

**13/01263/FUL, Land to South of Meeting House Close, East Leake.  
Response from East Leake Neighbourhood Plan Project Team**

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East Leake Parish Council has formed a Project Team to produce a Neighbourhood Plan to cover the Neighbourhood Area of the East Leake Parish. The designation of the Neighbourhood Area has been approved by Rushcliffe Borough Council. A vision statement has been drafted and distributed to the residents of the village for comment. See Appendix 3. The Neighbourhood Plan will establish planning principles that take forward the aspirations in the vision under the following headings:

- A viable community (community feel / employment)
- Green environment
- An attractive village centre
- Easier to get around (walking, cycling, wider links)
- Better facilities and services
- Housing for all

The Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to identify specific sites for housing development; however the contents are likely include the following:

- An envelope for built development around East Leake
- A plan for phasing over the whole 15 year planning period the 400 additional homes required by the Borough Council (assuming their proposed core strategy is approved and adopted)
- Specification and prioritisation of infrastructure requirements for the additional housing (including Health Centre, Schools, Sewerage, Car Parking, Village Centre, Transport, etc)
- Target numbers for different housing types/size
- Preferred housing design/styles
- Size of developments (large v small estates)
- Infill v green field developments
- Preferred locations for different types of housing
- Excellent pedestrian and cycle connectivity between existing and new housing areas, and between new housing areas and facilities and employment
- Areas targeted for development to provide employment.

A Community-led plan for East Leake is being developed alongside the Neighbourhood Plan by the East Leake Community Plan Group, which in 2012 surveyed all households in East Leake on a range of issues, including a section on Planning and Housing to inform the Neighbourhood Plan. This section of the survey is attached as Appendix 2, together with the responses analysed from the 38% response rate achieved. We believe that this is important evidence of the villagers' views on the type of housing wanted.

A large tranche of new housing has been built in East Leake in recent years and needs time to become assimilated. In order for East Leake to now develop into a fully rounded and sustainable community rather than a collection of disjointed commuter estates, future developments require thought and probably phasing, along with a prioritised plan for infrastructure development to support the additional population.

Approval of any large developments at this time would pre-empt and undermine the planning processes that are under way, at both the Neighbourhood and Borough levels. The views of the residents should inform future developments in East Leake, not the financial interest of developers in a hurried "first past the post" race.

Workshops facilitated by CABI have been held to assist the Neighbourhood Planning process, and one of the tools used was the Design Council's [Building for life criteria](http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/), see <http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/>. The NP project team group has made a preliminary assessment of the scheme proposed against these criteria. In summary – what is proposed lacks imagination, innovation and distinctiveness, and there are some serious areas of concern. See Appendix 1.

*Note that this response is from the Neighbourhood Plan Project Team, and is offered in addition to the formal response of the Parish Council via its Planning Committee.*

## APPENDIX 1 – ASSESSMENT OF MEETING HOUSE CLOSE PROPOSALS AGAINST BUILDING FOR LIFE CRITERIA

### INTEGRATING INTO THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Criteria	Neighbourhood Plan Group's Comments	Score
<p><b>1. <u>Connections:</u></b> Does the scheme integrate into its surroundings by reinforcing existing connections and creating new ones; whilst also respecting existing buildings and land uses along the boundaries of the development site?</p>	<p>Partially met.</p> <p>The single vehicle access is of concern, as is the increased traffic at the junction of Meeting House Close and Costock Road. This development more than doubles the number of houses served by this one long cul-de-sac. This is exacerbated by significant on-street parking at the lower end of the road.</p> <p>A second entrance/exit onto Mill Lane could improve the scheme, though the impact on existing residents would need to be considered. It would also necessitate adoption of Mill Lane for public vehicular and cycle access</p> <p>There is no official cycle path connection onto Castle Hill at the top end of the site, which would be convenient for cyclists heading towards the proposed new rehabilitation Centre at Stanford Hall, or towards Loughborough and contribute to the cycle routes within the area. Access for mobility scooters and baby buggies should also be provided.</p> <p>The proposed pedestrian connection onto Mill Lane at the top of the site is welcomed, and should be adopted as a public footpath, although it does not appear to be well lit and well overlooked for safety as recommended by the building for life guidelines.</p> <p>Connections with the neighbouring development are not otherwise good, and connections outwards from the existing part of Meeting House Close are already poor.</p>	Amber
<p><b>2. <u>Facilities and Services:</u></b> Does the development provide (or is it close to) community facilities, such as a school, parks, play areas, shops, pubs or cafés?</p>	<p>Not met. There are serious concerns.</p> <p>Primary School provision, as the catchment area school is over capacity at present.</p> <p>The village centre is within walking distance, but not conveniently so, especially for the less mobile (approx ½ mile). This includes the library and Health Centre, the latter in urgent need of replacement/improvement. The Health Centre is already inadequate for the needs of existing residents. There is insufficient parking, both short stay and long stay, in the centre of the village.</p> <p>The foul water sewerage system in the village is already operating at or above its design capacity, and there have been 9 instances of discharge of foul water into the brook in extreme weather conditions during the last year. In our view the upgrading of the system is essential to accommodate additional housing in the village. We have no specialist knowledge to determine whether the existing sewer on Meeting House Close can accommodate a doubling of demand.</p> <p>Whilst the developer claims to meet statutory requirements, the</p>	Red

