



Stapleford Parish Council

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Dear Sirs

Supplementary Response by Stapleford Parish Council – 22/04303/REM

Reserved matters application for additional access points, layout, scale, landscape and appearance following outline planning permission 20/02929/OUT (outline planning for the development of land for a retirement care village in Use Class C2 comprising housing with care, communal health, wellbeing and leisure facilities, public open space, landscaping, car parking, access and associated development and public access countryside park with all matters reserved except for access)

1. Introduction

1.1 The Parish Council's response to 22/04303/REM, dated 4 November 2022, sets out a strong desire to ensure that the development: reflects the distinctiveness of Stapleford; represents a sustainable, high quality scheme that promotes the wellbeing of both the existing and new community; protects and enhances the edge of village location, including the Cambridge Green Belt, its sensitive landscape setting, and biodiversity; secures appropriate parking provision for the new community and the countryside park; and is integrated into the community, securing connectivity and permeability to the village and beyond.

1.2 Government policy and the Local Plan give an emphasis to high quality design. Housing must be right for communities, locally led, well-designed, and of a consistent and high quality standard. The NPPF aims to achieve this objective by firstly promoting the use of area-based character assessments and design guides, and secondly by refusing permissions for developments of poor design.

1.3 Stapleford and Great Shelford Parish Councils are preparing a Neighbourhood Plan. Through the initial community engagement and consultation process, good design and high quality development has been identified as a key theme for the Neighbourhood Plan. The NPPF is clear that Neighbourhood Planning groups can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development through their own plans.

1.4 NPPF requires Neighbourhood Plans to be supported by up to date and robust evidence. Therefore, the Parishes jointly commissioned AECOM to prepare *Great Shelford and Stapleford Design Guidelines May 2019*, with the support of Locality grant funding. It is an important document which provides both a summary of the key characteristics of Great Shelford and Stapleford and specific design guidelines. These design guidelines provide a distinctive and robust layer of detailed advice for developers and decision makers to promote high quality, sustainable development in Great Shelford and Stapleford. As a locally prepared document, supported by the NPPF, it should carry significant weight in the decision making process.

1.5 *Great Shelford and Stapleford Design Guidelines May 2019* is available to view at <https://staplefordparishcouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/NP-Grt-Shelford-and-Stapleford-Design-Guide-250719.pdf>.

2. The Design Guidelines

2.1 The main objective of *Great Shelford and Stapleford Design Guidelines May 2019* (aka The Design Guidelines) is to establish principles so that new development is designed and planned having regard to the existing character and context of Great Shelford and Stapleford. It sets out a series of design guidelines and offers the best method for achieving appropriate development in the villages.

2.2 The Design Guidelines pose a series of key questions which SCDC should consider in reaching conclusions on the appropriateness of Rangeford's retirement care village and whether it constitutes high quality design as required by NPPF paragraph 130. In answer to the relevant questions set out in The Design Guidelines (Section 3), the Parish Council is of the view, as set out in its 4 Nov 2022 response, that the development as proposed:

- does not harmonise and enhance the existing settlement in terms of physical form and pattern
- does not relate well to local topography and landscape features, including long distance views
- adversely impacts existing views which are important to the area
- does not have regard to surrounding buildings nor take cues from materials and other local physical characteristics in its scale, height, form, massing and general proportions
- does not reinforce or enhance the established village character
- does not respect or enhance the existing area and, indeed, adversely changes its character

- does not positively contribute to the quality of the public realm/streetscape
- does not adopt appropriate materials and details
- does not provide adequate open space for the development in terms of both quantity and quality
- does not ensure buildings, landscapes, access routes, parking and open space are well related to each other, to provide a safe and attractive environment.

2.3 The local street patterns, building styles, materials and ecology should all help to determine the character and identity of the development. It is important with any proposals that full account is taken of the local context and that the new design embodies the “sense of place” and also meets the aspirations of people already living in that area.

2.4 An assessment of the character of Great Shelford and Stapleford has assisted in the production of the design principles. This offers the best method for achieving appropriate future development in Great Shelford and Stapleford. The following sections respond to the opportunities for positive change set out in The Design Guidelines.

3. Important Views and Landscape Impact

3.1 The Design Guidelines stress that one of the most prominent open views is experienced from Haverhill Road, connecting Stapleford with Magog Down. There are panoramic views from this local high point at Magog Down Hills across an otherwise flat landscape. Notably, the view is also identified as important in the Stapleford and Great Shelford Landscape Character Assessment 2019.

3.2 Canopies of mature trees break up the roofscape of both Stapleford and Great Shelford, subtly integrating the built form of the villages into the landscape. Prominent trees create this distinctive backdrop and strongly contribute to the wooded character and sense of place. However, Rangeford’s application site does not benefit from this wooded character and forms the most exposed and remote part of the village.

