

HOUSING IN CLUSTERS AND SMALL SCALE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

June 2022



Guidance on implementing Local Plan policies

SCLP5.4 Housing in Clusters in the Countryside
WLP8.7 Small Scale Residential Development in the Countryside

Consultation Information

The consultation for the Housing in Clusters and Small Scale Residential Development in the Countryside Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) begins Friday 17th June 2022 and will run for 7 weeks, ending Friday 5th August 2022 at 5pm. The Council is inviting you to make comments on the Draft SPD within this period. The best way to submit your representations is online via the East Suffolk Council website.

www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/planning-policy-consultations

Alternatively, please send comments to: East Suffolk Council, Planning Policy & Delivery Team, Riverside, 4 Canning Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk NR33 0EQ or planningpolicy@eastsuffolk.gov.uk

How to use this document

The document comprises 8 chapters each covering a different topic. The best way to navigate through the document is by using the interactive contents. By clicking on a specific chapter in the contents, it will automatically take you to that part of the document. If you want to go to a different section, the easiest way is to click the home symbol in the top right corner of the page which will return you to the contents. There is also a guide on the right-hand side of each page, this will show you which chapter of the document you are currently in and where that sits within the rest of the document. Throughout the document there are hyperlinks in the text that provide links to further information.

What is a Supplementary Planning Document?

Supplementary Planning Documents expand upon policy and provide further detail to support the implementation of policies in Local Plans. Whilst not a part of the development plan, they are a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. The Local Plan policies, which this SPD provides guidance on, can be viewed on the Council's website: www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/localplan



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1 Introduction

1.1 East Suffolk Council has two adopted Local Plans – the [Suffolk Coastal Local Plan](#)¹ (September 2020) and the [Waveney Local Plan](#)² (March 2019). The Local Plans set out strategies and policies for growth, including housing. Planned housing growth is focused largely upon the urban areas and defined larger settlements and villages. However as part of those strategies both Local Plans also provide opportunities for some limited housing to come forward in the countryside. This includes the opportunities provided by the policies that are the subject of this Supplementary Planning Document:

- Suffolk Coastal Local Plan – Policy SCLP5.4 Housing in Clusters in the Countryside
- Waveney Local Plan – Policy WLP8.7 Small Scale Residential Development in the Countryside

1.2 Whilst the two policies have similarities, they have differing backgrounds and differences in certain parts of the detailed criteria. The policies are explained below.

SCLP5.4 – Housing in Clusters in the Countryside

1.3 The strategy of the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan seeks to focus housing growth towards the Major Centres, Towns, Large Villages and Small Villages (as identified under Policy SCLP3.2 Settlement Hierarchy). This includes applying Settlement Boundaries to those defined settlements and allocating

sites for development in a number of locations. New development within Settlement Boundaries will be acceptable in principle, as per Policy SCLP3.3 Settlement Boundaries.

1.4 Policy SCLP5.3 Housing in the Countryside sets out the limited circumstances where housing would be acceptable outside of Settlement Boundaries and allocated sites, including housing development in ‘clusters’ in the Countryside. The geography of the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan area is such that there are many small, dispersed communities and clusters of housing outside of the defined settlements. Such communities do not have the level of services and facilities to support larger scale new housing development (and hence do not have Settlement Boundaries) but a small amount of development may help to meet local housing needs, enable people to stay within rural communities and help to sustain these rural communities and any services and facilities that exist within them. Policy SCLP5.4 therefore provides for a limited amount of housing development to come forward in these locations – referred to as ‘clusters’.

1.5 Other policies in the Local Plan also provide for other circumstances under which housing could come forward in the countryside, such as affordable housing, conversions or rural workers dwellings, however the guidance in this SPD is focused on Policy SCLP5.4.

1.6 The full text of SCLP5.4 is shown below. This should be read alongside the supporting text contained in paragraphs 5.21 – 5.28 of the Local Plan.

¹ [East-Suffolk-Council-Suffolk-Coastal-Local-Plan.pdf \(eastsoffolk.gov.uk\)](#)

² [Adopted-Waveney-Local-Plan-including-Erratum.pdf \(eastsoffolk.gov.uk\)](#)



Policy SCLP5.4: Housing in Clusters in the Countryside

Proposals for new dwellings within 'clusters' in the countryside will be supported where:

- a. The proposal is for up to three dwellings within a cluster of five or more dwellings;

Or

The proposal is for up to five dwellings within a cluster of at least ten existing dwellings which is well related to a Major Centre, Town, Large Village or Small Village;

And

- b. The development consists of infilling within a continuous built up frontage, is in a clearly identifiable gap within an existing cluster, or is otherwise located adjacent to existing development on two sides;
- c. The development does not represent an extension of the built up area into the surrounding countryside beyond the existing extent of the built up area surrounding, or adjacent to, the site; and
- d. It would not cause undue harm to the character and appearance of the cluster or, result in any harmful visual intrusion into the surrounding landscape.

Where more than three dwellings are proposed under criterion b) above, applicants must be able to demonstrate that meaningful and

effective community engagement has taken place in the development of the scheme and that the mix of dwellings proposed would meet locally identified needs.

Particular care will be exercised in sensitive locations such as within or in the setting of Conservation Areas and the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Consideration will also need to be given to the features of Landscape Character Areas in accordance with Policy SCLP10.4.

The cumulative impact of proposals will be a consideration in relation to the criteria above.

A 'cluster' in the context of this policy:

- Consists of a continuous line of existing dwellings or a close group of existing dwellings adjacent to an existing highway; and
- Contains 5 or more dwellings.



Policy WLP8.7 – Small Scale Residential Development in the Countryside

- 1.7 The strategy of the Waveney Local Plan largely focuses housing growth towards the larger settlements, including Lowestoft, the Market Towns and the Larger Villages and Smaller Villages, through allocating sites for development in a number of locations and by applying Settlement Boundaries to those locations (see Local Plan Policy WLP1.1, Table 2 and Policy WLP7.1). New development within Settlement Boundaries will be acceptable in principle, as per Policy WLP1.2 Settlement Boundaries. ‘Other rural settlements’ are not defined and do not have Settlement Boundaries.
- 1.8 The strategy of the Local Plan expects that 10% of the plan area’s housing growth will take place in the rural areas and that, in turn, 10% of the housing to be delivered in the rural areas is to be located in settlements within the Countryside (Policy WLP7.1). The Local Plan recognises that small scale developments can support communities by delivering housing types and sizes that are needed locally and provide opportunities for members of the existing community to live nearby and retain their social connections. The Local Plan also recognises that small scale developments can also provide social and economic benefits to the countryside. Policy WLP8.7 is therefore intended to provide for a limited amount of housing in the countryside as part of this strategy.
- 1.9 Other policies in the Local Plan also provide for other circumstances under which housing could come forward in the countryside, such as affordable housing, conversions or rural workers dwellings, however the guidance in this SPD is focused on Policy WLP8.7.
- 1.10 The full text of WLP8.7 is shown below. This should be read alongside the supporting text contained in paragraphs 8.37 – 8.42 of the Local Plan.

Policy WLP8.7 – Small Scale Residential Development in the Countryside

Small scale residential development in the Countryside of up to three dwellings will be permitted where:

- The site constitutes a clearly identifiable gap within a built up area of a settlement within the Countryside;
- There are existing residential properties on two sides of the site; and
- The development does not extend further into the undeveloped Countryside than the existing extent of the built up area surrounding the site.

Small scale residential development in the Countryside of up to and including five dwellings will also be permitted where:

- There is clear and demonstrable local support;
- The scheme demonstrates meaningful and robust consultation with the Parish Council, local community and other stakeholders;
- Following consultation, it can be demonstrated that any planning impacts identified by the local community have been fully addressed and therefore the scheme is supported by the community;



- The site is adjacent or within the built up area of the settlement within the Countryside; and
- The scheme when considered cumulatively with other developments in the Countryside would not result in a level of development which would be contrary to the strategy outlined in Policies WLP1.1 and WLP7.1.

For all small scale development in the Countryside the design of the scheme will need to respect and reflect the character of the settlement and existing built up frontage including:

- Housing density is reflective of the density in the village and surrounding built up area; and
- The ratio of the building footprint to the plot area is consistent with existing properties nearby which characterise the village.

1.11 Both Policies SCLP5.4 and WLP8.7 include a number of criteria. These criteria define in principle locations where development would be appropriate, including appropriate sites, as well as other requirements to ensure new development coming forward under these policies is appropriate to the local area.

Purpose of this Supplementary Planning Document

1.12 The purpose of this Supplementary Planning Document is to provide guidance on the application of policies SCLP5.4 and WLP8.7. This includes

further guidance on how the individual criteria of each policy will be applied and how each of the relevant criteria are to be met for development to be considered acceptable. Guidance is also provided on how policies SCLP5.4 and WLP8.7 relate to other policies in the Local Plans.

