



Land at Exton Road, Empingham

Call for Sites Supporting Statement

Prepared for:

The Udale Family and Grafton Spaces Ltd

21st June 2022

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 This report provides supporting details and evidence in respect of the submission of a site at Exton Road, Empingham to Rutland County Council's Call for Sites towards the next Local Plan. The Call for Sites arises following the withdrawal of the previous draft Local Plan, and the need for the Council to re-assess the available land in respect of the preparation of a new Plan.
- 1.1.2 This site has not previously been formally submitted to the Council, although a late submission was made to the previous draft Plan, and representations were submitted to the Local Plan stages in respect of further development in Empingham and on the Exton Road site in particular. It is not known if these representations were taken into account as part of the previous draft Plan, and it remains unclear at this stage how an Inspector would have viewed the Plan.
- 1.1.3 This statement has been prepared on behalf of members of the Udale family, who own the land and have a long association with Empingham, assisted by Grafton Spaces Ltd, who have over thirty years of property development experience. The promotion has the full support of the landowners, who are keen to see the future of the historic dovecote secured on the site, enabled by the benefits arising from a modest allocation for residential development.

2 EMPINGHAM IN CONTEXT

- 2.1.1 We consider that Empingham is one of the upper tier settlements in the County, and that it represents a sustainable location for development and growth overall. However, we would contend that this needs to be proportionate with the way that development is apportioned around the County.

2.2 THE SPATIAL STRATEGY

- 2.2.1 The consideration of the spatial strategy for the County will be an important step in the development of the draft Plan, but we anticipate that some growth in the more sustainable villages will be important.
- 2.2.2 The previous draft Plan, albeit that this was withdrawn, acknowledged the importance of directing some growth to the larger villages. It referenced these are Local Service Centres and considered the facilities and amenities in each as a key parameter in determining if growth could be supported in those locations. The parameters adopted revolved around education, retail, medical and community facilities. For our part, we would add public transport accessibility to this list, as that is an important aspect in people being able to live sustainably within a larger village setting where employment opportunities may be more limited.
- 2.2.3 As part of developing a spatial strategy, it is clear that development should be allocated in places where there are supporting amenities and facilities, and transport connections, to allow this to be sustainable development. We would also contend that, viewed from the other direction, growth in larger villages with amenities and facilities is imperative to secure the future viability of those amenities and facilities. The local school, the village shop, the doctor's surgery and the local community groups all rely, to a great extent, on the local catchment that they serve.

2.3 VILLAGE FACILITIES AND AMENITIES

- 2.3.1 Empingham meets all of these requirements to a degree that is absent in every other larger village or "Local Service Centre" within the County.
- 2.3.2 The C of E primary school, located just off Main Street, is an active local school with an associated pre-school, "Bright Sparks" which provides for children from 6 months of age and operates Monday to Friday, from 8:00 to 18:00.
- 2.3.3 The village has a well-respected GP surgery. There are also public amenities in the form of allotments and the very large playing field and facilities on Loves Lane, both of which are easily accessed from Exton Road via the public footpath to the rear of the site.
- 2.3.4 Barbara's Store on Church Street is open every day, providing a wide range of goods and service, and is easily visible from the A606. It therefore serves both local and passing trade. The Rutland Hairworks hairdressers is next door to the local store on Church Street. The White Horse public house is on the A606, at the west end of Main Street, and provides meals and rooms, as well as a pub.

- 2.3.5 The parish church of St. Peter is part of the Rutland Water benefice, and has services every other Sunday, as well as specific events to recognise events in the Christian calendar. Empingham Methodist Church is part of the Stamford circuit and has services every Sunday. The Methodist Chapel also hosts a community Post Office every Monday afternoon for the village.
- 2.3.6 Empingham Audit Hall operates as a community facility, providing space for a wide range of events. It is operated under a Trust and is available for booking by local people. It is also the local provision for various meetings, such as Circle Dancing, Dance Fit, Tai Chi, Upholstery Classes and Children's Parties. Other occasional uses include hosting Parish Council Meetings, Rutland County Council Election events, and the Village Garden Produce Show.
- 2.3.7 The cricket and associated social club on Exton Road is an important, and active part of the community, providing both sporting and social activities, including a bar and meeting facilities. The Club is also the location for the bowls club, fishing and other groups. Indeed, we note that there is a plaque on the Bowls Club reading "*Made and donated by the Udale Family 1988*", and there is a further plaque adjacent dedicated to the memory of Colin Udale, who died in 2021.
- 2.3.8 There are a wide range of clubs and societies that are active in the village. The Empingham Life website lists the following, in addition to the organisations mentioned above:
- Empingham Men's Shed
 - Empingham Allotment Association
 - Girl's Night Out
 - Empingham Garden Club
 - Strictly Empingham Dance Classes
 - Empingham Bowls Club
 - Rutland Water Fly Fishers

