Historical Assessment

Policy 4: Land South of James Street
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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Introduction

1.1 The Irchester, Knuston and Little Irchester Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Draft proposes at Policy 4 to allocate Land South of James Street for residential development of approximately 75 dwellings.

1.2 This report provides a site specific assessment of the potential heritage impact of this policy and specifically its potential impact on views towards the Grade I Listed St Katharine’s Church from the south of Irchester and potential archaeology on the site. It has been prepared following advice received from Historic England with the purpose of identifying any specific impacts and recommending amendments to Policy 4 to mitigate these impacts.

Background

1.3 The Consultation Draft Neighbourhood Plan was published for pre-submission consultation between 16th September 2016 and 28th October 2016 and following this a draft ‘Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Report’ (SEA Report) and accompanying ‘Sustainability Assessment Report’ (SA Report) were prepared ahead of consultation with the consultation bodies¹. These reports draw together the extensive evidence base prepared in the production of the Neighbourhood Plan and conclude that the Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have a significant effect on the environment and that a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is therefore not required.

1.4 In their response to the screening consultation both Natural England and the Environment Agency agreed that an SEA is not required for the Neighbourhood Plan. Historic England, however, in their response dated 30th March 2017 (see Appendix 1) raised concern regarding the proposed allocation of land south of James Street which they felt “may impact upon the setting of heritage assets, including the Grade I Listed Church of St Katharine”. On this basis, Historic England concluded “that there may well be significant impacts on the historic environment and it is our view that a SEA is likely to be required”. They caveated this response by stating that they “would like to stress that this is based on the current information provided in the screening request and the current draft Neighbourhood Plan”.

1.5 The evidence base for the draft Neighbourhood Plan includes detailed assessments of the historic environment including:
  • Environmental Assessment Report (Including Archaeological Assessment), ACD (March, 2014)

• Historic Landscape Assessment (Updated Version), MOLA (March 2016)

1.6 The findings of these assessments were summarised in the SEA and SA Reports, but the full documents were not sent to Historic England in this initial consultation. A Draft Screening Report – Heritage Update was therefore produced detailing this evidence and the assessment process followed in deciding to allocate land south of James Street for residential development. This Heritage Update report was sent to Historic England and in light of the additional detail it contains, Historic England issued a revised consultation response on 5th May 2017 (Appendix 2) stating that an SEA was not required, but that a further more rigorous heritage impact assessment of the proposed housing site south of James Street should be conducted to inform the content of emerging Policy 4.

1.7 On behalf of the Steering Group, the Borough Council of Wellingborough spoke to Historic England on 17th May 2015 to seek further clarity over what this additional heritage impact assessment should consist of. At this point, Historic England advised that they required a further site specific assessment of land south of James Street addressing the views across to St Katharine’s Church and potential archaeology on the site. This report provides this assessment. Historic England also acknowledged the level of work that has been completed regarding assessing the historic environment of Irchester and stated that they were not objecting to the allocation of land south of James Street, but simply required a more specific assessment to inform policy requirements for the development of the site.

2.0 VISUAL APPRAISAL

2.1 As identified in the Historic Landscape Assessment (Updated Version) prepared by MOLA (March 2016), the development of the main settlement of Irchester has been predominantly to the south and south west, firstly in the form of ‘ribbon development’ along primary routes in the earlier part of the 20th century and then infilling with cul-de-sac estate development during the mid and latter part of the 20th century. The southern and western edge of Irchester, including land south of James Street, is greatly changed from its original relationship to the village and constitutes a suburban landscape.

2.2 A defining urban feature of the local landscape in Irchester is the spire of the Church of St Katharine’s. The spire is prominent in many views around Irchester, but from the south of the village views of the spire are more limited and almost all taken over a proximate swathe of 20th century estate-type development. Directly from the south, views of the village and consequently the church spire are also affected by a wind farm on the mid-horizon to the north of Irchester and the presence of some large shed structures forming an intermediate horizon further to the north and east, respectively.

2.3 It is clear from the above assessment taken from MOLA’s report that views of the Church of St Katharine’s spire from the south of the village are heavily affected by the existing suburban context and
presence of urbanising features, such as the wind farm development on the opposite side of the hill, which have already seriously eroded the historic setting of the church and settlement from viewpoints to the south. On this basis, MOLA conclude that the site is considered to be of low sensitivity to change and that its development would not affect the setting of the principle asset.