1.13 The SPD covers the whole of the administrative area of East Suffolk except that part of the former Waveney district lying within the Broads for which the Broads Authority is the local planning authority. The guidance relating to SCLP5.4 only will only apply in the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan area and the guidance applying to WLP8.7 will only apply in the Waveney Local Plan area. The list below outlines which policies the chapters apply to:

- Chapter 2 – SCLP5.4 (Suffolk Coastal Local Plan area only)
- Chapter 3 – WLP8.7 (Waveney Local Plan area only)
- Chapter 4 – SCLP5.4 (Suffolk Coastal Local Plan area only)
- Chapter 5 – WLP8.7 (Waveney Local Plan area only)
- Chapter 6 – SCLP5.4 and WLP8.7
- Chapter 7– SCLP5.4 and WLP8.7
- Chapter 8 – SCLP5.4 and WLP8.7

1.14 Other policies within the Local Plans cover other various scenarios when development within the Countryside may be appropriate. These policies cover development such as affordable housing in the Countryside, rural workers dwellings, replacement dwellings, residential annexes and conversions. This SPD only relates to policies SCLP5.4 Housing in Clusters in



the Countryside and WLP8.7 Small Scale Residential Development in the Countryside.

- 1.15 As a Supplementary Planning Document, once adopted this document will be a material consideration when determining planning applications.



2 Suffolk Coastal Local Plan Policy

SCLP5.4 – What is a ‘Cluster’?

- 2.1 A ‘Cluster’ relates to the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan area only (Policy SCLP5.4).
- 2.2 For development to be supported under Policy SCLP5.4, it must be in a ‘Cluster’.
- 2.3 A ‘Cluster’ can only exist outside of a Small Village, Large Village, Town or Major Centre as categorised in the Local Plan and defined by Settlement Boundaries³, i.e. in the Countryside. The overarching purpose of Policy SCLP5.4 is to support a limited amount of development in those locations, recognising that they do not have the range or number of facilities to be classed as a Small Village, Large Village, Town or Major Centre in the Local Plan but that a limited amount of development may support the social sustainability of the rural areas.
- 2.4 Policy SCLP5.4 states:
- A ‘cluster’ in the context of this policy:
- Consists of a continuous line of existing dwellings or a close group of existing dwellings adjacent to an existing highway; and
 - Contains 5 or more dwellings.

³ Other than in the case of Newbourne, see chapter 8 of this SPD

- 2.5 Illustrations 1-3 (see pages 10-12) provide examples of what may or may not constitute a ‘cluster’ under the terms of the policy.

Consists of a continuous line of existing dwellings or a close group of existing dwellings adjacent to an existing highway

- 2.6 The dwellings in a ‘Cluster’ as a whole must be closely related (see illustrations 1 and 2). As per paragraph 5.25 of the Local Plan, extensive areas of open land should not exist between the dwellings (See illustration 3). Dwellings can be separated by some other features, such as gardens and accesses, and do not need to conjoin. There may also be other uses within the ‘close group’ or ‘continuous line’, for example a public house, however the cluster as a whole should have a residential function as opposed to, for example, an employment area. Dwellings separated by open fields or other extensive open spaces are highly unlikely to form a ‘Cluster’. It is not appropriate to define a specific size of space(s) that would or would not be acceptable in determining whether dwellings are ‘close’ – this will depend on the character of the area and will involve planning judgement. For example, some clusters may be characterised by existing dwellings in large plots whereas others may comprise a more compact pattern.
- 2.7 The dwellings in a ‘Cluster’ must also be adjacent to an existing highway. Suffolk County Council define a highway as any route in which the public has a right of way⁴. Therefore, roads such as private driveways will not be considered as highways.

⁴ <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/highway-maintenance/road-adoption/highways-and-private-roads/>



Contains 5 or more dwellings

- 2.8 A 'Cluster' must contain at least 5 existing dwellings. Buildings of other uses can be within the 'Cluster' (see illustration 1), acknowledging also that these may contribute to the sustainability of the 'Cluster', however there must be at least 5 dwellings if the application is for 1-3 new dwellings. This increases to at least 10 dwellings if the application is for 4 or 5 new dwellings. There is no maximum number of dwellings for a 'Cluster'.
- 2.9 Dwellings that are permitted, but not yet constructed, may in some circumstances be able to count towards the 5 or 10 dwellings. Consideration will be given to whether the development has started or any other clear evidence that the development will be implemented. Where there is uncertainty as to whether a development with planning permission will take place, for example a permission is close to expiring and has not started, it is unlikely that this would be counted as contributing to the cluster.

Other Considerations

- 2.10 The existing dwellings within 'Clusters' can vary greatly in their design, type, tenure and their building footprint to plot ratio. While dwellings in 'Clusters' must be closely related to each other in terms of location, they do not necessarily need to be of the same or similar design, shape, size or period. In fact, 'Clusters' where they have evolved and developed over time will

often show great variation in terms of the types of dwellings contained within them.

- 2.11 The areas of Small and Large villages, as well as Major Centres and Market Towns, have been categorised in the Settlement Hierarchy (Policy SCLP3.2) and defined by Settlement Boundaries⁵ in the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan (SCLP3.3) which provide opportunities for development to come forward. In addition, such settlements have been the focus for residential site allocations. The purpose of the Clusters policy is to support limited new development outside of these areas to support the social sustainability of the more rural parts of the plan area.
- 2.12 A 'Cluster' must be located entirely outside of the Settlement Boundaries established by policy SCLP3.3 or through a Neighbourhood Plan, to be considered to be entirely within the Countryside.

⁵ Other than Newbourne, see chapter 8 of this SPD



3 Waveney Local Plan Policy WLP8.7 – What is a ‘Settlement in the Countryside’?

- 3.1 For the purpose of this SPD, the term ‘Settlement in the Countryside’ is used throughout to refer to settlements within the Countryside covered by Waveney Local Plan Policy WLP8.7.
- 3.2 A ‘Settlement in the Countryside’ can only exist outside of a Smaller Village, Larger Village, Market Town or the Lowestoft area as categorised in the Waveney Local Plan and defined by Settlement Boundaries, i.e. in the Countryside. The purpose of Policy WLP8.7 is to support a limited amount of development in those locations, recognising that they do not have the range or number of facilities to be classed as a Smaller Village, Larger Village, Market Town or the Lowestoft area in the Local Plan but that a limited amount of development may support the social sustainability of the rural areas.
- 3.3 For the purpose of this SPD, the term ‘Settlement in the Countryside’ has been used to refer to settlements in the Countryside as defined by the Waveney Local Plan where Policy WLP8.7 may apply.
- 3.4 Illustrations 1-3 (see pages 10-12) provide examples of what may or may not constitute a ‘Settlement in the Countryside’ under the terms of the policy.
- 3.5 Policy WLP8.7 and its supporting text does not set out specific characteristics which would define a Settlement in the Countryside. Policy WLP8.7 does not specify a minimum numbers of dwellings. However to

function as a settlement there must be multiple dwellings which are closely related (see illustrations 1 and 2). Isolated dwellings will not constitute a ‘Settlement in the Countryside’ (see illustrations 1 and 3). Buildings of other uses can be within the settlement, provided it clearly functions as a residential settlement (rather than a group of employment uses for example), and in fact the presence of other uses may enhance the sustainability of the settlement.

- 3.6 The buildings of a ‘Settlement in the Countryside’ as a whole must be closely related and adjacent to each other (see illustrations 1 and 2). Extensive areas of open land should not exist between the dwellings and other buildings (see illustrations 1 and 3). Buildings and dwellings can be separated by some open areas, such as gardens and accesses, and do not need to be conjoined. However extensive open fields would not form part of the built up area of a Settlement in the Countryside.
- 3.7 The dwellings within a ‘Settlement in the Countryside’ can vary greatly in their design, type, tenure and their building footprint to plot ratio. While dwellings in these settlements must be closely related to each other in terms of location, they do not necessarily need to be of the same design, shape, size or period. In fact, settlements in the Countryside often show great variation in terms of the types of dwellings contained within them.
- 3.8 Dwellings that are permitted, but not yet constructed, may in some circumstances form a part of the ‘Settlement in the Countryside’. Consideration will be given to whether the development has started or other clear evidence that the development will be implemented. Where there is uncertainty as to whether a permitted development will take place, for example a permission is close to expiring and has not started, it is less likely that this would be counted as contributing to the ‘Settlement in the Countryside’.



- 3.9 The areas of Smaller and Larger villages, as well as Market Towns and the Lowestoft area, have been categorised in Policy WLP1.1 Scale and Location of Growth and defined by Settlement Boundaries (Policy WLP1.2) in the Waveney Local Plan which provide opportunities for development to come forward. In addition, such settlements have been the focus for residential site allocations. The purpose of the Policy WLP8.7 is to support limited new development outside of these areas to support the social sustainability of the more rural parts of the plan area.
- 3.10 A 'Settlement in the Countryside' must be located entirely outside of the Settlement Boundaries established by policy WLP1.2, or through a Neighbourhood Plan, to be considered to be entirely within the Countryside.