	amount of PRACTICAL play / green space is minimal. In reality, the area occupied by the balancing pond of doubtful relevance for younger children, and could present a safety hazard. In our view, this proposal provides much less amenity space than the previous version.	
3. <u>Public Transport:</u> Does the scheme have easy access to public transport to help reduce car dependency?	Not met. Although the nearest bus stop is within walking distance, it is understood that this service is likely to be discontinued in 2014. The main No 1 service is ½ mile away on foot – a significant distance. The bus services have their limitations, and need to be improved, e.g. addition of a late evening bus from Loughborough.  There is no defined cycle route from the top end of the scheme.	Red
4. <u>Meeting Local Housing requirements:</u> Does the development have a mix of housing types and tenures that suit local requirements?	Not met. The Community Plan questionnaire (Appendix 2) indicated over 2/3rds requesting smaller houses. Rushcliffe Borough council's assessment of need for market housing indicates 83% as 2 or 3 bedroom properties. This contrasts with around 80% 4-bedroom properties in this proposal. This will create a polarisation in the market v affordable provision, rather than a gradation to create a broad based community. The affordable homes will be easily identifiable, which is not recommended.  There is nothing in the scheme that offers live/work possibilities.  "Affordable housing" is not defined in any detail in the application, and it is not clear if these are homes for rent or part ownership type arrangements. A strategy for this has yet to be developed for East Leake, having regard to the Borough's targets.	Red

## CREATING A PLACE

5. <u>Character:</u> Does the scheme create a place with a locally inspired or otherwise distinctive character?	Partially met.  This is a generic housing development with designs selected seemingly at random from standard ranges. It could be built anywhere. It feels like another anonymous area of standard new suburban housing development. There is no distinctive vision.	Amber
6. <u>Working with the site and its context:</u> Does the scheme take advantage of existing topography, landscape features (including water courses), wildlife habitats, existing buildings, site orientation and microclimates?	Not met. There are several areas of concern.  The site is neighboured in several places by bungalows. Having houses next to them is out of scale and invasive for the residents, especially since the site is higher than most of the adjacent bungalows. This especially applies to The Keep and Castle Hill, as well as 3 Mill Lane.  Castle Hill is an important and pleasant approach road into East Leake with a distinctive style of bungalow on one side of the road, mirrored for much of the length on the other side of the road. Particular concern is that the proposed houses backing onto Castle Hill bungalows will be visible from Castle Hill, i.e. behind and above the bungalows.  Plot 50 appears to have an overbearing impact on 58 Meeting House Close.	Red

	<p>Between East Leake and Costock the valley of the Kingston Brook forms an important rural landscape feature, with ridges to both sides and fields sweeping down to the valley. The value of this feature is recognised in the Greater Nottingham Landscape Character Assessment 2009 (Regional Character Area Nottinghamshire Wolds, DPZ NW01 and NW02). The proposed site would breach the ridge line, albeit adjacent to an existing breach at Mill Lane. However the unbroken stretch of ridge from Mill Lane towards Costock forms part of the “green frame” of the East Leake settled area and should not be curtailed. The ridge line when viewed from most directions will be highly visible from as far away as the opposite ridge. This revised scheme is worse in this respect than the original.</p> <p>Part of the proposed site includes ancient ridge and furrow pasture, a characteristic of the Nottinghamshire Wolds, with the guidelines in the Greater Nottingham Landscape character assessment 2009 recommending conservation. An independent and expert opinion should be sought before planning permission is granted, to assess the importance of this example.</p> <p>The windmill on the site should either be protected so that the site is completely undisturbed, or subject to archaeological examination to determine its historical value before planning permission is granted. Partial restored foundations of the corn mill could become a feature of the park area, or its presence otherwise marked, perhaps in the naming of the park.</p> <p>There is little in the proposal about creating natural habitats such as wild flower areas or water habitats. Planting schemes do not emphasise native species.</p>	
<p><b>7. <u>Creating well defined streets and spaces:</u></b></p> <p>Are buildings designed and positioned with landscaping to define and enhance streets and spaces and are buildings designed to turn street corners well.</p>	<p>Partially met</p> <p>The scheme could be improved in this regard. There does not appear to be a particularly good hierarchy of more major streets/roads and minor ones.</p>	Amber
<p><b>8. <u>Easy to find your way around:</u></b></p> <p>Is the scheme designed to make it easy to find your way around?</p>	<p>Partially met</p> <p>The layout of the streets appears acceptable. Navigation is aided by the nature of the sloping site. However there do not appear to be any landmarks incorporated to improve legibility. Landmark buildings turning corners would assist.</p>	Amber