2.4 SUSTAINABLE ACCESS

- 2.4.1 Empingham lies on the A606 – one of only three significant A class roads in the County, and is the only one of the potential larger, Local Service Centre villages that has this level of accessibility. This allows good access by car to high-capacity routes with little congestion, with proportionate levels of development in Empingham being unlikely to add to existing issues on the highway network. The A606 proximity also facilitates a higher level of bus route provision, with enhanced frequencies compared to other locations.
- 2.4.2 The village is served by five different bus services - albeit that some of these operate a limited service. However, the 9MM operates an hourly service between Oakham and Stamford, providing a reliable and frequent service for a village location. The journeys to Stamford and Oakham take less than 15 minutes from Empingham.

2.5 CONCLUSION

- 2.5.1 Empingham is an extremely sustainable location within the County - indeed, we would contend that it is the most sustainable of all of the larger villages and potential Local Service Centres. It has all of the types of facilities and amenities identified as important for growth by the Council in the previous draft Plan, and actually provides more besides.
- 2.5.2 The opportunity to provide for growth in Empingham is exceptionally good, as further housing, proportionate to the village overall, will be sustainable in its own right, supported by the facilities, amenities and public transport provision, but will also allow modest population growth that will help to support those same facilities, amenities and public transport. This type of virtuous circle planning for rural areas accords with the principles of sustainable villages outlined by Lord Taylor in his “Living Working Countryside” review.

3 THE DOVECOTE SITE, EXTON ROAD

- 3.1.1 The site lies to the north of the village, on the eastern side of Exton Road broadly opposite the Cricket Club. The site itself would be a relatively unremarkable field, which would not feature at all highly in the landscape were it not for the 17th or 18th Century Dovecote that is positioned towards the upper side of the field, at the upper reaches of the slope.

3.2 OWNERSHIP AND PROMOTION

- 3.2.1 The site is in the ownership of one family, and they support the proposed allocation of the site for residential development.

3.3 SITE CONTEXT

- 3.3.1 The site comprises some 6,203 square metres, over a relatively regularly shaped rectangle orientated north-south. The site is shown in context with the wider Empingham settlement and its various land and property parcels below:



Figure 3.1 – Location & Property Parcel Plan

- 3.3.2 The Dovecote can be seen towards the middle of the site, but slightly to the north of the centre. The site slopes upwards from south to north, with a pronounced roll towards to the village.