Methodology

2.4 MOLA’s assessment aside, the Steering Group recognise Historic England’s concerns regarding the potential for localised views of the Church of St Katharine’s spire from within the proposed allocation at land south of James Street. A photographic assessment of the site has therefore been undertaken to identify and assess the visibility of the church spire from a series of viewpoints within and around the site. The viewpoint locations are shown on the map at Figure 1 below. Photographs were taken in summer during June 2017, conditions were cloudy but with clear visibility.

![Figure 1. Visual Appraisal Viewpoints](image)

2.5 The viewpoints were chosen to be representative of current views of the church available from within and around the site. There are no Public Rights of Way in close proximity to the site and the only publicly accessible viewpoints towards the church are therefore from Farndish Road which runs along the western edge of the site. Viewpoints 1-3 are taken from Farndish Road, 4-6 are taken from private land that is not part of the proposed development site and is not publicly accessible and photos 7-8 are taken within the application site and represent viewpoints that could be made publicly accessible as a result of the development.
Visual Appraisal

Viewpoint 1

Description: This is a view along Farndish Road looking north towards Irchester from approximately 350m south of the current built up boundary of the village and approximately 175m south of the boundary of the proposed development site at land south of James Street. Farndish Road slopes gently downhill from this point, dropping approximately 5-10m between this point and the built up boundary of Irchester. The top of the church spire is visible in this viewpoint, but the site is not visible due to the drop of the land and screening hedgerows.

Appraisal: Development of residential properties to the north of the site are unlikely to be visible from this location, but those further south may be visible depending on their height and the topography of the site.

Recommendation: Policy wording should be amended to reflect the need for further assessment of views towards the church from Farndish Road to the south of the site and the need to preserve key views of the church spire.
Viewpoint 2

Description: This is a view from Farndish Road adjacent to the southwest corner of the site looking northeast along Farndish Road and towards the site. There is a mature hedge along Farndish Road in this location, but occasional glimpsed views of the site and the church spire are possible through the hedge and trees. Views of the church spire from this location have existing suburban development in the foreground.

Appraisal: Draft Policy 4 includes a requirement for a 5m wide landscape buffer to be provided to the sites boundaries. Along the west boundary this will strengthen the visual screen provided by existing vegetation. Glimpsed view of new properties and the church spire will be available through the landscaping and particularly at the access into the site. These views will, however, be seen in the context of existing suburban development between the site and the church.

Recommendation: The church spire is not prominent in views from Farndish Road adjacent to the site. The policy wording requiring a 5m wide landscape buffer is therefore considered to be sufficiently strong to further soften existing glimpsed views.
Viewpoint 3

Description: This is a view from Farndish Road adjacent to the northwest corner of the site looking northeast along Farndish Road and towards the site. There is a mature hedge / trees along Farndish Road in this location and clear views along Farndish Road towards existing suburban development to the south of Irchester. Occasional glimpsed views of the site and the church spire are possible through the hedge and trees. Views of the church spire from this location have existing suburban development in the foreground.

Appraisal: Draft Policy 4 includes a requirement for a 5m wide landscape buffer to be provided to the sites boundaries. Along the west boundary this will strengthen the visual screen provided by existing vegetation. Glimpsed view of new properties and the church spire will be available through the landscaping and particularly at the access into the site. These views will, however, be seen in the context of existing suburban development between the site and the church.

Recommendation: The church spire is not prominent in views from Farndish Road adjacent to the site. The policy wording requiring a 5m wide landscape buffer is therefore considered to be sufficiently strong to further soften existing glimpsed views.
**Viewpoints 4, 5 and 6**

*Viewpoint 4*

*Viewpoint 5*
Description: These views are taken from private land to the south of the site. They are all taken approximately 350m south of the built up boundary of Irchester and approximately 175m south of the proposed site allocation. The views show agricultural land in the foreground, existing suburban development to the south of Irchester in the middle distance and the church spire in longer distance views.

Appraisal: Draft Policy 4 includes a requirement for a 5m wide landscape buffer to be provided to the sites boundaries. Along the southern and eastern boundaries of the site this will provide a visual screen of both new and existing residential development. These views are not from publicly accessible locations but the proposals will nonetheless provide a betterment on the current setting of Irchester by providing a green landscaped buffer that will help screen both existing and new properties and result in a natural edge to the settlement.

