Conservation Officer (Mr Paul Grundy) comments for: 25/01004/FUL

Proposal: Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of 19 dwellings, formation of access, associated landscaping and attenuation pond

Site: Springbank, High Street, Stoke Golding

Date Submitted: 11/11/2026

Site context and affected heritage assets

This proposal is for the demolition of a post-war modern dwelling known as Springbank to provide access from High Street to two enclosed pastoral fields located to the east. The fields and the access form the application site, with the proposal consisting of the erection of 19 dwellings with associated landscaping and an attenuation pond.

The site is currently bound to the north and east by hedgerows with occasional trees. Further to the north is a paddock used for pasture. To the east is a small agricultural complex consisting of a collection of low-scale buildings and structures and a farm track located behind the boundary hedgerow. To the south the site is bound by the rear gardens of dwellings located upon Roseway and to the west the site is bound by the rear gardens of dwellings located upon High Street. There are a range of boundary treatments to the rear gardens of these dwellings with certain sections softened by the presence of hedgerows and vegetation. The land within the site predominantly slopes downwards from west to east, with a hedgerow boundary in between the northern and southern fields comprising the site.

The application site is located wholly within the Stoke Golding Conservation Area which is an area of special historic and architectural interest. There are ridge and furrow earthworks along an east-west alignment within both fields that comprise the site and these earthworks are considered to be a non-designated heritage asset.

There are also numerous heritage assets within the vicinity of the site including several along High Street, notably the grade II listed building known as The Birches, and the non-designated heritage assets 54-56 High Street, these being identified as important local buildings within the Stoke Golding Conservation Area Appraisal and the Stoke Golding Neighbourhood Plan.

Further to the north and west of the site is the Registered Battle of Bosworth (Field) 1485 which is a designated heritage asset of national importance. Circa 200m to the southwest of the site is the grade I listed building the Church of St Margaret, which due to its ridge top position and tall tower and spire is a dominant feature within the surrounding landscape. Due to its prominence, there are positions within the surrounding landscape where the site is visible in conjunction with the church, including from the Ashby Canal which meanders through the open countryside to the north of Stoke Golding, the full length of which is a designated Conservation Area.

Whilst there are other heritage assets located within the vicinity of the site and the wider area, the assets identified above are only those considered to have the potential to be affected by the proposal, either through a direct impact or change within their setting.

National and local policy and guidance

Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on the local planning authority when determining applications for development which affects a listed building or its setting to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural and historic interest which it possesses. Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

Chapter 20 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2026) provides the national policy on conserving and enhancing the historic environment. The policies relevant to this proposal are highlighted below.

Policy HE4 concerns securing the conservation of heritage assets in decision-making and states that:

> 1. Heritage assets, as an irreplaceable resource, should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. To achieve this, development proposals which would affect the significance of heritage assets, including any contribution made by their setting should:
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> > a. Maintain or secure a use consistent with their conservation, taking into account the importance of maintaining the assets, the positive contribution they can make to sustainable communities including local economies, and the positive contribution they can make to local character and distinctiveness; and
> >
> > b. Avoid (or if that is not possible, minimise) harm to the significance of heritage assets, and instead conserve this significance.
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> 2. Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (including from development within its setting) should have a clear and convincing justification in accordance with the policies in this chapter.

Policy HE5 concerns assessing the effects on heritage assets in decision-making and states that:

> 2. Assessments of the potential effects of development proposals on the significance of heritage assets (including through effects on their setting) should identify whether proposals would be likely to:
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> > a. Have a positive effect, which is where the significance of a heritage asset would be enhanced, or better revealed; or
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> > b. Have no effect on the significance of a heritage asset; or
> >
> > c. Result in harm to the significance of a heritage asset, either from work affecting the asset itself or from development within its setting. The degree of harm should be identified: substantial harm would occur where the development proposal would seriously affect a key element of the asset's significance; or
> >
> > d. Cause the total loss of the significance of a heritage asset.

3. In making this assessment it is the effect on a heritage asset's significance rather than the scale of the development which should be considered.