3.3.3 The plan below provides a more detailed site location plan, taken from OS mapping:

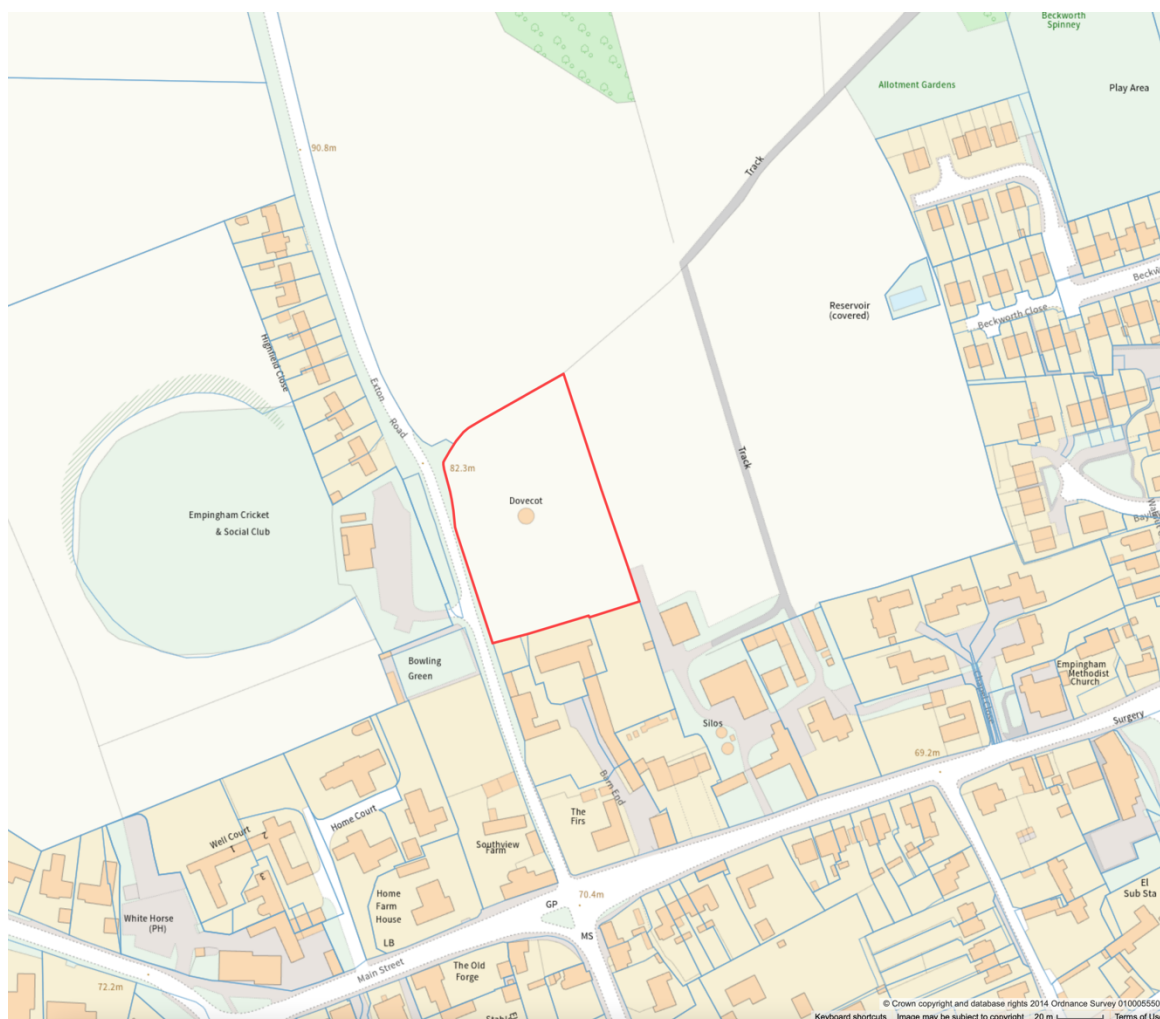


Figure 3.2 – Detailed Site Location Plan

- 3.3.4 This OS extract shows the former farmhouse, now known as “The Firs”, that the Dovecote related to originally. The changes to the former buildings over time, most notably with the construction of the brick built former stable block (now converted to a dwelling) at the northern end of the farmhouse plot, severed the original relationship between the stone-built dovecote and the farmhouse and barns to the south.
- 3.3.5 The Dovecote itself is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and a Listed Building. This makes it of significant heritage interest, and so we have provided additional research and study into this asset in support of the proposed allocation. (Orion Heritage Note at Appendix A to this report).

3.3.6 The key dimensions of the site are shown on the plan below:



Figure 3.3 – Site dimensions

- 3.3.7 The site is currently accessed from Exton Road, through a gateway at the north-west corner of the site. The track into the site is somewhat overgrown at present, as the field has not been in active agricultural use in recent years, as it is both relatively small for farming purposes, and is somewhat compromised in terms of usage by the dovecote in the middle!
- 3.3.8 It is not suitable for modern arable farming, and as far as we can ascertain, the most recent use of the site was as a paddock for horses.

- 3.3.9 The site is not currently serviced by any utilities, although a low voltage overhead power line crosses the southern end of the site, from east to west. This, and the current access and other features, are indicated on the Google Maps aerial photography extract below:

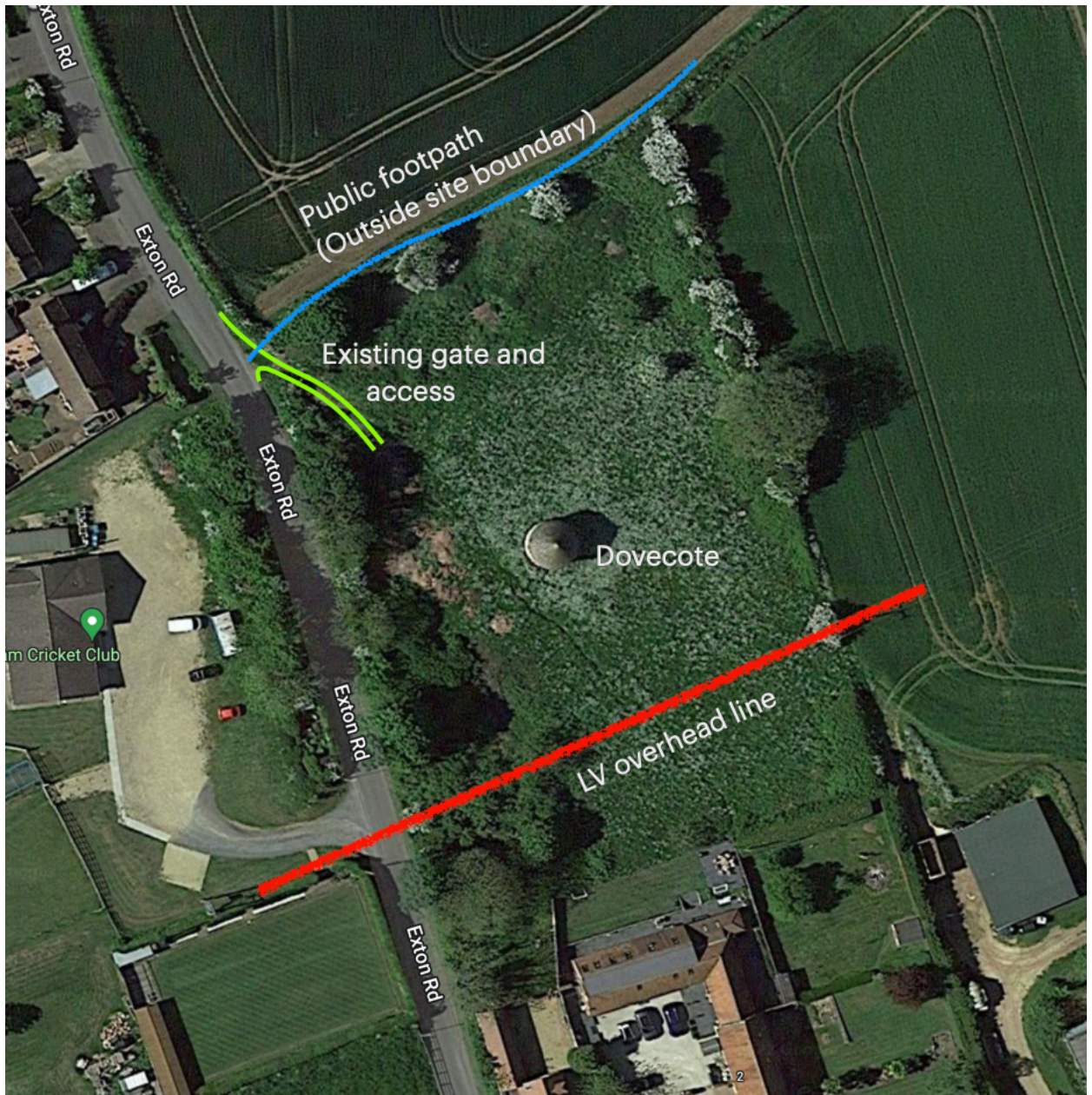


Figure 3.4 – Site constraints and features

4 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

- 4.1.1 The site would be suitable for a small allocation of residential development, consistent with the potential growth aspirations of the village, and the protection and maintenance of the heritage asset.

4.2 OPPORTUNITY TO SECURE THE HERITAGE ASSET

- 4.2.1 The future of the dovecote is a primary objective in promoting the site for development. As an established heritage asset within the village, it is important that it can be secured in perpetuity. The interior of the building is especially striking and the landowners are of the view that the local community should have the opportunity to share and enjoy the building.

- 4.2.2 We note that an article has been published in the June 2022 edition of “Rutland Living” exploring the local dovecotes and their history. Three (including the Exton Road dovecote) are in Rutland, and the article regrettably comments that all of the dovecotes featured are on private property and can only be viewed externally from the nearest public footpath or road. This is unfortunate as, certainly in the case of the Exton Road example, the interior is as fascinating as the exterior is impressive.



- 4.2.3 At present, there is no public access to the building and whilst there are distant views of it from Exton Road and the public footpath to the north it does not prove any direct community benefit.
- 4.2.4 The building is currently in a moderate state of repair but will deteriorate unless both a purpose and a source of funds for its repair and upkeep can be found. It is noted, at this point, that paragraph 200 of the NPPF makes clear that the loss of a monument is to be wholly exceptional, and so the promotion of the site uses this as a guide.
- 4.2.5 It is with this in mind that the landowners wish to promote the site with a view to finding a way to ensure the longevity of the dovecote alongside the provision of proportionate and appropriate housing development for the village.



- 4.2.6 Its importance and relevance are set out comprehensively in the Orion Heritage note attached to this report, but it is the importance and the future of the building that primarily dictates the proposed approach to development. The dovecote sits in a small field, disconnected from a wider agricultural holding, and hence the ability to generate any sort of income from the land is limited.
- 4.2.7 The use of the field as grazing for horses has been the only real viable use for the field in recent years, and this does not generate sufficient income to support the upkeep of the dovecote, and, moreover, does not require the use of the dovecote.
- 4.2.8 The potential to allow some limited and appropriately scaled development on the site therefore creates an important opportunity to seek to secure the future of the dovecote. The residential development on the site, of 12 - 14 homes, would act as “enabling development” to provide a funding scheme to both repair the dovecote and support it in the future. It is proposed that the contribution from development would provide a capital sum, securing the dovecote against the elements and preserving the import architectural aspects, as well as restoring the original fenestration treatments, and would also provide an endowment to allow the building to be both used and maintained in the future.



