



# **REPRESENTATIONS TO THE GREATER NORWICH LOCAL PLAN SUBMISSION DRAFT STRATEGY**

**PIGEON INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT LTD AND THEIR LANDOWNERS**

**IN SUPPORT OF LAND WEST OF NELSON ROAD, DISS**

**MARCH 2021**

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- 1. LAND AT NELSON ROAD CONCEPT PLAN**
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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Pigeon Investment Management Ltd ('Pigeon') welcome the opportunity to submit representations on the Greater Norwich Local Plan Pre-Submission Draft Strategy Regulation 19 Publication Stage ('the GNLP') on behalf of the Thelveton Estate ('the Landowners') in support of the allocation of Land west of Nelson Road, Diss (part of GNLP1045).
- 1.2 The following representations address procedural compliance and the soundness and Policies 1, 3, 5, 6, 7.1, 7.2, 7.6 and the Sites Plan. These identify a number of issues of soundness some of which require the allocation of additional sites in sustainable locations including at Land west of Nelson Road, Diss which provides the opportunity for new homes or assisted living homes which would help meet the residual need for specialist accommodation in the Greater Norwich Area in a highly sustainable location. The site is identified on the accompanying Concept Plan.

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## 2. PROCEDURAL ISSUES

### Duty to cooperate

- 2.1 Local Planning Authorities are statutorily required to work cooperatively on an effective and on-going basis to address strategic matters that cross administrative boundaries under the duty to cooperate as set out in paragraphs 24 to 27 of the NPPF. In order to demonstrate this has been achieved a Statement of Common Ground prepared using the approach of the PPG is required to be published throughout the plan-making process in accordance with paragraph 27 of the NPPF.
- 2.2 The Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework (NSPF) is understood to comprise such a Statement of Common Ground. The relevant strategic matters have been identified and the response to these have been agreed as required by paragraph 25 of the NPPF under 25 Agreements set out on pages 6 to 9 of the NSPF.
- 2.3 As set out throughout these representations the GNLP departs from some of these Agreements and as such the engagement has not been effective or ongoing and as such the duty to cooperate has not been met. For example:
- As set out in response to Policy 1 below the planned job growth of the GNLP is not matched by a corresponding housing requirement contrary to the third bullet point of Agreement 3 on page 15 of the NSPF.
  - The economic needs of the GNLP have been informed by the forecasts of Experian as set out on in paragraph 3.3 of the Employment Land Assessment Addendum 2020 rather than the forecasts of the EEFM upon which it was agreed economic needs would be assessed in the first paragraph under Employment Projections on page 30 of NSPF.
  - As set out in response to Policy 1 below the GNLP does not set a housing requirement sufficient to address the housing needs of the City Deal contrary to Agreement 13.
  - As set out in response to Policy 1 below the GNLP does not make sufficient provision of homes for the elderly and students contrary to Agreement 14.
  - As set out in response to Policy 5 below the GNLP does not make allocate a sufficient number of homes to meet the identified needs of the elderly contrary to the third bullet point under Agreement 16 on page 51 of the NSPF.
  - As set out in response to Policy 6 the GNLP does not make provision for a sufficient supply of school places contrary to Agreement 21 of the NSPF or health facilities contrary to the bullet point three from the end of page 16 of the NSPF under Agreement 3.

2.4 Furthermore, the NSPF is dated June 2019 and as such there is no evidence that the cooperation has been on-going for the last 18 months. The fact that the NSPF is out-of-date is also evident from the fact that:

- Section 4 identifies that the most recent set of population projections were published in May 2018 when more recent projections were published in March 2020.
- Section 4.2 identifies that the most recent set of household projections were published in September 2018 when more recent projections were published in June 2020.
- Table 9 which has informed Agreement 10 indicates that the minimum local housing need which has informed the NSPF was correct as of June 2019, but the minimum local housing need has changed since.

2.5 It is therefore evident that there has not been the necessary cooperative work to reflect upon different projections or the different minimum local housing need and any impact these may have.

2.6 For all of the above reasons the available evidence suggests that despite the cooperation which had occurred up until June 2019 the duty to cooperate has not been met. It also demonstrates that the cooperation has been ineffective contrary to paragraph 26 of the NPPF as the GNLP departs from numerous of the Agreements.

2.7 *Recommendation:* It will therefore be necessary to supplement the evidence to demonstrate that the engagement has been effective and ongoing since June 2019 and that all of the newly arising evidence has been taken into account if that is the case. Assuming it is, it will then be necessary to modify the GNLP to accord with the Agreements including by setting housing and employment land requirements which are compatible, uplifting the housing requirement to respond to the City Deal, uplifting the housing requirement to respond to the needs of specific groups and allocating sites to meet the needs of specific groups.

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### 3. POLICY 1 – THE SUSTAINABLE GROWTH STRATEGY

3.1 Policy 1 sets out the proposed strategy for the plan period and includes numerous policies including the proposed housing requirement, the proposed employment land requirement, the approach to windfall development, the approach to five-year land supply and the spatial strategy. The supporting text also identifies the proposed strategy for future plan periods.

#### Planning for the longer-term

3.2 Paragraph 187 of the GNLP indicates that any further growth in subsequent plans will be at a new settlement or settlements. This statement not only prejudices the outcome of the evidential work that will need to be undertaken in support of a future Local Plan it is also contrary to the available evidence as the New Settlements Topic Paper states that at this point in time the overall case for a new settlement in Greater Norwich is by no means clear. Paragraph 187 is therefore not justified and not sound.

3.3 *Recommendation:* Paragraph 187 should be deleted from the GNLP or amended to identify that opportunities for a new settlement or settlements will be explored within subsequent plans (alongside other options for accommodating growth, such as proportionate distribution to Market Towns and Key Service Villages) rather the prejudging the spatial strategy of a future Development Plan document.

#### Housing requirement

##### The location of the housing requirement

3.4 Paragraph 65 of the NPPF requires that a housing requirement is established within a Local Plan. Paragraph 73 requires that the five-year land supply is calculated against this housing requirement which is to be set out in strategic policies.

3.5 The foreword to the Draft Local Plan identifies a “requirement” for about 49,500 homes over the period 2018-38. Paragraph 177 and Table 6 of the GNLP however identify a housing “target” for only 40,541 homes and Policy 1 identifies a “need” for around 40,550 homes.

3.6 The GNLP is therefore not only ambiguous such that it may not be effective, it also does not accord with national policy and is therefore not sound as there is no housing requirement set out in strategic policies.

3.7 Appendix 6 then indicates that the five-year land supply will be calculated against the housing target of 40,541 homes rather than against the housing requirement alluded to in the foreword or against the housing need identified in a strategic policy, namely 40,550 homes in Policy 1. The assessment

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of the five-year land supply against the housing need rather than a housing requirement set out in a strategic policy is not consistent with paragraph 73 of the NPPF.

- 3.8 *Recommendation:* If as appears to be the case, the figure of 40,541 homes is to provide a housing requirement, it will be necessary to (i) modify the wording of the foreword to state that the GNLP provides for the delivery of around 49,500 homes rather than a housing requirement of around 49,500 homes, (2) modify Policy 1 to set a housing requirement rather than the housing need, (3) modify paragraph 177 and table 6 to identify a housing requirement rather than housing target and (4) modify Appendix 6 accordingly.

The minimum housing need

- 3.9 The housing need for 40,541 homes is derived from the standard methodology according to paragraph 40 of the GNLP.
- 3.10 The standard method provides the minimum local housing need according to the PPG (2a-004) and is calculated using the average household growth for 10 consecutive years, with an affordability uplift based on the median workplace-based house price to earnings ratio of the preceding year<sup>1</sup>.
- 3.11 The GNLP proposes to cover the period from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018. In order to establish the minimum local housing need for the plan period it is therefore necessary to calculate either the standard method from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018; or to calculate the current standard method and apply this to the remainder of the plan period in addition to the number of completions which have already occurred during the plan period.
- 3.12 In the case of the Greater Norwich Plan Area, the average household growth over the 10 consecutive years from 2018, namely 2018-28, was 400 in Broadland, 510 in Norwich and 704 in South Norfolk. The median workplace-based house price to earnings ratios in 2017 were 9.82, 6.93 and 8.92 respectively. Using these figures, the minimum local housing need over the plan period equates to **41,388 homes**.
- 3.13 Alternatively, the minimum local housing need from 2020 onwards can be calculated using the average household growth over the 10 consecutive years from 2020, namely 2020-30, with the affordability ratios of 2019 applied. The average household growth was 394, 505 and 680 respectively and the median workplace-based house price to earnings ratios were 9.01, 6.97 and 9.02 respectively. These figures produce a minimum local housing need of 2,008 homes per annum which equates to 36,148 homes over the period 2020-38. Table 6 of the GNLP identifies that 5,240

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<sup>1</sup> As confirmed in paragraph 15 of the Housing Delivery Test Measurement Rule Book.