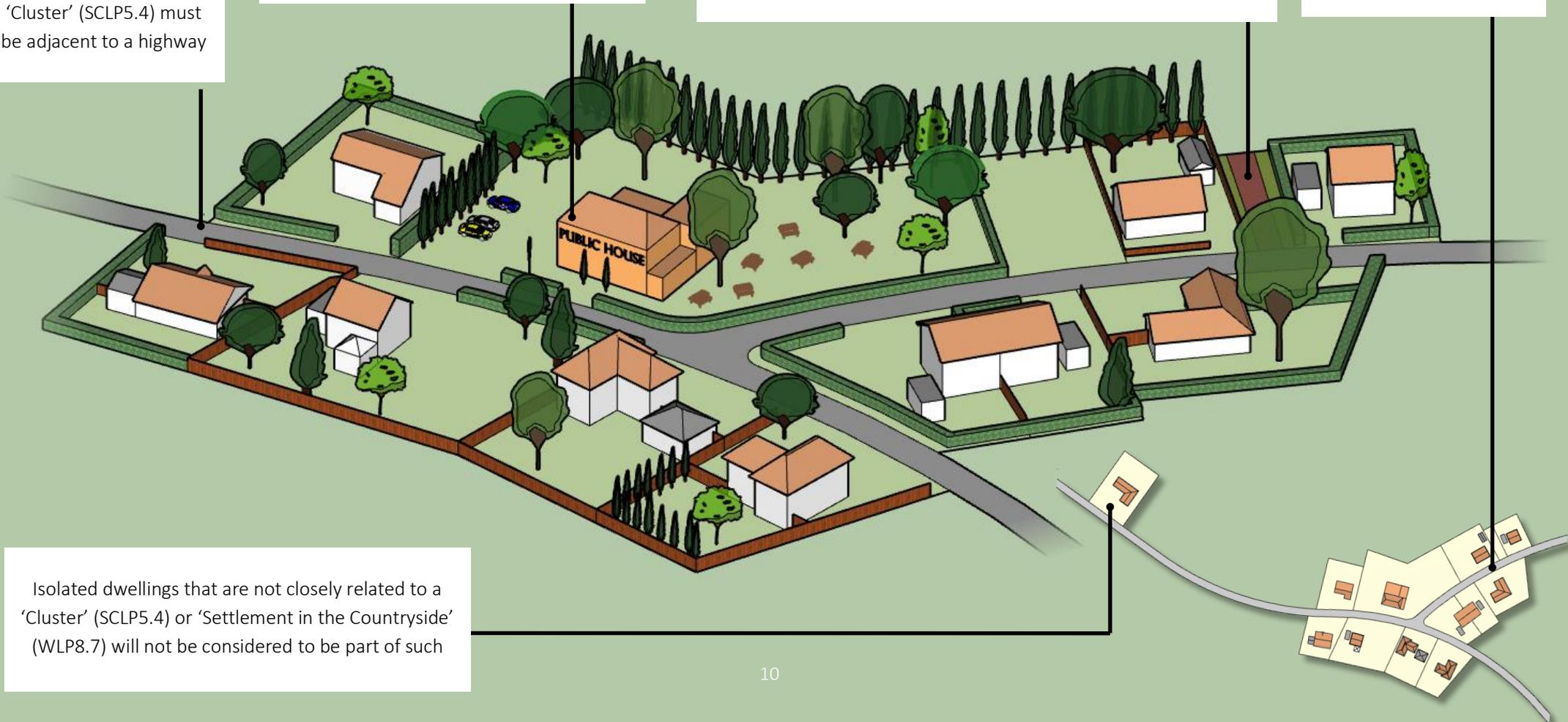
Illustration 1 | Example of features of a 'Cluster' or 'Settlement in the Countryside'

The dwellings within a 'Cluster' (SCLP5.4) must be adjacent to a highway

Non-residential dwellings can be located within a 'Cluster' (SCLP5.4) or 'Settlement in the Countryside' (WLP8.7) alongside residential uses

Within 'Clusters' (SCLP5.4) or 'Settlements in the Countryside' (WLP8.7) dwellings can be separated by small gaps/features and do not need to conjoin. In this example, a farm access is shown

To be identified as a 'Cluster' (SCLP5.4) or 'Settlement in the Countryside' (WLP8.7) the dwellings must be closely related to each other



Isolated dwellings that are not closely related to a 'Cluster' (SCLP5.4) or 'Settlement in the Countryside' (WLP8.7) will not be considered to be part of such

Illustration 2 | Example of a linear 'Cluster' or 'Settlement in the Countryside'

A 'Cluster' (SCLP5.4) must contain 5 or more dwellings

This example shows a more linear pattern of existing development that could form a 'Cluster' (SCLP5.4) or a 'Settlement in the Countryside' (WLP8.7)

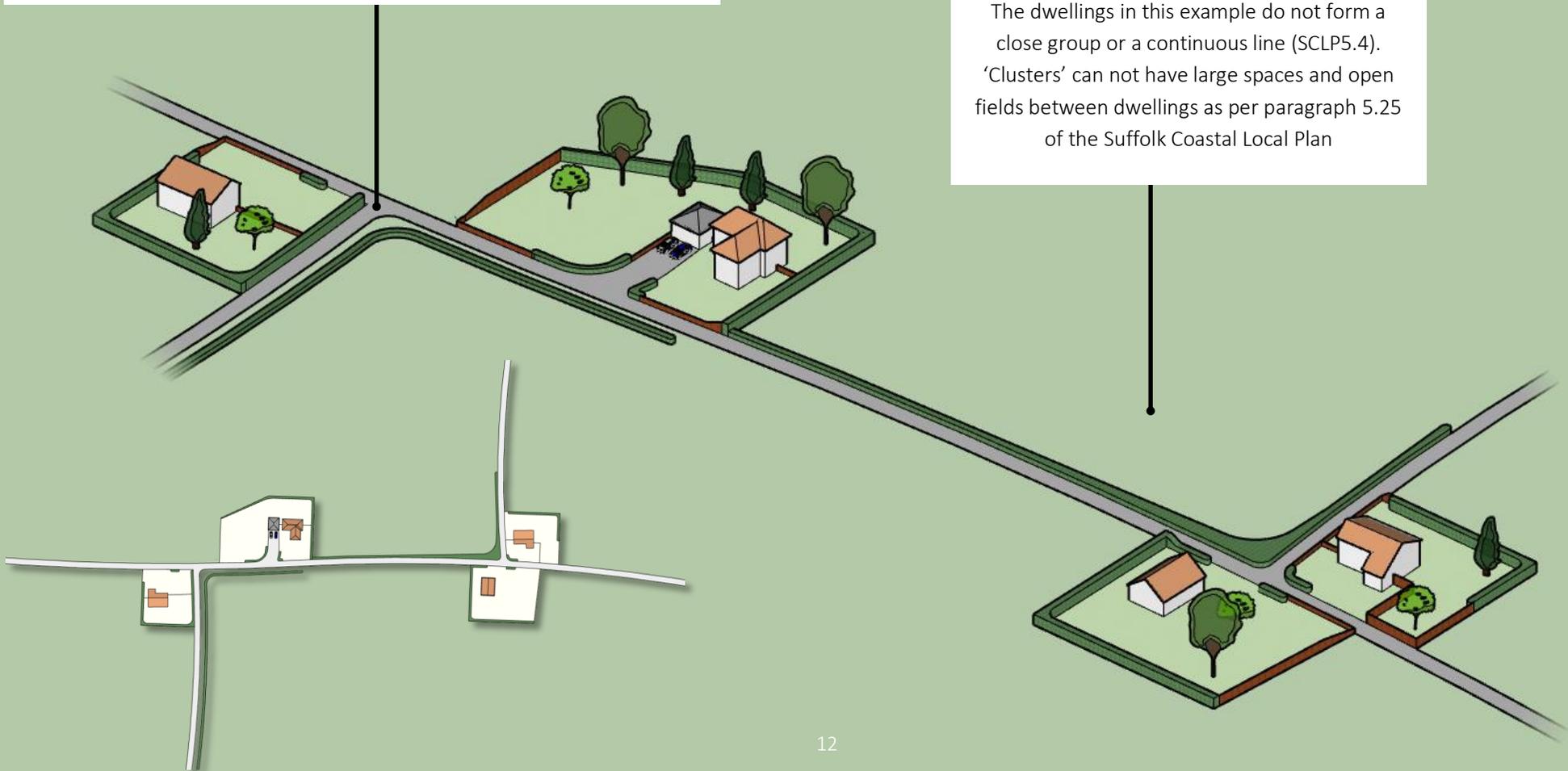
Although this example shows dwellings on both sides of the road, a continuous line of dwellings (SCLP5.4) does not need to be on both sides of the road



Illustration 3 | Example of an area that would not be considered a 'Cluster' or 'Settlement in the Countryside'

The dwellings in this example are not well related to each other and would not therefore be considered a 'Settlement in the Countryside' (WLP8.7)

The dwellings in this example do not form a close group or a continuous line (SCLP5.4). 'Clusters' can not have large spaces and open fields between dwellings as per paragraph 5.25 of the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan





4 Suffolk Coastal Local Plan Policy

SCLP5.4 – Site Characteristics

- 4.1 Criteria b), c) and d) of SCLP5.4 are key considerations in identifying whether a site is suitable for housing development in principle under this policy. Further details on criteria b) are set out in paragraph 5.25 of the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan.⁶
- 4.2 **Criterion b)** of Policy SCLP5.4 sets out that development should consist of:
- Infilling within a continuous built-up frontage
 - Is in a clearly identifiable gap within an existing cluster
 - Or is otherwise located adjacent to development on two sides.
- 4.3 The policy allows for up to three dwellings in clusters of at least five existing dwellings and up to five dwellings in clusters of at least ten existing dwellings, and the guidance below applies as appropriate to proposals of between one and five dwellings.
- 4.4 Illustrations 4 – 9 (see pages 17-22) provide examples of what may or may not constitute an appropriate site in a Cluster in terms of the policy.