- 4.2.9 We envisage that the dovecote would become useable again, as a community asset. Placed into a community led trust, the building could then be used for all manner of purposes by the various groups that already exist, and potentially for other purposes yet to be devised. Our ideas have been around its use as a meeting point for local societies, as a social space, as a wedding venue - for photographs, and, potentially for weddings themselves, as a summer tearoom for cyclists and walkers and so on.

- 4.2.10 The dovecote is very close to the essential heart of the village social amenities, which revolve around the cricket and bowls clubs, with their social emphasis that is made available to everyone. It is possible to envisage the dovecote being used in partnership with the existing social club facilities on Exton Road, for example, as a function space suitable for dining, weddings and other functions / village activities.
- 4.2.11 Ultimately this would be for the community to decide, but it would create the possibility for an entirely unique proposition in the village - making use of an important asset that highlights the importance of dovecotes in the history of Rutland.
- 4.2.12 As the scheme is promoted, we will undertake more work on this aspect, and seek to engage with key local stakeholders to ascertain who might have an interest in the building, and how they might use it, flexibly, for a variety of purposes that, together with the repair and endowment funds, would secure it for the future.
- 4.2.13 In the meantime, we would highlight the requirements of NPPF paragraph 201, which sets out the criteria that might lead to a decision to allow the loss of a heritage asset. We consider that the dovecote is not able to meet any of these criteria as it stands, but this does not mean that its loss should be contemplated. Instead, even though the criteria to consider the loss of the asset may be met in the case of the dovecote, the intention is to use a sensitively designed development to secure it for the future instead.

4.3 CAPACITY AND AVAILABILITY

- 4.3.1 The site is immediately available for development, as it has no on-going use at present.
- 4.3.2 A site of c.0.6 hectares would typically be expected to accommodate 18 to 20 dwellings, at a deliverable density of 30 dwellings per hectare. However, we do not consider that this would be appropriate at this location, as the setting of the dovecote means that only part of the site would be developable.
- 4.3.3 An outline site appraisal was undertaken as part of the representations submitted to the previous draft Local Plan process, but this particularly scheme is now being re-assessed in the light of the further work that has been completed on the site.
- 4.3.4 In particular the comprehensive heritage research and site appraisal that has been undertaken will inform the potential configuration of development on the site in detail, but it is clear from this evidence that the northern-western quadrant of the site, in particular, will need to be kept open. The eastern boundary is likely to be less sensitive, as views from the footpath to the north of the site are restricted by both the hedgerow and the topography, meaning that only the roof of the dovecote is visible even when it comes into view. In addition, longer distance views out of into the site to the east have been limited or removed by recent development in this part of the Empingham settlement.
- 4.3.5 This means that development could be located along the eastern boundary of the site, from the south at least as far as the dovecote, and most likely further north without disturbing the setting of the dovecote or the available views of it.
- 4.3.6 The southern end of the site is also, in our view, less sensitive to the setting of the dovecote, in our view. The land rolls down the hill here, meaning that the dovecote stands significantly higher than the land to the south of the site. This means that

development here would be much less intrusive in terms of any effect on the Dovecote.

- 4.3.7 Further heritage and masterplanning work will need to be completed as part of further promotion of the site, and consideration given to the means of access for vehicles, but also on foot or cycle, but at present we envisage a theoretical capacity of 12 - 14 dwellings.

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1.1 The development proposed at Exton Road would directly address core planning objectives by contributing a proportionate number of new houses in the village and by securing the future of the listed and scheduled dovecote on the site. The proposed site at Exton Road is both available and deliverable.
- 5.1.2 The housing need for Rutland should, logically, be spatially located such that it supports growth across the County, and, in respect of the higher tier villages, like Empingham, to also support local facilities and amenities. The quality and diversity of the facilities and amenities that currently exist in Empingham, along with the accessibility of the location, on the A606 and on a number of bus routes, make it both a sustainable location for people to live, but also need a reciprocal consideration to maintain and enhance the population that can support this sustainability into the future.
- 5.1.3 We consider that an option to provide 12 to 14 houses in Empingham would have significant benefits for the Local Plan aspirations, based on the criteria that the Council adopted previously. They would provide for housing in, arguably, the most sustainable and most accessible village in the County, and therefore help to protect and support the many facilities and amenities that already exist in the community.
- 5.1.4 The implications of the COVID virus and the necessary responses to it have re-emphasised for many communities the importance of local facilities in maintaining the resilience of rural and village communities.
- 5.1.5 In addition, as part of the development scheme, the dovecote would be restored and repaired, and it could then be offered to the community as both a heritage and community asset in perpetuity.
- 5.1.6 We expect that the new draft Local Plan will continue the Council's previously stated aspiration regarding its support for the adaption or re-use of redundant listed buildings. Although the dovecote represents an unusual challenge in this respect, and one which requires imagination and creativity, we would encourage the Council to make a positive determination to go on this journey to do something truly remarkable and community focused regarding the future of this important asset.
- 5.1.7 We trust that these representations are clear in respect of the issues that we consider arise with regard to the consideration of this site in respect of the Council's "Call for Sites". We will continue to work to build an evidence base for the Exton Road site and look forward to engaging with the Council in that regard.
- 5.1.8 We would be pleased to provide further clarification of the proposals at any time if that would prove helpful to the Council at this stage.

