

Parish: Monks Eleigh**Location: Village Hall, Church Hill****Proposal: Erection of a pair of semi-detached dwellings and 2 (no.) detached dwellings and 4 (no.) garages. Construction of new vehicular access.****Applicant: Trustees of Monks Eleigh Village Hall****Case Officer: Gareth Durrant****Date for Determination: 15/03/10**

The application was deferred from the meeting held on 12 May 2010 to enable a panel of Members to visit the site in advance of determining the planning application. In particular, Members resolved to visit the site in order to assess the impact of the proposed development upon the setting of the Grade I listed Church and the character and appearance of the village conservation area.

THE SITE

1. The site currently supports the village hall and is situated adjacent to an on the opposite side of Church Hill to the Parish Church, a grade I listed building. Part of the site frontage is within the village Conservation Area which is situated to the east and south of the village hall site. The village hall is situated on a corner plot. The building fronts and is elevated above Church Hill, but is also adjacent to Church Field, a cul-de sac which serves 51 dwellings and the village primary school (located to the west). The site is approximately 0.1 hectares in size and has no formal means of vehicular access. Accordingly no off-street parking is provided at the site and the land immediately surrounding the village hall is grassed. The land is level, but is raised up from Church Hill by approximately 1.5 metres. The site frontage to Church Hill is banked with hedgerow planting on the roadside edge. The frontage to Church Field is also banked although the height of the bank reduces as you move westward into Church Field. The south, west and north boundaries are open.
2. The village hall building has a rectangular footprint with a depth of 27.5 metres and a width of 8.7 metres. It is approximately 4.7 metres to ridge and approximately 2.5 metres to eaves.

THE PROPOSAL

3. The application proposes the erection of four dwellings following demolition of the existing village hall. The dwellings are comprised of two detached dwellings fronting Church Hill (Plots 3 and 4) to the east and a pair of semi-detached dwellings facing southward and fronting Church Field (Plots 1 and 2).
4. Plots 1 and 2, the semi detached pair would be 7.7 metres to ridge (4.1 metres to eaves), each unit having a footprint of 7.5 x 6.2 metres, with a small (2.3 x 2.2 metres) rear conservatory. Plots 1 and 2 provide identical accommodation with two bedrooms and a bathroom at first floor level and sitting/dining room, kitchen and entrance hall (with small w.c.) at ground floor level.

5. Plot 3 (detached unit proposed to be sited close to the south east corner of the site) would be 7.9 metres tall to ridge (3.7 metres to eaves) and have a footprint of 10 x 6.1 metres. Plot 4 (detached and sited close to the north east corner of the site) is the tallest of the four proposed dwellings and has a 9.5 metre ridge at its highest point (9 metres at its lowest, where the land rises). The eaves are 5.3 metres at their highest point and 4.8 metres at their lowest). The dwelling would have a footprint of 10 x 6.1 metres). Plots 3 and 4 provide the same internal accommodation being three Bedrooms (1 en-suite) and a bathroom at first-floor level and a kitchen/breakfast room, sitting room and hall (with small w.c.) at ground-floor level.
6. The walls of the proposed dwellings would be finished in a mixture of brick, render and timber left to a natural finish, whilst the roofs would be clad with clay pantiles (Plots 1 and 2) and clay plaintiles (Plots 3 and 4).
7. The application is accompanied by various drawings, a desk top contamination report a design and access statement and explanatory covering letter.
8. The covering letter submitted with the planning application explains that all profits gained from the proposed re-development of the existing village hall site would be put towards the construction of a new community hall to be constructed at Monks Eleigh Primary School (separate planning permission already granted by the Suffolk County Council). The letter goes on to state the applicants need to maximise the value from the sale of the village hall site if the project is going to proceed and therefore require enabling costs and S106 contributions to be kept to a minimum. The applicant requests the normal requirements of Policy HS08 (affordable housing in villages) are set aside in order to achieve improved school and village facilities.
9. The desk-top contamination report submitted with the application indicated the likelihood of the site being contaminated is low.
10. The design and access statement is summarised as follows;
 - The village hall is of very poor construction and no longer meets the needs of the village and proposals for a new village hall are the subject of an application submitted to Suffolk County Council.
 - The site lies within the settlement boundary and is in walking distance of all the services and facilities the village offers (shop, pub, restaurant, church, school, church hall and playing field).
 - The design of the proposed dwellings aims to reflect the nature of the site, pattern of development of its surroundings, both in its architectural appearance, use and setting.
 - The density of the development is approximately 44 dwellings per hectare which meets the requirements of PPS3.
 - The proposal is that all four properties should be 'open market'. The proceeds of the sale will go in total to the fund to provide the new Community Hall proposed to be constructed at Monks Eleigh Primary School.
 - The proposal is to provide a mix of smaller houses with small gardens, this balances the recent residential development in Monks Eleigh which has been for large detached houses in generous plots.

