PINEWOOD PARISH COUNCIL’S RESPONSE TO FOLLOWING PLANNING APPLICATIONS:-

**B/14/01375 - Change of use of Belstead House to provide 4 dwellings: Conversion of dining hall form 1 dwelling; Conversion and extension of thatched barn to dwelling: Demolition of prefabricated classroom building; Erection of 13 dwellings together with alterations to access, formation of parking areas and associated landscaping works.**

Whilst Pinewood Parish Council has no objection to the redevelopment of Belstead House as mentioned above, we would request this only be granted on condition that the access via Sprites Lane (a restricted byway, number 44) is limited to the residents/visitors of the above dwellings, residents of Sprites Lane and those accessing the Bridge School.

The description of Sprites Lane is misleading. In paragraph 4.3 p5 of the Travel Plan Sprites Lane is described as ‘a restricted byway at the entrance to the site’. However in paragraph 4.7 page 5 it is described as’ would fall under the category of an up to 6.1 m UAP4 carriageway (High Street), the smallest urban road.’ The Oxford Dictionary describes a byway as ‘a road or track not following a main [route](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/route#route__5); a minor road or path’. The description of Sprites Lane as a byway better describes the majority of the Lane. The Travel Plan seems to be confused as to the classification of the Lane. The assumption that Sprites lane has capacity of 750 vehicles per hour either way does not apply to a byway.

The statement on page 5 ‘this access has been in use by the Conference Centre for over 50 years for access by vehicles servicing the premises (including delivery vehicles, catering vehicles, etc.) without any access difficulties’ would also be contradicted by residents who used the area.

The developers’ describe the Belstead House site as a Conference Centre (Town and Country Planning Use Class C2) on page 3 of the Travel Plan. This may be useful as a head line description but does not describe its actual use. It was used for residential and day courses by Suffolk County Council and community education courses. Its use was sometimes sporadic and had considerably decreased towards its eventual closure at the end of 2012.

The description of the usage of the building on P4 has no evidence to back it up and is not supported by the experience of residents in Pinewood.

‘*The principal business of Belstead House is conferences and various training courses and the centre has hosted residential courses virtually every weekend as well as on week days throughout the year. In 1999 the buildings had been in educational use for over 50 years. Week day conferences and courses were arranged by the County Council and also by other organisations. These have attracted up to approximately 200 delegates with associated car parking provision. It is anticipated that the week day activities led to peak hour vehicle generation of approximately 150 vehicular movements in the morning peak hour and similar number in the evening peak hour. People that attend the activities come from all over the County and further afield and invariably arrived as a single occupant of private motor cars or by taxi. Delegates from Ipswich also arrived by using bus transport‘p4*

The developer overstates the use of Belstead House as a ‘Conference Centre’. In describing the use of Belstead House the developer gives the impression that it was always used to capacity – this is not so. Many weekend courses were for subjects such as water colouring/poetry/drawing – these were not for 200 people at a time.

The Travel Plan also states that due to lack of information from Suffolk County Council, “It was therefore decided to use the trip rates produced by another consultant in regards to the proposed development of a conference centre in Plymouth.’ They have provided no evidence which explains why a centre in Plymouth can be used as an adequate comparison. They have not stated which centre is being used as a comparison so that others can comment on the validity of their comparison.

The data collected and used by the travel plan does not provide an adequate baseline from which to decide how the development will impact on local traffic. The data was collected outside of term times and uses a peak time of 5pm to 6pm. The two main sources of traffic within the area close to the site are i) The Bridge School in Sprites Lane, and ii) Suffolk One. Using a data collection period when both are closed and a peak time which is outside of their daily operating time invalidates the accuracy of the data collected.

The Bridge School and Suffolk One have to implement traffic management measures during peak periods of operation.

In appendix G of the Travel Plan the developer puts forward a plan to improve Sprites Lane. This improvement is inadequate as traffic entering the new system will not be able to see traffic entering the system at the opposite end. If more than two cars entered the system from either end the lay-bys would not be sufficient resulting in the road layout being ineffective. Traffic using local roads to access Belstead Houses for courses held there would have been travelling against the flow of most peak time traffic.

Recently the Bridge School has doubled in size and already the school has to dedicate staff each day to physically manage the traffic accessing the school at the beginning and at the end of the school day. Any further significant traffic usage of this lane will cause major congestion.

