

11 March 2022

Dear Sir/Madam

D32/Response to West Wickham Neighbourhood Plan

We are writing on behalf of our Clients who own White Gables, 104 High Street, West Wickham in response to the West Wickham Neighbourhood Plan. The owners of White Gables are a family who have been in the village for many years and are hoping to stay in the village for many years to come. However they are looking to downsize from their existing property as it is becoming too big and unmanageable and at the time of writing there is nothing suitable in the village.

As members of the village community who love and care for the village, they fully support the vision of the Neighbourhood Plan to “enhance the lives of current and future residents” and particularly the main objective of “sustaining a diverse and thriving community with policies that support and facilitate improvements in the provision of community facilities and that deliver a housing mix that meets the needs of local people. This means providing smaller dwellings for the young and old who wish to remain in the Parish.” It is this last sentence that is the reason we are contacting you as part of the Neighbourhood Plan consultation.

As highlighted in 2.5 of the Neighbourhood Plan there is an “imbalance of our housing stock that is not perceived to meet the needs of local people. Community support is focused on delivering a mix of homes including affordable, smaller family homes and opportunities for downsizing for local people.” The owners of White Gables are a prime example of this issue.

Section 4.4 of the Neighbourhood Plans states that the “housing requirement figure to be met during the period 2018 to 2031. This figure is 3 dwellings. This number has already been exceeded, in part, through the delivery of 4 affordable dwellings as part of a rural exception site.” Whilst the number of units required may have been exceeded, the plan identifies there is still need for a better mix of housing. The plan does not go on to suggest how this need will be met.

It is unclear as to who is responsible for identifying suitable sites to meet housing need;

“Outside development frameworks, only allocations within Neighbourhood Plans that have come into force... will be permitted.”

South Cambs Local Plan Policy S/7 Development Framework

This would suggest that the South Cambridge Local Plan views it the role of Neighbourhood Plans to suggest suitable sites, however the Neighbourhood Plan for the area does not look at housing allocations sites to meet local need. Both plans are being developed at the same time, so it is unclear which comes first or how they work together in this instance. As we understand it dwellings in Streetly End outside of the development framework were approved to the detriment of the village without the support of the Parish Council. We would suggest it is therefore important that the Parish identifies suitable sites for new homes to prevent this from happening again.

The Neighbourhood Plan states it needs to “redress the imbalance in our current housing stock” and suggests there is an opportunity for “small scale development that can be tailored to local need,” yet it does not go on to identify where these small scale developments could occur. It does not appear if a call for sites was undertaken as

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part of this Neighbourhood Plan consultation.

The Neighbourhood Plan also highlights concerns “If the imbalance in the housing mix is not improved the community will continue to lose diversity.” Our clients are interested in sustaining a diverse and thriving community and wish to help address the housing mix balance through an approach that protects and enhances the best characteristics of the village.

As it currently stands we do not feel that the Neighbourhood Plan successfully meets its Objective 2 - “Sustain a diverse and thriving community with policies that support and facilitate improvements in the provision of community facilities and that deliver a housing mix that meets the needs of local people. This means providing smaller dwellings for the young and old who wish to remain in the Parish.”

We feel that it is really important that the Neighbourhood Plan considers sites suitable for small scale development specific to local needs in order to meet its objective and we would propose the land adjacent to White Gables as such a suitable plot.

The report that accompanies this letter illustrates the characteristics of the site that would suggest it is a suitable site for a small home(s). If incorporated into the Neighbourhood Plan & Development Framework, it would mean a local family can downsize and remain in the village. Additionally it would allow a new growing family to move into the village, to care for and ensure the long life of a heritage asset and the continued diversity of the village, thus helping the Neighbourhood Plan meet its objectives. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you in more detail.

Yours Sincerely,

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of Alex Ball.

Alex Ball