- Two affordable houses for rent by a registered social landlord were provided in 2009 in The Street. It is now a priority for the village to be able to upgrade the village school and provide a Community Hall and this development will help to achieve this.
- The layout is linear and follows Church Hill and Church Field providing frontage development to both. The properties of Church Hill are stepped to follow site contours. The Grade I listed church will continue to dominate the area. The two detached properties sitting behind the existing verge hedgeline will provide an enhanced appearance from that of the present prefabricated concrete frame and clad village hall.
- The scale of the proposed dwellings is designed to reflect the scale of the surrounding residential properties.
- Simple window and door openings and the use of some dormer windows in combination with a mix of brickwork and boarding, clay pantiles and peg tiles provides a strong domestic feel to the houses.
- The existing hedge line to Church Hill will be retained along with the pedestrian steps.
- Brick walls (1.8 metres high) will be constructed on the south and west road boundaries with space in front for landscaping. A close-boarded fence and a new hedge will be provided to the north of the garden to Plot 4.
- There is no dominant architectural aesthetic in the vicinity. The aim is to use traditional local good quality materials to reflect what is found in the more historic core of the village being the street and south end of Church Hill.

RELEVANT HISTORY

11. None relevant to the village hall site.
12. 2010 - Planning permission has been granted by Suffolk County Council for the erection of a new community hall within the grounds of the village primary school to the west of the application site. Application number B/09/01056/CDP refers.

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

13. **PPS1** (Delivering Sustainable Development)
14. **PPS3** (Housing)
15. **PPS5** (Planning for the Historic Environment)
16. **PPS9** (Biodiversity and Geological Conservation)
17. **PPG17** (Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation)

PLANNING POLICIES

18. The Development Plan comprises the East of England Plan, adopted 2008, saved policies in the Suffolk Structure Plan, adopted 2001, and the saved policies of the Babergh Local Plan (Alteration No. 2) adopted 2006. The following policies are relevant to this proposal:

East of England Plan - 2008

- **SS1** (Achieving Sustainable Development)
- **SS4** (Towns other than Key Centres and Rural Areas)
- **H2** (Affordable Housing)
- **T14** (Parking)
- **ENV3** (Biodiversity and Earth Heritage)
- **ENV6** (The Historic Environment)
- **ENV7** (Quality in the Built Environment)

Babergh Local Plan (Alteration No.2) 2006

- **HS02** (New Housing in Villages)
- **HS03** (Sustainable and Non-Sustainable Villages)
- **HS09** (Affordable Housing from Windfall Developments in Small Villages)
- **HS27** (Housing Density)
- **HS28** (Infilling and Groups of Housing)
- **HS32** (Public Open Space Provision (small sites))
- **CR20** (Protecting Existing Village Facilities)
- **CN01** (Maintaining Local Distinctiveness)
- **CN03** (Protection of important open spaces, visually important gaps in the streetscene and recreational facilities)
- **CN06** (Development to or Affecting the Setting of Listed Buildings)
- **CN08** (Development affecting Conservation Areas (including views into and out of Conservation Areas))
- **TP15** (Parking Standards)

The relevant documents can be viewed via the internet. Please see Page3 for details.

CONSULTATIONS

19. PC – provide the following comments:
20. Recommend approval in terms of land use and appearance and would add that the design and access statement provided has satisfied it that the new dwellings have been designed with their surroundings in mind and will have no detrimental impact upon the streetscene and no significant impact upon views from the surrounding area. Approval would be in line with saved policies CN01, CN08, CR04 and HS02 of the Local Plan.
21. However, the Parish Council have asked that I bring to your attention a perceived problem with regard to the access to the garages of Plots 2 and 4. The proposed access is over an adopted public footpath belonging to Suffolk County Council and land beyond belonging to a third party. The Parish Council is concerned that the site plan does not show the actual dimensions of the land belonging to the Village Hall.
22. LHA – Requested amendments in order to achieve adequate visibility to the accesses/parking spaces.
23. EH – Initial advice (desktop assessment of the proposals);
 - No objection to the demolition of the existing building on the site, or to the principle of its redevelopment with housing. Whilst it is outside the Conservation Area, the site faces the grade I listed St. Peter's Church directly across the road.