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homes were completed in 2018-20. In addition to the minimum local housing need of 36,148 over the period 2020-38 this would again produce a minimum local housing need for **41,388 homes** over the plan period.

3.14 It is therefore apparent that the standard method has been miscalculated within the GNLP and that the minimum local housing need is greater at **41,388 homes**. Policy 1 and all other references to a need for 40,550 are therefore not justified, effective, positive or consistent with national policy and are therefore not sound.

3.15 *Recommendation:* In combination with the subsequent considerations it will therefore be necessary to modify the emerging housing requirement in Table 6, paragraph 179, Appendix 6 and Policy 1.

Exceeding the minimum housing need

3.16 The standard method also only provides the minimum local housing need, and the PPG (2a-010) identifies that this should be exceeded including in situations where there is a growth strategy or where strategic infrastructure improvements may drive an increase in housing need or where previous levels of delivery are significantly greater than the standard method or where previous assessments of need are significantly greater than the standard method. All of these situations arise in Greater Norwich and there is also a particular need for communal establishments which is not reflected in the standard method. As such it is considered necessary to exceed the standard method as required by national guidance to provide a justified, effective and positive GNLP that complies with national policy.

The housing need of students

3.17 The standard method is informed by the 2014-based household projections which assume that the five-year migration trends which were experienced in the period 2009-14 will be maintained. The Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA) identified that University of East Anglia (UEA) had 16,640 students and the Norwich University of the Arts had 1,485 students in 2009 providing a total of 18,125, but that this had increased to 18,140 by 2014 with 16,265 at UEA and 1,875 at the University of Arts. The 2014-based projections which inform the standard method therefore reflect the fact that there were an additional 15 students over the previous five years or 3 per annum<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that the projections in the SHMA which reflect an increase of 420 students per annum are different to the official projections which inform the standard method and which assume an increase of only 3 students per annum.



- 3.18 Paragraph 54 of the GNLP however indicates that the Universities in Norwich are expected to expand. Indeed, the UEA Development Framework Strategy prepared on behalf of the University of East Anglia (UEA) in June 2019 identifies that the number of students was planned to increase from 17,195 in 2017 to 22,000 by 2036, an increase of 4,805 students over the period 2017-36 or 253 students per annum.
- 3.19 The additional students at UEA will clearly have an impact on the housing need in Greater Norwich which is not taken into account within the projections used within the standard method.
- 3.20 These students would require the equivalent of 1,685 homes<sup>3</sup> over the period 2017-36. In 2017/18, 117 student bedspaces or the equivalent of 41 homes were built in Norwich such that during the period 2018-36 it will be necessary to meet the residual need for the equivalent of 1,644 homes in addition to the minimum local housing need identified by the standard method. It will be necessary to deliver such accommodation to meet the objectively assessed needs as required by paragraphs 11b, 23, 35a and 117 of the NPPF, to accord with Agreement 14 of the NSPF, to provide for a positive, effective and justified Local Plan and to accord with the Vision of the GNLP.
- 3.21 These figures only take account of the planned growth of UEA to 2036 and do not take any account of any planned changes in the number of students at the University of the Arts. Any such increases would require additional housing to that identified above.
- 3.22 The housing requirement of the GNLP however does not take any account of the needs of students contrary to paragraph 61 of the NPPF, such that no accommodation is proposed for this population which will clearly have adverse implications on the accessibility of the housing market to the remainder of the population and/or compromise the ambitions of UEA. In the absence of such considerations, the housing requirement is not effective, positive, justified or consistent with national policy and is therefore not sound.
- 3.23 *Recommendation:* Assuming that student numbers remain constant at the University of the Arts and that there is no further growth following 2036 at UEA, there would be a need to increase the minimum local housing need by 1,644 homes from 41,388 to an equivalent of **43,032 homes** over the plan period. It should be recognised that this need should be met through an appropriate combination of student accommodation and housing.

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<sup>3</sup> Based on the conversion rate of the PPG (68-034) taken from the Census results which identify that there were 6,526 students in 2,289 student-only households in Norwich or 2.85 per household. The ratio for Norwich is used as Policy 5 indicates that such provision will either be at the UEA campus within Norwich or at sites suitable for residential development with sustainable access to the universities which are again likely to be in Norwich.

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The needs of those in institutional accommodation

- 3.24 The SHMA for Central Norfolk identifies a need for 3,909 people aged 75 or over to be accommodated in residential institutions over the period 2015-36. The 2014 based institutional population projections identify an increase of 2,060 such people within the GNLP area over the period 2015-38 comprising 1,088 in Broadland, 291 in Norwich and 681 in South Norfolk.
- 3.25 In the period 2015-18, a total of 234 bedspaces in older persons communal establishments were built, including 7 in Broadland, 225 in Norwich and 2 in South Norfolk. This leaves a residual need for 1,826 bedspaces in the period 2018-38, comprising 1,081 in Broadland, 57 in Norwich and 679 in South Norfolk.
- 3.26 The household projections which inform both the SHMA and the standard method do not include this population. It is therefore apparent that there is a need for 1,826 bedspaces in communal establishments in addition to the standard method and that in the absence of such provision the housing requirement will need to increase as fewer dwellings will be released to the market as recognised in paragraph 5.39 of the SHMA. The number of dwellings that would not be released in the absence of such residential institutions is 987 using the calculation identified in the PPG (63-016a)<sup>4</sup> comprising 584 in Broadland, 33 in Norwich and 369 in South Norfolk.
- 3.27 It will therefore be necessary to increase the housing requirement by 987 homes to meet the objectively assessed needs within the GNLP and to accord with the Vision of the GNLP.
- 3.28 The housing requirement of the GNLP however does not take any account of the needs of older people contrary to paragraph 61 of the NPPF and Agreement 14 of the NSPF. In the absence of the necessary response to meet the needs of this population, the housing requirement is not effective, positive, justified or consistent with national policy and is therefore not sound.
- 3.29 *Recommendation:* In addition to the minimum of 43,032 homes required to accommodate the proposed increase in students, to respond to the needs of the older population in communal establishments there is a need for the equivalent of an additional 987 homes which would provide a minimum housing requirement for **44,024 homes**. It should again be recognised that this need should be met through an appropriate combination of student accommodation, communal establishments and housing.

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<sup>4</sup> The census data identifies that there were 98,640 adults in 53,331 households in Broadland or 1.85 per household, 103,598 adults in 60,311 households in Norwich or 1.72 per household, and 97,154 adults in 52,806 households in South Norfolk or 1.84 per household.

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The City Deal and Strategic Infrastructure

- 3.30 Paragraph 18 of the GNLP identifies that the Greater Norwich City Deal requirements will be met through the GNLP. As the Greater Norwich City Deal forms a growth strategy which has been agreed with Government, the GNLP is required to meet the requirements of the City Deal as this forms part of national policy as set out in paragraph 6 of the NSPF. This is also agreed in Agreement 13 of the NSPF.
- 3.31 The City Deal identifies that strategic infrastructure is needed including to deliver a step change in housing delivery. It sets a target for an average of 15,000 homes or 3,000 homes per annum in the period 2014-19 and for 37,000 homes to be delivered in the period 2008-26.
- 3.32 MHCLG Live Tables identify that only 12,804 dwellings were built in the period 2014-19 in addition to the equivalent of 581 homes provided as student and older persons bedspaces. This provides a total of 11,296 or an average of only 2,259 homes per annum from 2014-19. It is therefore apparent that the short-term target of the City Deal has not been met and that accordingly the shortfall of 3,704 homes should be addressed as soon as possible to achieve the objectives of the City Deal. No such short-term uplift to remedy this shortfall is made within the GNLP contrary to the requirements of national policy in the form of the City Deal and to Agreement 13 of the NSPF.
- 3.33 In the period 2008-20, the MHCLG Live Tables identify an equivalent of 20,924 housing completions in addition to the equivalent of 837 homes provided as student and older persons bedspaces. This provides a total of 21,761, which means that in order to provide 37,000 homes in the period 2008-26 it will be necessary to deliver the remaining 15,239 in the period 2020-26 or an average of 2,540 per annum. However, the housing need identified in emerging Policy 1 of 40,541 homes only provides for an average of 2,027 homes per annum. The housing need of the Draft Local Plan therefore again does not provide a sufficient number of homes to meet the housing needs required by the City Deal and is therefore not consistent with national policy.
- 3.34 It is therefore evident that the Draft Local Plan does not meet any of the targets of the City Deal and that it is accordingly not effective, not justified, not positively prepared and inconsistent with national policy.
- 3.35 *Recommendation:* In order to provide a sound Local Plan that is consistent with national policy and the NSPF it will therefore be necessary to uplift the housing requirement to remedy the shortfall of 3,704 homes as soon as possible and to deliver the residual housing requirement of the City Deal by 2026. It will therefore be necessary to set a plan period housing requirement of at **least 44,024 homes** including a stepped housing requirement for **5,240 homes for the period 2018-20** reflecting the number of completions achieved, at least **15,239 homes for the period 2020-26** and at least

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**23,545 homes over the period 2026-38** to meet the minimum local housing need identified by the standard method, provide for the proposed increase in student numbers, accommodate those in need of residential institutions and to accord with the City Deal.