## STREET AND HOME

<p><b>9. <u>Streets for all:</u></b></p> <p>Are streets designed in a way that encourage low vehicle speeds and allow them to function as social spaces?</p>	<p>Partially met.</p> <p>There is no provision for cyclists. It is difficult to see how the streets will function as social spaces.</p>	Amber
<p><b>10. <u>Car parking:</u></b></p>	<p>Partially met.</p>	Amber

Is resident and visitor parking sufficient and well integrated so that it does not dominate the street?	There is a good allocation of parking spaces per household for residents; however vehicles will dominate the street scene in some areas. The solution is uniform – the guidelines recommend that a variety of different parking arrangements could add interest. Visitor parking could be problematic.	
11. <u>Public and private spaces:</u> Will public and private spaces be clearly defined and designed to be attractive, well managed and safe?	<p>Surveillance does not seem to have been designed in, but most of the public areas are overlooked to some extent by housing.</p> <p>Nothing is included about street/footpath lighting or maintenance of vegetation, which could lead to dark, unsafe areas. No management plan is included.</p> <p>No play equipment is proposed, and a contribution to upgrading the play equipment in the centre of the village should be explored with the local community.</p>	Amber
12. <u>External storage and amenity space:</u> Is there adequate external storage space for bins and recycling as well as vehicles and cycles?	<p>Not met.</p> <p>There is no detail about bin storage, but it would appear that there are quite long bin journeys from backs of buildings to streets in the affordable housing – this could lead to bins being left on the street. There is no cycle storage for the houses without garages, or anywhere to store garden equipment etc. Garages do not appear to be large enough for both cars and cycles.</p>	Red

## APPENDIX 2 – RELEVANT SECTION OF COMMUNITY PLAN QUESTIONNAIRE

**9. Planning and Housing** - In this section, we'd like to find out what you think about planning and housing in East Leake.

THE RUSHCLIFFE CORE STRATEGY REQUIRES THAT AT LEAST 400 NEW HOMES ARE BUILT IN EAST LEAKE DURING THE NEXT 15 YEARS

We cannot change the 'Core Strategy' which is based on Central Government requirements, BUT if the Parish Council instigate a 'Neighbourhood Plan' the community can have its say on HOW, WHERE, WHEN, WHAT TYPE and also other planning issues such as employment opportunities in the village, village services, transport, village centre layout and design.

U. Please rank the need to build the following housing types within East Leake.	High				Low			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
U1. Large executive houses with 4 or more bedrooms.	8%	11%	14%	67%				
U2. Smaller 3-4 bedroomed houses including semi-detached.	31%	34%	16%	18%				
U3. Homes and apartments suitable for smaller families and single people.	41%	28%	15%	16%				
U4. Bungalows.	32%	30%	18%	21%				
U5. Sheltered Accommodation.	25%	25%	17%	34%				

V. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about housing development in East Leake?	Strongly Agree					No Opinion				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
V1. I am happy with the styles, designs and types of homes in East Leake.	8%	64%	21%	7%						
V2. New housing should be provided in large estates.	32%	30%	20%	19%						
V3. The building of the proposed 400 new homes should be phased in over the next 13 years.	30%	44%	9%	17%						
V4. Following the development of these 400 new homes, East Leake should continue to expand further.	4%	8%	27%	61%						
V5. Priority should be given to the re-development of existing built areas.	35%	53%	8%	4%						
V6. Development on greenfield land surrounding the present built areas of the village is the best option.	3%	12%	26%	59%						
V7. Housing should be located within easy reach by foot to the village centre and public transport.	26%	61%	8%	5%						