4. Decision-makers should be satisfied that assessments accurately reflect the effects on heritage assets caused by development proposals.

Policy HE6 concerns proposals affecting designated heritage assets and states that:

1. When considering the potential effect of a development proposal on the significance of a designated heritage asset, substantial weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential effect amounts to a positive effect, harm, substantial harm, or total loss of its significance.

2. Development proposals which would have a positive effect on a designated heritage asset should be supported.

3. Any harm to a designated heritage asset will be a matter of considerable importance and weight, which should be dealt with in accordance with paragraphs 4 to 6 of this policy.

4. Where a development proposal would harm the significance of a designated heritage asset the effect on the asset and its significance should be weighed against any public benefits resulting from the proposal. Important public benefits can include securing the long-term reuse of a vacant or underused listed building, and enabling energy efficiency and low carbon heating measures to be employed.

Paragraphs 5 and 6 of this Policy relate to development proposals causing substantial harm to, or the total loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset, but as identified later on in these comments these paragraphs are not considered relevant to this proposal.

Policy HE7 concerns making decisions of non-designated heritage assets and states that:

1. Development proposals which would have a positive effect on a non-designated heritage asset should be supported.

2. Where a development proposal would harm the significance of a non-designated heritage asset, this should be weighed against the benefits of the proposal and a balanced judgement made, having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the non-designated heritage asset.

3. Where a development proposal would cause substantial harm to, or the total loss of, the significance of a non-designated heritage asset, it should only be supported where the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefits of the proposal, having regard to the scale of the harm or loss and the significance of the non-designated heritage asset.

Policy HE9 concerns conservation areas and states that:

1. Development proposals within or affecting the significance of conservation areas should:

a. Retain and conserve buildings and other features which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area where possible; and

b. Consider the area's special architectural or historic interest (as identified as part of the designation of the conservation area) in the design of development.

2. Not all elements of a conservation area will necessarily contribute to its significance. Where a development proposal would result in the loss of a building or other element which contributes to the character or appearance of a conservation area that is desirable to conserve, the assessment of impact should take into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the conservation area as a whole, and the effects of this considered in accordance with policies HE5 and HE6.

3. Proposals which conserve those elements of a conservation area that make a positive contribution to the area (or which better reveal its significance) should be supported.

Also of relevance is Chapter 14 of the NPPF (2026) which provides the national policy on achieving well-designed places. Policy DP3 provides the key-principles for well-designed places in decision-making with paragraph 1 stating:

Development proposals should respond to their context (the history, character and features of their site and its setting), so that they integrate with and enhance their surroundings; such as through the arrangement of development plots and buildings, the use of materials and architectural features, and the restoration, reuse and integration of heritage assets.

Policies DM11 and DM12 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Polices DPD (SADMP) seek to protect and enhance the historic environment and heritage assets. Policy DM11 states that the Borough Council will protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment throughout the borough. This will be done through the careful management of development that might adversely impact both designated and non-designated heritage assets. All development proposals which have the potential to affect a heritage asset or its setting will be required to demonstrate:

a) An understanding of the significance of the heritage asset and its setting, and
b) The impact of the proposal on the significance of the asset and its setting, including measures to minimise or avoid these impacts; and
c) How the benefits of the proposal will outweigh any harm caused
d) Any impact on archaeology in line with Policy DM13

Policy DM12 requires all development proposals to accord with Policy DM10: Development and Design. Policy DM12 also states that development proposals within or adjacent to the historic landscape of Bosworth Battlefield should seek to better reveal the significance of the area. Proposals which adversely affect the Bosworth Battlefield or its setting should be wholly exceptional and be accompanied by clear and convincing justification. Particular regard will be had to maintaining topographical features, archaeological remains or to the potential expansion of the Battlefield. Development proposals should ensure the significance of a conservation area is preserved and enhanced through the consideration and inclusion of important

features (as identified in Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans). All proposals for development affecting the setting of listed buildings will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that the proposals are compatible with the significance of the building and its setting.