⁶ Due to an editing error, paragraph 5.25 refers to criterion c), when in actuality the text describes and relates to criterion b).

Infilling within a continuous built-up frontage

- 4.5 A built-up frontage is a continuous line of existing dwellings adjacent to a highway. The dwellings within the frontage do not need to conjoin (see illustration 4). The frontage might include features such as private gardens, driveways, accesses and garages, and potentially land that would comprise an appropriately sized infill plot(s), but must otherwise read as a line of dwellings. These dwellings must be adjacent to an existing highway in order to provide vehicular access. Suffolk County Council define a highway as any route in which the public has a right of way⁷.

Is in a clearly identifiable gap within an existing cluster

- 4.6 A ‘gap’ is a space between dwellings that is clearly identifiable and therefore distinct from other spaces within the ‘Cluster’. This is likely to be informed by the character of the cluster – for example one cluster may be characterised by dwellings in large plots whereas in another cluster the same sized space between dwellings may appear as a ‘gap’. A ‘Cluster’ can have more than one ‘gap’ within it.

Or is otherwise located adjacent to development on two sides

- 4.7 The site must be surrounded by development on at least two sides. This can include scenarios where the site is separated by existing development by a highway, as per Local Plan paragraph 5.25. The existing development must extend along the entirety of the proposed site, not just a part of it (see Illustration 4).

⁷ <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/highway-maintenance/road-adoption/highways-and-private-roads/>



- 4.8 **Criterion c)** states that development must not represent an extension of the built-up area into the surrounding countryside beyond the existing extent of the built up area surrounding, or adjacent to, the site.
- 4.9 The existing built up area must extend along the entirety of the application site. This will mean that the proposed dwelling(s) does not extend further into the Countryside than the existing built development surrounding the application site. The curtilage of the proposed dwelling(s) should also not extend further into the countryside than the curtilage of existing dwellings.
- 4.10 **Criterion d)** states that the proposal must not cause undue harm to the character and appearance of the cluster or, result in any harmful visual intrusion into the surrounding landscape.
- 4.11 The role of the spaces between existing dwellings should be considered (see illustration 7). These spaces can contribute to the rural character of the area. Due to their role, it should not be seen that all spaces within a 'Cluster' could or should be developed. In considering whether a site is acceptable in principle, consideration should be given to the contribution and value the site, without the development, makes to the character and appearance of the cluster and the surrounding landscape. Consideration should be given to the Suffolk Coastal Landscape Character Assessment (2018)⁸ (or any subsequent assessment), as well as any landscape assessments, character appraisals or similar produced by Neighbourhood Plan groups. In Conservation Areas⁹, consideration should be given to Conservation Area Appraisals.

⁸ <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Planning/Suffolk-Coastal-Local-Plan/First-Draft-Local-Plan/SCDC-Landscape-Character-Assessment.pdf>

- 4.12 The features and character of the cluster or the landscape in which it sits may sometimes mean that it is not possible to mitigate the impacts of a proposal, and therefore a proposal in principle would have a detrimental impact on the character of the area. In these cases, development of the site will not be supported. Specific policy on Landscape Character is contained in Policy SCLP10.4.

Other Considerations

- 4.13 The site, as well as the 'Cluster', must be located completely outside of the Settlement Boundaries established by policy SCLP3.3, or within a Neighbourhood Plan, and therefore be completely within the Countryside (see illustration 9).

⁹ <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/design-and-conservation/conservation-areas/conservation-area-appraisals/>



5 Waveney Local Plan Policy WLP8.7 – Site Characteristics

- 5.1 Policy WLP8.7 sets out that development will be permitted where:
- The site constitutes a clearly identifiable gap within a built up area of a settlement within the Countryside;
 - There are existing residential properties on two sides of the site; and
 - The development does not extend further into the undeveloped Countryside than the existing extent of the built-up area surrounding the site.
- 5.2 Illustrations 4 – 9 (see pages 17-22) provide examples of what may or may not constitute an appropriate site in a settlement in the countryside in terms of the policy
- The site constitutes a clearly identifiable gap within a built-up area of a settlement within the Countryside***
- 5.3 A ‘gap’ is a space within a built-up area. The ‘gap’ must be clearly identifiable and therefore distinct from the spaces within the ‘Settlement in the Countryside’ that form an integral part of its character. However, a ‘Settlement in the Countryside’ can have more than one ‘gap’ within it.
- There are existing residential properties on two sides of the site***
- 5.4 The site must be surrounded by residential properties on at least two sides. This can include scenarios where the site is separated from existing properties by a highway. To meet this part of the policy, the existing

development should extend along the entirety of the proposed development, not just a part of it (see Illustration 4).

The development does not extend further into the undeveloped Countryside than the existing extent of the built-up area surrounding the site

- 5.5 The existing development must extend along the entirety of the application site. This will mean that the application site does not extend further into the Countryside than the existing built up area surrounding the application site. The curtilage of the proposed dwelling(s) should also not extend further into the countryside than the curtilage of existing dwellings.

Proposals for 4 or 5 dwellings

- 5.6 WLP8.7 also makes provision for sites of 4 or 5 dwellings to come forward, and also for development to take place adjacent to the settlement in certain circumstances. The policy allows for sites of up to 5 new dwellings to be developed adjacent or within the built-up area of the ‘Settlement in the Countryside’ without necessarily being enclosed by development on two sides, subject to compliance with the relevant criteria in the policy including there being local support for the development. This element of the policy provides flexibility to allow small scale development in rural areas that may not have the resources to create a Neighbourhood Plan or Development Order, as set out in paragraph 8.39 of the Waveney Local Plan.

Other Considerations

- 5.7 The effect of the principle of developing a site on the character of the settlement and surrounding landscape should also be considered.



- 5.8 The role of the spaces between dwellings should be considered (see illustration 7). These spaces often contribute to the rural character of the area. Due to their role, it should not be seen that all spaces within a ‘Settlement in the Countryside’ could or should be developed. In considering whether a site is acceptable in principle, consideration should be given to the contribution and value the site, without the development, has to the character and appearance of the settlement and the surrounding landscape. Policy WLP8.35 relates to Landscape Character. Consideration should be given to the Waveney Landscape Character Assessment (2008)¹⁰ (or any subsequent assessment), as well as any landscape assessments, character appraisals or similar produced by Neighbourhood Plan groups. In Conservation Areas, consideration should be given to Conservation Area Appraisals¹¹.
- 5.9 The features and character of the settlement in the countryside and the landscape surrounding it may sometimes mean that it is not possible to mitigate the impacts of a proposal, and therefore the proposal would have a detrimental impact on the character of the area. In these cases, the development of the site will not be supported.
- 5.10 The site, as well as the ‘Settlement in the Countryside’, must be located completely outside of the Settlement Boundaries established by policy WLP1.2, or a Neighbourhood Plan, and therefore be completely within the Countryside (see illustration 9).

¹⁰ <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Planning/Waveney-Local-Plan/Background-Studies/Landscape-Character-Assessment.pdf>

¹¹ <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/design-and-conservation/conservation-areas/conservation-area-appraisals/>

Illustration 4 | Potential sites in a 'Cluster' or 'Settlement in the Countryside'

Sites without adjacent existing development on at least two sides will not be appropriate (SCLP5.4 and WLP8.7). Note that for WLP8.7 the policy refers to *residential properties* on two sides (for development of up to 3 dwellings as per para 5.1 above).