## 9. Planning and Housing - Tell us what you think about planning and housing in East Leake (cont...)

W. There are financial incentives for the village which come with new housing development. If we could influence where this money should be allocated, rank the following in order of priority.	High		Low	
	1	2	3	4
W1. Building a new health centre.	73%	14%	6%	7%
W2. Providing more car parking within the village centre.	32%	30%	20%	19%
W3. Maintaining our local village environment (e.g. litter picking, keeping the brooks clean etc.)	57%	31%	9%	3%
W4. Improving our local transport links.	40%	36%	17%	7%
W5. Refurbishing the playground facilities within East Leake.	24%	32%	29%	15%
W6. Building a large hall/entertainments venue.	12%	19%	27%	41%
W7. Making our village look more attractive.	31%	34%	24%	10%
W8. Extending our primary schools.	36%	28%	21%	15%
W9. Other (please specify):				

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## East Leake Neighbourhood Plan: Draft Vision

### Introduction

East Leake is a rural village in south Nottinghamshire, set in a green hollow surrounded by hills. The built area is divided through the centre by a green wedge, the result of the Kingston Brook and its associated floodplain. Over the last half century, it has grown rapidly from being a linear village at the junction of roads that emanate north, south, south-west, east and west, to being a much larger settlement of some 6000 people. It is very well connected to the rest of the East Midlands region and beyond, being close to Loughborough, Nottingham, Derby and Leicester, and having motorway, rail and airport links within a few miles of the village.



East Leake set in a green hollow...

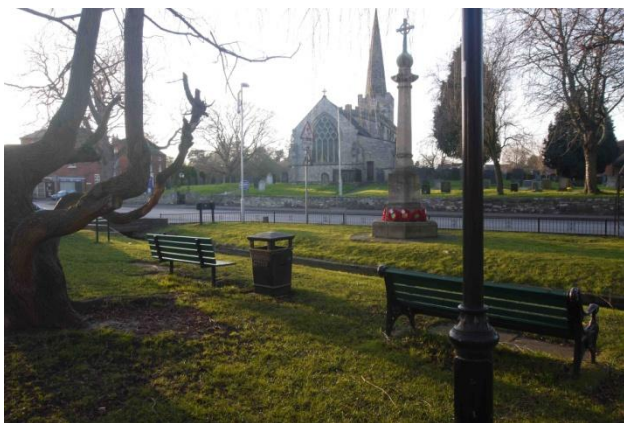


...surrounded by hills

East Leake is largely self-contained and acts as a hub for surrounding smaller villages. It has a historic centre at one end of Main Street and a contrasting, more modern shopping centre at the other. There are a wide range of services and a good selection of shops in the village, plus considerable employment, especially at British Gypsum.

### Why we need a vision

This vision is our aspiration for shaping East Leake over the next 15 – 20 years, by setting goals that are both realistic and achievable. We believe we need a vision to ensure that East Leake develops in the way the community wants, for the benefit of all.



St Mary's Church commenced in the 11<sup>th</sup> century



Sheepwash Brook on Brookside



## **Our vision**

**A viable community.** We wish to maintain the character of East Leake as a place with a strong sense of community, supporting a wide range of facilities and services. We aim to enhance local employment opportunities, in particular improving facilities for start-up businesses.

**Maintaining the green environment.** We wish to conserve and enhance the rural character of the village, and to preserve the ring of green undeveloped hills surrounding the village. Further, we intend to exploit and enhance the network of informal green spaces within the village, so that they support attractive pedestrian and cycle routes connecting the different parts of the village.



Green wedge dividing the village



Shopping centre

**An attractive village centre.** We are concerned that at present the shopping centre is something of a muddle; we will endeavour to improve the quality of the entire public realm in the village centre by making it more pedestrian-friendly and safer, resolving parking problems, reducing traffic dominance and radically improving the quality of building design and materials. We will also encourage retention and widening of the range of shops and facilities that serve the needs of the community.

**Easier to get around.** We will seek to improve connections between the different parts of the village, and out into the countryside beyond, for both pedestrians and cyclists; in particular we want all new developments to enhance the network of routes within the village. We will press for improvements to public and community transport links with facilities and transport interchanges outside the village.

**Better facilities and services.** We believe that the capacity of essential services such as health, education and drainage should be increased in step with any new developments within East Leake and surrounding smaller villages, and will press hard for this. Further, we wish to improve facilities for young people, and in particular provide more activities for teenagers



Georgian house in Station Road



New private housing at Osier Fields

**Housing for all.** We are concerned that recent new housing developments have been mainly targeted at well-off families; our aim is to maintain the diversity of the village population by ensuring that new housing is provided for young people, lower income families and older people. We will restrict new housing to sites within walking distance of the village centre, and will ensure that its character is sympathetic to the local tradition in terms of materials and scale. We will encourage smaller scale housing developments on infill sites in preference to large-scale estates on green field sites. We will encourage and support improvements in the quality and energy efficiency of older housing.