

5. Please give details of why you consider the Local Plan is not legally compliant or is unsound or fails to comply with the duty to co-operate. Please be as precise as possible.

Introduction

On behalf of Lovell Partnerships Limited (Lovell), Reepham High School and the landowner (Robert & Rita Buxton), we strongly support carrying forward the existing allocation of REP1, Land off Broomhill Lane, Reepham, subject to various amendments. The site is, subject to the changes sought, entirely deliverable, and capable of making a significant contribution towards satisfying the Councils' housing needs during the period to 2038.

Whilst in principle Policy REP 1 is considered to be sound, in accordance with the tests set out in paragraph 35 of the NPPF, the detailed wording is unsound as elements are not effective or justified. More specifically, the red line boundary of the allocation, and the quantum of development envisaged, does not represent the optimum development solution for the site, which is reflected in the live planning applications that have been submitted on the site and are currently awaiting determination – see below for further detail.

Minor alterations to Policy REP1 are therefore sought, to ensure its soundness.

Background – Existing Allocation

The site is currently allocated under Policy REP1 of the Broadland Site Allocations Development Plan Document (SADPD), 2016. Policy REP1 allocates the site for residential development and community facilities (including cemetery land, recreational open space and a Sports Hall), alongside 100 – 120 dwellings. The following guidelines for development are included in REP1: need for a Transport Assessment; realignment and improvement work to Broomhill Lane; off-site highway works, where necessary; adequate landscaping and Green Infrastructure; SuDS provided; mix of housing sizes and types; provision of sports hall in close proximity to the High School; and, provision of extension to the cemetery.

Current Site Progress

As set out in the Regulation 18(C) Representation (<https://gnlp.oc2.uk/document/reps/15674>), despite the site's current allocation, no development has yet come forward on the site. This is, in part, due to the fact that, from an operational perspective, locating the Sports Hall on the site emerged as being impractical for Reepham High School's daily operations. Consequently, ongoing discussions have been held over the past years regarding bringing development forward on the site which is optimal for all parties involved.

Through these discussions, it emerged that Reepham High School were eager to pursue the provision of a Sports Hall to the south of the school, on part of the existing sports pitches, which are surplus to requirements. From an operational point of view, this location is in much closer proximity to the school's existing facilities, enabling the Sports Hall to be run in an operationally efficient manner. This will ensure that the Sports Hall is adjacent to the principal sports pitches at the school, assisting in timetabling and student access, alongside ensuring that classroom based teaching is adjacent to the sports pitch provision.

In addition to the above, the location of the Sports Hall to the south of the existing school enables access to be easily achieved from the school's existing car park, which both avoids the requirement for large areas of hardstanding to be created, and allows for community use of the sports hall outside of school hours. More specifically, locating the Sports Hall to the south of the school will enable use of the Sports Hall by the local community, without creating any safeguarding or security issue within the school ground.

In addition, as detailed above, the relocation of the Sports Hall will allow the development of more residential units within the boundary of the existing allocation. The increased number of residential units will, in part, help subsidise the development of the sports hall.

As a result of the collaboration between Lovell and Reepham High School, full planning applications have been submitted for the erection of a Sports Hall on land to the south of the school (reference 20201183), residential development of 141 dwellings (reference 20200847) across the whole of site REP1, and improvements to Broomhill Lane (reference 20200469) to widen the carriageway and provide the necessary visibility at the Broomhill Lane junction, all of which are currently being considered by Broadland District Council, and it is hoped will be determined positively in the next 3-6 months.

It is considered that the above strategy represents the optimum solution for the site, ensuring that the Sports Hall is delivered in the best location to meet the needs of the High School and wider community, whilst maximising the ability of the site to contribute to meeting local housing need.

Confirmation of Deliverability

Suitable

Reepham is identified in Policy 7.3 of the Regulation 19 Publication as a Key Service Centre, as it provides a location which has a good range of services and amenities to support day to day life whilst also providing access to public transport and employment opportunities. These services include a high school, primary school, shop, doctor's surgery, village hall, library, and public houses as well as a range of employment opportunities. Accordingly, Reepham is a suitable location for growth. Given that REP1 and REP2 have not been developed, the draft GNLP seeks to carry both allocations forward, and does not propose any new allocations.

Given the suitability of Reepham, carrying forward the site's existing allocation, with a small increase in the quantum of development envisaged, will help achieve the GNLP's aspirations of focusing growth in locations with access to jobs and services, whilst supporting a vibrant rural economy.

The site is currently allocated under Policy REP1 of the Adopted Development Plan, and the principle of residential development here has therefore already been established as entirely suitable.

The current planning application (20200847), which is accompanied by a suite of technical information, demonstrates that 141 dwellings can be accommodated on site, without any detrimental impacts. Discussions are still ongoing with a number of Statutory Consultees, but we are confident that an acceptable solution can be found to all matters raised. This includes highways matters, where we are working closely with the Local Highway Authority to ensure that any impacts are suitably mitigated.

Based on 141 dwellings, and a revised site area of REP1 (8.71 ha), the density of the development equates to 17 dwellings per hectare. Whilst this density is lower than the indicative minimum densities set out in Policy 2 of the draft GNLP, which seeks a minimum of 25 dwellings per hectare (dph) to make efficient use of land (subject to site specific constraints), the density does include the land for a cemetery, Broomhill Lane, and public open space provision. Accordingly, in this instance, excluding the cemetery and land for a sports hall, the density equates to 19dph. This demonstrates that even with the increased quantum of 141 dwellings, the density is below the minimum threshold sought by the draft GNLP; a reflection of the site constraints. As drafted, the density sought by the allocation is 12dph, which is not considered to be consistent with the requirements of Policy 2 of the draft GNLP.