APPENDIX A - HERITAGE APPRAISAL

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Date: 10th June 2022

To: Robert Grafton, Grafton Spaces Ltd

DOVECOTE SITE, EXTON ROAD, EMPINGHAM HERITAGE ADVICE

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This heritage advice note has been produced to provide initial advice to support promotion of the site in the initial Call for Sites phase of the emerging Rutland Local Plan. It takes into account initial historic research and an in-person examination of the site undertaken on the 25th May 2022.

1.2 The Dovecote is a Grade II listed building (NHLE 1073911) and a Scheduled Monument (NHLE 1016848) dating from the 17th or 18th century.

1.3 In its listing description it is described as follows:

Dovecote. C18. Coursed rubble stone and conical C20 tile roof with ball and weathervane. Circular plan of 3 storeys. On ground floor a door and small opening, then 2 round arched boarded openings on 1st floor facing EW, and 2 similar on 2nd floor facing NS. Scheduled ancient Monument.

1.4 In its listing as a Scheduled Monument it is described as follows:

Reason for Designation

Dovecotes are specialised structures designed for the breeding and keeping of doves as a source of food and as a symbol of high social status. Most surviving examples were built in the period between the 14th and the 17th centuries, although both earlier and later examples are documented. They were generally freestanding structures, square or circular in plan and normally of brick or stone, with nesting boxes built into the internal



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wall. They were frequently sited at manor houses or monasteries. Whilst a relatively common monument class (1500 examples are estimated to survive out of an original population of c.25,000), most will be considered to be of national interest, although the majority will be listed rather than scheduled. They are also generally regarded as an important component of local distinctiveness and character.

The dovecote at Empingham is a well preserved example of a circular stone dovecote which retains its nest boxes. The three storey elevation is unusual in a circular dovecote of this date.

Details

The monument includes the standing and buried remains of a circular stone dovecote, located 170m north east of Exton Road crossroads on rising land behind the village. The dovecote is a Listed Building Grade II of 17th or 18th century origin and is built of well-dressed grey stone. It has three stories and is entered on the ground floor by a square headed door. There are two sets of round headed windows; those on the first floor face east and west and are larger than those on the second floor which face north and south. A protruding slate string course is located close to the top of the walls, immediately beneath the upper windows. The modern conical roof is of wooden shingles with a wooden ball finial. The interior retains its nest boxes, with projecting stone alighting ledges, although no potence survives.

- 1.5 Promotion of the site for the Rutland Local Plan will need to focus on the potential for improvement of the site and its heritage assets, in order to effect positive changes to the Dovecote and to maintain the character and appearance of the Empingham Conservation Area.
- 1.6 Due to the nature of the proposal a degree of 'less than substantial' harm to the Dovecote and Conservation Area will likely be unavoidable. However, this harm can be offset by the benefits afforded to the significance of the asset and its setting through sympathetic repair and re-use, noting that this would need to be funded through some enabling development on the site.

2.0 National Planning Policy

- 2.1 Government policy in relation to the historic environment is outlined in Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), entitled 'Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment'. This provides guidance for planning authorities, property owners, developers and others on the conservation and investigation of heritage assets. Section 16 of the NPPF recognises that intelligently managed change may sometimes be necessary if heritage assets are to be maintained for the long term.
- 2.2 Paragraph 194 states that planning decisions should be based on the significance of the heritage asset, and that the level of detail supplied by an applicant should be proportionate to the importance of the asset and should be no more than sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal upon the significance of that asset.
- 2.3 Paragraph 199 outlines that when considering the potential impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation and that the more important the asset, the greater the

weight should be. This is irrespective as to whether the harm to the significance of the asset is substantial or less than substantial.

- 2.4** In relation to substantial harm to designated heritage assets, para 200 states:
“Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:
- a) Grade II listed buildings, or Grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional;*
 - b) assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional;”*
- 2.5** Paragraph 201 states:
“Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:
- a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and*
 - b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and*
 - c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and*
 - d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.”*
- 2.6** Where the harm to a designated heritage asset’s significance is less than substantial, Paragraph 202 states:
“Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.”
- 2.7** Paragraph 203 requires the decision-maker to take into account the effect on the significance of non-designated heritage assets and to take a balanced judgement having regard to the scale of harm or loss and the significance of the asset(s) potentially affected.

3.0 What is Setting & Significance?

- 3.1** Annex 2 of the NPPF has the following relevant definitions.
- *Significance* The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. This interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting.
 - *Setting* is defined as: The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the

significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.