- Monks Eleigh is one of the most attractive villages in this part of Suffolk and the site, together with the church sites at the end of a progression of historic buildings, nearly all listed which front Church Hill as it climbs up from the main street. Whilst the design and access statement acknowledges the importance of this context, English Heritage is concerned that the proposals appear to fail to address and reflect the very important and sensitive location. We feel that the design and layout, forms and detailing are more suited to a less demanding suburban site than one adjoining this historic core and its medieval church.
- We would especially draw your attention to the Church Hill frontage. Here the staggered building arrangement ignores the alignment of the historic street and the two large dwellings have only a metre gap between them. The introduction of dominant areas of stained weatherboard and the horizontal emphasis of openings has not, we feel, been justified.
- Whilst we condone the adoption of a simple contemporary design solution we suggest that you consider the appropriateness of this scheme and instead explore a solution that is informed by the factors we refer to above and the townscape and historic building conventions that are so evident in Monks Eleigh.

24. EH – Second letter (following a site visit)

- We looked at the Church Field area which comprises mainly mid-twentieth century houses arranged around a long green that runs east-west along an axis that is terminated at the east end by the imposing tower of the church. The village hall is not of any historic, architectural or townscape merit and obstructs views of the lower half of the west end of the church and its removal would therefore have distinct advantages in opening up views of the tower.
- The gain would be largely nullified if new buildings of inappropriate bulk and form were to be substituted for the hall.
- English Heritage has not objected to the principle of redevelopment, but we feel that the setting of the church from the west can be said of similar significance to the other visual aspects we discussed in our earlier letter.
- All of this leads me to recommend that new housing should comprise single-storey forms with a roofscape that allows at least the same amount of the church tower, including the west window, to be visible from the west. I realise this approach would require a radical reconfiguration of the housing layout and its detailed design. It is likely to entail linked rather than detached buildings and may lead to a reduction in the number of units.
- This is a challenging site, but we do not think it impossible to reach a solution that is of a high quality and which preserves and enhances the setting of the Grade I listed church as well as the setting of the conservation area.

25. SWT – Where a building is demolished there is a possibility that it may impact on a protected species. Should permission be granted we recommend that demolition proceeds with caution. If any protected species such as bats are discovered work should cease immediately and further advice sought. We also recommend that work commences outside the bird nesting season of March to end of July. If this is not possible a check should be made for nests prior to demolition or vegetation clearance taking place and advice sought if any are found.

26. Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service – Submits advisory comments for the benefit of the applicant/developer.
27. SCC (Archaeology) comment the location of the site has good potential for the discovery of important hitherto unknown archaeological sites and features in view of its proximity to known remains (in the vicinity of the church). The Archaeological Service recommends the standard archaeological condition (submission of a programme of work and scheme of investigation) is attached to any planning permission granted.
28. Historic Buildings Officer (Babergh) – nb comments received before PPS5 replaced PPG15;
- The existing single-storey village hall building sits within an otherwise open space defined by residential property on three sides and by the imposing west tower of the Church of Saint Peter to the east.
 - Whilst the village hall intrudes into this space, the scale of the building and its open setting maintains the spatial character within the residential surroundings. The piecemeal residential development which has created this space appears to have deliberately had regard for the church, maintaining important views of the west tower of the Grade I listed building.
 - The siting, scale and form of the existing village hall building affords views of the majority of the west face of the tower, including the principal west window. Whilst there can be no objection to the demolition of the existing building, any redevelopment of the site should maintain the important views of the church as presently exists.
 - A suitable scheme would consist of a terrace of three single-storey dwellings sited precisely on the footprint of the existing building and facing south with open plan front gardens. Such a scheme would preserve the important views of the church for which special regard must be afforded with any redevelopment of this site.
 - The application proposes the erection of four dwellings on the village hall site which are of a scale which would significantly alter, if not destroy, this important view of the church which has been identified as an essential part of the character of the grade I listed building. The scale and siting of the proposed dwellings do not respect the values of the existing building and, as such, the application should be refused as being contrary to the provisions of PPG15 and the Babergh Local Plan.
29. Environmental Health (Land Contamination) – I am generally satisfied with the documents submitted and will not be requesting any further information from the applicant. However, we should be made aware if any unknown contamination is discovered during construction.
30. Head of Contract and Asset Management (Economic Development) – No objections providing the measures to protect and enhance the community facility is implemented.
31. Head of Community Development (Affordable Housing) provides the following comments;

