

North of Marrottps Way GNLP0287 – Unreasonable Site

These representations have been produced by Cheffins Planning on behalf of William Young in relation to the decision by the Greater Norwich Development Plan team to consider that Land to the North of Marriotts Way – Ref GNLP0287 (Residential development of approx. 250 houses and 2.35ha of public open space for recreation and leisure) was an unacceptable option for development. The justification for the rejection of this site was on the basis that *"This site is not considered to be suitable for allocation as it is located on the western edge of the town, less centrally placed than the preferred and reasonable alternative sites. The site appears to be significantly constrained if there is a requirement to cross the Marriotts Way which is a County Wildlife Site and green infrastructure asset"*.

In rejecting this site, which totals an area of this 12.85ha, there are concerns that the Development Plan team has failed to assess and understand the significant community and environmental benefits which could arise from this site, as well as the ability to provide 33% affordable housing and 5% custom build development as sought by Policy 5 of the emerging plan. As detailed in the illustrative masterplan produced to accompany these representations the scale of development is significantly less than that stated at circa 125 dwellings as opposed to the 250 dwellings. In addition, the development will provide for a fully serviced site for a health facility. This will be provided to the north west of the main access road into the development. This could provide for the replacement of one of Alysham's doctors surgeries, a new dentist or similar type of facility. The site promoter is also committed to providing contributions to fund a new all-weather pitch to complement the sports facilities located to the south west of the site. As a result of the proposed development being significantly different to that put forward it is recommended that the site is re-assessed with the HELAA detailing the new scoring.

It is recognised that the Council has stated that *"The site appears to be significantly constrained if there is a requirement to cross the Marriotts Way which is a County Wildlife Site and green infrastructure asset"*. As can be seen from the illustrative masterplan a single point of access is to be provided across the Marriotts Way. The proposed access will form a northwards extension of the road which already serves both Alysham Football Club and the recently completed Woodgate Way development. The provision of this single point of access across the Marriotts Way will be designed to minimise the impact of this access on the cyclists and pedestrians using this route. This will include appropriate signage and traffic calming to ensure that users of the Marriotts Way have priority over vehicles accessing the proposed development. A separate pedestrian/cycle route is also proposed from the centre of the scheme providing access to both the Marriotts Way but also Liz Jones Way in the adjacent housing development. Further pedestrian and cycle links are proposed to the north of the development onto an upgraded footpath and cycle link. This will provide a viable alternative to the private car to access Alysham it will also create an alternative to Marriotts Way, reducing pressure on this route.

The site clearly represents a logical extension to the existing built development in Alysham being bordered to the south and east by existing residential development and sports facilities to the south west. The site also has excellent links to the existing footpath network, whilst, the Marriotts Way provides both short and long-distance cycle opportunities. This is clearly one of the sustainability credentials associated with this site.

It is recognised that the Marriotts Way is a County Wildlife Site and the design of the scheme has sought to both protect and enhance this. As can be seen from the illustrative masterplan a significant amount of landscaping is provided adjacent to the CWS and this will be designed to enhance the bio-diversity of the CWS. Landscaping is also provided on the western and northern boundaries providing appropriate wildlife corridors and links from the site to the open countryside. These areas of planting will be managed to ensure that their bio-diversity credentials are maximised.

A further significant benefit arising from this development is the proposition to manage the triangular shaped parcel of land to the west of the access road for nature conservation. It is also

likely that surface water attenuation ponds will be provided in this area, providing further biodiversity benefits. The site owners are committed to working with local wildlife trusts to ensure that appropriate planting is used and habitats created in this area.

In addition, to the proposed enhancements to the football club, informal public open space is provided on the southern boundary of the proposed housing adjacent to the planting and habitat enhancements associated with the Marriotts Way.

The site is clearly within both cycling and walking distance of John O'Gaunt Primary and Bure Valley Schools, with the Marriotts Way offering a safe off-road route to enable access to these facilities. These schools are located 0.9 miles from the proposed development site. The site is also located only a kilometre from Alysham town centre, which is within an acceptable distance for both walking and cycling. The above distances compare favourably with the 325-350 dwellings proposed allocation (GNLP0311, GNLP0595 & GNLP2060). It is contended that my client site represents a more logical extension to existing development than the reasonable alternative GNLP0336 and clearly does not have the access constraints associated with both GNLP0336 and GNLP0596. The site GNLP0287 is located a similar distance from Alysham Town centre when compared with (GNLP0311, GNLP0595 & GNLP2060).