The applicant’s revised proposal for the improvement of Sprites Lane to safely accommodate vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists is considered unsuitable by Suffolk County Council in their response to this application because of the restrictions of the available corridor width. As Sprites Lane cannot be brought up to an adoptable standard in accordance with the Suffolk Design Code we feel this again makes it unsuitable for high volumes of traffic, cyclists and pedestrians. This is a very popular and well used public right of way taking residents who are walking out into the wider countryside; with no footpaths this would become dangerous for the walkerif the levels of traffic were increased significantly.

**B/14/01377 – Outline – Residential development for the provision of 155 dwellings and 65 bedroom care home.**

Pinewood Parish Council wishes to object to this application for the following reasons:-

* This development is not part of the Babergh Local Plan 2011 – 2031 as defined in CS2 and CS7 and map C. The Ipswich fringe that is included in the local plan does not include this particular location. Therefore this site has not been the subject of proper consultation through any local plan process.
Page 45 of the Core Strategy when referring to South West Ipswich Fringe states that the development of the area “needs to be considered and planned with the local communities and refers to the development of a “Master plan”. This is surely essential NOW – no decision on this development, the Wolsey Grange development and other development proposals, should be taken until a comprehensive review of the cumulative effect on the South West Ipswich Fringe including Pinewood has been undertaken. Factors such as traffic congestion on the A12 and A14, A1214 and local roads, loss of green space and recreational areas, pressure on local medical services are all things which should be included.
* Had it been included in the plan, we still believe the proposed development is a direct contravention to the policies as set out in the plan. The proposal for 155 houses in an area approx. 14.1 acres is in complete contrast to the adjacent Pinebrook housing area which has 196 houses in approx. 25 acres, in real terms the proposed estate will have approximately 60% of the Pinebrook numbers in 50% of the area; doubling the density of housing. This is not in keeping with the local plan.
* The proposed development by virtue of its size, scale and type is against Policy CS20 as nowhere in the Design and Access Statement does it give sufficient evidence to prove that there is an identified local need for this type of development from either a housing needs survey or agreed in advance by the District Council.
* Babergh’s own planning policy states preference should be given to Brownfield sites. This location certainly does not meet that requirement and the local need certainly is not to a level which should require the building on Greenfield sites.
* 2.2.2.5 of the local plan states that the most important consideration when planning growth is the provision or improvement of the necessary infrastructure to ensure that proposed development does not impose a burden on the existing community. The roads in our locality are already suffering from congestion and overload and we question the overriding conclusion of the developer that the traffic effect will be minimal.
* ‘Pinebrook’, a residential area comprising of 196 dwellings is currently a cul-de-sac estate with Cottingham Road the only access route in/out for all but a few houses at the top end of the road.

Cottingham Road by nature of its design, a winding steep road with no more than 100 -125 metres visibility in any one direction is not designed to take large volumes of traffic. With part of the road already lined to allow the safe flow of the existing traffic any increase in the traffic as a result of this development will need the length of Cottingham Road lined which will be to the detriment of the houses that face onto this road who will lose valuable amenity when visitors are not able to park.

The transport assessment/travel plan is not representative of the area as the figures were collected on 23 & 24 July 2015 when the number of car movements were lower than normal as the survey was undertaken during the school summer holidays. Consideration of the following was not taken into account:-

* The Bridge School Secondary School in Sprites Lane was closed and the Primary Department was not yet opened.
* Suffolk One was closed. There are a large number of buses that visit the college each day in the morning and the afternoon which haven’t been included in the report.
* East Bergholt High School was closed and as Pinewood is a catchment area for this school there are two buses stopping on Shepherd Drive twice daily often causing a backlog of traffic.
* The other local area catchment schools (Gusford, Sprites and Chantry Academy) were closed on these dates therefore the traffic was reduced.
* St Joseph’s College was also closed.

**The data collected and used by the travel plan therefore does not provide an adequate baseline from which to decide how the development will impact on local traffic at its busiest times. This surely demonstrates the inaccuracy and total inadequacy of the data gathered to formulate the Travel Plan. In order to gather reliable data this survey must be done again within term time before any decision making.**

The travel plan does not show the difficulty that is currently experienced by residents when leaving the Pinebrook area as the only routes from Cottingham Road are by filtering onto Scrivener Drive or along Ward Road out onto Shepherd Drive. Both Scrivener Drive and Shepherd Drive are locations already grid-locked at peak times and with no traffic management i.e. traffic signals, traffic lights or roundabouts at the Cottingham Road/Scrivener Junction or the Ward Road/Shepherd Drive junctions it is very difficult for motorists to enter and exit. During peak times it is almost impossible to turn right onto either Scrivener Drive or Shepherd Drive.

