to the Town Council.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 The application proposed represents a significant residential led development that would extend Woodbridge into open countryside beyond the defined physical limits of the town, on a site that lies within the setting of the AONB. Development on the site would have a significant and adverse impact on the character and appearance of the AONB. Also at the present time it is not possible to rule out a likely significant impact on the Deben Estuary SPA and the Highway Authority also have significant concerns at this stage regarding the proposed accesses onto Ipswich Road and Top Street. Furthermore development on the site would lead to the coalescence of Woodbridge and Martlesham.
- 6.2 The development is not therefore considered to represent sustainable development when assessed against the NPPF as a whole.
- 6.3 The Council can demonstrate a five year supply of housing land. The benefits of the proposal are acknowledged, particularly the provision of affordable housing, however for the reasons set out in the report and the refusal reasons identified below, it is considered that the harm identified is significant and demonstrable when weighed against the benefits.
- 6.4 It is not considered that the imposition of conditions or the application of a S106 Agreement would, in this instance, mitigate the identified harm.
- 6.5 The application is therefore recommended for refusal for the reasons set out below.

### **RECOMMENDATION: REFUSE** for the following reasons:

1. The site lies in the open countryside outside the defined physical limits for Woodbridge where there is a presumption against new development in recognition of its intrinsic character and beauty. Policy SP29 limits new development to that which of necessity requires to be located there. The strategy for Woodbridge, in Policy SP26 is to consolidate the town and to balance



opportunities with the acknowledged physical and environmental constraints, including the Deben Estuary with its nature conservation and landscape designations. The site is also not well related in terms of connectivity to the services and facilities within the town centre. The proposal is not considered to be sustainably located and as such is contrary to the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework and Policies SP1, SP1A, SP19, SP26 and SP29 of the Suffolk District Local Plan Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document July 2013.

2. The proposal fails to make adequate provision/contributions (and/or agreement to provide) for facilities/services for the occupants of the dwellings. The applicant has not entered into the necessary legal agreement, which is required to ensure the following is provided:
  - The provision of a third of the dwellings as affordable housing
  - The provision of highway improvements and a travel plan
  - The provision of enhanced footway/cycle links
  - The provision and management of open space
  - Financial contribution towards visitor management within the Deben Estuary
3. The proposal is therefore contrary to the NPPF and Policies SP1, SP11, SP16, SP17, SP18, SP26, DM2 and DM32 of the Suffolk District Local Plan Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document July 2013.
4. The application does not provide sufficient information to enable the archaeological potential of the site to be suitably assessed and this is a requirement prior to the determination of the application.
5. The transport assessment does not adequately reflect the highways impact of the combined residential and commercial development, and the likely impact of the internal traffic diverting to use the Top Street access in greater proportions than anticipated. The proposal could therefore result in an unacceptable level of additional traffic onto minor roads.
6. The application does not provide sufficient information to rule out a likely significant effect on the Deben Estuary Special Protection Area contrary to Policy DM27 of the Suffolk District Local Plan Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document July 2013.
7. The proposal will extend development close to the boundary of the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Development on the site would have a significantly adverse impact on the setting of the AONB. The proposal is therefore contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy SP15 of the Suffolk District Local Plan Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document July 2013.
8. 'Saved' Policy AP212 seeks to maintain the open character of the land which separates, amongst others, Martlesham from Woodbridge to prevent coalescence. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy AP212 and AP28 of the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan (incorporating the First & Second Alterations) and Policy SP15 of the Suffolk District Local Plan Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document July 2013.
9. 'Saved' Policy AP214 recognises that the land lying between Sandy Lane and the A12, including the application site, is a prominent and essential component of the Fynn Valley, lying between the Special Landscape Area to the west and the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The area is important in visual terms, particularly in views from the adjacent AONB and it creates a significant open space barrier between Woodbridge and Martlesham. Development on the site would therefore be contrary to saved Policy AP214 of the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan (incorporating the First & Second Alterations)

**DETERMINATION:**

**BACKGROUND PAPERS:** Planning Application file Ref No: DC/15/4788/OUT

**Committee Date:** 24 February 2016

**Site Visit Date:** 22 February 2016