

**The Implications for Fressingfield's heritage by Applications 1449/17 (Land off Stradbroke Lane); 1648/17 (Land at Post Mill Lane) and 1432/17 Land off John Shepherd Road.**

The Supreme Court Judges - in the landmark case of Hopkins Homes v Suffolk Coastal - found that planning officers and councils should be mindful of guidance in local plans and the NPPF as a whole and not isolate advice given therein. There is a common theme in both of these planning guidance documents that protecting landscape and heritage is a legal requirement and part of the sustainability test to be considered. Also given that the definition in the NPPF of sustainability is quality of life and it should be remembered that people choose to live and holiday here because of its rural qualities and for the quality of life they offer.

In both the NPPF and the Babergh/Mid Suffolk local plan, there are repeated legislation or guidance to protect heritage and to maintain it from being adversely affected in terms of character and setting.

Fressingfield is a national rarity having 58 listed buildings and it is their setting and that of the village as a whole which will be ruined for future generations if these inappropriate and large scale developments are granted in addition to the 52 just recently given permission. Fressingfield is a small rural village without the necessary infrastructure and sustainability to absorb large developments.

Mid Suffolk's Conservation Area Appraisal described Fressingfield as being somewhere with 'quality of place', and it is indeed not just a local asset for its picturesque tranquility and beauty, but a national asset bringing many tourists to the area.

There are many ancient manors and hall houses within the village including examples of early timber-framed medieval houses, and the many other listed buildings, farmhouses and cottages with their architecture in the local Suffolk vernacular style.

If these large and inappropriate developments are granted, we will lose the rural character and heritage setting of this rare medieval village. The Stradbroke Road development as just one example, will mean that this access to the village will be transformed from open countryside to a suburban housing estate of 85 homes.

As the local plan (2.2.7) states, *"The District Planning authority looks to safeguard and enhance these listed buildings and their settings using statutory powers."*

However, the topography of the village means that the large developments proposed for John Shepherd Road and Post Mill are on the brow of a hill and will massively impact on the rural aspect of the whole village as viewed from Harleston Hill, the main access road into Fressingfield. This will be especially marked in winter months when the trees are not in leaf.

Policy HB1 clearly denotes the Council's *"priority on protecting the character and appearance of all buildings of historic interest. Particular attention will be given to protecting the settings of listed buildings."*

It is the same with Churches, (2.2.9) Suffolk's many outstanding churches "form an important part of the landscape of the setting of villages" and must be preserved in accordance with this principle. The important Grade I listed Church of Saint Peter and Paul here which is famous for its fine Decorated and Perpendicular architecture and magnificent hammer-beam roof will be impacted negatively and significantly by the John Shepherd and Post Mill development.

The other Grade I listed building is a national treasure, as one of the only surviving raised aisle open hall house dating from circa 1330-1340. (C A Hewitt, Aisled Timber Halls and Related Buildings, 1976). It is perhaps the most "ostentatious" example of a raised-aisled hall roof with its crown-post and triple tie beams. (Dymond, D & Martin, E, An Historical Atlas of Suffolk). It is a truly outstanding example of fourteenth century vernacular carpentry. (Hewitt, English Historic Carpentry, 1980).

As English Heritage commented on the John Shepherd application with real concern:

*"The proposed development to the west of Church Farm Stable and barn would introduce modern housing beyond the established historic pattern of development and separating the historic farmstead from the fields at this point. This would result in harm to the historic significance of the Former Stables and Barn by diminishing the quality of their setting that contributes to their significance."*

*The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) identifies protection and enhancement of the historic environment as an important element of sustainable development and establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development in the planning system (paragraphs 6, 7 and 14). Paragraph 128 of the NPPF requires applicants to describe the significance of heritage assets affected by proposed development and the contribution their setting might make to that significance."*

Policy HB8 outlines the statutory duty of the council to safeguard the character of conservation areas, protecting their character. Policy HB10 states that *"The District Planning Authority will refuse advertisements that detract from the character or appearance of their surroundings."*

Our heritage includes Fressingfield's open and rural character and its connection to the fields that surround it. By allowing over development, the council will go against policy H7 which protects *"The existing character and appearance of the countryside"* and also that of SB3 which outlines the importance of retaining visually important open spaces.

Policy H8 states that proposals should "not detract from the character and appearance of its surroundings and landscape setting."

Policy CL1 sets out the same advice, *"The landscape quality and character of the countryside will be protected for its own sake..development in the countryside should have the minimum adverse affect and should seek to positiveley contribute to its diverse character."*

The Core Strategy Focused Review 2012 (3.2) describes clearly what sustainable development (a legal requirement within the new NPPF) entails and this includes enabling people :

*"To enjoy a better quality of life, without compromising the quality of life of future generations."*

This document also outlines the importance of safeguarding the environmental and landscape sensitivity of the district and maintaining its value as a heritage and tourist asset.

Core Strategy 2008 promises “A better heritage for future generations”, to safeguard the distinctive and attractive areas of Suffolk. The Objectives SO1 and SO4 of this strategy clearly set out to *“protect, enhance and restore landscape..to protect, manage, enhance and restore the historic heritage/environment and the unique character” of local towns and villages, by ensuring that new developments are appropriate in terms of scale and location in the context of settlement form and character.”*

The NPPF is absolutely clear that “Protecting and enhancing the historic environment is an important component of the National Planning Policy Framework’s drive to achieve sustainable development (as defined in [paragraphs 6-10](#). The appropriate conservation of heritage assets forms one of the ‘Core Planning Principles’ ([paragraph 17](#) bullet 10) that underpin the planning system.

**The conservation of heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance is a core planning principle. Heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and effective conservation delivers wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits.”**

None of the proposed developments will in any way enhance the environment in Fressingfield, quite the reverse. The proposals run contrary to all of the current guidelines relating to the protection of important heritage assets.

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