- The application states in the Design and Access Statement that the proposal is that all four properties should be open market. It is clear this application falls within the policy that states that one in three of the properties should be an affordable housing unit. It may be that there are mitigating circumstances in that the proceeds of the development will go towards funding the new Community Centre but in our view this does not provide an automatic exemption from the policy.
- The Strategic Housing Market Assessment, the Babergh Housing Needs Survey and the recent local need survey clearly establish the need for affordable housing in Monks Eleigh, which has not been met by the recent provision of two units in The Street as the Design and Access Statement would seem to imply. We are currently working with the Parish Council and a housing association to bring forward an affordable housing scheme on a rural exception site.

REPRESENTATIONS

32. Four letters have been received in support of the planning application (three letters from members of the Village Hall Committee and one letter from a local resident). The following is a summary of the material comments received;
- Disappointed at the response made by English Heritage.
 - Points out that a new village hall is required to serve the community and the development of the land would help to fulfil this objective.
 - Points out that the existing village hall is in a poor structural condition and in need of replacement.
 - Finds it difficult to comprehend why the proposals are alleged to have such a profound impact upon the setting of the church.
 - A replacement has been planned for some time and the community have been working hard to deliver this and a new school community hall and the development of the village hall site is an excellent way to fund the project.
 - The dominant feature of the church is the tower which would remain visible; the view of the nave is screened by the trees for a large part of the year.
 - Visual impact of a small housing development would be minimal.
 - We believe we have consulted and taken the advice of the District Council. The community together with the Parish Council are fully behind the present scheme and support for this scheme would be a large step towards securing Monks Eleigh as a vibrant and sustainable community for the future.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

33. The application is situated within the settlement boundary of the village. Its development for residential purposes therefore accords in principle with relevant settlement policies in the Development Plan. However, regard has to be had to planning policies which seek to protect other interests. The issues central to the determination of this planning application are;
- The principle of development
 - Impact upon the setting of the Grade I listed Church

- Impact upon the conservation area, streetscene and character of the village
- Planning obligations

The principle of development

34. The Local Plan regards Monks Eleigh as a non-sustainable village (saved Policy HS03), principally because of a lack of employment opportunities in the village. Nonetheless the village has a built up area boundary and the erection of new residential development in the village is accepted. Saved policy HS02 states new housing development in non-sustainable villages will take the form of infilling (up to a maximum of three dwellings). Larger groups of development are appropriate in the larger sustainable villages listed in policy HS03 (which does not include Monks Eleigh). The proposal for the erection of four dwellings at the village hall site is therefore contrary to Policy HS03 and the principle of the proposed development of four dwellings is not acceptable. However, it is considered that the development does not constitute a significant breach of the policy (only one dwelling over the maximum is proposed) and accords with the general planning aim of making the most efficient use of land for new housing development. Whilst there are no objections to this application on the grounds that four, as opposed to the maximum of three dwellings are proposed on a single site in this non-sustainable village, the suitability of the specific proposal for this site (including the number of dwellings proposed) and its impact upon its environment must also be carefully considered.
35. The application site contains the village hall. This is regarded as a 'village facility' by saved Local Plan policy CR20. The policy states that planning permission for a change of use that would result in the loss of a village facility would only be given where it is shown that the facility is no longer needed by the local community or is no longer commercially viable. This application, which includes the demolition of the only village hall in Monks Eleigh, would clearly result in the loss of a facility. The applicant has not demonstrated the facility is no longer needed by the local community, on the contrary it is considered that meeting venues such as village halls are vitally important to vibrant and inclusive communities.
36. Planning permission has recently been granted for the erection of a new community centre within the grounds of the village school (paragraph 12 above). Once erected and made available, the replacement facility would compensate for the loss of the village hall and the impact of the loss of the village hall would be appropriately mitigated. However, work has not started on the new facility and until it is erected and available, this proposal is contrary to the provisions of saved policy CR20. Clearly it would be unreasonable to expect the new facility to be fully erected in advance of this planning application being determined. In order to ensure a community hall facility is retained in the village an obligation under S106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) is required. If agreed between the applicant and Council, the obligation would restrict the commencement of construction work on the new dwellings and prohibit demolition of the existing village hall until the new facility is provided.
37. Whilst no agreement is in place to restrict development in this way proposals are contrary to the provisions of saved policy CR20.