Available

Lovell Homes have a conditional contract on the site.

Part of the land (which is currently used as playing fields) is leased to the school on a temporary basis, and can be terminated with the agreed notice period at any time. The remainder forms part of the landowner's estate.

It is anticipated that development on the site would be both available and developable in 1 to 5 years.

Achievable

Based on the suitability assessment above, there are no site-specific constraints which could threaten the delivery of residential development, a sports hall and cemetery extension. Therefore, residential development on the site is deemed to be entirely achievable.

Lovell have a strong reputation for delivering housing within Broadland. Lovell East Anglia is based at Broadland Business Park and employs around 130 people across Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and Essex. Lovell have 10 developments currently on site, representing a mix between their contracting and development businesses, and in 2019 completed circa 450 dwellings. Lovell are committed to delivering this development within the next 5 years.

Viable

We are confident that, subject to the alterations sought, the delivery of the site is viable having regard to the policy requirements of the draft GNLP and there are no factors that we are aware of, at this moment in time, that could prevent the delivery of the site.

However, this statement is made on the basis that the scheme provides 20% affordable housing. A Viability Assessment prepared to support the planning application referred to above, demonstrates that in order to subsidise the delivery of the sports hall, it is not viable to provide more than 20% affordable housing.

Summary

Reepham is a sustainable location for growth, benefitting from existing facilities, such as a primary and high school, doctor's surgery, dentist, SPAR, alongside a range of shops, places to eat and drink, employment opportunities, and public transport provision.

As has been demonstrated, the site is suitable, available, achievable and viable, and is deliverable within the first five years of the plan period. As previously recognised, there are no constraints which would affect the suitability of the site for the proposed development of at least 140 dwellings, cemetery extension and sports hall, as further demonstrated in the live planning applications.

Minor alterations to the scope of the allocation and the policy wording are required to ensure its soundness.

6. Please set out the modification(s) you consider necessary to make the Local Plan legally compliant and sound, in respect of any legal compliance or soundness matter you have identified at 5 above. (Please note that non-compliance with the duty to co-operate is incapable of modification at examination). You will need to say why each modification will make the Local Plan legally compliant or sound. It will be helpful if you are able to put forward your suggested revised wording of any policy or text. Please be as precise as possible.

In order to ensure that REP1 is sound, a number of minor modifications are required, as detailed below:

Red Line Boundary

Given the desire to locate the sports hall on land to the south of Reepham High School, the red line of REP1 requires minor alterations, as shown on the Site Boundaries Plan. This results in the site area being 8.71 ha.

Density and Quantum

A live planning application (reference 20201183) seeks consent for the sports hall on the existing sports pitches, to the south of Reepham High School. This unlocks additional land within REP1 to accommodate additional residential development. As detailed within the planning application for residential development that is currently under consideration (reference 20200847), 141 dwellings can be accommodated on the site (21 additional dwellings in excess of the Adopted REP1, and 41 dwellings in excess of the approximate quantum set out in the Regulation 19 Publication).

Based on 141 dwellings, and a revised site area of REP1 (8.71 ha), the density of the development equates to 17 dwellings per hectare. Whilst this density is lower than the indicative minimum densities set out in Policy 2 of the draft GNLP, which seeks a minimum of 25 dwellings per hectare to make efficient use of land (subject to site specific constraints), the density does include the land for a cemetery, Broomhill Lane, and public open space provision. Accordingly, in this instance, excluding the cemetery and land for a sports hall, the density equates to 19 dwellings per hectare.

Revised Policy Wording

POLICY REP1 Land off Broomhill Lane, Reepham (approx. ~~8.2~~ 8.71 ha) is allocated for residential development & community facilities (including cemetery land, recreational open space and a sports hall). This comprises land to the north (~~approx. 5.7 ha~~) and south (~~approx. 2.5 ha~~) of Broomhill Lane, Reepham, and land to the south of Reepham High School. The site will accommodate ~~approximately 100~~ at least 140 homes in total.

More homes may be accommodated, subject to an acceptable design and layout, as well as infrastructure constraints.

The development will be expected to address the following specific matters:

1. Vehicular access to be from a realigned and improved Broomhill Lane, incorporating appropriate traffic management measures and footway provision, with pedestrian access linking to Park Lane and Broomhill Lane.

2. Off-site improvements to the highway network may also be necessary, as required by the highway authority, potentially including extension of the 30mph speed limit on Whitwell Road and consideration of extending the 20mph speed limit to the High School.
3. Provision of a sports hall for the High School to be located in proximity to the existing school facilities.
4. Provision to be made for an extension of the existing town cemetery.
5. Due to the proximity of Broomhill Meadows CWS, an ecological appraisal will be required prior to development, to include evaluation of drainage impacts, provision of net gain biodiversity and buffering measures
6. Mitigation and further investigation with regards to the site's susceptibility to surface water flooding.
7. Avoid contamination of groundwater.
8. Norfolk Mineral and Waste Core Strategy Policy CS16 applies as this site is underlain by safeguarded mineral resources. The benefits of extracting the minerals, if feasible, will be taken into consideration.

Key

Amendment – Proposed Amendments

Strikethrough – Proposed Text to be Removed