Recommendation: The policy wording requiring a 5m wide landscape buffer is considered to be sufficiently strong to provide a material improvement on current views towards the church spire by enhancing the landscape setting of the village. This policy requirement could, however, be strengthened by making specific reference to providing landscaping to enhance views towards the church spire.
Viewpoints 7 and 8

Viewpoint 7

Viewpoint 8
**Description:** These views are taken from currently inaccessible private land along the southern boundary of the site. The views show agricultural land in the foreground and existing suburban development to the south of Irchester in the middle distance with the church spire visible behind.

**Appraisal:** These viewpoints are not currently publicly accessible and the site’s development therefore represents an opportunity to enhance the setting of the church by opening up publicly accessible viewpoints.

**Recommendation:** The policy wording requires the site layout for the proposed development to “consider views and vistas towards the Grade I Listed St Katharine’s Church” and to be “designed to protect, enhance or better reveal the significance of heritage assets and their settings, most notably St Katharine’s Church”. It is considered that this policy requirement could be strengthened by making specific reference to the need for proposals to identify key vistas towards the church and to design these into the layout of the proposals to provide uninterrupted views of the church spire. This will ensure that the development of the site enhances opportunities to view the church and appreciate its significance.
Visual Appraisal Summary

2.6 The above assessment demonstrates that the only publicly accessible viewpoints that are located near to the site are along Farndish Road. To the south of the site, the church spire is visible in the distance in views along Farndish Road (Viewpoint 1) with trees and hedgerows in the foreground and adjacent to the site (Viewpoints 2 and 3) glimpsed views of the church are possible through existing mature vegetation.

2.7 In Viewpoint 1, while the church spire is visible, the site itself is hidden from view by existing vegetation and the lower level of the land as it slopes down towards the village. This said, residential development on this site has the potential to affect views of the church spire from along Farndish Road (depending on the height of properties and the topography of the site). It is therefore recommended that the wording of Policy 4 be amended to reflect the need for further assessment of views towards the church spire from Farndish Road and the need to preserve key views of the church spire from Farndish Road to the south of the site.

2.8 In viewpoints 2 and 3, views of the church spire are only glimpsed through the trees and are seen in the context of existing suburban development to the south of Irchester. The existing draft policy requirement to provide a 5m wide landscape buffer is therefore seen as appropriate and sufficient mitigation of any impact on these views.

2.9 The church spire is more visible from private land to the south of the site (Viewpoints 4-6). The potential for harm to these views is obviously limited as they are not publicly accessible. It is also considered that the proposed policy requirement for a 5m wide landscape buffer will improve the landscape setting of Irchester by replacing existing highly visible suburban estate development with a green edge to the village.

2.10 The spire is also clearly visible from locations within the site (Viewpoints 7 and 8), but again these are not currently publicly accessible and the church is seen in the context of existing suburban development. It is therefore considered that the proposed development of the site represents a significant opportunity to enhance the setting of the church by opening up publicly accessible viewpoints towards it. In this respect, it is recommended that the policy wording could be strengthened by making specific reference to the need for proposals to identify key vistas towards the church and to design these into the layout of the proposals to provide uninterrupted views of the church spire.
3.0 **ARCHAEOLOGY**

**Local Area**

**Prehistoric**

3.1 There is fairly extensive evidence for prehistoric activity within the vicinity of Irchester, with sites of prehistoric settlements to be found to the northwest of the village, south-west and south-east of the village. There have also been a number of Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age finds recorded within the Historic Environment Record (HER). There are listings within the HER for a round barrow, ditch, enclosure, ring ditch and trackway of possible prehistoric or Roman date on land to the south of Irchester and west of Farndish Road (i.e. to the west of Land South of James Street). This area also contain findspots of an undated burnt stone pit as well as a number of prehistoric flints and hand axes. Iron Age activity is limited largely to the north of Irchester, where there is evidence of a possible Iron Age roundhouse.

**Roman**

3.2 To the north of Irchester village is the known Roman settlement of Irchester town, located 2km south of Wellingborough. The Roman road route Durobrivae (Water Newton) to Dungee Corner is projected to run north-south to the west of modern day Irchester village, approximately in line with the Wollaston Road (750m west of the site). The extension of the road to the north continues up towards Kettering and beyond, to the south the road appears to follow the county boundary between Northamptonshire and Bedfordshire through to the Dungee Corner. To the east of the site, the HER records a possible Roman settlement and ditch system and Roman subsurface remains have also been found on land to the west of the site.