Examples of a 'clearly identifiable gap in an existing cluster' (SCLP5.4) or a 'clearly identifiable gap within a built up area of the countryside' (WLP8.7)

The existing adjacent development must enclose the site, ensuring the site does not extend further into the Countryside than the existing development (see also illustration 5)

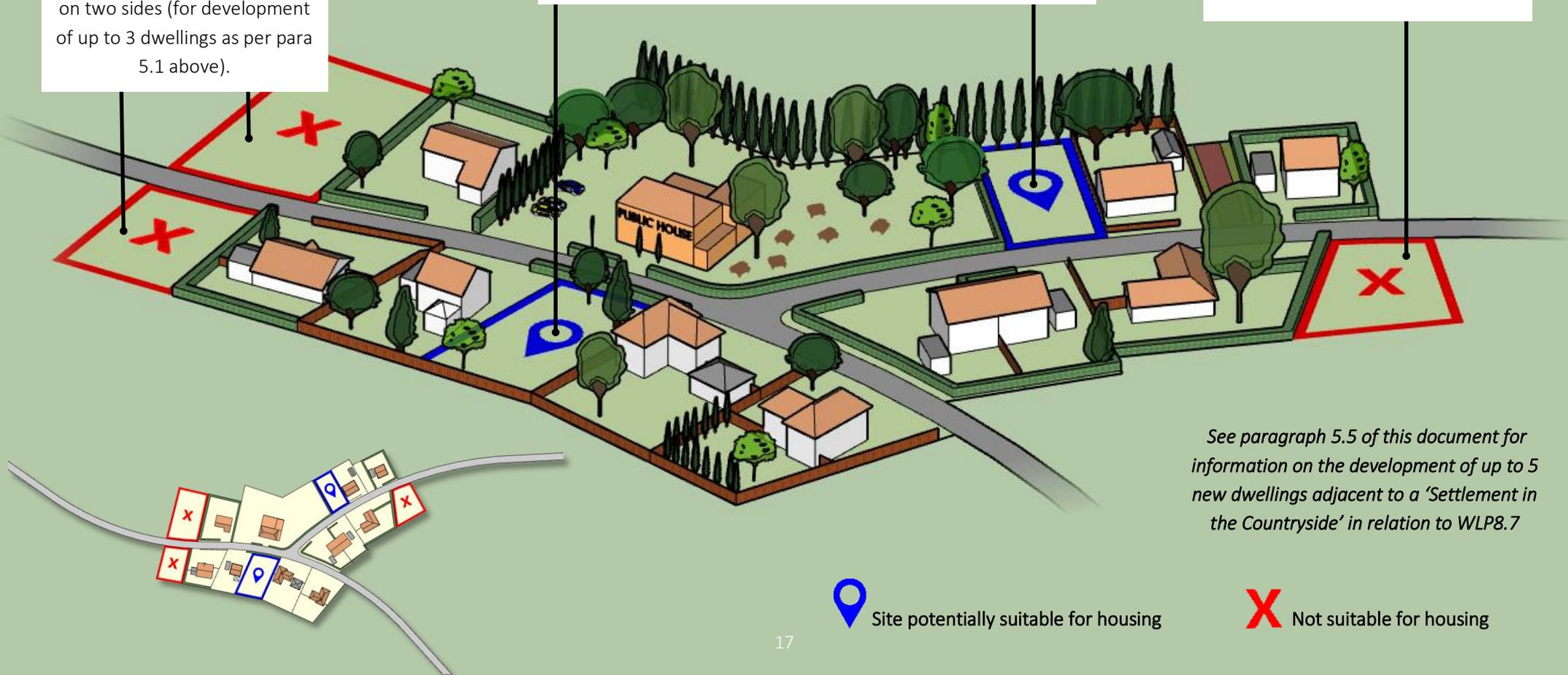


Illustration 5 | Potential sites in a linear 'Cluster' or 'Settlement in the Countryside'

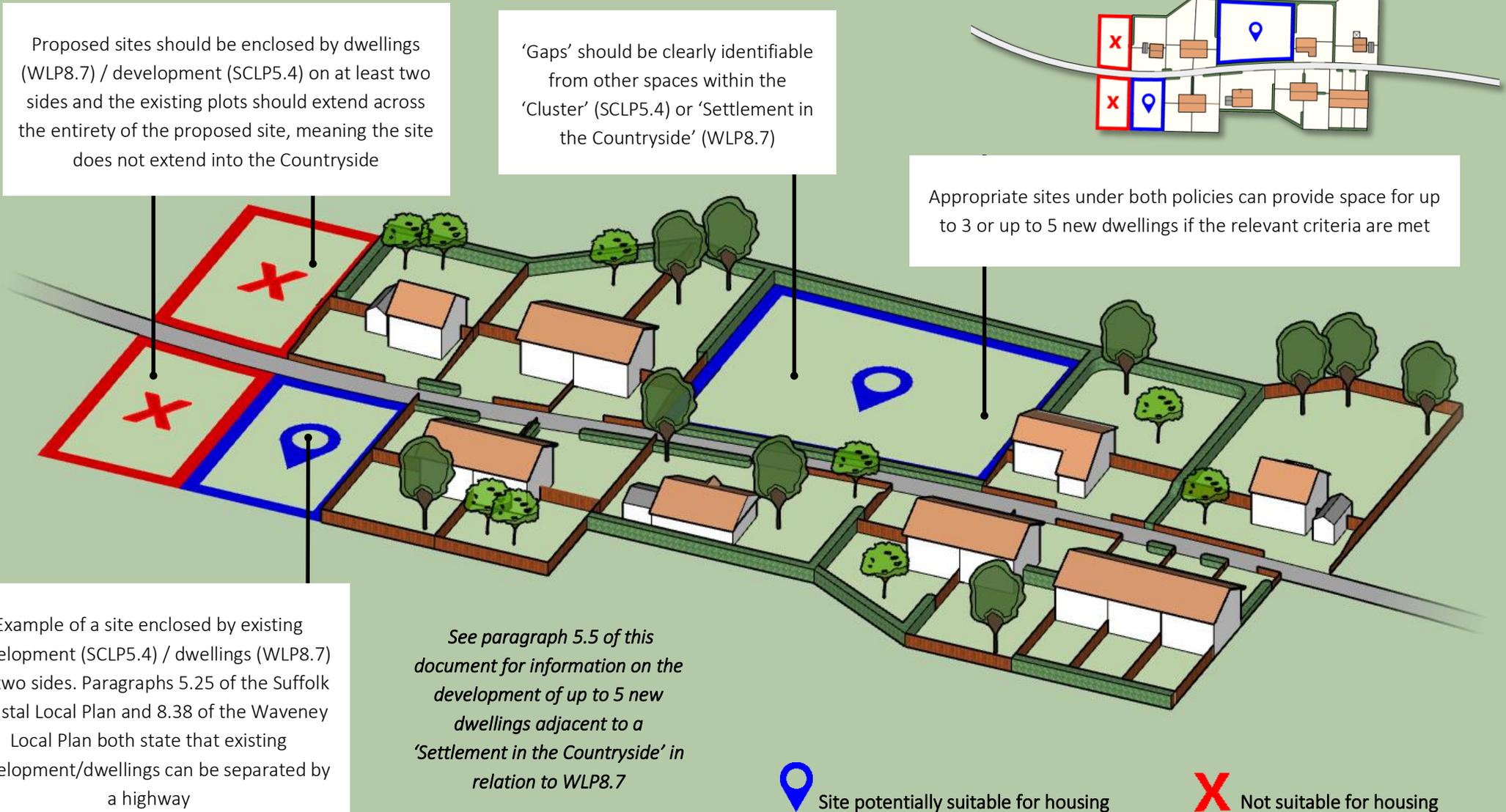
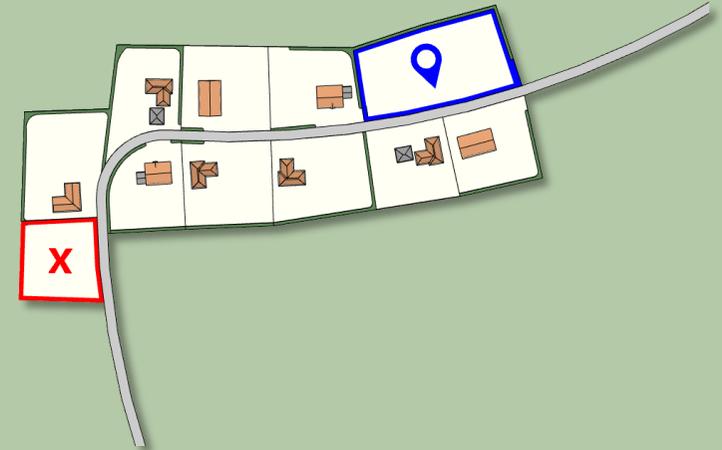