Previous assessments of need

3.36 The SHMA for Central Norfolk of June 2017 identifies that there is a need to deliver 44,714 homes from 2015-36 taking account of the City Deal. In the period 2015-18, the equivalent of 6,680 homes were delivered and so there is a residual need for 38,034 homes from 2018-36, or 2,113 per annum. Assuming that this need remained constant across the period 2036-38, there would be a need for 42,260 homes.

3.37 It is therefore once again apparent that the proposed housing requirement does not accord with national policy in the form of the City Deal, or national guidance in the PPG (2a-010) as previous assessments of housing need have identified that the need is greater than the housing requirement proposed. As a result, the housing requirement of the GNLP is not positively prepared and will not be effective in meeting housing needs.

3.38 *Recommendation:* This again provides support for a minimum local housing need of at least 44,024 homes over the plan period.

Previous levels of delivery

3.39 Paragraph 59 of the NPPF recognises the objective to significantly boost the supply of housing. The need for this is apparent from the fact that nationally an average of only 223,000 dwellings per annum and the equivalent of 6,000 homes per annum arising from the delivery of student and other institutional bedspaces providing a total of 229,000 homes per annum over the previous five years in response to the need for 300,000 homes.

3.40 In the GNLP area, a total of 11,089 dwellings per annum have been built in the preceding five-years and the equivalent of 837 homes provided as student and older persons bedspaces providing a total of 11,926 homes or an average of 2,385 per annum. In order to facilitate the significant boost to housing supply required by paragraph 59 of the NPPF it will therefore be necessary to deliver significantly in excess of 2,385 homes per annum or significantly in excess of 47,704 homes over the plan period.

3.41 The housing need identified in the GNLP of 40,541 homes equates to an average of only 2,027 homes per annum and would perversely suggest that recent levels of delivery could be sustainably reduced by 15% notwithstanding the local and national housing crisis. This proposed housing requirement is

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therefore not consistent with national policy or guidance, it will not be effective in providing the housing needed, and it is not positively prepared.

3.42 A housing requirement of 44,024 homes as identified previously would only equate to an average of 2,201 homes per annum and so would similarly not even maintain current levels of delivery let alone achieve the necessary boost to housing supply.

3.43 *Recommendation:* In order to provide the necessary boost to housing supply as required by national policy it would therefore be necessary to uplift the housing requirement to a figure significantly in excess of **47,704 homes**. However, the need to uplift previous levels of delivery will obviously vary from area to area but this is at least indicative of the fact that the minimum housing requirement of **44,024 homes** identified by the evidence in Greater Norwich may be too low and a housing requirement in excess of this may be necessary to accord with the national objective to significantly boost the supply of housing as set out in the PPG (2a-010).

Ensuring contingency to meet needs

3.44 In order to provide sufficient contingency to ensure that the minimum needs will be delivered, taking account of the non-delivery of sites, it has been found by numerous Inspectors that it is appropriate to set the housing requirement circa 5% above the minimum housing need<sup>5</sup> as this will be necessary to ensure that the Local Plan is effective and housing needs are actually met.

3.45 In Greater Norwich, the housing trajectory of the current Joint Core Strategy identified that there would be 25,878 housing completions in the period 2008-20. However, only 20,924 homes have been delivered according to the MHCLG Live Tables which demonstrates that at least historically, the trajectory of Greater Norwich overestimates the developable supply by circa 23.7%. It is therefore considered that it will be necessary to identify a housing requirement which is significantly more than 5% in excess of the housing need and that it will also be necessary to identify a developable supply of circa 23.7%<sup>6</sup> in excess of the housing need if the GNLP is to be effective in meeting the housing need in order to be effective, positive, justified and to meet the housing need as required by national policy<sup>7</sup>. This is also necessary to provide flexibility to respond to rapid change as required by paragraph 11a of the NPPF.

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<sup>5</sup> Including in the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan and the Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy.

<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that this is broadly commensurate with the 22% identified in the GNLP.

<sup>7</sup> Paragraphs 7, 8, 11 and 35 of the NPPF.

- 3.46 As set out above, there is a minimum need for 15,239 homes in the period 2020-26 to accord with the City Deal and a minimum residual need for 23,545 homes over the period 2026-38 to meet housing needs including those of students and those in need of communal establishments. In order to ensure that this is able to be met, in accordance with the findings of Inspectors elsewhere, it would be necessary to increase these requirements by 5% to provide confidence that the actual needs will be met which would result in a minimum housing requirement for **16,001 homes from 2020-26** and **24,722 homes from 2026-38**. In addition to the completions from 2018-20 this would provide a minimum housing requirement for 45,958 homes.
- 3.47 Similarly, based on the accuracy of previous trajectories in Greater Norwich it would be necessary to identify a supply 23.7% in excess of the minimum housing need, which would require a supply of **18,847 homes during the period 2020-26** and a supply of **29,120 homes during the period 2026-38**, which in addition to completions would require a supply of 53,207 homes.
- 3.48 *Recommendation:* In order to ensure that the minimum housing need is met it is necessary to set a housing requirement for 16,001 homes from 2020-26 and for 24,722 homes from 2026-38.

#### **Employment Land Requirement**

- 3.49 Policy 1 identifies a target to support the delivery of an additional 33,000 jobs between 2018 and 2038.
- 3.50 Paragraph 168 of the GNLP identifies that this target has been established through local trend-based evidence. The source for this target is set out in footnote 54 which links to an extract of the East of England Forecasting Model from 2010. This extract is so old that it cannot be relied upon to justify an employment target in 2021 especially given the significantly different economic circumstances that prevail than those which existed in 2010. This is exemplified by the fact that paragraph 290 of the GNLP indicates that the number of jobs increased by 15,000 from 2015-18 and yet the extract from EEFM assumed that the number of jobs would only increase by 6,400 during this period.
- 3.51 Furthermore, the EEFM extract does not actually identify the potential for 33,000 additional jobs during the plan period as suggested by paragraph 168. The source for this target is correctly identified in paragraph 289 of the GNLP namely the Avison Young Greater Norwich Employment Land addendum (2020) which forecasts a growth of 32,700 jobs in paragraph 3.6 and then an additional 483 jobs in paragraph 4.57. It will therefore be necessary to review or delete footnote 54 of the GNLP to avoid confusion and to provide an evidence-based justification for the job growth target of Policy 1 **for this to be justified and sound**.

- 3.52 Table 25 of the Avison Young addendum indicates that 7,754 of the total of 33,000 jobs will be within former B-use classes and that it would be necessary to deliver 76.4ha of former B-use employment land to accommodate these. As set out in paragraph 289 of the GNLP, there is no quantitative need for additional employment sites to meet this need. Nevertheless, the GNLP allocates former B-use employment sites totalling around 360ha according to Policy 1 which equates to an over-allocation of 283.6ha relative to need.
- 3.53 Paragraph 289 suggests that this over-allocation provides for a number of issues including supporting more ambitious levels of jobs growth if demand can be stimulated. The GNLP therefore supports a potentially significant over-delivery of employment land without taking account of the sustainability of doing so.
- 3.54 Whilst this over-allocation of employment land will assist the economic growth of the area and represents positive planning, if a significant proportion of the allocations are actually developed and occupied, they will either require a greater housing requirement in accordance with the third bullet point of Agreement 3 on page 15 of the NSPF to accommodate the resultant workforce or will be dependent upon greater numbers of in-commuters from outside of the plan area contrary to paragraph 103 of the NPPF. The over-allocation will therefore either be ineffective as these sites will not be delivered in the absence of the necessary housing to accommodate a sufficient workforce or it will be inconsistent with national policy by increasing the need to travel.
- 3.55 *Recommendation:* Accordingly, an appropriate monitoring framework should be put in place to ensure that a sufficient number of homes are provided to accommodate the growth in the workforce and to avoid the resultant environmental harms of a greater dependency on long-distance commuting flows. If the monitoring framework indicates that a greater number of jobs have been accommodated than the growth in the resident workforce such that the economy of the area becomes more dependent upon unsustainable long-distance in-commuting flows, this should trigger an immediate review of the GNLP alongside a policy response with residential planning applications being considered more favourably until such time as the GNLP review is adopted to address the imbalance.