Guidance is provided within the Stoke Golding Conservation Area Appraisal (SGCAA) (2013), and this states that any new development must take account of the established character of the area by being of appropriate scale and density and utilising appropriate materials so that the buildings will make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area. The SGCAA continues and states that to maintain the distinctive character and appearance of the conservation area it will be necessary to (*those relevant to the proposed development listed only*):

- Retain the listed buildings and buildings of local interest.
- Ensure new development contributes positively to the character or appearance of the conservation area regarding siting, scale, design and materials used.
- Ensure important views are protected.

The Stoke Golding Neighbourhood Plan (2024) identifies valued and locally important elements of the area that are relevant to this proposal, including locally important views (with the proposal possibly affecting view E. View from Stoke Lane towards Stoke Golding; this being a locally important view from a publicly accessible location regarded as highly characteristic), non-designated heritage assets (including the building 54-56 High Street and areas of ridge and furrow), and the defined form and character of the area (including identifying the predominant building style and materials).

Policy SG11 concerns Locally Important Views and states that development should be located and designed in a way that is sensitive to the open landscape, with extensive vistas dominated by natural features that characterise the Neighbourhood Area. Proposals will not be supported if potential impacts on landscape cannot be adequately mitigated through design and landscaping.

Policy SG14 concerns non-designated heritage assets and states that the determination of planning applications which would affect non-designated heritage assets will be assessed having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset. New development should take opportunities to enhance heritage assets or better reveal their significance.

Policy SG15 concerns design of new development and states that only development that reflects the traditional character of Stoke Golding will be supported unless the development is of exceptional quality or innovative design. Development must also (*those relevant to the proposed development listed only*):

1. Be in keeping with the scale, form and character of its surroundings;
2. Protect and where possible enhance important features such as jitties, traditional walls, hedgerows and trees;
6. As appropriate to the scale of development create a place with a locally inspired character and:
    i) Protect and where possible enhance the setting of the canal and battlefield site, particularly through the integrity of farmsteads and dispersed built form on the main approaches to the village;
    ii) Respect local building styles by ensuring that buildings are of modest size (maximum of two storeys) and simple in plan and

elevation. Buildings should be red brick with dark blue plain clay roof tiles or Welsh slates. Chimneys should be prominent;
iii) Protect and where possible enhance Stoke Golding's historic street pattern, including jitties and yards;
iv) Development in, or affecting the setting of, Stoke Golding Conservation Area should respond to the prevalent 18th and 19th century styles which incorporate a range of domestic, industrial, agricultural, and commercial influences;

7. Take advantage of existing topography, landscape features (including water courses), wildlife habitats, existing buildings, site orientation and microclimates;
8. Ensure buildings are designed and positioned to enhance streets and spaces

The proposal

This proposal is for the demolition of a post-war modern dwelling known as Springbank to provide access from High Street to two fields to the east, upon which it is proposed to erect 19 dwellings with associated landscaping and an attenuation balancing pond.

The new internal access road is proposed to loop around the site and provide access to all dwellings via private driveways and shared surfaces. The dwellings are arranged within the northern and southern sections of the site and within the south-western corner. The dwellings would be a combination of detached, semi-detached and terraced houses. Hedgerows along the boundary of the site and within its interior are mostly retained, with limited sections removed or trimmed to allow for access and visual permeability. The balancing pond is proposed in the north-eastern corner of the site to provide adequate drainage and some landscaping amenity.

The significance of the affected heritage assets and the impact of the proposal upon their significance

A Heritage Statement and Impact Assessment has been submitted by the applicant which is of a proportionate level detail to satisfy the requirements of Policy HE5 (1) of the NPPF and Policy DM11 of the SADMP. The Statement identifies the significance of the affected heritage assets and makes an assessment of the impact of the proposed development on their significance.