**Saxon**

3.3 There is little evidence for Saxon occupation in the area of the town (Roman Irchester), but a number of earlier discoveries suggest activity continued into the early 5th century. Little evidence has been found for continued occupation of Roman Irchester at the end of the Roman occupation except for a late or post-4th century timber structure built against the interior of the southern town defences. Aside from this, the HER records possible Saxon remains within the south centre of Irchester village approximately 200m north of the site.
Medieval activity in the area is well documented with the Church of St Katharine’s, the first part of which was built in the 12th century, being the focal point. There is a record of two medieval manor houses within Irchester village, one next to the church, and another to the south of Station Road. The HER records several scatters of medieval pottery remains throughout the village and around the peripheries, as well as extensive evidence for ridge and furrow cultivation to the northwest of the village. Land to the north of Station Road is recorded as having medieval closes and a concentration of medieval pottery within it, and immediately to the south aerial photographs have shown earthworks associated with the medieval village.

Land South of James Street

It is clear from the above that Irchester has a long and rich history stretching back to pre-historic times and in particular there is significant evidence of Roman and Medieval activity in the local area. This said, there is little direct evidence from the site itself, with the exception of a probable trackway and pits that have been noted on aerial photographs. Land to the west of the site, however, has certain pre-historic and Roman sub-surface remains and the site is therefore assessed to have high archaeological potential, albeit to a lesser extent than other sites on the edge of the village.

Recommendations

Any application for development on the site will necessarily have to be accompanied by reports detailing archaeological studies and it is highly likely that the County Council’s archaeologists will require detailed investigations and archaeological works either prior to the application being determined or as a condition on any consent granted. For added clarity, it is also recommended that the policy wording be amended to require the submission of results from archaeological investigations, the scope of which should be agreed with the County Council.
4.0 CONCLUSION – RECOMMENDED CHANGES TO POLICY 4: LAND SOUTH OF JAMES STREET

4.1 This report has been prepared in response to consultation feedback from Historic England regarding the need for a site specific historical assessment of draft Policy 4 of the Irchester, Knuston and Little Irchester Neighbourhood Plan which proposes to allocate Land South of James Street for residential development. It provides a site specific assessment of the potential heritage impact of this policy and specifically its potential impact on views towards the Grade I Listed St Katharine’s Church from the south of Irchester and potential archaeology on the site.

4.2 Based on the results of this assessment, the following changes to the wording of draft Policy 4 are recommended (original text in black and new text in red):

Policy 4: Land south of James Street

The Neighbourhood Plan allocates 3.98ha of land south of James Street, as shown on the Policies Map, for housing development of approximately 75 dwellings, public open space and a 0.3ha area reserved for a future community facility.

Development proposals for the land allocated for housing will be supported, provided they accord with the following principles:

i. The development shall be laid out in accordance with the zonal drawing provided at Figure 9, including the following provisions:

- Vehicular access shall be provided from Farndish Road.

- A pedestrian footpath shall be provided along the eastern side of Farndish Road from where it currently stops to the northwest of the site to the site’s vehicular entrance. A second pedestrian entrance into the site shall be provided from Farndish Road at the north-west corner of the site. This access will be designed to allow emergency service vehicles a secondary access point into the development.

- Public Open Space shall be provided on site in accordance with adopted standards published by the Borough Council of Wellingborough.

- In addition to this Public Open Space an additional 0.3ha area of open space shall
be provided to be reserved as the potential location of a future community facility and provided as Public Open Space in the meantime.

- An easement of 5m either side of the water main crossing the site shall be provided and incorporated into the site’s Public Open Space provision (N.B. the area reserved for community facilities should not form part of the easement).

- A 5m wide landscape buffer shall be provided to the site’s boundaries. Along the eastern, southern and western boundaries it will create a strong and attractive settlement boundary and will be designed to enhance views towards the Grade I Listed St Katharine’s Church by screening both existing and proposed modern development. Along the northern boundary it will mitigate against any adverse impact on the existing properties along James Street and be incorporated into residential gardens where necessary to avoid security concerns to these properties.