### **Housing**

#### The deferral of housing needs to other documents

- 3.56 Policy 1 sets out a Table identifying the distribution of housing across the settlement hierarchy. This identifies that 10,704 homes will be delivered from new allocations. It is however apparent from Table 6 on page 48 that these 10,704 homes include 250 at Diss to be allocated through the emerging Diss Neighbourhood Plan and 1,200 to be allocated through the South Norfolk Village

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- Clusters Housing Sites Allocation Plan (SNVCHSAP) which are not proposed as part of the GNLP. The latter of these is recognised in the paragraph following the Table in Policy 1 but the former is not. This paragraph should therefore be amended accordingly to set the scope for the preparation of these daughter documents and make it clear that there remains a need to allocate 250 homes at Diss and 1,200 homes in the South Norfolk Village Clusters in addition to the allocations in the GNLP.
- 3.57 Until the Diss Neighbourhood Plan or the SNVCHSAP form part of the Development Plan, the GNLP cannot rely upon delivery from the sites which may emerge through the progression of these plans. At present, both plans are at a relatively early stage of preparation and so these should only be afforded limited weight. Therefore, whilst it may be appropriate to defer meeting needs to these daughter documents, the GNLP cannot justifiably rely upon the delivery of the potential sites which will not be tested as part of the GNLP. The figures in the GNLP will need to be comprehensively reviewed to reflect this, such that the currently identified supply will reduce from 49,492 to **48,042 homes**.
- 3.58 In order to be effective and provide flexibility to respond to change as required by paragraph 11a of the NPPF, the GNLP will also need to provide some mechanism to address the potential for these documents to be delayed or abandoned or for these documents to be found sound with a lower supply of housing. In the absence of such a mechanism the entire basis for the spatial strategy could be undermined by such eventualities.
- 3.59 For example, in the absence of the Diss Neighbourhood Plan, the GNLP would support a disproportionately low level of growth in Diss, far lower than that in any other Main Town, notwithstanding its impressive sustainability credentials as summarised in paragraphs 354 to 361 of the GNLP. Such a strategy would be unsustainable. Similarly, in the absence of the SNVCHSAP the GNLP would not facilitate any growth across the rural part of South Norfolk and would therefore not accord with paragraphs 77 and 78 of the NPPF and would also result in a disproportionate share of housing being directed to Broadland.
- 3.60 *Recommendation:* In the interim in order to address the policy vacuum that arises from the current absence of such documents it is necessary to set out clear Development Management policies for the consideration of residential planning applications in the South Norfolk Village Clusters. However, given that some development is facilitated in Diss through the GNLP which may meet needs in the short-term, it is considered that it is necessary to identify a timescale for the making of the Diss Neighbourhood Plan to ensure that the medium term needs are appropriately responded to and if this timescale is not achieved then to set out how residential planning applications will be considered from then on.

#### The distribution of development



- 3.61 Paragraph 37 of the GNLP indicates that in 2011 circa 55% of the population of the plan area lived in the Norwich urban area. The Table at Policy 1 however proposes that 32,691 homes from existing commitments and proposed allocations will be provided in Norwich urban area or 66% of the supply identified in the GNLP. In addition, a proportion of the homes delivered through Policy 7.5 and the windfall allowance will also be directed towards the Norwich urban area. This means that in total somewhere between 66% and 70% of the supply will be within the Norwich urban area over the plan period. In contrast, just 14% of the supply is directed to the Main Towns and 7% to the Key Service Centres. This represents a significant shift towards urban-living compared to the current position. There is no justification or evidence in support of this policy decision which is likely to have significant implications on the sustainability of the plan area.
- 3.62 This strategy will result in households that would otherwise have met their housing needs across other parts of the plan area moving to Norwich in the absence of any alternative. The resultant diversion of households, their patronage and their disposable income to Norwich is likely to compromise the vitality of rural communities contrary to paragraph 78 of the NPPF. For example, the number of primary school aged children is projected to reduce across the plan area over the plan period and if this is compounded by a shortfall in housing delivery outside of Norwich it is likely that a number of primary schools may become unsustainable to the detriment of those pupils that do attend these schools.
- 3.63 Additionally, the disproportionate levels of housing supply proposed in Norwich are likely to increase the need to travel to maintain economic, social and familial relationships outside of Norwich contrary to paragraph 103 of the NPPF.
- 3.64 The proposed distribution is not therefore considered to be effective in providing for sustainable development, it is not justified, and it conflicts with national policy.
- 3.65 The proposed under-supply of housing within Main Towns and Key Service Centres will not only compromise the viability of such settlements with reduced disposable income, patronage and footfall contrary to paragraph 78 of the NPPF, it also does not support the delivery of much-needed community facilities including in terms of healthcare, education and sports facilities or the employment land necessary to retain existing businesses in these settlements which are necessary to support the sustainability of these settlements in accordance with paragraph 20 of the NPPF. As a result, the spatial strategy of the GNLP is not considered to be effective, positive or consistent with the NPPF.
- 3.66 The disproportionate levels of delivery proposed in the Norwich urban area not only give rise to unsustainable effects, they are also likely to be challenging to deliver. Policy 1 would require an annual delivery rate within the urban area in excess of 1,635 dwellings per annum. This requires

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- that the level of development in the Norwich urban area alone is only slightly below that which has been achieved across the entire GNLP plan area over the last decade<sup>8</sup>. This is unlikely to be realistic. If the necessary boost to housing supply is to be achieved it is likely that a greater range and choice of sites across all of the sustainable settlements within the plan area will be required.
- 3.67 This is reflected in the Sustainability Appraisal which assessed a range of potential options as identified in Figure 5.3. Options 1, 2 and 3 assessed the delivery of 33,380, 32,280 and 32,080 homes respectively in Norwich urban area as compared to the 32,691 proposed in the GNLP. The Sustainability Appraisal concluded in Box 5.3 that all of these options would be harder to deliver than other options because they focus growth in locations that have already seen significant growth, have significant outstanding commitments and have experienced delivery issues.
- 3.68 Policy 1 relies upon the effective operation of Policy 7.1 (The Norwich Urban Area Including Fringe Parishes) to achieve these aspirational rates of development which the Sustainability Appraisal acknowledges will be challenging. As set out in our response to Policy 7.1 it is now clear that the levels of delivery proposed in the Norwich urban area will not be achieved.
- 3.69 In order to provide a deliverable and effective GNLP and to provide sufficient flexibility in accordance with paragraph 11a of the NPPF including to respond to the lower levels of delivery that will actually be achieved in the Norwich urban area, it will be necessary to identify a sufficient range and choice of sites by allocating more housing to some of the Main Towns and Key Service Centres.
- 3.70 The Main Towns are acknowledged to play a vital role in the rural economy, providing employment opportunities and services for their hinterlands and operating as engines of rural growth with good access to services in paragraph 346 of the GNLP, Similarly, the Key Service Centres are acknowledged to have a good range of services, with access to public transport and employment which plays a vital role in serving rural areas according to paragraph 372. These settlements therefore provide highly sustainable locations for meeting a greater proportion of growth across the GNLP area.
- 3.71 The role of such settlements is likely to have become even more integral to the sustainable operation of the GNLP area as a result of the current pandemic for a number of reasons. There has been a significant increase in home-working with workers spending their working days at home in the Main Towns and Key Service Centres with a greater reliance on local services, facilities and infrastructure. In order to support this new way of working, it will be necessary to support the delivery of new services, facilities and infrastructure including healthcare, sports and schools to

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<sup>8</sup> Of 1,778 homes per annum from 2010-20 according to MHCLG Live Table 122.

meet the existing identified needs but also to provide for a distribution of development that supports a population capable of sustaining existing and new services and facilities.

3.72 Additionally, as a result of the pandemic, households are seeking homes with greater access to open space and the countryside rather than the limited opportunities provided in more urbanised areas such as Norwich. In order to respond and to provide the homes that households are seeking it would therefore be appropriate to support a greater proportion of housing in the Main Towns and Key Service Centres to both support existing and new facilities, meet the existing need for infrastructure and facilitate greater access to the recreational opportunities.

3.73 *Recommendation:* In order to address this, the spatial strategy should be reviewed to ensure that a sufficient number of homes are delivered to support the vitality of each of the Main Towns and Key Service Centres and to ensure that opportunities to provide supporting facilities or employment where these will enhance the sustainability of the community are considered favourably.

3.74 The preceding representations on the Spatial Strategy are all set in the context that the identified housing need does not even accord with the minimum set by national policy and does not take account of the needs of specific groups. It is therefore evident that the quantitative elements of the Spatial Strategy will need to be revised to ensure that housing needs can be met across the GNLP area. This should be achieved through directing more growth to some of the Main Towns and Key Service Centres to counterbalance the disproportionate levels of growth proposed within the Norwich urban area.

### **Windfall**

3.75 In addition to deferring to Policies 7.1 to 7.5 to deliver housing, Policy 1 sets out three criteria for considering “windfall” residential planning applications. The latter two criteria simply again defer to Policies 7.4 and 7.5 and so are unnecessary. The first criterion however indicates that “windfall” development will be acceptable within settlement boundaries where this accords with the settlement hierarchy. It is entirely unclear what this means or how this will operate such that this part of the Policy is ineffective and unsound.