Stoke Golding Conservation Area

The application site lies wholly within the Stoke Golding Conservation Area. The Stoke Golding Conservation Area Appraisal (SGCAA) identifies what makes the conservation area of special historic and architectural interest and summarises its heritage significance as follows:

- The village's nationally important connection as the site of the crowning of Henry Tudor following the Battle of Bosworth Field
- Distinctive townscape character featuring late Georgian and Victorian working class cottages and artisan housing interspersed with landmark buildings of significant architectural importance.
- The retention of former farmhouses and agricultural buildings highlight the settlements rural origins.

- The clusters of historic brick cottages and the prominent position of the Church highlight the rural character of the area.
- Large scale mature trees are an important element in the rural village character of the historic core of Stoke Golding and reflect its history as a distinct village settlement within the Leicestershire countryside.
- The importance of framed views within streets, through gaps between buildings and the vista to St Margaret's Church from the canal and beyond.
- The importance of private greenery from return frontages in residential streets

The SGCAA continues and identifies the character of the conservation area as being primarily derived from the agricultural origins of the settlement. This can be identified through a number of former farmhouses and farm buildings within the area, strong visual links to the countryside and several very important green or hard surfaced spaces. The ancient street pattern with its unique twists and turns has added a further layer of local distinctiveness to the area.

The conservation area has a distinctive setting which is derived from the location of Stoke Golding as a ridge top settlement overlooking the rolling countryside and the Ashby Canal to the north. The historic core of the settlement with associated built form is still clearly defined along the north–south ridge. The settlement can be seen from all approach roads to the village with the spire of St Margaret's Church dominating the view. From the north, both the dogleg road from Dadlington and the canal tow path provide fine views of the church which allow for an appreciation that it is located at the heart of the settlement. These views are identified as important views within the SGCAA and the Ashby Canal Conservation Area Appraisal.

The SGCAA identifies High Street, where the application site is located, as being a distinctive character area within the conservation area. The streetscape around the White Swan is characterised by close knit development with many properties built up to or close to the back edge of the footway. This ensures a strong sense of enclosure and channels views along the street in both directions. The decorated façade of (grade II listed building) The Birches on the High Street provides a visual stop at the S bend. Further north the gable of the out-building to Ivy House Farm achieves the same effect. It is unfortunate that the appearance of the buildings of Mulberry Farm in the centre of this cluster, which are constructed of pre-cast concrete and timber and date from the 1950's, badly detract from the general quality of the area. They also have a detrimental impact on the setting of Crown Hill, the site of the crowning of Henry following the Battle of Bosworth. This site has been identified as an Improvement Area in the SGCAA with planning permission granted for redevelopment of the site and the 1950's buildings recently demolished.

The SGCAA identifies that apart from listed buildings, there are a number of other buildings of local interest which positively contribute to the special architectural and historic interest of the Conservation Area. These include 54-56 High Street which are immediately to the west of the application site.

During the latter half of the twentieth century, numerous dwellings have been constructed in between the historically interspersed development along High Street which has increased the density of built form along the Street and its immediate environs. In most cases the dwellings constructed from this period onwards have not reflected the style and form of vernacular and traditional buildings within the conservation area, and this includes Springbank, identified within the Photographic Record that accompanies the SGCAA as *a modern dwelling that does little to enhance the quality of the Conservation Area by way of its large dormer window and*

flat roof rear extension. These modern dwellings are sited further back within their respective plots so there is less enclosure to the street scene along the northern section of the High Street. However, this section of the High Street does retain a rural edge character, and due to the spacing of the dwellings and the retention of a narrow track to the application site there are however glimpses of the surrounding countryside, particular looking east, from which the character of the application site can be appreciated.

The application site has a varying role in contributing to the heritage significance of the conservation area. Springbank is an uncharacteristic modern dwelling which does not contribute positively to the heritage significance. In contrast the two fields which consist of the majority of the application site contain defined ridge and furrow earthworks which confirms these fields formed part of the agrarian open field system surrounding the historic settlement and which provides the application site with evidential and historic value. The subsequent enclosure of these fields and planting of boundary hedgerows and trees has established a typical Midlands landscape feature that reinforces the rural character of the site. Whilst the site interior is not wholly visible in the important views from the north looking back towards the settlement, the vegetated northern boundary ensures the rural character of the site is perceptible in such views, with the northern boundary softening the presence of built form on High Street to the west and further to the south along Roseway. The open nature and rural character of the application site is perceptible from High Street when viewed in between the dwellings to the north of Springbank, from the existing trackway to the site, and clearly when upon the site itself.