3.3 The photograph below (included within The Design Guidelines) shows the development at Chalk Hill which forms a conspicuous element within this important view due to the lack of a soft edge to the countryside. The Design Guidelines states that the Chalk Hill development has poorly considered its location on the rural edge of Stapleford and not provided a well landscaped buffer to reduce the visual impacts and allow for the new development to be integrated with the surrounding landscape.



3.4 The openness of the settlement edge creates views of the neighbouring rural countryside and forms an essential part of a sense of arrival or departure from Stapleford. The Design Guidelines recommend that new development should retain and enhance the views identified in the character appraisal.

3.5 The photograph above demonstrates the sensitivity of Rangeford's site in its landscape setting, with the remaining village nestled in a low lying, but significantly treed landscape. It is critical that the new development retains this loose style of development, nestled within the landscape. However, the extended flat roofscape of the proposed pavilion with solar panels; the roof design, height, depth and bulk of the residential units; and the density of the footprint of the development, all create an environment in which significant landscaping within the development is impossible due to the non-permeable SuDS and extensive hard surfacing. The proposed boundary landscaping will not ameliorate this harmful impact. As such, the development will have a significant adverse impact upon the chalk landscape, particularly when viewed from a popular viewpoint and informal recreation area at Magog Down, contrary to The Design Guidelines.

4. Street Pattern, Densities and Layout

4.1 The Design and Access Statement details the definition of three character typologies and their attributes which could provide a sound basis on which to intelligently relate Rangeford's development to the character and context of Stapleford. The Design Guidelines reinforce the appropriateness of these character typologies. Haverhill Road is a rural part of the village with typically larger plots, bigger driveways, and garages. This open feel is created by larger front gardens, set back property lines and a lower density of development. Within this rural part of Stapleford, farmsteads and agricultural buildings congregate in small clusters within the agricultural landscape. These buildings are typically lower density and larger in size and form.

4.2 However, as set out in the Parish Council's 4 Nov 2022 response, there is a complete disconnect between the character typologies as they are described in the Design and Access Statement and The Design Guidelines versus the design proposals submitted with 22/04303/REM.

4.3 In accordance with the principles set out in The Design Guidelines, the development should reflect the current mix of housing of various housing types, layout and sizes typical of Stapleford. New development proposals should be responsive to the historic layout of the villages, including plot widths, proportions, density, building lines and positions within the plots. The Design Guidelines principles state that proposed housing developments should include front gardens to maintain the open character of the streets and provide space for garden trees. In contrast, the density, form and bulk of the development as proposed by Rangeford creates a harsh and commercial urban form which detracts from the rural character of Stapleford and this important rural gateway.

4.4 A reduction in density of buildings will increase the legibility of residential roads and provide wider views through to and out of the village in accordance with the principles in The Design Guidelines. This openness and lower density should be secured through amendments to the current scheme.

5. Building Heights, Layout and Roof Lines

5.1 The majority of buildings in Stapleford and Great Shelford are residential and commonly two and a half storeys high. A range of styles and plot sizes creates a mosaic of built form contributing to the village's sense of character. A variety of roof materials, including thatch and slate, and often on high pitched roofs are typical. Hipped roofs, many with chimneys, are a consistent feature of the architecture of the villages and inform the characteristic of the area.

5.2 The Design Guidelines principles state that new development proposals should be consistent with the variety of pitched roofs prevalent in both villages, creating a varied roofline. Roofs should be mostly pitched and of plain tile, slate tile, concrete tile or thatch. The Design Guidelines also states that solar panels and roof mounted services should be located in discrete locations, preferably not on the street facing side or façade of the building.

5.3 Stapleford does not have examples of flat roof buildings and therefore Rangeford's prominent pavilion with solar panels is an alien and incongruous feature building. Typical roof design at the development site is single span and specifically does not include the 'M' gable roofs required to cover the depth of buildings proposed. The design has not had sufficient regard to the prevalent roof styles of the area identified in The Design Guidelines and is more typical of an urbanised/city/commercial location.

5.4 The Design Guidelines, complementing the Local Plan policy H9, states that for developments over nine units a diversity of frontage, scale and form of development will be the best way to create a well-integrated development which fits into the existing urban fabric and compliments the existing character. Clearly, it is Stapleford Parish Council's view that Rangeford's design, due to its excessive depth and bulk of buildings, the monotonous street frontages, the compact street scene dominated by roads and on-street parking, with no space for meaningful planting and landscaping within the development, does not align with The Design Guidelines.