3.76 *Recommendation:* It will be necessary to modify this part of the Policy accordingly to provide clarity on how accordance with the spatial strategy will be assessed.

### **The approach to five-year land supply**

3.77 Policy 1 also proposes that the five-year land supply will be assessed across the plan area and that enough allocations are provided to demonstrate a five-year land supply at adoption.

- 3.78 As set out above, paragraph 177 and Appendix 6 indicate that the five-year land supply will be assessed against the identified local housing need of 40,541 homes. This is contrary to national policy, not only because the minimum local housing need has been miscalculated as set out above, but also because paragraph 73 of the NPPF requires that the five-year land supply is assessed against the housing requirement set out in strategic policies rather than against the minimum local housing need set out in supporting text.
- 3.79 Paragraph 73 of the NPPF requires that LPAs identify a sufficient supply of specific deliverable sites to provide a minimum five-year land supply. The NPPF also identifies that in order to be considered deliverable sites must be available now, offer a suitable location for development now, be achievable with a realistic prospect of delivery and for certain sources of supply that there must also be clear evidence that housing completions will begin on site within five years. Once again, the specific sites which comprise the deliverable supply have not been identified and there is no evidence that they meet any of the criteria of a deliverable site such that they cannot be considered deliverable on the basis of the current evidence. Therefore, in the absence of the necessary evidence the GNLP is unable to demonstrate a five-year land supply contrary to national policy.
- 3.80 It is also noteworthy that on page 143 of the GNLP it is suggested that it is cautious to assume that a site which is only allocated in 2022 will deliver within 1 to 2 years in 2023/24. This is entirely unrealistic. The Start to Finish report (Lichfields, February 2020) for example identifies that in reality it takes on average 3.3 years from the submission of a planning application for 0-99 homes until the first completion is achieved, or 2 years from the grant of planning permission for 0-99 homes until the first completion is achieved. These lead-in times increase for larger sites. It is therefore immediately apparent that the supply identified in the GNLP is unrealistic.
- 3.81 Notwithstanding the absence of the necessary evidence, even if the housing trajectory of the GNLP is accepted at face value, there would not be a five-year land supply against the housing requirement of the City Deal and the NSPF contrary to paragraph 73 of the NPPF. This is evident from the fact that:
- The City Deal sets a housing requirement for 37,000 homes from 2008-26, or 2,056 per annum.
  - This equates to a housing requirement for 24,667 homes in the period 2008-20 during which time only 21,761 homes have been delivered giving rise to a backlog of 2,906 homes.
  - There is therefore a five-year requirement (excluding buffer) for 13,183 homes (5 x 2,056 + 2,906).

- With the application of the necessary 5% buffer this would equate to a five-year requirement for 13,843 homes over the period 2020-25.
- The housing trajectory (Appendix 6) of the GNLP identifies a supply of only 13,435 homes during this period which provides for a **4.85 year land supply**.

3.82 Pigeon nevertheless reserve the right to comment on the five-year land supply once the necessary evidence is available.

3.83 *Recommendation:* As identified previously, the content and structure of Policy 1 will need to be modified to set a housing requirement which accords with national policy against which the five-year land supply will be assessed. It will also be necessary to itemise the sites included in the deliverable and developable supply and to provide the evidence required by national policy in support of these to demonstrate that the GNLP accords with paragraph 73 of the NPPF and to supplement the deliverable supply such that the GNLP will be able to demonstrate a minimum five-year land supply.

#### **Plan Period Housing Supply**

3.84 Table 6 of the GNLP suggests that sufficient provision is made to deliver 49,492 homes during the plan period. As set out above, some 23.7% of the identified supply of the Joint Core Strategy in Greater Norwich has not come forward as planned. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary there is no reason to suppose that the non-implementation rate will now be significantly different. If the non-implementation rate of the Joint Core Strategy is maintained, then circa 40,000 homes would be delivered from the identified supply of 49,492 homes which wouldn't even be sufficient to meet the minimum local housing need of 41,388 homes identified by the standard method let alone meet the needs of specific groups or respond to the City Deal.

3.85 To put this another way, if the non-implementation rate is maintained it would be necessary to identify a supply of 53,207 homes over the plan period, an increase of 3,718 homes from that currently identified.

3.86 Paragraph 67 of the NPPF requires that a supply of specific sites or broad locations for growth are identified across the plan period. The GNLP makes allowances for windfall developments including those arising under Policy 7.5, identifies broad locations for growth in the Diss Neighbourhood Plan and the SNVCHSAP and the remainder of the developable supply arises from specific sites. Of the identified supply, 250 homes are proposed to be brought forward in the Diss Neighbourhood Plan and 1,250 homes in the SNVCHSAP all of which have not yet been identified. The GNLP also makes an allowance for 800 homes arising from sites delivered through Policy 7.5. There isn't any evidence in support of this allowance for housing arising from Policy 7.5 such that it is **not justified and nor**

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- will it be demonstrably effective in meeting this proportion of housing needs. An allowance for 1,296 homes arising from windfall sites is also provided for.
- 3.87 Without these windfall allowances and broad locations for growth, there is a residual supply of 45,946 homes arising from commitments and proposed allocations. However, there is no such breakdown of the specific commitments and allocations that contribute to the identified developable supply of the GNLP. Accordingly, in the absence of the necessary trajectory the GNLP does not accord with national policy and is not sound.
- 3.88 Without the specific committed sites having been identified and without any housing trajectory for the committed and allocated sites it is not possible to assess whether there is a reasonable prospect that they will be available and could be viably developed at the point envisaged. Therefore, these sites are not demonstrably developable according to the definition of the NPPF and as such the housing supply of the GNLP does not accord with national policy.
- 3.89 The developability of some sites is considered in response to Policies 7.1 to 7.4 below based on the evidence which is available. It should be noted that this is not comprehensive owing to the fact that the necessary components or evidence is not available.
- 3.90 Pigeon reserve the right to comment on the plan period supply once the necessary evidence is available.
- 3.91 *Recommendation:* In order to demonstrate that the GNLP will be effective and that the developability of the supply has been assessed in accordance with national policy, it will be necessary to publish evidence to justify the allowance of 800 homes arising from Policy 7.5, publish a housing trajectory for the specific sites upon which the GNLP relies and provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate that these can be delivered.

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**4. POLICY 3 – ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT**

- 4.1 Policy 3 requires that every development will provide at least a 10% gain to biodiversity. Whilst this objective is generally supported, this will clearly place a cost on schemes which has not been considered within the Viability Assessment as required by the PPG (23b-005) and therefore has the potential to prejudice delivery. It will also have a potential land-take implication which could result in reduced delivery of new homes and employment space.
- 4.2 There is potential that this requirement could undermine the deliverability of elements of the GNLP especially given that some development typologies are already identified as being not viable or having marginal viability in Part 5 of the Viability Assessment even without this requirement.
- 4.3 Therefore, this policy requirement may render parts of the GNLP ineffective and is not consistent with national guidance.
- 4.4 *Recommendation:* It will be necessary to examine the implications of this requirement in an updated Viability Assessment and if necessary revise the GNLP accordingly prior to submission.

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**5. POLICY 5 – HOMES**

- 5.1 Policy 5 identifies that proposals should address the need for homes for all sectors of the community having regard to the latest evidence which is to be supported.

**Affordable housing**

- 5.2 Paragraph 271 of the GNLP indicates that the SHMA had identified a need for 11,030 affordable homes over the period 2015-38 and that this represents 28% of the total housing need at that point. Figure 83 of the SHMA actually identifies a need for 11,030 affordable homes over the period to 2036 rather than 2038 as set out in paragraph 4.102. Figure 83 also identifies that there was a need for 39,486 homes, of which 11,030 represents 28%, in the absence of any consideration of economic signals. The SHMA proceeds to identify in Figure 96 that there was actually a need for 44,714 homes to ensure a sufficient workforce to support the City Deal. The need for 11,030 affordable homes therefore only represents 25% of the total housing need identified in the SHMA for the period 2015-36. Paragraph 271 will therefore need to be revised accordingly.
- 5.3 The GNLP now proposes to deliver 49,492 homes over the period 2018-38 as compared to the need identified in the SHMA for 44,174 homes over the period 2015-36. If this is achieved, this will have beneficial effects on the accessibility of the housing market compared to that assumed in the SHMA such that it would be expected that a lower proportion of households will fall into affordable housing need. As such, the need for 25% affordable housing identified in the SHMA should be treated as a maximum.
- 5.4 From Table 6 of the GNLP it can be calculated that there it is proposed that 44,252 homes will be delivered over the period 2020-38. As set out, the available evidence indicates that there is a need for at most 25% of this to be delivered as affordable housing, or at most a need for 11,063 affordable homes.
- 5.5 Policy 5 only requires affordable housing to be provided on major development sites of 10 dwellings or more which will include all of the new allocations and a proportion of the existing commitments. The new allocations will contribute 10,704 homes according to Table 6 and the existing commitments will contribute 31,452. The latest Annual Monitoring Report indicates that 1,625 of the existing commitments are on sites of 9 homes or less and so the available evidence indicates that circa 40,531 homes will arise from major development sites if the trajectory is achieved.
- 5.6 Therefore to deliver the full affordable housing need of 11,063 affordable homes even assuming that all of this is delivered on the 40,531 homes proposed to be delivered on major development sites without any contribution from small exceptions sites, it would only be necessary for 27% of housing to be provided as affordable housing on these major development sites.