In summary Springbank is an uncharacteristic modern dwelling which does not contribute positively to the heritage significance of the Stoke Golding Conservation Area. In contrast the two fields which consist of the majority of the application site comprise an area of historic open land with associated landscape features which contributes positively to the rural fringe setting of the historic settlement of Stoke Golding and to the heritage significance and character of its associated conservation area.

The SGCAA identifies that the character of the conservation area is vulnerable to new development that does not reflect the established street pattern, which is discordant with the traditional street scape and the threat to green space from infill development. Opportunities to sustain the character of the conservation area include responding to the existing architectural scale, predominant building materials and character of the original historic buildings in the area.

The proposed demolition of Springbank would remove a negative element of built form from the High Street. The positive benefits this would have to the character and appearance of the conservation area are limited in extent and would only be delivered in conjunction with the wider development upon the two fields to the east.

The proposed scheme introduces a considerable amount of built form and associated infrastructure onto an area of historic open agrarian land. It would be contrary to the established grain of development where there is no built form at depth in fields to the rear of the established single plots along the eastern side of the High Street. The extent of development would result total loss of the ridge and furrow earthworks and eliminate the positive contribution these features make to the historic and evident value of the Conservation Area. Whilst the majority of the boundary and interior hedgerows and trees would be retained, the proposed new dwellings would be visible from the proposed site access on High Street, likely glimpsed in between existing buildings on High Street, and the upper floors and roofscacpes be visible and

introducing a further urbanised element in the important views from the north looking back towards the settlement as identified within the SGCAA and Neighbourhood Plan. The wider visibility of the proposed development would clearly erode the rural character of the site itself and heavily urbanise the rural fringe setting of the settlement. There are also numerous aspects of the design of the proposed dwellings which (despite some amendments being made during the course of the determination of the application) do not reflect the existing architectural form, predominant building materials and character of the traditional buildings in the Conservation Area, including:

- The use of render for the predominant facing wall material on the key landmark plots 1 and 6 with the subsequent high level of visibility of this uncharacteristic material from High Street and in important views from the north
- The use of projecting gables on the front elevation of plots 2, 3 and 5 and the subsequent high level of visibility of this uncharacteristic architectural form in important views from the north
- The use of non-traditional concrete roof tiles for each plot

For the above reasons, in my opinion the proposal would cause a moderate degree of harm to the significance of the conservation area (taking into account the relevant significance of the site and the positive contribution the elements referenced above make to the character of the conservation area as a whole). It should be noted that the applicants Heritage Statement and Impact Statement also identifies harm to the significance of the conservation area, although at a low level of less than substantial harm (in the terms of the previous version of the NPPF).

Ridge and furrow

At ground level the fields forming the application site have a ridge and furrow landscape pattern, with distinctive east-west parallel lines caused by the above ground ridges that are clearly evident when on the site and located within its immediate surroundings. These features are remnants of the medieval and post-medieval agricultural practices and in this case are of evidential and historic value, previously forming part of the agrarian open field system in the area and serving the settlement. There is likely some associated communal value too as despite the omission of this site the local community have articulated the contribution ridge and furrow makes to the local area within the Neighbourhood Plan. Whilst the presence of ridge and furrow on the site may have been overlooked historically by the Borough Council (identification of the earthworks on the site within the SGCAA is not certain) and within the Neighbourhood Plan, this doesn't alter the position that its significance has now been appropriately acknowledged within the Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment that accompanies this application and it needs to be dealt with in an appropriate manner now as part of this development proposal.

The Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment has completed a standard methodology to assess the significance of the ridge and furrow earthworks, and this has concluded that they are of a low level of significance. It is considered that the ridge and furrow earthworks are of historic, evidential and communal value, constituting a non-designated heritage asset of a low level of significance, and (as identified in the section above) comprising a feature that makes a minor positive contribution to the character of the conservation area.

In considering the impacts of the proposals solely on the ridge and furrow, the proposal would result in its total loss and there are no practicable amendments that

could be sought that would retain it in situ. Given its low level of significance and the investigation/documentation provided to date within the Desk-Based Assessment, it may be considered that a satisfactory level of recording of the asset has been provided and that this has minimised the harmful effect upon its local significance, however the recording does not represent a mitigation measure that fully compensates for its loss, so a residual adverse impact of a minor degree upon the significance of the non-designated heritage asset will remain.

54-56 High Street

The cottages at 54-56 High Street are recognised as making a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. They are of local heritage value, primarily for their vernacular architecture, historic form, and contribution to the linear and historic grain of the High Street.

Given the development is positioned to the rear of High Street, on land historically separated from the roadside by garden plots and rear yards, the siting of the development avoids direct encroachment or dominance over the cottages. The visual relationship between the development and 54-56 High Street will be limited due to the presence of existing surrounding built form to the north and south and existing landscape features and vegetation. The local heritage value and immediate setting of the cottages would remain entirely legible and coherent following the development. For these reasons the proposed development would preserve the setting and local heritage value of the non-designated heritage asset at 54-56 High Street.

Battle of Bosworth Field

The Battle of Bosworth is one of the most important battles and an iconic event in English history and the deciding battle of the Wars of the Roses. The application site is located to the east of Crown Hill, which was almost certainly the site of Henry VII's field coronation and is the location of the final act of the battle, this being key to the significance of the battlefield as a whole. Recent research has provided a detailed understanding of the battlefield area and has led to the amendment of its designation, reinforcing the evidential basis on what that boundary was determined, and affirming the clear significance accorded to the area of the battlefield in which part of the proposed development lies. The principle reasons for its designation are provided by Historic England in the designation description (National Heritage List for England 1000004)[1]), with of particular relevance for this application being its:

- Historical importance: an iconic event in English history, the Battle of Bosworth brought the Tudor dynasty to the throne and saw the last death of an English king in battle
- Topographic integrity: while agricultural land management has changed since the battle, the battlefield remains largely undeveloped and permits the site of encampments and the course of the battle to be appreciated

The application site lies away from the focus of any major engagements associated with the battle so it plays no particular role and contribution in understanding the movement and engagements of the battle. It does lie around 200m to the east of Crown Hill, however there is no intervisibility between the site and Crown Hill so it does not make any meaningful contribution to its setting. Despite the ridge and furrow features on the site reflecting the character of the landscape and its surroundings at the time of the battle, there is no direct functional relationship

[1] https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000004

between the site and the battlefield, and there is no clear or important intervisibility between the site and the battlefield from which this element of potential interest can be appreciated and understood. For these reasons the development is considered to preserve the heritage significance of the registered Battle of Bosworth Field.

Listed buildings (The Church of St Margaret and The Birches)

As identified above the grade I listed Church of St Margaret is located within 200 metres of the application site and the grade II listed building the Birches is located c.60m from the site access, on the western side of High Street. There is direct intervisibility between the site and these assets as well as instances when they can be viewed together in longer distance views. The site is therefore within the setting of these heritage assets.

The overall significance of the church is principally derived from the architectural and historic interest of the asset, which is embodied within the fabric of the church both internally and externally. The building demonstrates a high level of illustrative value, with the architecture demonstrating church building techniques and styles from the 13th century onwards. The clear aesthetic value of the church is apparent from both immediately adjacent within the church yard, but also within the wider landscape. This, in particular, contributes to its significance, with the scale, architectural features and materials all contributing to its aesthetics. There is also communal value which contributes to the overall significance of the church, derived from the role that the church has continuously played as a religious centre for the community from the 13th century through to the present day.