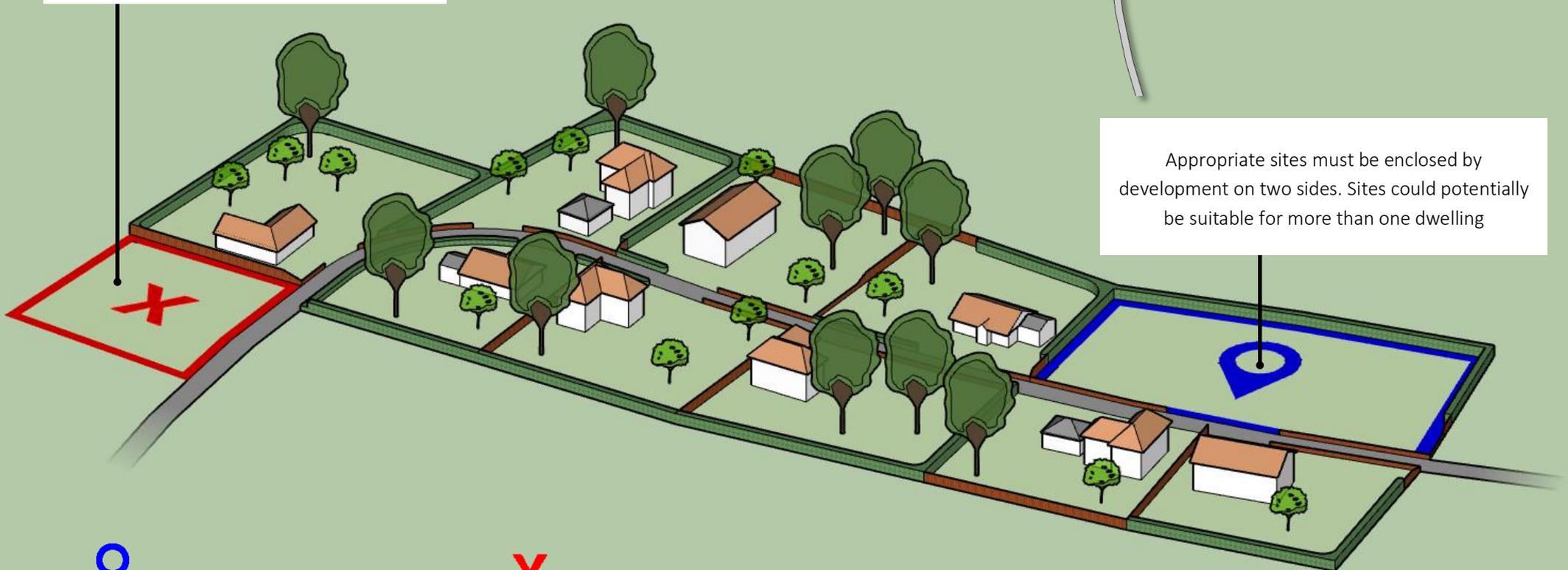
Illustration 6 | Potential sites in a 'Cluster' or 'Settlement in the Countryside' with large plots

A site with existing development on only one side or that does not extend along the entirety of the site will not be supported

See paragraph 5.5 of this document for information on the development of up to 5 new dwellings adjacent to a 'Settlement in the Countryside' in relation to WLP8.7



Appropriate sites must be enclosed by development on two sides. Sites could potentially be suitable for more than one dwelling



Site potentially suitable for housing



Not suitable for housing

Illustration 7 | Potential sites in a 'Cluster' or 'Settlement in the Countryside'

In considering whether a site is suitable in principle, consideration should be given to the site's contribution to the character of the 'Cluster' (SCLP5.4) or 'Settlement in the Countryside' (WLP8.7) in its undeveloped form

Appropriate sites must be within a clearly identifiable gap, enclosed by development on at least two sides and should not extend further into the Countryside. Sites could be suitable for more than one dwelling

See paragraph 5.5 of this document for information on the development of up to 5 new dwellings adjacent to a 'Settlement in the Countryside' in relation to WLP8.7

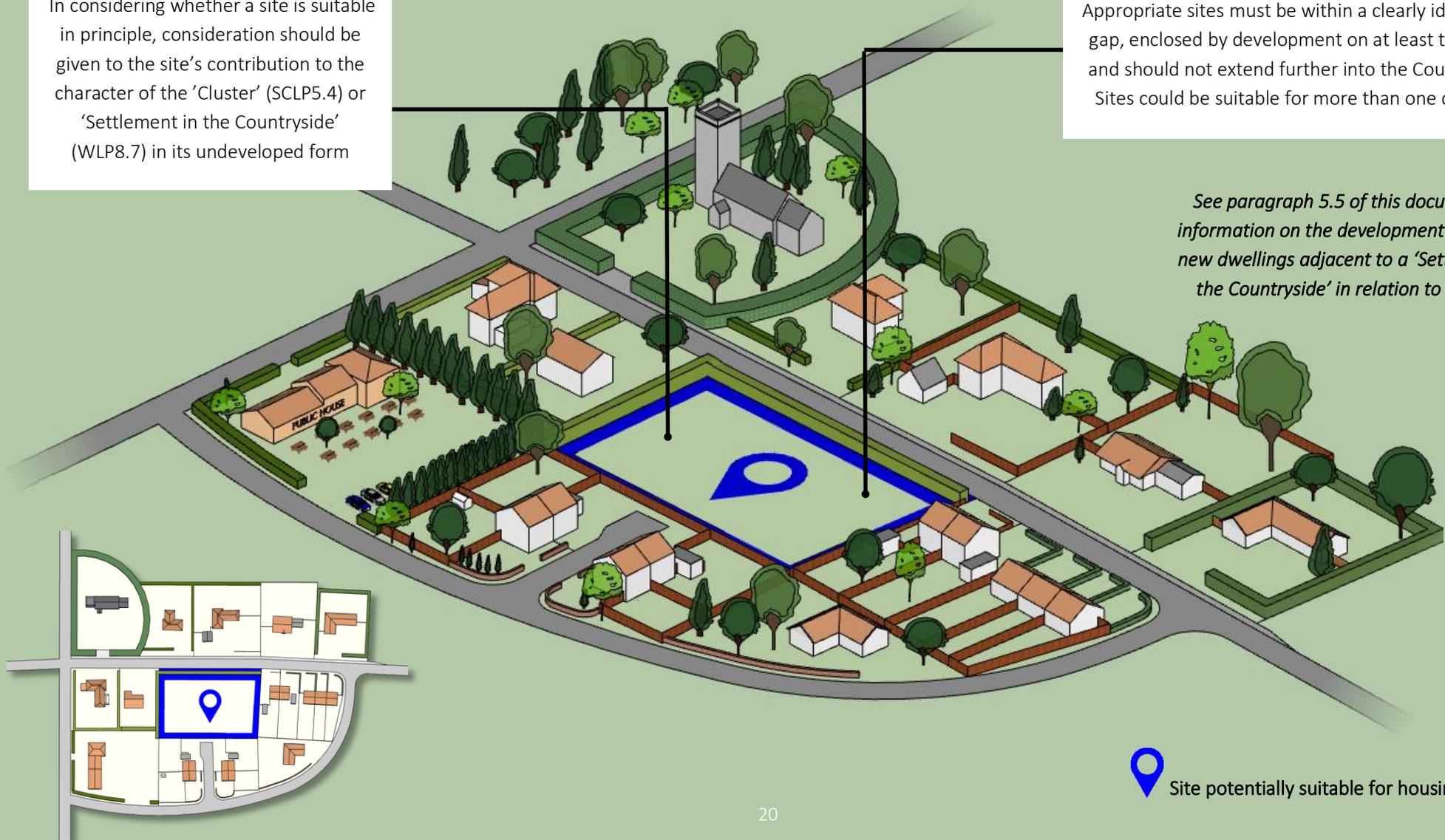


Illustration 8 | Example of a 'Cluster' or 'Settlement in the Countryside' with no 'gaps'

'Clusters' (SCLP5.4) and 'Settlements in the Countryside' (WLP8.7) exist through the Countryside of East Suffolk. However, not all will have gaps or spaces that are suitable for development