- The site layout shall be informed by a detailed assessment of views towards the Grade I Listed St Katharine’s Church (included as part of the Heritage Impact Assessment require by point iii. below) to preserve key views towards the church spire along Farndish Road to the south of the site and to identify key vistas towards the church from within the site that can be designed into the layout to provide newly accessible and uninterrupted views towards the church spire.

ii. The mix of housing provided on site will reflect the most up to date assessment of housing needs arising in the Parish (currently the 2013 Housing Needs Survey) and include a mix of 1-4 bedroom dwellings including a proportion of flats and bungalows.

iii. The development will be designed to protect, enhance or better reveal the significance of heritage assets and their settings, most notably the Grade I Listed St Katharine’s Church. It will meet the design requirements set out under point i. and will additionally be informed by a Heritage Impact Assessment and Archaeological Assessments that will be prepared in consultation with Historic England and Northamptonshire County Council’s Archaeological Service.

iv. The development will protect and where possible enhance on-site biodiversity.

v. The development will make a financial contribution towards mitigating impacts on the Upper Nene Gravel Pits Special Protection Area (SPA) in accordance with JCS Policy 4 and ‘The Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area Supplementary Planning Document - Addendum to the SPA SPD: Mitigation Strategy’.
vi. The existing water main located within the boundary of the site needs to be incorporated into the proposed layout of the site. However, if this is not possible then the development can apply to divert existing assets under the Water Industry Act 1991.

vii. The development will be designed to integrate into the wider settlement linking to cycle, pedestrian, public transport and vehicular networks.

viii. 40% of the total dwellings will be provided as affordable homes, subject to viability and national policy regarding affordable housing thresholds.

ix. Highways access shall be designed to a standard capable of accommodating 150 dwellings to future-proof potential access into land south of the site should it be required for development post-2031.

x. Consideration shall be given to the need to widen Farndish Road to mitigate potential highways impact from the development. Consideration shall also be given to highways issues and impacts on surrounding roads arising from the development.
APPENDIX 1. HISTORIC ENGLAND STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CONSULTATION RESPONSE, 30TH MARCH 2017
30 March 2017

Dear Ms Daft

Request for screening for SEA - Irchester Neighbourhood Plan

Thank you for consulting Historic England on the above 07 March 2017.

For the purposes of this consultation, Historic England will confine its advice to the question ‘Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment?’ in respect of our area of concern, cultural heritage. We note the SEA screening statement considers that an SEA is not required.

We observe that the Plan proposes site allocations. Specifically, the current draft plan includes one housing allocation to the south of James Street which may impact upon the setting of heritage assets, including the Grade I Listed Church of St Katharine. This has not been subject to SA/SEA as part of the Local Plan process. As such there may be significant environmental effects upon the historic environment.

Therefore, we are of the view, at this time, that there may well be significant impacts on the historic environment and it is our view that a SEA is likely to be required. We understand that our views, together with the views of other statutory consultation bodies should be taken into account before the overall decision on the need for SEA is made. I should be pleased if you could send a copy of the determination when this is issued.

We would like to stress that this is based on the current information provided in the screening request and the current draft Neighbourhood Plan. To avoid any doubt, this does not reflect our obligation to provide further advice on the SEA process, and subsequent draft Plan’s.
Please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss any of these comments.

Yours sincerely

Emilie Carr (Mrs)
Historic Environment Planning Adviser
E-mail: Emilie.carr@HistoricEngland.org.uk
APPENDIX 2. HISTORIC ENGLAND REVISED STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
CONSULTATION RESPONSE, 5TH MAY 2017
02 May 2017

Dear Ms Bateman

**Request for screening for SEA – Irchester, Knuston and Little Irchester Neighbourhood Plan**

Thank you for consulting Historic England on the above 07 March 2017 and for the further information submitted 07 April.

For the purposes of this consultation, Historic England will confine its advice to the question ‘Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment?’ in respect of our area of concern, cultural heritage. We note that the SEA screening statement considers that an SEA is not required. Following submission of more detailed information described above and with further consideration, we remain of the view that a rigorous assessment of the potential impact on the historic environment (both designated and non-designated assets and their settings) of a site allocation for 75 dwellings at land south of James Street is required. In this case, a more rigorous heritage impact assessment of the proposed housing site south of James Street would instead be acceptable.

We understand that our views, together with the views of other statutory consultation bodies should be taken into account before the overall decision on the need for SEA is made. I should be pleased if you could send a copy of the determination when this is issued.

We would like to stress that this is based on the current information provided in the screening request and the current draft Neighbourhood Plan. To avoid any doubt, this does not reflect our obligation to provide further advice on the SEA process, and subsequent draft Plan’s.

Yours sincerely

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