5.7 Policy 5 however requires the delivery of at least 33% affordable housing on major development sites except in Norwich City Centre where at least 28% affordable housing is required. The available evidence demonstrates that this level of affordable housing is not required.

5.8 Therefore, this aspect of Policy 5 is not justified and is therefore not sound.

5.9 *Recommendation:* In order to address this it will be necessary to either recalculate the affordable housing needs based on the planned supply and then set affordable housing policies accordingly, or to reduce the affordable housing requirement within Policy 5 to 25%. However, this is not to say that the provision of additional affordable housing requirement in excess of this level should not be supported such as that proposed by Pigeon.

### **Specialist Housing**

5.10 Paragraph 275 of the GNLP sets out an objective to reduce the dependency upon residential care homes and nursing homes by supporting people to remain in their own homes or supported housing. This is welcomed because of the associated mental and physical health benefits that such independence can provide to the older population. However, it should be acknowledged that places in specialist residential institutions will remain necessary for some of the population who have particular care needs.

5.11 As set out in response to Policy 1 the housing requirement takes no account of the number of older people in need of accommodation in residential institutions. If some of the people that were forecast to be in need of a place in a residential institution are able remain in their homes or supported housing, then this similarly places a greater demand for homes in the form of supported housing than provided for by the standard method. This objective therefore makes no difference to the preceding representations on the housing requirement as it will still be necessary to provide additional accommodation for the same population whether in supported housing or residential institutions.

5.12 Paragraph 276 of the GNLP identifies a need for 3,857 specialist retirement units in the plan area over the period 2020-38 based on evidence which is not currently publicly available. It is unclear from this paragraph whether the reference to specialist retirement units includes or excludes residential institutions or whether this reflects only the need for supported accommodation such as sheltered housing, assisted living and extra care housing. The necessary evidence will need to be published to justify the identified need and to clarify precisely which forms of accommodation this includes.

5.13 Paragraph 277 then identifies that the GNLP contains allocations to provide such accommodation at Colney Hall, Taverham, Aylsham, Harleston and Barrack Street, Norwich. The proposed allocation at Barrack Street, Norwich (GNLP0409) however makes no reference to the provision of retirement housing. Paragraph 277 will therefore need to be modified to address this error. The remaining proposed allocations provide:

- (i) a dementia care unit of approximately 80 beds and approximately 120 units of extra care at Colney Hall (GNLP0253),
- (ii) 1,400 homes including an unspecified amount of specialist care housing at Land between Fir Covert Road and Reephams Road, Taverham (GNLP0337),
- (iii) a 90 bed care unit/extra care housing at Land at Norwich Road, Aylsham (GNLP0596), and
- (iv) a 90 unit extra care housing scheme at Land at Briar Farm, Harleston (GNLP2136).

5.14 In combination, these therefore provide for circa 170 beds in residential institutions<sup>9</sup>, 210 extra care units and the opportunity for an unspecified number of specialist units but almost certainly significantly less than 1,400 at Taverham. There therefore clearly remains a significant unmet need for retirement homes and/or beds in residential institutions to address the identified need for 3,857 units over the period 2020-38.

5.15 The needs identified by the GNLP is therefore not justified in the absence of the necessary evidence base, and the policies are not effective in meeting the needs of the older population contrary to paragraph 59 of the NPPF. Policy 5 is therefore not sound.

5.16 *Recommendation:* In order to provide a sound GNLP it will therefore be necessary to identify a sufficient supply of specialist retirement homes to address the needs of the population as set out in Agreement 14 of the NSPF. Such opportunities are provided by the allocation of Land west of Nelson Road, Diss.

#### **Accessible Housing**

5.17 Policy 5 requires proposals for major housing development to provide at least 20% of homes to the Building Regulation M4(2)(1) standard or any successor. This is an optional technical standard which footnote 46 of the NPPF identifies should only be applied where there is a demonstrable need. There does not appear to have been any assessment of the need or otherwise for the application of this standard within the GNLP area as whole or within individual settlements such that this part of the

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<sup>9</sup> Assuming Land at Norwich Road, Aylsham provides a 90 bed care unit rather than extra care housing.

Policy is not currently justified and is not consistent with national policy. As such this part of Policy 5 is not sound on the basis of the current evidence.

- 5.18 *Recommendation:* In order to address this it will either be necessary to demonstrate a need for accessible housing or to delete this part of the Policy.

#### **Purpose-built Student Accommodation**

- 5.19 This part of Policy 5 facilitates the delivery of the student accommodation in accordance with the UEA Development Framework which is to be supported. However, as identified in response to Policy 1, the proposed housing requirement does not reflect the need for student accommodation identified in the UEA Development Framework contrary to paragraph 61 of the NPPF.

- 5.20 The inclusion of student accommodation within Policy 5 infers that this will be counted against the housing requirement notwithstanding that the housing requirement excludes the need for student accommodation. Table 6 confirms that this is the case, as the 5,240 completions from 2018-20 includes the 1,026 student bedspaces with an appropriate conversion factor that were delivered in this period. This would be unjustified and ineffective in meeting the needs of households and/or students and therefore unsound.

- 5.21 *Recommendation:* It will therefore be necessary to increase the housing requirement to reflect the needs of students.

#### **Self/Custom-Build**

- 5.22 Paragraph 61 of the NPPF requires that the need for self/custom-build housing is assessed and reflected in planning policies. Contrary to the requirement of national policy, no such assessment has been undertaken in the GNLP. As a result, the requirement of Policy 5 that at least 5% of plots on proposals of 40 dwellings are provided as self/custom-build plots is not justified.

- 5.23 Many households seeking to build their own homes wish to do so on plots in rural areas or villages, and less so in more urbanised locations. Therefore the approach of Policy 5 to seek such provision on every development of 40 dwellings or more regardless of location is not justified and nor will it be effective in meeting the need for such plots.

- 5.24 Therefore, it is considered that once the need for self-build plots has been established, the requirement to deliver these should be specific to individual allocations to ensure that the needs will be met across the GNLP area and that these will be met at locations and at scales which are likely to be attractive to the self-build market.

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- 5.25 The GNLP does not propose any allocations at Brundall and numerous other settlements as set out in Policy 7.3. As a result the GNLP makes no provision for self/custom-build plots in these settlements to respond to any local needs. This is not justified and will not meet needs contrary to the NPPF. It will therefore either be necessary to allocate sites in these settlements or to identify Development Management policies to facilitate the delivery of such plots on unallocated sites.
- 5.26 Furthermore, in order to provide the flexibility to adapt to rapid change as required by national policy such as an increased need for such plots, Development Management policies should allow self-build schemes to come forward where they are well related to settlement boundaries and have access to a range of services and facilities.
- 5.27 *Recommendation:* In order to address the needs with sufficient flexibility, the needs will have to be identified, allocations proposed to respond to these needs and then in addition the provision of such plots will need to be facilitated through Development Management policies.

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**6. POLICY 7.1 – NORWICH URBAN AREA INCLUDING THE FRINGE PARISHES**

- 6.1 As set out in response to Policy 1, a disproportionate 66% to 70% of the supply of housing in the GNLP is proposed in the Norwich Urban Area. This is not only unsustainable as described previously, as acknowledged in the Sustainability Appraisal it is also unlikely to be developable both as a result of market saturation which arises from focussing so much development in a single settlement but also for site specific reasons as set out below.

Northern City Centre Strategic Regeneration Area

- 6.2 Paragraph 318 identifies that the brownfield redevelopment of Anglia Square will act as a catalyst for the delivery of other sites within the Northern City Centre strategic regeneration area. As acknowledged in paragraph 320 of the GNLP a planning application for the redevelopment of this site has recently been refused by the Secretary of State. As a result, there is a significant barrier to the delivery of this site. The applicants have lodged a legal challenge to the decision of the Secretary of State but until this has been concluded the proposed development cannot be considered to be developable in accordance with the presumption of regularity. This is also likely to affect the developability of the remaining sites in the Northern City Centre Strategic Regeneration Area which were planned to deliver a total of 1,558 homes during the plan period.