Impact upon the setting of the Grade I listed Church

38. National planning policy for listed buildings is contained in PPS5, a recent replacement of PPG15 and PPG16. The following paragraphs from PPS5 are of particular relevance to the application proposals;

- When considering applications for development that affect the setting of a heritage asset, local planning authorities should treat favourably applications that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset. When considering applications that do not do this, local planning authorities should weigh any such harm against the wider benefits of the application. The greater the negative impact on the significance of the heritage asset, the greater the benefits that will be needed to justify approval.
 - Local planning authorities should identify opportunities for changes in the setting to enhance or better reveal the significance of a heritage asset. Taking such opportunities should be seen as a public benefit and part of the process of place shaping.
 - Local planning authorities should take into account the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to the character and local distinctiveness of the historic environment. The consideration of design should include scale, height, massing, alignment, materials and use.
 - There should be a presumption in favour of the conservation of designated heritage assets and the more significant the designated heritage asset, the greater the presumption in favour of its conservation should be.
 - Where the application will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance local planning authorities should refuse consent unless it can be demonstrated that (inter alia):
 - (i) the substantial harm to or loss of significance is necessary in order to deliver substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss;
 - (ii) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and
 - (iii) the harm to or loss of the heritage asset is outweighed by the benefits of bringing the site back into use.
39. On a local (and regional) level, policy ENV6 of the East of England Plan and saved Local Plan policy CN06 specifically address proposals affecting the setting of listed buildings. These policies seek to protect, conserve and, where appropriate enhance the historic environment and state that development proposals should (inter alia) be of an appropriate scale, form, siting and detailed design to harmonise with the [listed] building and its setting and respect those features which contribute positively to the setting of a listed building, including space, views from and to the building and historic layout. Other policies (East of England Plan ENV7 and Local Plan policies HS02, HS28 and CN01) set more general criteria to assess impacts of development proposals which also apply to the setting of listed buildings.
40. The site of the existing village hall is adjacent to the village church, the Church of Saint Peter. The church is a Grade I listed building and is therefore considered to be the most important listed building in the village. The church is sited on an east/west axis with the dominant tower present on the western end of the building, facing onto Church Hill and the application site.

41. The existing housing development around the village hall site (Church Field) surrounds and fronts onto three central parcels of land. Two of these spaces are open greens, whilst the third is the village hall site. The design of the layout is such that it provides an open aspect and clear views of the church tower from all vantage points in the public realm within Church Field. The only compromise at present to the setting of the church (when viewed from the west) is the existing village hall building which presently conceals the lower parts of the tower from certain view points. The demolition of the village hall building would, in the view of officers, enhance the setting of the listed church.
42. The new housing proposed in the application would, owing to the layout bulk and (in particular) scale, radically alter public views of the church tower from within Church Field. Whilst the existing village hall building affects only the lower parts of the tower, the proposed housing would conceal significantly more of the tower depending upon your viewing point. At the very least the proposed development should aim to preserve the existing setting of the listed church and, at best, enhance it. The proposed development which proposes buildings significantly taller than the existing village hall and develops a much greater proportion of the site with these taller buildings would severely compromise the setting and visually dominating presence of the listed church and is contrary to national (PPS5), regional (ENV6 and ENV7) and local (HS02, HS28, CN01 and CN06) policies in this respect. The bottom line is that the development of this site, because the intensive layout and scale would erode the open character of Church Field which provides the church tower setting with an important setting.
43. Your planning officers concerns about the severe adverse impact the proposed development would have upon the listed church are shared by both English Heritage (paragraphs 23 and 24 above) and the Council's Historic Buildings Officer (paragraph 28 above).