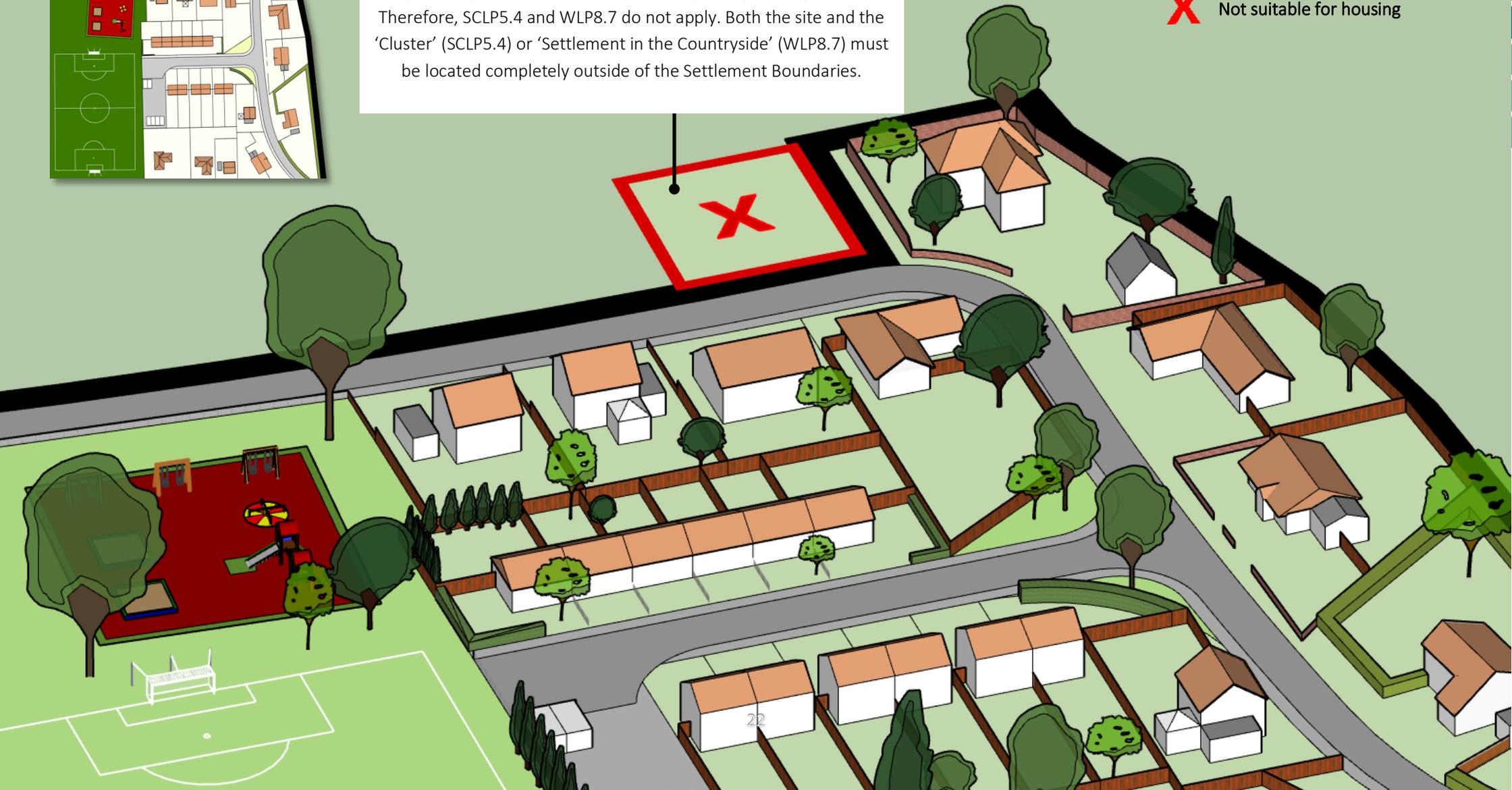


Illustration 9 | 'Clusters' or 'Settlements in the Countryside' and Settlement Boundaries



While this site is outside of the Settlement Boundary, the 'Cluster' (SCLP5.4) or 'Settlement in the Countryside' (WLP8.7) is not. Therefore, SCLP5.4 and WLP8.7 do not apply. Both the site and the 'Cluster' (SCLP5.4) or 'Settlement in the Countryside' (WLP8.7) must be located completely outside of the Settlement Boundaries.

- Settlement Boundary
- ✗ Not suitable for housing





6 Character and Appearance

- 6.1 In rural areas, the development of a small number of dwellings can have a substantial impact on the character of the local area. High quality design can enhance the character of settlements as well as take advantage of modern sustainable methods to reduce the impact on the rural character. However, clear guidance is required to ensure that development does not have a detrimental impact on local character. Proposals which harm the character of the local area will not be supported.
- 6.2 Criterion d) of Policy SCLP5.4 states that to be supported development should not cause undue harm to the character and appearance of the cluster or, result in any harmful visual intrusion into the surrounding landscape.
- 6.3 Policy WLP8.7 states that for all small-scale development in the Countryside the design of the scheme will need to respect and reflect the character of the settlement and existing built-up frontage including:
- Housing density is reflective of the density in the village and surrounding built up area; and
 - The ratio of the building footprint to the plot area is consistent with existing properties nearby which characterise the village.



Figure 1 Proposals under WLP8.7 must be designed to a density with a building: plot ratio that is consistent with the existing dwellings within the 'Settlement in the Countryside'

- 6.4 Proposals will also need to comply with the relevant landscape policies (SCLP10.4 Landscape Character and WLP8.35 Landscape Character) and design policies (principally SCLP11.1 Design Quality and WLP8.29 Design) in the relevant Local Plan. Neighbourhood Plans¹² could also include landscape and design policies, or other design guidance or assessments that should be used and referred to where they exist.
- 6.5 Proposals need to consider the impact on the wider landscape as well as the character of the 'Cluster' or 'Settlement in the Countryside' in which the site is located.

¹² <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/neighbourhood-planning/neighbourhood-plans-in-the-area/>



Character and appearance of the Cluster

Design of the proposal

- 6.6 Both of the Local Plans contain policies relating to the design of new development. SCLP11.1 in the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan and WLP8.29 in the Waveney Local Plan are the main design policies.
- 6.7 The scale and design of any scheme should be appropriate to the existing character and appearance of the 'Cluster' or 'Settlement in the Countryside'. This should include type of dwellings, plot sizes and building footprints and sizes. These characteristics of a 'Cluster' or 'Settlement in the Countryside' can be uniform or varied depending when they were developed and who developed them.
- 6.8 The site being proposed must allow for a suitable layout, orientation and density of new dwellings that is appropriate to the character to the existing development. For example, if a cluster is characterised by dwellings in large plots, a small gap may not provide an option for development that would be appropriate to the character of the 'Cluster' or 'Settlement in the Countryside'.
- 6.9 New dwellings themselves should be of a high-quality design that clearly demonstrate a detailed understanding of local landscape features, the built environment and open space that contribute to the character of the 'Cluster' or 'Settlement in the Countryside'. The proposed new dwellings should respond to these local features through their overall scale, character, height and massing. New dwellings should respond to the overall pattern of development in the local area and should have an appropriate layout on the site based on its position in the 'Cluster' or 'Settlement in the Countryside' and the surrounding uses. New dwellings should use materials and detailing

that are complementary to the local features. All new dwellings, whether they are of a traditionalist, contemporary or innovative style, should be of the highest quality design.

- 6.10 The design and features of the curtilages of the new dwellings must also show an understanding of the existing character of the area. The curtilage and the boundary treatments of the site should help integrate the new dwellings into the area and the wider landscape. Consideration should be given to, for example, appropriate surfacing for driveways that reflects the rural nature of the cluster or settlement.

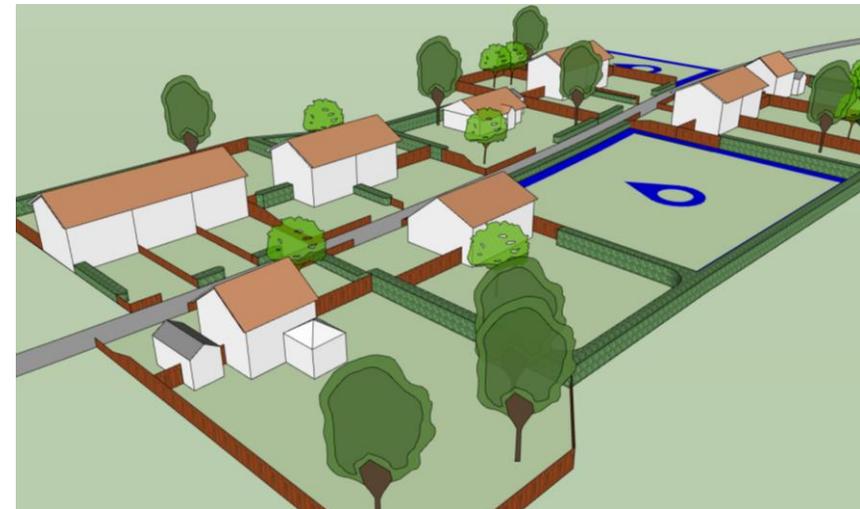


Figure 2 'Clusters' and 'Settlements in the Countryside' can contain various dwelling types and features. New dwellings should respond to the overall pattern of development in the area and respond to the features of the area



Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings

- 6.11 Particular care needs to be taken with development that takes place within or in the setting of Conservation Areas. Conservation Areas and their unique features contribute significantly to the character of their local area and any new development must acknowledge this.
- 6.12 Most Conservation Areas are located in areas with identified Settlement Boundaries, meaning in these cases that development under policies SCLP5.4 and WLP8.7 will not be applicable. However there are a small number of Conservation Areas that exist outside of Settlement Boundaries and therefore, potentially, in a cluster or settlement in the countryside.
- 6.13 Information on the character and appearance of Conservation Areas are contained within the Council's Conservation Area Appraisals¹³. These should be referenced by the applicant and should inform the proposal. Proposals within or which may affect a Conservation Area will be considered against policies SCLP11.5 and WLP8.39 and the relevant paragraphs in Chapter 16 of the 2021 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 6.14 Some 'Clusters' and 'Settlements in the Countryside' may potentially include Listed Buildings. As policies SCLP5.4 and SCLP8.7 relate to development in 'gaps' and adjacent to existing dwellings, there is potential for proposals to affect the setting of a Listed Building. Particular care therefore needs to be taken with development that is in the setting of a Listed Building. Development potentially affecting a Listed Building or its setting will be considered against Policy SCLP11.4 Listed Buildings (in the

Suffolk Coastal Local Plan area) and against the Chapter 16 of the 2021 NPPF.

- 6.15 Non-Designated Heritage Assets may also be present in clusters or settlements in the countryside, and the effect of a proposal on the significance and setting of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account. Policies SCLP11.6, WLP8.38 and paragraph 203 of the 2021 NPPF set out the relevant policy.
- 6.16 Further guidance on Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings and other heritage assets can be found in the Council's Historic Environment Supplementary Planning Document¹⁴.