3.2 Historic England's *The Setting of Heritage Assets: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition)* provides guidance on the management of change within the setting of heritage assets. The document restates the definition of setting as outlined in Annex 2 of the NPPF. Paragraph 9 states

"Setting is not itself a heritage asset, nor a heritage designation, although land comprising a setting may itself be designated (see below Designed settings). Its importance lies in what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset or to the ability to appreciate that significance."

3.3 Setting is described as being a separate term to curtilage, character and context; while it is largely a visual term, setting, and thus the way in which an asset is experienced, can also be affected by noise, vibration, odour and other factors.

3.4 When considering designated heritage asset setting related issues and relevant planning case law, the key points are:

- All heritage assets have a setting, and that setting may contribute to the significance of the asset.
- Change in the setting of a heritage asset may affect that contribution.
- Change (for example visual change) is not in itself an impact on the significance of a heritage asset. An impact will only occur if the change affects the contribution made by setting to overall significance.
- The correct basis for an assessment is therefore an analysis of the significance of the heritage asset, including the contribution made by setting and the impact caused to that significance.
- In cases where only setting is affected, only the portion of significance derived from setting can be affected.
- It cannot be assumed that visual change constitutes an adverse impact or that more visual change will be a greater impact. So, proximity to and intervisibility are not useful criteria *on their own* for the assessment of impact magnitude. What must be understood is how this visual change affects the contribution to significance made by setting before a conclusion can be reached about the magnitude of any impact.
- It cannot be assumed that a more important asset (typically a high-grade designated asset) will experience a greater magnitude of impact. What matters is the extent to which its significance derives from setting and this is unrelated to the importance of the asset.
- Harm in all cases, means 'harm to the significance of a heritage asset'. Where the setting of a heritage asset contributes to its significance, change in that setting may harm the significance of the heritage asset. Policy and law does not recognise separate concepts such as 'harm to the setting' or 'harm to the significance of a setting'.

4.0 Local Policy

- 4.1 The relevant local heritage policy for Rutland is detailed in the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (Adopted July 2011). Policy CS22 – The Historic and Cultural Environment states the following:

“The quality and character of the built and historic environment of Rutland will be conserved and enhanced.

Particular protection will be given to the character and special features of:

- a) Listed buildings and features;*
- b) Conservation areas;*
- c) Scheduled ancient monuments;*
- d) Historic parks and gardens;*
- e) Known and potential archaeological sites.*

All developments, projects and activities will be expected to protect and where possible enhance historic assets and their settings, maintain local distinctiveness and the character of identified features.

Development should respect the historic landscape character and contribute to its conservation, enhancement or restoration, or the creation of appropriate new features.

The adaptive re-use of redundant or functionally obsolete listed buildings or important buildings will be supported where this does not harm their essential character.”

5.0 Consideration of Significance and Setting of Listed and Scheduled Empingham Dovecote

- 5.1 The Dovecote derives significance from the historic and architectural special interest of its built form, as a rare example of an intact round dovecote on a large scale. It is built from finely dressed Lincolnshire limestone which is illustrative of Empingham’s historic development as a model village attached to the Ancaster estate. Along with the church spire, it is the first built feature experienced from an approach along Exton Road, positively contributing to the character of Empingham as a whole. It derives some of its significance from its setting, as its relationship to the open fields on all sides and the farmhouse to its south defines its historic function. Views of the Dovecote from Exton Road and the footpath to the north also contribute to its significance, as its setting on the threshold of the village is a deliberate symbolic choice.

Adaptation of the Dovecote and its Setting

- 5.2 The limestone walls of the Dovecote are in relatively good repair and it is still technically functional, though its significance is negatively impacted by the visible holes in the 20th century roof tiles. It is presently out of use and the interior is filled with soil and green waste, discouraging public engagement with the building. Sensitive development would

retain the historic fabric and undertake necessary works to the roof with the necessary Listed Building Consent to secure the interior from damage from the elements. Repurposing the Dovecote as a community space will prove beneficial to its continued upkeep, and it is recommended that its functional elements, such as the nest-holes, door and windows are retained. Fixing the holes in the roof is a necessary step to maximize public engagement with the Dovecote as a functional building, will be a positive impact on its significance.