Impact upon the conservation area, streetscene and character of the village

44. The Council should have special regard to Conservation Areas and has a duty to ensure development proposals either preserve or enhance the character of a Conservation Area (Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, as amended). Policy ENV6 of the East of England Plan and saved policy CN08 of the Local Plan address proposals for development within or affecting Conservation Areas. Policy CN08 sets out criteria which seeks to ensure development proposals (inter alia)
 - preserve or enhance the character of the Conservation Area,
 - retain spaces which contribute to the special character of the area,
 - are of an appropriate scale, form, and detailed design to harmonise with the setting
45. The site is, for the most part, outside of the village conservation area with only a sliver of land at the Church Hill frontage being located within it. Nonetheless, the proposed development affects views into and out of the Conservation Area. At this part of the village, the Conservation Area is dominated by the church and its west tower. It has already been established above that the setting of the church would be significantly compromised by the development proposals and, for the same reasons, the scale, bulk and layout of the proposed development would also be of detriment to the character of the village Conservation Area.

46. The form of the dwellings proposed in this scheme is a reasonable interpretation of the village vernacular with steeply pitched roofs and shallow plans. However, there is an extensive use of timber boarding proposed which would dominate the dwellings. The majority of dwellings in Monks Eleigh are finished in render with brick examples also evident. There are very few examples of dwellings in the village with extensive use of timber cladding. Given the sensitivity of the site at the end of a group of historic buildings extending up Church Hill from the historic core of the village and being located opposite the Grade I listed church, the choice of external materials is important. The extensive use of timber cladding on domestic buildings is not vernacular to the village or, indeed south Suffolk generally. It is considered that if this site is to be developed with new housing, the external materials should be referenced from the local palette.
47. The Church Hill highway is set at a lower level than both the village hall and church sites; such that the road is banked on both sides as it passes these sites. The Church tower dominates the highway at present. The village hall site compensates for the dominance of the church tower by creating an open spacious feel opposite the church when moving up Church Hill. This openness is formed by the subordinate single-storey scale of the existing village hall building and its generous set back from the edge of the carriageway. The proposed erection of two-storey dwellings, up to 9.5 metres tall much closer to the Church Hill frontage would lead to the road being dominated on both sides by tall buildings and because of the lower level of the road it would be 'tunnelled' by buildings at this point. This would be an undesirable feature in the streetscene and would be detrimental to character.
48. The proposed dwellings are designed with a number of contemporary features on their external elevations, particularly the fenestration. Whilst the buildings are, in isolation, architecturally interesting, they do not relate well to their context and, with particular regard to the two detached dwellings fronting Church Hill, would appear incongruous in the streetscene and detract from the character of this part of the village. In this respect the proposals are also contrary to policy ENV7 of the East of England Plan and saved policies HS03, HS28 and CN01 of the Local Plan.

Other issues

49. The development is not at risk of flooding and would not significantly increase the risk of flooding elsewhere (surface water is proposed to be discharged to soakaways) and, subject to the safeguards recommended by the Suffolk Wildlife Trust, would not pose significant threats to biodiversity interests. The Local Highway Authority has requested amended plans to address some concerns regarding visibility for the proposed accesses and parking spaces and it is anticipated amended drawings to address this point will be received in advance of the meeting. Members will be updated of this issue at the meeting.
50. The four dwellings proposed in this application would be constructed in the vicinity of a number of existing dwellings. However, officers are satisfied the occupiers enjoyment of these existing dwellings would not be compromised by the development by virtue of potential dominance, loss of light overlooking (from windows) or general noise and disturbance.
51. The mature hedging to the Church Hill frontage of the application site is proposed to remain as part of the development proposals. The hedgerow is an important natural feature in the street and setting of the church.