Landscape

- 6.17 Policies SCLP11.4 and WLP8.35 are the key Local Plan policies covering landscape, against which proposals will be considered alongside SCLP5.4 and WLP8.7.
- 6.18 Any development within 'Clusters' and 'Settlements in the Countryside' should take into consideration the particular features of the Landscape Character Area in which the 'Cluster' or 'Settlement in the Countryside' is located. Particular care will need to be exercised in sensitive locations, such as within or in the setting of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

¹³ <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/design-and-conservation/conservation-areas/conservation-area-appraisals/>

¹⁴ <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Planning/Planning-Policy-and-Local-Plans/Supplementary-documents/Historic-Environment-SPD/Historic-Environment-SPD-reduced.pdf>



Applicants will be expected to demonstrate how landscape features have been considered.



Figure 3 New development should respond to features that contribute to the landscape character of the area. These can include natural features, such as woodland, and built features, such as key buildings like churches

- 6.19 Information on the features and characteristics of Landscape Character Areas can be found in the Suffolk Coastal Landscape Character Assessment (2018)¹⁵ and the Waveney Landscape Character Assessment (2008)¹⁶. The way in which a proposal responds to the landscape and mitigates any potential impacts should be clearly shown through the application.
- 6.20 Neighbourhood Plans may also have local landscape character assessments and landscape policies, which may also be relevant to the proposal.

Cumulative Impact

- 6.21 The policies are intended to support limited new development in the Countryside, therefore the consideration of the cumulative impact of new developments permitted under these policies is a key element that will need to be considered as these policies continue to be applied.

Policy SCLP5.4

- 6.22 SCLP5.4 states that the cumulative impact of proposals will be a consideration in relation to any that are proposed within sensitive areas, such as the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Conservation Areas. When a relevant application comes forward, consideration will be given to whether there is an extant permission or completed development permitted under this policy. The cumulative impact of these permissions and completions on the character of the 'Cluster' and the area in which the 'Cluster' is located will then be considered and if further permissions in the 'Cluster' would be detrimental to the local and wider character.

Policy WLP8.7

- 6.23 Policy WLP8.7 states that when development of up to 5 new dwellings is proposed under the part of the Policy which provides for this, the proposal will be considered cumulatively with other developments in the Countryside to ensure it would not result in a level of development that would be contrary to the overall strategy outlined in Policy WLP1.1 and Policy WLP7.1.

¹⁵ <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Planning/Suffolk-Coastal-Local-Plan/First-Draft-Local-Plan/SCDC-Landscape-Character-Assessment.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Planning/Waveney-Local-Plan/Background-Studies/Landscape-Character-Assessment.pdf>



- 6.24 Policy WLP7.1 sets out that 10% of the growth in the Waveney plan area will take place in the Rural Areas and that, of that 10%, 10% will take place in other rural settlements in the Countryside.
- 6.25 The amount and proportion of housing growth developed in the Countryside is monitored and is reported annually through the Council's Authority Monitoring Report (AMR). The AMR includes a breakdown of the proportion of new development in each of the areas in the Waveney Local Plan area (Lowestoft Area, Beccles and Worlingham, Bungay, Halesworth

and Holton, Southwold and Reydon, Larger Villages, Smaller Villages and Countryside).

- 6.26 Any consideration as to whether further development in the Countryside under Policy WLP8.7 would undermine the overall strategy of the Waveney Local Plan will be based upon the way and rate at which development is expected to come forward over the whole plan period. Such a decision would only be made if sustained trends in the data show this to be necessary for delivery of the strategy in the Plan, and would be determined through the AMR process.



7 Public Consultation

- 7.1 Where four or five new dwellings are being proposed, applicants are required to engage with the local community under both policy SCLP5.4 and WLP8.7.
- 7.2 This engagement must be meaningful and effective. This means that the scale of the engagement must be appropriate to the scale of the scheme being proposed and that anyone who could be affected in the local area must be given the opportunity to engage. This should not be limited to the Parish Council or Parish Meeting and immediate neighbours to the site. Rural areas can also be home to local businesses, groups and organisations who all have different interests related to the local area.
- 7.3 A variety of engagement methods should be used, including digital methods through the internet, as well as more traditional methods such as but not limited to leafletting and in person events where appropriate. This will ensure that all members of the community have an equal opportunity to be involved. The number and types of methods used should be proportionate to the scale of the proposal.
- 7.4 As part of the planning application, applicants should submit a statement which describes the methods used during the engagement. This statement could form part of the Planning Statement. In this statement, applicants must also show what measures were taken to engage, who was engaged with, what issues were raised, and how the planning issues raised through the engagement have been addressed through amendments to the proposal or by providing reasons why issues have not been addressed.

- 7.5 It is recommended that applicants approach the Parish Council or Parish Meeting for the area to determine the best form of community engagement that will be suitable for the residents of that area.

Local Housing Needs

- 7.6 SCLP5.4 states, in relation to community engagement, that the mix of dwellings being proposed should meet locally identified needs. The assessment of local needs should be based on the collection of primary data, such as through a survey, and should identify the needs of the local area rather than the preferences of the community. Applicants should consider the whole variety of housing types available, including specialist and adaptable housing and when these could be needed. The result of this assessment does not need to dictate what is delivered as some sites may not be appropriate for certain types of housing, however any proposal must show how local needs have been considered.
- 7.7 An assessment of local housing needs and how a proposal will help meet these relating to an application under policy WLP8.7 would also be supported.

Policy WLP8.7 – clear and demonstrable local support

- 7.8 Under WLP8.7, the policy expects there to be clear and demonstrable local support. Applicants should also show that there is genuine support for the proposal from the local community and the Parish Council or Parish Meeting. This does not mean that there can be no objections, or that a single letter of support would be acceptable. The applicant should show that through their community engagement the local community have generally shown support for the proposal. If the community have raised any relevant planning concerns through the engagement, these should be addressed by



the applicant. If there are any planning concerns that have not been addressed in any way, the application will not be supported.



8 Other Policies

8.1 This SPD focuses on the application of policies SCLP5.4 and WLP8.7. However, the Local Plans should be read as a whole. Therefore, even if an application is deemed to meet the requirements of SCLP5.4 or WLP8.7, it will still have to meet the requirements of any other relevant policies in the relevant Local Plan and any relevant Neighbourhood Plan. Some key policies that interact with SCLP5.4 and WLP8.7 are explained below.

Housing Mix

- SCLP5.8 Housing Mix
 - WLP8.1 Housing Mix
- 8.2 Policies SCLP5.4 and WLP8.7 provide opportunities for small scale residential development in rural areas in recognition of the support this can provide to the sustainability of these settlements by providing opportunities for people to stay within their communities. Policies SCLP5.8 and WLP8.1 both provide a focus on smaller dwellings as part of the housing mix in new developments and the mix of dwellings proposed should therefore be informed by these policies.

Self-Build and Custom Build

- SCLP5.9 Self-Build and Custom Build Housing
- WLP8.3 Self-Build and Custom Build

8.3 Proposals under policies SCLP5.4 and WLP8.7 could provide valuable opportunities for self-build and custom build dwellings. The Council will support applications for self-build and custom build where they are in compliance with other relevant policies in the relevant Local Plan.

Affordable Housing

- SCLP5.11 Affordable Housing on Exception Sites
- WLP8.6 Affordable Housing in the Countryside

8.4 Policies SCLP5.11 and WLP8.6 provide support in principle for sites to come forward in the Countryside if they are for affordable housing. In these scenarios, the site being proposed for the new dwellings must be adjacent (or well related under SCLP5.11) to an identified Settlement Boundary or an area that could be classed as a 'Cluster' under SCLP5.4 or a 'Settlement in the Countryside' under WLP8.7. The guidance in this SPD (chapters 2 and 3) will apply in defining a 'Cluster' or 'Settlement in the Countryside'.

SCLP5.7 Infill and Garden Development

8.5 Policy SCLP5.7 relates to the details of the design and siting of infill development, rather than to the principle, as per paragraph 5.35 of the Local Plan. It includes specific design criteria to ensure this type of development does not detrimentally impact the amenity of neighbouring properties and the character of the street scene. Proposals for infill in the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan area will therefore be considered against SCLP5.7 alongside SCLP5.4.



SCLP11.9 Newbourne – Former Land Settlement Association Holdings

- 8.6 Newbourne is identified as a Small Village in the Settlement Hierarchy due to the level of services and facilities that it has. However, the area of Newbourne that comprises the Former Land Settlement Association Holdings is unique within the plan area, with a large number of regular shaped plots, some of which still contain commercial scale greenhouses. Due to its unique nature, Newbourne does not therefore have a defined Settlement Boundary.
- 8.7 This is because it is considered that some types of development, such as backland development, have the potential to harm the unique character of the area. New development in Newbourne needs to be carefully managed.
- 8.8 The combination of these factors result in a bespoke approach to consideration of new housing development in Newbourne. Policy SCLP11.9 provides specific criteria for new development in the Former Land Settlement Association Holdings area, including in relation to the principle of housing development. Alongside this, Policy SCLP5.4 (or other policies on housing in the countryside, if relevant) also apply across Newbourne (both within and outside of the area defined as Former Land Settlement Association Holdings).

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