- 6.3 Even if evidence is able to be provided which demonstrates that the applicants are committed to progressing an alternative scheme if their challenge is unsuccessful, paragraph 320 recognises that the delivery of this scheme will be dependent upon public support which cannot be relied upon. Even if it is demonstrated that this funding will be secured, the resultant delays are likely to be significant and the supply within the plan period reduced accordingly. However, at present given the decision of the Secretary of State and the absence of the necessary funding, this site and potentially the remainder of the Strategic Regeneration Area should not be considered to be developable.

East Norwich Strategic Regeneration Area

- 6.4 Paragraph 333 of the GNLP identifies the long-term potential to deliver a new urban quarter at East Norwich Strategic Regeneration Area comprising brownfield sites including Yare at Carrow Works, the Deal Ground, the Utilities Site and land in front of ATB Laurence Scott. No evidence is provided that the named sites can deliver in the plan period up to 2038. Policy 7.1 proposes that the development of these sites is not only a long-term prospect but also that it will be dependent upon a master planned approach to be secured through a future Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The requirement for a future SPD prevents development in the short-term and also creates uncertainty which will disincentivise interested parties from investing in these sites for at least the

short-term. Even assuming that the landowners are committed to the delivery of these schemes in the longer term this will therefore significantly delay the implementation of these sites. Robust evidence would need to be provided to demonstrate that notwithstanding these constraints, the sites will be viable and likely to deliver within the plan period. It is of particular note that the viability of this proposal has not been assessed in the Viability Assessment.

- 6.5 The GNLP is correct to suggest that East Norwich represents a long term growth option as even without such a reliance upon future documents, the brownfield regeneration of historic industrial and former manufacturing areas takes many years of concerted effort, often with the intervention of the public sector to address funding gaps owing to constraints such as contamination, heritage and flood risk.
- 6.6 Much of the East Norwich Strategic Growth Area is located adjacent to existing water courses including the Rivers Wensum and Yare therefore flood risk will represent an issue with regard to delivery.
- 6.7 Furthermore, the available evidence does nothing to suggest that these sites will come forward as described below.
- 6.8 Outline planning permission was granted at the Deal Ground in 2013 but no applications for the approval of reserved matters or for the discharge of conditions have since been submitted in the subsequent 7 years. This is not only indicative of the length of time that it can take to resolve issues on large brownfield sites prior to delivery, it may also be symptomatic of a particular issue on this site which may not be able to be resolved. Once again, there is no evidence as to what has prevented the delivery of this site, whether this has now been resolved or therefore that this site will deliver during the plan period.
- 6.9 Similarly, the Utilities site was subject to a planning application in 2015 which was then withdrawn owing to funding issues. There is no evidence that these issues have been resolved and that accordingly this site may be able to be developed during the plan period.
- 6.10 Carrow Works and Land in front of ATB Laurence Scott do not even appear to be subject to planning applications at present and there is no evidence that these will contribute to the developable supply.

#### Other new allocations

- 6.11 Policy 7.1 then identifies a supply of 200 homes arising from new allocations at Colney. The only proposed allocation that delivers any residential units at Colney is GNLP0253 which provides for a dementia care unit of approximately 80 beds and approximately 120 units of extra care housing. As

set out in the PPG (68-035) the contribution made to the supply from the dementia care unit should be based on the amount of accommodation released in the housing market namely 109 homes and not the 200 homes as assumed in Policy 7.1. Furthermore, this site was previously subject to a planning application including the provision of a healthcare campus (use class C2) which was refused in 2013. There is no planning application before the Council and no evidence that this site will contribute to the developable supply.

6.12 Similarly, Policy 7.1 identifies a supply of 1,417 homes at Taverham on new allocations, 1,400 of which are assumed to arise from GNLPO337R and 12 from GNLPO159R. No other allocations are proposed to deliver the remaining 5 homes. This is presumably an error within Policy 7.1 which in the absence of any evidence in support of any of the identified supply casts doubt on the reliability of the figures. The 1,400 homes proposed at GNLPO337R are also not the subject of any planning application currently and there is no evidence that this site will deliver within the plan period.

6.13 It is therefore clear that even based on the insufficient evidence that is available, the supply identified in Policy 7.1 has been over-stated and that in reality the developable supply will be lower.

#### Existing commitments

6.14 Policy 7.1 also relies upon the delivery of 26,019 homes on existing commitments. As set out previously these individual specific sites are not set out within the evidence base contrary to paragraph 67 of the NPPF and no assessment of their developability appears to have been undertaken such that the reliance upon these is not justified, and may not be effective in achieving the proposed spatial strategy. It would however appear that this supply includes sites such as HEL1 which was allocated in 2016 but upon which no progress has been made in the subsequent five years and upon which there remains no planning application.

#### Summary

6.15 It is therefore evident that not only is the urban-focus of the GNLP unsustainable on its own terms, jeopardising the vitality of rural communities contrary to paragraph 78 of the NPPF and increasing the need to travel contrary to paragraph 103 of the NPPF, it is also unlikely to be achievable including because of the market saturation that arises from focusing development in one location, the reliance upon as yet unidentified funding streams, the dependency upon future SPDs, the absence of any progress towards delivery to date and the absence of any evidence that the identified sources of supply are developable. To compound matters it is also apparent from the limited evidence available that the identified supply has been erroneously over-inflated as described previously.

6.16 Pigeon reserves the right to comment once the necessary evidence is available.

6.17 *Recommendation:* In order to accord with national policy, support rural communities, reduce the need to travel, and provide for an achievable GNLP, it will be necessary to revisit the distribution of development. It will also be necessary to address the identified errors and to itemise the sources of supply in accordance with national policy and provide the appropriate evidence to demonstrate that these are developable including for example providing trajectories, assessing the viability of those sites with particular constraints, and providing evidence that the promoters are committed to delivery.

Contingency site

6.18 Given the record of delivery in Greater Norwich, with 23.7% of the housing requirement of the adopted development plan not having been met, the supply of the GNLP will need to be increased substantially to circa 53,207 homes. If the GNLP does not make adequate provision for this, in the alternative it will be necessary to provide mechanisms to address the likely shortfalls that will arise.

6.19 The last paragraph of Policy 7.1 responds to this and identifies a large contingency site at Costessey within the Norwich Urban Area to be brought forward if delivery of housing in the GNLP does not meet local plan targets. This simply compounds all of the issues of soundness identified above. For example, if the targets are not met through delays to the implementation of sites outside of the Norwich Urban Area this contingency site would serve to focus delivery at the Urban Area to an even greater extent such that the GNLP would be even less sustainable.

6.20 This proposal to identify a contingency site in the Norwich Urban Area would be circular, as the likely under-delivery will arise owing to too much development being focussed at the Norwich Urban Area.

6.21 In order to be effective, the GNLP should identify a developable supply that is robust rather than relying upon contingency sites. If having identified a robust supply, there is an under-delivery this should be addressed through an appropriate monitoring framework that would trigger a review of the GNLP. This will then allow sites in appropriate locations to be identified that are capable of addressing any under delivery. For example, if sites within the Norwich Urban Area are not coming forward to due to market saturation, then sites in sustainable locations, outside of the Norwich Urban Area, that are capable of addressing that issue could be identified an allocated.

6.22 *Recommendation:* In the first instance the necessary evidence in support of the developable supply should be published as required by national policy to accurately determine the developable supply. It will then be necessary to establish the amount of additional housing that will be required to meet the housing need in the GNLP and to provide sufficient confidence that this will actually be met which could be of the order of 53,207 homes across the plan area. An appropriate monitoring



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framework should then also be introduced to trigger an immediate focussed review of the GNLP if any shortfall arises.

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## 7. POLICY 7.2 - MAIN TOWNS

- 7.1 Paragraph 346 of the GNLP states that the Main Towns of Aylsham, Diss, Harleston, Long Stratton play *'a vital role on the rural economy'* as they *'provide employment opportunities and services for rural hinterlands'*. It goes on to say that the settlements are *'the engines of rural growth'*. Accordingly, it is necessary to make appropriate provision at these highly sustainable settlements to ensure that the rural economy is supported and that local housing needs are addressed as required by paragraphs 78 and 83 of the NPPF.
- 7.2 Nevertheless, the GNLP proposes that some of the Main Towns receive a disproportionately low level of growth including at Diss. This entirely undermines the recognition afforded to such settlements in paragraph 346 of the GNLP, it will undermine the vitality of such settlements contrary to paragraph 78 of the NPPF and it will not support a prosperous rural economy contrary to paragraph 83 of the NPPF.
- 7.3 Paragraph 354 of the GNLP recognises that Diss is *'strategically located'* benefiting from access to a mainline railway connection and acting as a hub for local bus links. In the following paragraphs, the GNLP acknowledges that Diss *'has the widest range of shops and services of the main towns'* plus a *'broad range of employment opportunities'*, that it has *'potential for economic growth as an enhanced centre serving a large rural hinterland in South Norfolk and northern Suffolk'* and that it has *'potential for jobs growth on existing undeveloped allocated employment land particularly for manufacturing, including high value activities.'*
- 7.4 Furthermore, there are a far greater number of jobs in Diss than there are workers resident in Diss such that the town is dependent upon in-commuting to maintain its economic base. This situation is likely to be compounded by the proposed delivery of an additional 10.8ha of employment land in Diss under Policy 7.2 such that in the absence of a sufficient amount of housing the need to travel will increase contrary to paragraph 103 of the NPPF.
- 7.5 In order to reduce the need to travel in accordance with paragraph 103 of the NPPF, to support the local economy and to minimise travel distances to provide for a sustainable distribution of development, it would therefore be appropriate to ensure that a sufficient supply of housing development is facilitated in Diss to redress the existing imbalance and to ensure that the additional employment land identified in the GNLP does not exacerbate this imbalance.
- 7.6 Notwithstanding its evident sustainability credentials compared to the other Main Towns and its current reliance upon in-commuting, Diss is unsustainably proposed to receive the lowest proportional growth of any of the Main Towns with only 763 homes over the plan period which equates to 0.10 home for every resident based on the figures in Table 1 of the GNLP as compared