Whilst also dealt with in the representations made in relation to the consultation Local Plan there are questions as to whether the level of growth being directed to Alysham is appropriate. When comparing the level of growth with other towns the figures appear very low with 745 and 625 dwellings proposed for Diss and Harleston respectively, whilst only 521 dwellings are proposed for Alysham. However, the above figure needs to be treated with caution as 225 dwellings of the 525 figure represents existing commitments with only 300 dwellings being provided. The 225 dwellings are largely complete. This is an exceptionally low figure for what is the largest town in Broadland District, which can accommodate significant levels of development without an adverse impact upon the environment. The increase in population will also aid the vitality and viability of local services and facilities. The site GNLP0287 is responding to this growth with enhancements to health care facilities as well as sports facilities. Unlike, other locations within Broadland it is apparent that there is a realistic prospect of development within Alysham being delivered early on in the plan period. It is also apparent that the figure of 14% of total housing growth being targeted towards main towns is rather low when compared with the higher level of delivery associated with such settlements.

Whilst it is recommended that the revised development is re-assessed within the HELAA table there are concerns as to why my client's site has been rejected especially when it has the lowest number of amber scores than any of the other sites considered. In all of the sites assessed the access arrangements are amber. As detailed above there are clear benefits which arise from the site with considerable habitat enhancement proposed to offset the limited harm from crossing the Marriotts Way. The distance from services is questioned and it is arguably little different to the preferred sites. GNLP0287 does not have the transport and highway issues associated with the preferred site, with GNLP2060 having significant adverse transport and highway impacts. GNLP0287 more importantly is not at risk of flooding. In reading the Stage 6 Detailed Site Assessment the actual comments made do not support the rejection of this site. The comments made regarding sites GNLP0311, 0595 and 2060 are not wholly positive and despite none of these sites not actually offering to provide a primary school, this appears to have been the subsequent justification for allocating these sites. However, due to size of the allocation (300 dwellings) and a primary school there are questions as to the density of development which will be needed to be provided to achieve the 300 dwelling figure due to relatively small size of the combined sites.

Whilst, it is stated that the decision to allocate this site *"...is partly based on the sites' ability to provide a school site"*. Such an assessment should have been made in connection with all of the sites put forward and the need for a school has unquestionably created a bias in the assessment process. This has resulted in less constrained and suitable sites being discounted. It is apparent that GNLP0267 is capable of providing a site for a school as well as 125 dwellings at a much lower density than that associated with the preferred site. However, this option has not been explored. Other

sites are also proposing other benefits instead of a school and these benefits should also be properly considered.

In conclusion, in contrast with the preferred site and reasonable alternatives the development of this site has the potential to deliver circa 125 dwellings, with policy compliant levels of affordable and custom build housing. The site owners are committed to improving the facilities at Alslyham Town Football Club with the provision of an all-weather pitch. The potential impact on the Marriotts Way County Wildlife Site has been recognised with the development proposals seeking to extend the wildlife site to the north, with an additional circa 2.5 hectares of the site (triangular parcel of land to the north west of the access road) providing for the enlargement of existing habitats and the creation of new habitats. The scheme is also looking to enhance the pedestrian and cycle route on the northern site boundary to allow a viable alternative to the Marriotts Way to access Alysham. Finally, the site owners are committed to providing a health care facility within the development and are currently in discussions with health providers to understand whether they would be interested in such a facility and their accommodation needs. This facility will assist in meeting the needs of the growing population and accord with the objectives of the neighbourhood plan which is seeking improvements in health and care facilities.

In view of the above it is contended that the Council should reconsider their rejection of this site, reassess it based on a mixed use comprising 125 dwellings and a medical centre and recognise the benefits that it could bring. Furthermore, they should look to allocate additional housing in Alysham in recognition of the benefits that additional housing will bring to the vitality and viability of local services and which will have a much greater chance of being delivered early on in the plan period.