‘Pinebrook’ residents are not the only residents who will be affected – all Pinewood residents will be affected by more traffic between Sprites Lane and the Copdock Interchange Retail Park roundabout.

The proposed development of a further 155 dwellings and a 65 bed care home will increase the traffic adding still further and we consider this is in contravention of the Suffolk Design Guide County Highways Policy as follows which states:-

Section 3.3.38 Major access roads serving more than 150 up to 300 dwellings:-
a) Two points of access should be provided to the part of the site being served and the road layout should conveniently connect those points of access.
b) Where only one point of access is available the road layout should form a circuit and there should be the shortest practicable connection between the circuit and point of access. This should form the stem of the T-junction usually with a local distributor road.

Section 3.3.9 From the point of safety and the need to consider access in emergencies, not more than 150 dwellings will normally be served by a single means of access.

In addition to the above no allowance has been made for traffic that has/will be generated as a result of the following:-

* The Ipswich Veterinary Centre which opened in September 2015.
* The Bridge School Primary Department has since opened in September 2015.
* Aldi to be built over the coming months
* Proposed Wolsey Grange which will impact at both ends of Scrivener Drive.
* There is also the land at present owned by Fred Olsen which at some time in the future will have some commercial/business use.
* There is no projected traffic information for the proposed care home.
* The detrimental impact upon the amenity of both Pinewood residents and Ipswich Borough residents through the introduction of a large scale development in this countryside location through the loss of meadow significantly impacts upon open space provision and the ecological network. Belstead Brook Park is an open space frequented daily by large numbers of ramblers and dog walkers all year round. The area has a footpath across the proposed development site which has been in use since the houses were first built in 1984 and there is no clear evidence that this will be retained. By right of use over a period of some 21 years we consider this public footpath should be retained in its present location. The law is now set out in section 31 of the Highways Act 1980, which says that if a route is enjoyed by the public for 20 years or more, as of right and without interruption, the path is “to be deemed to have been dedicated as a highway”.

Information boards have been put up to encourage people to use the area. The educational perspective of this important environment will be removed should such a large development take place and completely undermine the good work conducted over several years by local community groups.

* The detrimental impact upon the biodiversity interests of the site; the loss of habitat for flora, fauna animals and species etc., Wildlife habitat reduction is of serious concern. Already highlighted in the surveys for the site are possible nesting sites for bats (a species known to be in decline). Other animals regularly seen include: deer, foxes, squirrels, birds of prey, owls, herons, mice, frogs and newts. Although some of the green areas will remain, such a dramatic and extensive reduction will cause irreversible effects on the local wildlife structure and ecosystem.
* Proposal results in significant levels of tree felling, with no satisfactory replacement tree planting scheme in place.
* The flood Risk has not been adequately assessed and the associated detrimental effect on the water course such as Belstead Brook.
* The impact on the local doctor’s surgery from a development that is to be predominantly for the elderly will put a strain on services and there is no information on how the local surgery is to cope.
* The Pinewood doctor’s surgery in the Travel Plan is shown to be within walking/cycling distance. Elderly people are not likely to do either if feeling unwell.
* The Surgery car park already struggles to cope and there is little adjacent on street parking because of double yellow lines having to be introduced because of parking problems caused by students from Suffolk One.
* The Travel plan states that the proposed development is only 400M from a bus route. This would not apply to the extremities of the development. As a number of the residents will be elderly a shorter distance would be required and again is not met.
* The information given by the developer about the number 13 bus operated by Ipswich Buses is incorrect. The developer overstates the availability of public transport at certain times. The number 13 does not run every 12 minutes throughout the day. Early morning use between 05.55 and 8.10 varies between 15 and 30 minutes and after 18.40 buses run only every 30 minutes.
* With the proposed care home located very near to the brook, very vulnerable people will suffer most from the noise and pollution from the Copdock Interchange and the roads feeding into it.

In view of all of the above points raised, Pinewood Parish Council objects to this application.