Planning obligations

52. Saved Local Plan policy HS09 seeks to secure affordable housing contributions from small developments in small villages and states the Council will seek to negotiate on a site by site basis an element of affordable housing of up to 35% of the total provision having regard to the up to date Housing Needs Survey [or equivalent], market and site considerations and the sustainability of the proposed development. The starting point for the Council is to secure at least one of the four proposed dwellings as an affordable unit, in accordance with the requirements of the policy. In this case the applicant has requested the normal requirements of Policy HS09 are set aside. It is claimed all of the receipts from the sale of the site for open market housing are required to fund the construction of the new community facility within the grounds of the village school. Very little evidence has been submitted with the application to demonstrate that an affordable housing unit could not be provided as part of this proposal. The evidence submitted is in the form of a vague summary of secured funds provided and contains no explanation, justification or evidence to support the financial case made.
53. There is clear evidence of housing need in the village and a site is actively being sought to provide an 'exceptions site' on the edge of the village to provide local needs affordable housing for Monks Eleigh and other abutting parishes. The Head of Community Development has confirmed there is a need for additional affordable housing in the village and has expressed concern that a contribution might not be secured from this development. Current housing needs surveys have revealed there are 103 applicants in housing need who have expressed an interest in living in Monks Eleigh (significant housing need is also identified in the surrounding parishes).
54. With no affordable housing proposed as part of this development and without sound justification for its omission, the proposal is also contrary to saved Local Plan policy HS09.
55. Saved policy HS32 of the adopted Local Plan requires all applications proposing new dwellings to make provision for public open space. This is either in the form of on-site provision (minimum of 10% of the application site area) or off-site provision in the form of a commuted payment. The policy requirement is supported by PPG17 which states planning obligations should be used as a means to remedy local deficiencies in the quantity or quality of open space, sports and recreational provision. Local authorities will be justified in seeking planning obligations where the quantity or quality of provision is inadequate or under threat, or where new development increases local needs. In this case, no open space contribution is proposed (either at the site or off site by means of a financial contribution). The reason given for this is that all proceeds to be generated from the sale of the village hall site would be required to provide the replacement community facility. The same justification has been provided for the absence of an open space contribution as for the absence of an affordable housing contribution and similarly it is considered the absence of a public open space contribution has not been fully justified.
56. The application proposals would generate additional demands for open space and recreation in the village and with the quantity and quality of existing provision in the village falling short of recognised national standards, a contribution from this development is justifiable. With no recreational amenities contribution proposed as part of this development the proposal is also contrary to saved Local Plan policy HS32.

Conclusions

57. The application proposals are contrary to a range of government policies and guidance (PPS1, PPS3, PPS5 and PPG17), regional policies (East of England Plan policies SS1, SS4, H2, ENV6 and ENV7) and local policies (saved Local Plan policies HS02, HS09, HS28, HS32, CR20, CN01, CN03, CN06 and CN08). The development would have a significantly detrimental impact upon the setting of the Grade I listed church and would also adversely affect views into and erode the character of the village conservation area. The proposals also involve the loss of a village facility with no mechanism in place to secure a replacement facility and the scheme fails to deliver any affordable housing and recreational amenities contributions. Furthermore, the development fails to respect its context and would appear alien and incongruous in the streetscene to the detriment of the character of the village.
58. It is recommended that planning permission is refused on 6 confirmed grounds with the potential for a further reason for refusal to be added should highway safety concerns not be satisfied.
59. It is acknowledged the existing village hall building is failing, is inefficient and does not meet with modern requirements. However, the perceived community benefits arising from the development do not outweigh the harm caused, particularly to the setting of the listed church. There are other options open to the applicants in order to part raise finance for the village hall. The village hall site could be developed with an alternative scheme along the lines of that suggested by English Heritage (paragraph 24 above). That potential scheme, for single-storey development of the site, would preserve the setting of the church and provide some (but probably not all) funding towards the village hall. Alternatively, officers are currently investigating the potential to develop a different site in the village which could deliver the balance of funding required for the construction of the new community facility whilst also, providing the required affordable housing and recreational amenities contributions. These alternative options would include the demolition of the village hall leaving its present site undeveloped (an enhancement to the setting of the listed church). As the proposed development would cause such significant harm to its surroundings and would deliver no affordable housing or recreation amenities contribution, the other, more favourable options should be pursued.

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be refused for the following reasons:

- (1) Severe adverse impact upon the setting of the village church (contrary to policies SS1, ENV6, ENV7, HS02, HS28, CN01, and CN06).
- (2) Adverse impact upon the village Conservation Area (views into the conservation area) (contrary to policies SS1, ENV6, ENV7, HS02, HS28, CN01 and CN08).
- (3) Design and layout failing to respect local context, compromising the streetscene and village character (contrary to policies SS1, ENV7, HS02, HS28 and CN01).
- (4) No mechanism in place to safeguard against the loss of the village facility (contrary to policy CR20).
- (5) No mechanism in place to secure affordable housing from the development (contrary to SS4, H2 and HS09).
- (6) No mechanism in place to secure recreational amenities contribution (contrary to HS32).
- (7) Adverse impacts upon highway safety **if subsequently be advised by LHA** (and if suitably amended drawings are not received)