

STC comment on the proposed modification to GNLP0132

Sprowston Town Council is opposed to the replacement of the existing positive requirement for “a new high school” within GNLP0132 with the option to provide land for a high school “if required”.

The Town Council believes removal of the requirement to provide a new high school in Sprowston is unsound. Its reasoning is as follows:

In 2022 the existing high school in Sprowston (Sprowston Community Academy) was oversubscribed. A new high school in Sprowston is urgently required in order to meet growing demand from within Sprowston itself and the surrounding area.

All newly built housing developments in Sprowston, and those proposed to be built (see list below) are on average a 30-minute walk away from existing high schools. As a result, considerable numbers of pupils are driven to school. This causes congestion, issues with pupil road safety, parking problems and heightened emissions around local schools. These problems are particularly pronounced around Sprowston Community Academy. A high school within GNLP0132 would allow pupils from these new developments to easily walk or cycle from their homes. The commensurate reduction in vehicle trips and emissions associated with the ‘school run’ would be considerable.

An indicative list of recent and proposed housing developments within Sprowston follows:

- Manor Park; White House Farm; Miller’s Field (estates to the north of Blue Boar Lane): 2000+ homes;
- Tilia; Halsbury Homes; Barratt DWH (estates to the South of Salhouse Road): 1500+ homes;
- Proposed next phase of the White House Farm development (between Atlantic Avenue and GNLP0132): 500+ homes;
- Planned Beeston Park development: 3000+ homes.
- Proposed development on GNLP0132: 1000+ homes

The above is in addition to existing homes in Sprowston and neighbouring parishes that would find a high school in GNLP0132 to be within walking or cycling distance.

The original vision for a new high school in GNLP0132 positioned it as a community venue for the growing population of Sprowston’s North East ward and; a much-needed “community use” sports hub serving the wider area.

Removal of the high school would leave residents of Sprowston’s North East Ward with no prospect of a community venue or hall within easy walking distance.

Formal sports pitches associated with a high school (and available for community use) are able to leverage a number of additional benefits that are unlikely to be available to any ‘stand-alone’ formal sports pitches provided through the proposed modification and designed and delivered under the policies of the adopted development plan. These additional benefits include: on-site car parking; pitches that

are protected from dogs; equipment that is protected from damage by members of the public; access to on-site changing rooms and toilet facilities. In addition, potential exists for the school to install 3G football pitches with appropriate floodlighting. This would allow it to help Sprowston's popular football clubs (some of which are amongst the largest and most short of pitches in Norfolk) by providing all weather pitches into the evenings and during the off-season.

In 2020 Sprowston Town Council conducted a survey asking Sprowston residents what new recreational facilities they would like to have in the town. The second most requested recreational facility was "a swimming pool" (the first being more areas for nature and wildlife). A new high school with a swimming pool designed from inception to be accessible by the community would go a long way to addressing the lack of a public pool in the Old Catton/Sprowston/Rackheath area.

Sprowston Town Council is disappointed that the modifications for GNLP0132 do not include firm requirements for the key items of infrastructure necessary for a sustainable, healthy and prosperous community; such as a medical centre; dentist surgery; adequate local shops; etc. Removal of the high school from GNLP0132 would only exacerbate these shortcomings.

Should the inspector be minded to approve the modifications, the Town Council respectfully asks that the following be taken into consideration:

1. The proposed modification sub-titled "Should land for a secondary school not be required the land uses shall comprise" should be amended as follows:

amend the third (last) bullet point to read:

- "Formal and informal open space, including sports pitches, **children's play space**, in accordance with the policies of the adopted development plan".

add a further bullet point/requirement:

- A suitable community building

With the above amendments, Sprowston Town Council wishes to ensure adequate space for Childrens' equipped play areas and a community venue or hall for use by residents in the locality. It is the Town Councils wish and understanding that a new high school would also function as a community venue and hall. Removal of the high school would leave the community without access to any analogous facilities, or indeed any civic or community focal point.

2. In the proposed modification sub-titled "The Requirement for a Secondary School";

remove "**1 April 2026 or**".

Sprowston Town Council concurs with Rackheath Parish Council's comments on this modification. There are simply too many variables and unknowns for the 1st April 2026 to be a realistic expiry date for the safeguard on the high school land within GNL0132.

Furthermore, setting **any** expiry date by which planning permission for a high school on GT16 must be or secured, or by which the LEA must formally decide that a secondary school in GNL0132 is not required, runs the very real risk that the area will lose out on a new high school simply by default. The Town Council is therefore opposed to any sunset clause on the safeguard. The residents and future generations of Sprowston and neighbouring parishes should be given a cast iron guarantee that a much-needed new high school will be built in the area, no matter how long that may take.

3. Irrespective of whether a high school is eventually provided in GNL0132, or Rackheath GT16; Sprowston Town Council strongly believes a foot and cycle bridge (and ideally a motor vehicle flyover) must be built over the A1270 Northern Broadway and linked to the A1151 Wroxham Road. Without a safe means of crossing the busy and dangerous A1270, access to a high school in either Rackheath or Sprowston will be severely limited for pupils living on the opposite side of the A1270. In addition; for a high school in GT16 to be readily accessible to residents on the new developments on Salhouse Road (be they in Sprowston; parts of Rackheath; Thorpe; or Great and Little Plumstead); a fully accessible crossing over the A1270 Northern Broadway at Salhouse Road would also be a necessity. Accordingly, Sprowston Town Council asks that a requirement is added to the modification to ensure any new high school in GT16 or GNL0132 is supported by provision of suitable crossings over the A1270. Building a new high school without the necessary transport infrastructure would be unsustainable and unsound.