Waldringfield Parish Council

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Planning working group report for councillors for the WPC meeting of March 10th 2026

Re application: **DC/26/0281/FUL** Proposal for 6 dwellings with garages and associated access – Land Adjacent To Mill Road, Waldringfield.

All application documents are available on the ESC public access planning portal.

Introduction

Councillors are aware that as a result of increased housing targets ESC can no longer show a 5 year housing supply. In addition, ESC must conduct a full review of the Local Plan as it is now 5 years old. As a result it is therefore considered to be out of date which makes it "vulnerable" to planning applications in locations not identified in the Local Plan.

The accompanying document "extract from ESC's interim housing position statement" explains the impact that this situation currently has on planning decisions. Councillors are asked to familiarise themselves with this document before the meeting.

For the purposes of this report a brief summary is included below.

ESC will continue to give some weight to the policies within the Local Plan, including SCLP5.3 as the application site is located outside of the settlement boundary and is therefore in the countryside for planning purposes.

i.e. "*Policy SCLP5.3: Housing Development in the Countryside*

g) Other residential development consistent with policy on residential development in the countryside contained in the National Planning Policy Framework."

However, as the Local Plan is out of date, significant weight must be given to Paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF, which states that:

*"Plans and decisions should apply **a presumption in favour of sustainable development**.* (our emphasis)*… For decision-taking this means:*

… d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed;

or

any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination"

The above means that the presumption in favour of sustainable development, often referred to as the **"tilted balance"** means that councils should now apply a greater weight to the contribution to housing supply from sustainable housing proposals. **In particular, proposals for housing that are sustainable but that would be contrary to Local Plan policies on housing development may be granted planning permission.**

Paragraph 11 requires a decision maker to apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development with part 11(d) giving particular regard to sustainable locations. Greater weight will be given to the benefits of proposals that are well related to settlements, services and facilities, particularly the larger towns and market towns that have a higher level of services whilst avoiding isolated and unsustainable locations. Paragraph 11(d) requires that permission should be granted unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole.

Paragraph 8 of the NPPF states:

"Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):

a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and

c) an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy."

We recommend therefore that the parish council keeps ESC's housing position statement in mind when reviewing this application along with the required balance between the Local Plan and the NPPF.

We are also aware of the concerns and objections expressed by a number of residents across the village, many of whom have registered an objection on the ESC planning portal.

Some key points to consider regarding the detail of the application in relation to the above.

Potential impacts/harms with potential mitigation:

1. The application is outside the village settlement boundary. However, the application site is unusual, possibly unique, as it is bordered on 2 sides by dwellings within the settlement boundary (plus domestic gardens on the 3rd side). It is in the geographical centre of the village, within easy walking distance of all of the facilities including the village hall, primary school, children's play park, the Church Field Trust open space, the church, the river, the pub, the sailing club and the PROW network.
2. The development would inevitably have an impact on the neighbouring properties to the north – the extent of the impact might be mitigated in part by the design and layout of the proposed dwellings, currently shown as 1.5 stories high. We visited the site with the applicant and the architect and asked for a new drawing to illustrate the street-scene of the complete site – internally and from the entrance from Mill Road- including boundary treatments. At the time of writing no such drawing has been submitted – we consider this document to be necessary in order to assess the level of impact on neighbouring dwellings and also on the Mill Rd street-scene.

NB. There is also a discrepancy between the elevation drawings and the (albeit) illustrative drawing within the D&A, including materials.

3. Potential harm to landscape and AONB – A number of viewpoints have been chosen in the Landscape Assessment and the conclusion is that the tops of the proposed dwellings might be partially visible from some points in the AONB, but would be offset by the outlines of the existing dwellings and the boundary hedging and tree line to the south of the site. There is no viewpoint at the entrance to the site in Mill Rd although there was one in Cliff Rd. For more detailed information, see the application Landscape Assessment and the ESC Landscape Officer's response, both documents are on ESC planning portal.

4. The development is expected to have a negative impact on biodiversity. We asked at the site meeting for information regarding the ownership and ongoing management of the communal areas of the development including the biodiversity areas/existing trees etc - the architect was rather vague. We consider that such information should be included in the application documents in order to assess future mitigation proposals. The architect appreciated the need to prove a net gain but the means of achieving this are not detailed in the application. The Ecology Report says the specific details will be forthcoming.

NB. It is worth noting that the line of oak trees to the south of the site are on Church Field and were planted 20+ years ago to define the boundary – a tree protection plan for offsite trees is included in the application documents – should TPOs be sought by WPC?

Potential benefits:

Although there has been a spread of building activity in the village over recent years, much of this has been to replace existing dwellings with larger properties or to extend existing dwellings and have therefore not increased the housing supply. Over the last 10 years only 5 new dwellings have been completed, all of which were in the "market" designation rather than in the "affordable" designation and all were 4 bedroom properties.

There is an inconsistency in the D&A re the size breakdown of the dwellings. In the text of the D&A page 2 it says there will be *"2 x two bed dwellings, 3 x three bed dwellings and 1 x four bed dwelling"*. However the Appendix 1 contains a chart showing 1x2 bed dwelling, 3x3 bed dwellings 1x3/4 dwellings and 1x4 bed dwelling. This needs to be clarified.

A further inconsistency in the D&A is on page 3 which states *"The proposed houses are predominantly single storey and can therefore include accessibility standards to Category 2: Accessible and Adaptable Dwellings (M4(2)) that is equivalent to Lifetime Homes Standard. Where attic/upper floor space is utilised, this will be for one of the bedrooms only to ensure* ***all homes*** *can accommodate at least one person with a disability."* However, looking at the plans of the different dwellings - number 6 has no bedroom on the ground floor - there is a separate "dining room" on the ground floor but no shower, so could not be used as a functioning sleeping space for a person with a disability. This needs to be clarified.

The Design & Access Statement recognises that 1 in 3 houses in such a development must meet the "affordable" designation and suggests these would be 1 of the two bed and 1 of the three bed dwellings. It is somewhat ambiguous as it states "*This* ***can*** *include 1 x two bed house and 1 x 3 bed house.*" It goes on to say "*Tenure is to be agreed, however the nature, size and location of this site would suit affordable provision made available for sale at below market (80%) value to persons with a local connection."*

If the figures given on page 2 of the D&A are the correct ones, the relatively modest scale of the proposed properties together with the affordable element could make a positive addition and help rebalance the Waldringfield housing stock. This needs to be clarified.

General comment on the application documents:

Given that this is a "full" application and not an "outline" application we consider that there are a number of areas where insufficient/contradictory information has been provided by the applicant – particularly given the sensitivity of the site. We are disappointed that no public consultation has taken place.

We suggest that the following should be submitted by the applicant:

- Clarification on the breakdown of house sizes.
- Confirmation of details of the "affordable" dwellings.
- Clarification re the provision of downstairs bedroom in all dwellings (not provided in plot 6)
- Confirmation of method to achieve Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)
- Street-scene drawings (internally and from the access to Mill Rd) so that it can be seen how the proposed new houses will appear in situ.
- Landscaping plans to include detail of curtilage boundary treatments, plus hard and soft surfaces.
- Ownership/management/maintenance plan for communal areas including roads etc., site boundary treatments and biodiversity areas.
- More details on planting proposals/species e.g. what are "*small urban tress"*? (Ecology Report fig 4.)
- External lighting details and plan.
- Meaningful detail of proposed materials and colours.
- Glass specification, particularly for the rooflights
- Clarification on ownership of the verge outside of the site plan (over which the access is to be created) plus clarification on who will carry out the work onto the highway and that the proper agreements and licences will be in place.