The immediate setting of the church is made up of the moderately sized church yard which surrounds it. The wider extended setting is relatively wide, owing to the tall and visually prominent tower and spire, noticeable on the skyline from many points within the surrounding landscape. This demonstrates the importance and influence of the church and therefore contributes to its value. Due to the current undeveloped nature of the application site, the prominence of the tower and spire, and location of the church upon the higher ground in the settlement, there are views of both the church tower and spire from upon the site. There are also clear views of the church tower and spire from the Ashby Canal and from Stoke Lane (being part of the locally important view as identified in the Neighbourhood Plan). Within these views the vegetated northern boundary of the site is clearly evident in the middle ground, with development of varying forms and ages within the settlement being evident in the view in the middle ground and further beyond.

There is likely to be a reduction in the extent of views of the church spire and tower when positioned on the site due to the layout of the development. Currently the site does not offer a publicly accessible viewpoint to fully appreciate the significance of the church, so the development of the site may actually increase accessibility for views of the church from the site in its wider setting although, as above, the extent of views would be reduced by the development, so it is considered that the impact of the proposal upon this component of the church's setting would be neutral.

The visual relationship between the application site and the church is apparent from other vantage points within area, particularly in views from Ashby Canal and from Stoke Lane. Due to the siting of the church on a ridge top and the height of the tower and spire these features would remain prominent in the landscape following the proposed development, however the introduction of built form on the site would have an urbanising effect and alter part of the largely rural landscape from within which the interest of the church and the character of its surroundings can currently clearly be

appreciated. The proposed development is therefore considered to result in an introduction of new, unrelated built form upon the site that detracts from the setting of the church and consequently reduces the appreciation of its significance. The level of impact would be reduced to some degree by the visual screening afforded by retention of the mature hedgerow along the northern boundary. For these reasons it is considered the proposal would have a very minor adverse impact upon the significance of the grade I listed Church of St Margaret.

The overall significance of the early to mid-18th century house The Birches is also derived from its architectural and historic interest. Despite its relative proximity there is no evidence to suggest a direct functional or historic relationship between the application site and The Birches. Due to intervening built form the Birches is not experienced or appreciated from the site or its immediate surroundings. It is considered that the development would not alter this arrangement, and as such the development would preserve the significance of the grade II listed building.

Ashby Canal Conservation Area

The Ashby Canal was constructed during the late-18th to early-19th centuries to link the coal reserves of north-west Leicestershire with the wider network including the Coventry Canal further to the south. It is of considerable historic and archaeological value, but despite its industrial origins it retains a rural character for much of its length as its meanders its way through a pastoral landscape and setting. There are excellent panoramic views of the countryside and this rural setting from the towpath and the top of canal bridges, whilst in some views there are glimpses or vistas of nearby settlements, providing context and understanding for the route of the canal which functioned to serve and benefit such settlements. Many settlements, including Stoke Golding, have expanded over time which has provided an increased urbanised character nearer to the route and edges of the canal. There is a reference within the Ashby Canal Conservation Area Appraisal (ACCAA) (2009) that new development on the top of the ridge in Stoke Golding has spoiled the view; this does make clear that there is residential development visible in views looking east, south and south-west when traversing the canal towpath around Stoke Golding, although the context for such views from the towpath does remain clearly rural.

The proposed development would introduce further built form within the wider setting of the canal. When viewed from the canal towpath, the elements of the development would be visible over the retained mature hedgerow along the northern boundary. However, given that the site forms a small component of the wider setting of the canal, and that the development would be set within the context of flanking built form, it is considered that the degree of change within the setting of the canal would be negligible so there would be no clear adverse impacts upon the heritage significance of the Ashby Canal Conservation Area.

Harm vs benefits exercise and summary

As per the assessment above it is considered that the proposal will result in a moderate degree of harm to the significance of the Stoke Golding Conservation Area, a very minor degree of harm to the significance of the grade I listed building the Church of St Maragret (the conservation area and listed building are designated heritage assets), and a minor degree of harm to the significance of the ridge and furrow earthworks on the site (these being a non-designated heritage asset). Accordingly the harm caused to the significance of these heritage assets must be carefully weighed up against the public benefits of the proposal as required by Policy DM11 of the SADMP and Policies HE4 to HE7 of the NPPF.