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- to 0.43 homes for every resident in Long Stratton, 0.18 homes for every resident in Wymondham, 0.16 homes for every resident in Harleston and 0.13 homes for every resident in Aylsham.
- 7.7 The supply of 763 homes for Diss arises from 363 homes on existing commitments, the allocation of GNLPO102 for 150 homes and an allowance for 250 homes which is proposed to be addressed in the Diss Neighbourhood Plan.
- 7.8 The proposed allocation at GNLPO102 is in continuing use as an employment site by the UK's leading crop production and grain marketing business. The site provides one of the company's nationwide network of grain storage and processing facilities each of which are located in strategically placed locations to provide optimum accessibility for producers across the local area. There is no evidence that the existing occupier intends to release this site for residential development and even if this is the case there does not appear to have been any consideration of the economic effects that would arise from the loss of this employer from Diss which would be facilitated by the allocation of this site.
- 7.9 The absence of any indication that the existing occupier plans to release the site is evident from Appendix A of the Site Assessment Booklets – Tables of Allocated Sites with reasons for allocation which states that "Should the site become vacant, as appears likely, its redevelopment would be automatic to make effective use of land".
- 7.10 Even if there was any evidence that this site could be delivered within the plan period, the evidence base recognises the numerous constraints that affect this site and without any evidence that these can be satisfactorily addressed nevertheless proposes this an allocation.
- 7.11 The delivery of new residential development at the site would also be almost entirely surrounded by employment land meaning that it would be largely disconnected from neighbouring residential uses which provide for natural surveillance and reduce the potential for crime. There may be issues with residential amenity given the presence of businesses immediately on virtually all sides, each of which is likely to be served by heavy goods vehicles potentially operating throughout the day and night, with the potential for noise and air quality issues.
- 7.12 Moreover, Stage 3 of the Diss Site Assessment Booklet states that the use of the site for residential purposes is not supported by the local community and that the Town Council consider the allocation of the site to be prejudicial to the delivery of the Diss Neighbourhood Plan.
- 7.13 The Stage 6 assessment states that the loss of employment is a concern, identifies a series of constraints including in relation to impacts on the highway, noise arising from the railway line, the

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- surrounding employment uses, and contamination. It also again confirms that no documents have been submitted to support the site.
- 7.14 The proposed allocation is therefore not sustainable nor demonstrably developable. As such, it is not justified, it may not be effective in contributing to the housing supply in Diss and it would compromise the economy of the town contrary to paragraph 83 of the NPPE.
- 7.15 There are other sustainable and deliverable alternatives including land west of Nelson Road (GLNP1045) which will provide the opportunity for new homes or assisted living homes which would help meet the residual need for specialist accommodation in the Greater Norwich Area in a highly sustainable location.
- 7.16 *Recommendation:* In order to accord with national policy it will firstly be necessary to distribute a greater number of homes to Diss. Given that the proposed allocation is unsound this will need to be deleted and alternatives identified either within the GNLP or within the subsequent Diss Neighbourhood Plan.

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**8. POLICY 7.6 – PREPARING FOR NEW SETTLEMENTS**

- 8.1 Paragraph 395 of the GNLP suggests that the sustainable options for settlements extensions are diminishing. There nevertheless remain a significant number of sustainable options for settlement extensions and the ability of these to respond to any future housing requirements cannot be pre-empted without the necessary work having been undertaken. The necessity for such work is recognised in Policy 7.6.
- 8.2 Until this work has been undertaken the necessity or otherwise for a new settlement cannot be established. Once again this appears to be accepted in Policy 7.6.
- 8.3 Nevertheless, Policy 7.6 suggests that one or more new settlements will be brought forward in the next Local Plan subject to the outcomes of this work. This Policy will therefore be entirely ineffective during the current plan period as the necessary work has not been undertaken. It is therefore not sound.
- 8.4 Furthermore, we consider that there remain a large number of sustainable options for accommodating future growth within the Main Towns and Key Service Villages (as identified within the HELAA) and whilst the ability of these to accommodate future housing requirements will remain unknown until any future housing requirement has been confirmed, these highly sustainable options should be considered, at the very least, alongside any consideration of a new settlement/s.
- 8.5 *Recommendation:* Policy 7.6 should be deleted from the GNLP.

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## 9. THE SITES PLAN

### Introduction

- 9.1 The Sites Plan which accompanies the GNLP identifies the proposed new allocations and allocations which are proposed to be carried forward from the existing Development Plan.
- 9.2 The GNLP proposes one allocation at Diss at the Frontier Agriculture Ltd site but defers the identification of other sites to a subsequent Neighbourhood Plan. In Stage 3 of the Site Assessment Booklet the Town Council identify that the allocation of this site or any other site would be premature to the Diss Neighbourhood Plan.
- 9.3 Furthermore, the proposed allocation at GNLP0102 is in continuing use as an employment site by the UK's leading crop production and grain marketing business. The site provides one of the company's nationwide network of grain storage and processing facilities each of which are located in strategically placed locations to provide optimum accessibility for producers across the local area. There is no evidence that the existing occupier intends to release this site for residential development and even if this is the case there does not appear to have been any consideration of the economic effects that would arise from the loss of this employer from Diss which would be facilitated by the allocation of this site.
- 9.4 The absence of any indication that the existing occupier plans to release the site is evident from Appendix A – Tables of Allocated Sites with reasons for allocation which, states that “Should the site become vacant, as appears likely, its redevelopment would be automatic to make effective use of land”. It is clear from this statement (i.e. ‘should the site become vacant’) that its change of use from employment to residential use remains uncertain.
- 9.5 Even if there was any evidence that this site could be delivered within the plan period, the evidence base recognises the numerous constraints that affect this site and without any evidence that these can be satisfactorily addressed nevertheless proposes this an allocation.
- 9.6 The delivery of new residential development at the site would also be almost entirely surrounded by employment land meaning that it would be largely disconnected from neighbouring residential uses which provide for natural surveillance and reduce the potential for crime. There may be issues with residential amenity given the presence of businesses immediately on virtually all sides, each of which is likely to be served by heavy goods vehicles potentially operating throughout the day and night, with the potential for noise and air quality issues.

- 9.7 Moreover, Stage 3 of the Diss Site Assessment Booklet states that the use of the site for residential purposes is not supported by the local community and that the Town Council consider the allocation of the site to be prejudicial to the delivery of the Diss Neighbourhood Plan.
- 9.8 The Stage 6 assessment states that the loss of employment is a concern, identifies a series of constraints including in relation to impacts on the highway, noise arising from the railway line, the surrounding employment uses, and contamination. It also again confirms that no documents have been submitted to support the site.
- 9.9 The proposed allocation is therefore not sustainable nor demonstrably developable. As such, it is not justified, it may not be effective in contributing to the housing supply in Diss and it would compromise the economy of the town contrary to paragraph 83 of the NPPE.
- 9.10 If any sites are to be allocated at Diss in the GNLP, these should be sites which can deliver rapidly such as the Land west of Nelson Road, to secure the necessary housing supply in advance of the making of the Diss Neighbourhood Plan rather than sites which even if they are able to be delivered within the plan period will not be delivered in the short-term given the need to relocate the existing employment use and could therefore be identified appropriately in the Diss Neighbourhood Plan.
- 9.11 The Land west of Nelson Road (GNLP1045) is identified as a reasonable alternative in the Site Assessment Booklet but is not selected owing to the fact that decisions over allocations are deferred to the neighbourhood plan process according to Appendix B – Tables of Unallocated Sites with reasons for rejection. This justification applies equally to the proposed allocation of the Frontier Agriculture Ltd site even if this proposed allocation was sound. Therefore, the proposed allocation at Diss is therefore not only unsound it has not been justified on an equitable basis.
- 9.12 *Recommendation:* In order to provide a sound GNLP it will be necessary to delete allocation GNLP0102.