6. Gateways and Landmark Buildings

6.1 The Design Guidelines has identified key attributes which should be considered and maintained in development proposals. One of the positive aspects it identifies is the sense of rural character which informs the setting of Stapleford and is integral to its distinctiveness. This is particularly true of Haverhill Road, which has a sense of departure from the village and entry into a tranquil landscape. Development is mainly of single dwellings flanking either side of Haverhill Road until the edge of the settlement at Gog Magog Way. Importantly, large front gardens and grass verges contribute to the open character of the area. Rangeford's development as proposed introduces a high density and commercial form which is not aligned with the sense of tranquil arrival into Stapleford.

6.2 The design principles state that there are opportunities for new development to contribute focal buildings which will enhance the villages' legibility, so long as the design contributes to village character and distinctiveness without detracting from its intimate quality. Rangeford's development has such an opportunity, through the design of the pavilion, to create a distinctive landmark building which positively enhances the village rather than detracts from it. However, the Parish Council considers that the pavilion has characteristics more akin to a retail supermarket and has no design references to any building in Stapleford.

7. Open Space

7.1 The Design Guidelines highlight how Great Shelford and Stapleford appreciate the biodiversity value of wildlife corridors and seek to retain existing vegetation which forms part of the green infrastructure. It notes that open spaces are fundamental to the success of the villages. The design principles state that new open spaces should be well connected to existing green spaces to ensure the proposals enhance biodiversity and habitat provision. The Parish Council stressed in its 4 Nov 2022 response the need for Rangeford's landscaping scheme to meaningfully enhance opportunities for biodiversity and habitats throughout the retirement village, not just at the countryside park.

7.2 The design principles also seek to ensure the use of sustainable urban drainage systems where appropriate and that new open space includes a commitment to long term management to ensure the success of the design objectives. The Parish Council has highlighted the conflict between the proposed open space and their use as SuDS. It is essential that 1.8 hectares of functional open space is provided within the site if the development is to meet the principles set out in The Design Guidelines.

8. Material and Boundary Treatments

8.1 The Design Guidelines set out the notable features in Stapleford which should be used as the palette for Rangeford's development to ensure that it appropriately reflects the character of the village. Materials need to be high quality and reflect the local vernacular if they are to contribute to an authentic development which would enhance the local

character. Therefore, concrete tiles, artificial slates, and plastic and aluminium windows and doors should be avoided.

8.2 New development proposals are likely to be more successful if they comprise high quality, traditional materials such as red, gault, gault yellow/white/grey brick and timber frame. The Design Guidelines do not seek to stifle innovation, but new design should enhance the character of the area. In the Parish Council's view, Rangeford's design should demonstrate an understanding of the historic context and complement the existing materials, including architectural detailing. In this rural area within the Green Belt, proposals should reflect the style and design of existing architecture represented in farmhouses, agriculture buildings, cottages and villas. In particular, new buildings on the edge of the village should be designed to minimise visual impacts, complementing the existing roofscape.

8.3 The materials proposed for new boundary treatments should be of high quality, respond to the character of the buildings in the area and have strong attention to architectural detailing. These include:

- gault brick walls with semicircle coping and design details including red brick stretcher courses or bands, often seen with red brick patterns throughout the wall façades of both villages
- walls with projecting chamfered string courses
- cast iron finger post signage of post-war vintage topped by a roundel
- timber bollards used to prevent parking on grass verges
- traditional cast iron street name plates
- historic street lights
- buttress walls, often in flint or brick
- gate posts and pier with sphere stone finials
- front gardens delineated by traditional boundary treatments reflecting the character of the villages, e.g. hedgerows or brick walls.

9. Parking

9.1 The Design Guidelines state that good design should include adequate off-street parking which does not dominate the front of dwellings but is complimented by ample planted front garden space. New development of more than nine units should provide safe, attractive and well landscaped pedestrian routes to local facilities and public transport links. The Parish Council set out in its earlier response why it does not consider that Rangeford's proposal provides adequate off-street parking. The compact nature of the development, the prevalence of on-street parking around the Green, the lack of front gardens, and the presence of non-permeable SuDs result in an unsafe environment for elderly residents which is dominated by hard surfacing and cannot be described as well landscaped.

10. Conclusions

10.1 The Design Guidelines summarises the key characteristics of Great Shelford and Stapleford and provides specific design principles. As such, it gives a distinctive and robust

layer of detailed advice for developers and decision makers to ensure that development in Stapleford promotes high quality and sustainable development. As a locally prepared document, supported by the NPPF, it should carry significant weight in the decision making process.

10.2 The Design Guidelines reinforce and strengthen Stapleford Parish Council's objections to this proposal. Significant amendments are required to make the development acceptable, and the Parish Council looks forward to working with Rangeford Villages to secure a design which reflects its location in the Cambridge Green Belt and its sensitive rural setting at the edge of Stapleford village.

Yours faithfully

Belinda Irons

Clerk

On behalf of Stapleford Parish Council

5 December 2022