Policy HE6 (1) of the NPPF requires substantial weight to be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets, and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. This is irrespective of the level of harm to the significance of the asset. Policy HE6 (3) confirms that any harm to a designated heritage asset will be a matter of considerable importance and weight to be dealt with in accordance with (*in the case of this application*) paragraph 4 of this policy.

Policy HE4 (2) of the NPPF states that any harm to the significance of any designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification.

Public benefits may follow from many developments and could be anything that delivers economic, social or environmental progress as described in the NPPF (paragraph 17). Public benefits may include heritage benefits as specified in the Planning Practice Guidance (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment – paragraph 20), such as:

- Sustaining or enhancing the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting
- Reducing or removing risks to a heritage asset
- Securing the optimum viable use of a heritage asset in support of its long term conservation

The submitted plans demonstrate that the proposed dwellings would reflect some of the traditional characteristics of the built form in the wider Stoke Golding Conservation Area, including being two storeys in scale, the majority being of a red brick construction, and having traditional architectural detailing to some elevations. As identified in the assessment above, there are however elements of the design of the dwellings that do not reflect the existing architectural form, predominant building materials and character of the traditional buildings in the conservation area, and the very presence of the dwellings can only be achieved via having a harmful urbanising effect upon the rural character of the conservation area. It is therefore considered that whilst aspects of the proposed design of the dwellings would make some contribution to local distinctiveness, this would only constitute a very minor heritage benefit via reflecting and sustaining some elements of the conservation area's predominant built form and significance. Further very minor heritage benefits are also referenced as being deliverable within the Heritage Statement, namely the installation of a heritage information board and historically inspired street names for the development.

Non-heritage benefits demonstrated by the proposed development include the provision of dwellings towards the future housing supply of the borough (including affordable housing), some short-term employment offered by the construction of the dwellings, and the potential use of local services by future occupants of the dwellings. This list is not necessarily exhaustive and further social, economic and environment benefits may also be identified.

In my opinion the proposal would cumulatively deliver a relatively minor level of heritage benefits that should be afforded limited weight in the balancing exercise. The weight afforded to the non-heritage public benefits arising from the proposal should be determined. If the level of public benefits is insufficient to outweigh the moderate harm caused to the Stoke Golding Conservation Area and the very minor harm caused to the grade I listed building the Church of St Margaret then the proposal will not accord with Policy HE6 (4) of the NPPF and Policy DM11 of the SADMP. In completing this balancing exercise great and substantial weight must be demonstrably given to the conservation of the heritage assets as required by Policy

HE6 (1) of the NPPF and the statutory duties of Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The ultimate conclusion of the balancing exercise, however, lies within the decision-taker.

When making a decision on the ridge and furrow earthworks on the site as a non-designated heritage asset, Policy HE7 of the NPPF requires a balanced judgement to be made, weighing the benefits of the proposal and having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the asset. As per the assessment in these comments, it is considered that the significance of the asset is low and the residual harm upon the asset resulting from the proposed development is minor. The public benefits of the proposal shall need to be identified by the decision-taker, as per the exercise required when applying the relevant policies on designated heritage assets. If the balanced judgement regarding non-designated heritage assets comes out in favour of the proposal it will accord with Policy HE7 of the NPPF and Policy DM11 of the SADMP

Should this application be approved the following planning condition should be applied and considered:

- Notwithstanding the information included within the application form and Materials Schedule document, the provision of details / samples of the materials to be used on all external elevations of the development. This is to ensure that the development has a satisfactory appearance and that the significance of the conservation area is preserved. Please note, a concrete roof tile is not a traditional roof material within the Stoke Golding Conservation Area, so alternatives such as a natural clay or slate for roof coverings are expected to be selected for the development.