- 5.3** The Dovecote's setting on the east side of Exton Road is intentional and strategic. The farming of doves was a refined pursuit of the landed classes, and from the 18th century on it was common for dovecotes to be set in prominent positions at estate thresholds. The roof of Empingham Dovecote is the first built feature encountered along the approach to Empingham along Exton Road, heralding the prestige of Empingham as a prosperous model village within the wider Ancaster estates. At present, this aspect of the Dovecote's setting is harmed by the council housing on the west side of Exton Road which detract from the rural feel of the landscape. The surrounding plot is overgrown with thick trees so the Dovecote is only briefly glimpsed from the existing access on Exton Road.
- 5.4** These negative factors could be ameliorated through sensitive redevelopment. Cutting back the overgrown trees around the plot will improve visibility of the Dovecote from Exton Road and restore it as a local landmark. These trees are protected due to their position within the Conservation Area, and their full removal would constitute a harm. Therefore, rather than the removal of trees, a controlled tree line should be maintained along Exton Road, and further trees may be added within the site to mitigate any loss. Careful placement of the access road will allow a clearer view of the Dovecote from the road, encouraging a more general public awareness of the building. The present gated access to the site is on the north-western side of the plot directly opposite the council housing on Exton Road. A reconsideration of the position of this access has the ability to cut off this undesirable visual corridor, re-emphasizing the relationship between the Dovecote and the open fields to the west of Exton Road.
- 5.5** To further minimize harmful impacts on the Dovecote's setting, the proposed development should avoid encapsulating the asset on all sides. Planning will likely opt to maintain a degree of separation between the new build and the asset to avoid disturbance of any below-ground features, as the asset is a Scheduled Monument and this would incur the need for Scheduled Monument Consent. The installation of a landscape buffer around the Dovecote would allow close appreciation of the built fabric, a major aspect of its significance which is currently partly concealed by vegetation.
- 5.6** The sloping topography to the south of the Dovecote is advantageous, as placement of buildings to the south will reduce their visibility from the important approach along Exton Road. A focus of development to the south of the plot, along with consideration of the height of any proposed buildings, will maintain covisibility of the Dovecote and the Church, as well as broad views into the Conservation Area from the north. Sustained upkeep of vegetation and trees in the surrounding field will also improve the continuity of these views.

- 5.7** At present the site is overgrown and lacks any pathways guiding the experience around the Dovecote's immediate setting. Historically, Dovecotes were often oriented with their doors facing the associated farmstead, so the farmer could keep watch against thieves. The doorway of the Empingham Dovecote faces south toward The Firs, but the building immediately to the south of the site has been extended and re-clad in recent years, and now has a modern appearance which does not relate to the Dovecote. Historic Ordnance Survey mapping shows that there was formerly a footpath connecting the Firs Farmhouse with the access on the north-western corner of the Dovecote plot. This path would have dictated movement around the Dovecote, and stressed the visual pathway between the south doorway of the Dovecote and the farmhouse.
- 5.8** Establishing a key view to and from the south doorway within the masterplan may be a strategy to enhance the Dovecote according to its historic design. Reinstating a pathway to the door will make the function of the building more legible and reinforce its relationship with its setting. The visual experience of the Dovecote seen against rising landscape to the north will also be highlighted, encouraging people to pause and appreciate it within its landscape setting.

Contributions to Character and Appearance of the Conservation Area

- 5.9** The impact of development will require assessment against the Empingham Conservation Area as a whole. There is a need to maintain the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and to balance any harms arising with the benefits of the scheme. The Conservation Area Appraisal draws attention to the approach along Exton Lane as a positive contributor to the Area's rural character, and views into the Conservation Area should be retained as much as possible. The Conservation Area is also defined by sections of green space, and planning should factor in the need for landscape buffers and tree planting within the development.
- 5.10** There is a precedent for modern residential development within the Conservation Area boundary, notably on the north side of Main Street within view of the Dovecote site. The Conservation Area Appraisal notes that some of this residential development has resulted in a loss of character to the Conservation Area, through the introduction of "suburban housing designs and layouts and non-local materials".
- 5.11** To reduce harm to the Conservation Area, new development should utilize appropriate local materials and sympathetic low-density design to reduce loss of character. The choice of materials such as pale limestone and timber window frames will adapt the new development to the character of the Conservation Area and may also reduce any stylistic clash between the new build and the Dovecote.
- 5.12** The site is unlikely to represent a substantial degree of harm to other listed buildings along Main Street due to the degree of separation, site topography and intervening built form. To minimize the degree of less than substantial harm, the height and massing of

new development should be designed to minimize visual impact on neighboring buildings to the south.

6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 Empingham Dovecote is a locally distinctive building with unique architectural and historic qualities. In its current unloved state it retains an inherent charm, but has been reduced to an incidental detail in the wider landscape setting. It is in an obscure and relatively inaccessible location shrouded by unkempt bushes, attracting interest only from immediate locals. Appropriate redevelopment of the site holds the potential to recontextualize it as a landmark of Empingham, set at the threshold between historic landscape and the model estate village. Community engagement is key to securing the Dovecote for future generations and galvanizing new interest in Rutland's built environment.
- 6.2 These positive contributions to the Dovecote and Empingham Conservation Area have the potential to offset the low levels of less than substantial harm arising from the scheme, providing a justification for development.