

Introduction

The two landowners, Norfolk County Council (NCC) and Hugh Crane Limited, are collaborating to bring forward allocations GNLPO378 and GNLP2139 as one development, as per the proposed site allocation. Along with their representatives they have selected Lovell Partnerships to masterplan and deliver the proposals.

Both parcels of land are currently farmed for arable purposes and will be made available for development when planning consent has been achieved.

On behalf of these parties, we strongly support the allocation of sites GNLPO378 and GNLP2139 for development of at least 340 homes. As demonstrated during the various Regulation 18 consultations, the site is entirely deliverable, and capable of making a significant contribution towards satisfying the Councils' housing needs during the period to 2038.

The continued suitability of the site is detailed below. In considering the suitability of the site regard has been given to the specific requirements of the draft policy. On this basis, the allocation of the two sites to the west of Acle is considered to be sound based on the test of soundness set out in paragraph 35 of the NPPF, subject to minor alterations to the wording of Policy GNLPO378R and GNLP2139.

Background

Following the initial Call for Sites process the preferred site allocations for Acle included GNLPO378 and GNLP2139. It was stated that both sites would be able to accommodate 100 dwellings, 33% of which would be affordable, associated open space and community facilities. It was further acknowledged that more homes may be accommodated, subject to an acceptable design and layout as well as infrastructure constraints.

It was recognised that in order to bring the two site allocations forward it would be necessary for the two sites to collaborate in order to deliver shared infrastructure, not limited to a road linking the Norwich Road to the south and the South Walsham Road to the north.

Since then the two landowners have continued to work together to bring the two sites forward as one allocation and have engaged Lovell to masterplan and deliver the scheme. On this basis, the identification of the two sites under one policy is fully supported.

Emerging Masterplan

The Indicative Masterplan prepared by Lovell has evolved to consider a number of the site constraints, not limited to the topography across both parcels of land. In developing the masterplan it was essential to design the link road, off which development parcels can be created and designed. There is an obvious route for the road to take, having regard to the topography.

The Indicative Masterplan demonstrates how, in accordance with draft Policy GNLPO520, the site could deliver at least 340 together with open space and community facilities. The Indicative Masterplan incorporates key infrastructure, notably the provision of a link road between Norwich

Road and South Walsham Road, and significant green infrastructure would be provided. In addition, the Indicative Masterplan demonstrates how other aspects of the policy, such as the need to not prejudice the development of Acle Academy, can be addressed.

Confirmation of Delivery

Lovell are currently working in partnership with Repton Developments, a private development company set up by Norfolk County Council, to deliver the current consent on the adjacent allocation ACL1. Construction commenced in 2020 and we are forecasting a construction programme of circa four years.

Accordingly, Lovell and Repton Developments are very familiar with the site's constraints and confirm that the proposed allocation is deliverable within the Local Plan period, having regards to its viability, suitability, availability and achievability.

Viability

The current masterplan has been designed with a key focus on a phasing strategy that enables the link road to be delivered by the development. We are confident that the delivery of the site, taking into account a phased delivery of the link road, 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.

The viability of the scheme takes into account impending changes to Building Regulations with the progression towards Future Homes.

Suitability of Site

Acle is identified as a key service centre under policy 7.3 of the Regulation 19 Publication with a range of services and facilities, including a secondary school, a primary school, a range of shops, pubs, cafes and restaurants, medical centre and a recreation centre with facilities for football, tennis, cricket and bowls.

In addition, Acle is well serviced with good transport links, benefitting from direct access to the A47, a non-stop bus link to Norwich in under 25 minutes, and a train station with an 18-minute journey to Norwich train station. Having regard to the services and facilities, and transport connections, Acle is suitable for growth. The subject site is in very close proximity to both the A47 and the train station, which are both located directly to the south.

Development to the west of Acle presents the most logical location for future growth. The land to the east is constrained by flood risk, and to the south the A47 creates a clear boundary; restricting significant growth.

The subject site by comparison is relatively unconstrained and entirely suitable for development. Furthermore, the land to the west presents an opportunity to divert traffic away from the village centre by providing a link road between the Norwich Road and the South Walsham Road.

Availability

The whole of the proposed allocation is currently farmed, within the two landowner's respective estates. The subject land represents a small part of both of their estates and none of the land within, or adjacent to the allocations, is essential for the long-term efficient operation of their estates.

Both landowners are committed to making their land available to offer the opportunity for early development (of both infrastructure and housing on the site), to help deliver the growth targets for the GNLP area.

It is anticipated that development of the site would be available and developable within the first 10 years of the Local Plan

Achievability

There are no site-specific constraints that cannot be overcome by design during the planning process, and so the development is entirely achievable within the Local Plan period.

Summary

The two landowners, together with their representatives, strongly support this allocation, and are proposing to bring this forward for development immediately. We anticipate that following receipt of planning consent, construction will commence in 2024 with a construction period of 7 years, completing in 2031.

The landowners' development partner, Lovell Partnerships, has considered the site's constraints within its masterplan and assessment of viability. The scheme is entirely deliverable, having regard to the shared infrastructure in a phased manner.

Having regard to the delivery of the shared infrastructure we consider it appropriate to amend the wording of the policy slightly, to ensure that the scheme is phased to ensure the link road is delivered by the development. The phased delivery of the link road will mean that the upfront costs are managed to ensure the scheme remains viable.

As such we recommend that point 4 should be amended to 'Provision of a link road, in accordance with an agreed phasing plan, between Norwich Road and South Walsham Road of a sufficient standard to accommodate HGV and agricultural traffic' The amendment will ensure that the policy is justified and, therefore, sound.

Policy GNLP0378R/GNLP2139R

Land west of Acle (north of Norwich Road, south of South Walsham Road, approx. 25.5 ha) is allocated for residential development. This will accommodate at least 340 homes, associated open space and community facilities.

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. Preparation of masterplan to guide the development of the two sites, submitted as part of the application for planning permission.
2. Early assessment of the junction and the A47 at this location is required.
3. The site's proximity to the Broads

The masterplan should demonstrate:

4. **A plan detailing how the site will be delivered in phases having regard to infrastructure requirements**
5. Provision of a link road between Norwich Road and South Walsham Road of a sufficient standard to accommodate HGV and agricultural traffic
6. Access (vehicular and pedestrian) provided through allocation ACL1 to the east.
7. The Public Right of Way along Mill Lane is protected for continued use as a footway and bridle path
8. Development does not prevent the potential future expansion of Acle Academy
9. Open space providing leisure opportunities and enhancing the green infrastructure network
10. Off-site requirements may include a footway along the west of Mill Lane, east at South Walsham Road and other improvements to the highway network as required by the Highway Authority.
11. Mitigation and further investigation with regards to site susceptibility to surface water flooding and any potential risk of flooding from the reservoir.

Red Text – Proposed Amendments