

GNLP 2045 – Scoping Response

1. Developing the Vision and Objectives – Stoke Holy Cross Parish Council think the plan should include the following ;

Following government instruction on building new housing to meet national targets

Improving existing road networks and developing new links where necessary.

Developing a strategic transport policy to ensure commercial and private vehicles together with a dependable and financially viable public transport system are supported and improved upon.

Making sure that where new housing is built, all supporting services and infrastructure is in place to support an increasing population, this is particularly important in villages included in the GNLP.

Considering not only the impact of building on the environment and ecology, but how the plan might help to improve what we have now by protecting valuable rural landscapes such as the Tas Valley and promoting improved biodiversity.

Finally none of the above is possible without a reliable, strong local economy which provides local jobs for local people.

2. Structure – In general terms we do agree with the structure and process for this plan although one observation is the digital version is quite hard to navigate and is very wordy.

3. Growth Strategy & Settlement Hierarchy – From figures provided it appears that targets for development in Norwich Urban areas have not been met while towns, key service centres and villages have all out-performed set targets. The conclusion would be to focus on Norwich Urban areas for this Local Plan and in particular redeveloping brownfield sites. That does not mean other areas should have no development, simply that far less should be necessary for GNLP 2045.

With respect to which areas would we consider suitable for growth, we would favour more infill where possible. Eventually the availability of sites for infill and redevelopment sites will reduce. Due to the targets set, the only obvious answer would be to build an entirely new settlement.

4. Site Allocation – n/a at this stage

5. Local Specific Policies – The village of Stoke Holy Cross lies on one side of the Tas Valley, an important and rare chalk stream habitat. In the South Norfolk Landscape Assessment Report, South Norfolk Council refer to this as a “*pastoral valley floor with grazing cattle and distinctive willow pollards lining the watercourses on the valley floor.*” It should be noted that the overall landscape strategy “*is to conserve the peaceful, rural quality of the Tas Valley*”

5. Housing – Stoke Holy Cross has had a significant numbers of new houses over the past decade (53 new properties on Broomefield Estate, Hopkins Homes, and 24 on Harrold Place, Ingram Homes). As a village with one shop, one restaurant and one fish and chip shop, there are few opportunities for employment meaning, in most cases people must commute to work and the unreliable nature of the bus service causes residents without their own vehicles

significant stress. The local bus company runs a limited service often cancels at short notice or changes the route so buses arrive with no room to pick up more passengers. Local public transport is not fit for purpose for people who rely on it and this should be a priority.

A policy of gradually increasing the number of dwellings means developers are not required to add amenities even if they could afford to. Over time, this has had a cumulative impact: more houses mean more residents mean more demand on local services and infrastructure while services and infrastructure remain unchanged.

As a Parish Council, we are not averse to new housing and accept this is driven by a national housing strategy however, we do not believe it is viable to add to housing unless it goes hand in hand with significant investment in :

The road network

Bus services – requires significant improvement.

Health Services – Doctors Surgery, Dentists, Ambulance Services etc

Schools – currently our primary school has capacity but Framingham Earl High School does not

Recreational Facilities for all ages

Shops

Footpaths and walkways

Protection of local habitats

Police

Without investment we believe continued development of villages using undeveloped (agricultural) land does not fit within the policy framework of the Local Plan. For example, adding housing to villages does not use brownfield sites, it forces people to drive for work, education and shopping adding to congestion and climate change through emissions and has a detrimental effect on valuable local habitats.

6. The Economy – The Parish Council recognises the need for a strong economy. Due to the rural nature of South Norfolk, local employment is quite limited outside Norwich but there is work in agriculture and tourism with a particular strength around nature and ecology which could be developed further. Norfolk is a fascinating landscape with a rich mix of wildlife and a history which people are keen to visit and experience.

The Parish Council would welcome help from this plan in supporting small businesses and startups to develop, support for training and personal development.

7. Infrastructure – The residents of Stoke Holy Cross experience regular road closures caused by water mains failures due to issues with infrastructure. This prevents public transport from running reliably and means people are unable get to work, school, college or keep appointments. As mentioned in the Housing section, the unreliability of the bus service causes significant disruption and stress for the residents who rely on it.

In South Norfolk, 10.5% of households do not own a car or van. Only 6% of households are less than a 15 minute walk from a railway station. An overarching theme of the draft NPPF is that

sustainable transport should be considered at the earliest stages of planning. There is little detail in the GNLP that identifies transport infrastructure to support development in villages.

Residents have experienced flooding in the lowest part of Stoke Holy Cross (on Mill Green) with foul water coming out of drains during heavy rain. Although work was carried out to alleviate local flooding, we were advised that the foul water pumping station near Stoke Mill was at or near capacity and was unable to cope with excess water during heavy rainfall. This demonstrates that infrastructure design dating back many years cannot cope with increased housing, in this case the addition of the Broomefield Estate and Harrold Place developments had an upsetting knock on effect for residents elsewhere in the village. While water utility companies are legally obliged to supply fresh water and treat waste water to new developments there are limitations. We would ask that both planners and utility companies consider the effect of increased housing on existing systems, working together at the planning stage to avoid such incidents with future development.

In the past 18 – 24 months we have experienced more frequent power outages and mobile phone signal failures. Together with the aforementioned flooding, these are signs that local services are becoming overwhelmed. It is unsustainable to continue to load up systems and services without investing in the resources required to cope with additional demand.

When considering green infrastructure and achieving sustainable development by maximising the potential for growth on suitable land within settlements, enabling development which will support the rural economy, rural communities and the provision of infrastructure limiting development away from settlements help safeguard the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

8. The Environment – As touched on in “Local Specific Policies” the environment directly south of Norwich City is a fragile and valuable landscape. The village of Stoke Holy Cross sits on one side of the Tas Valley looking to the west. Separated by fields, to the east and part of the parish is Upper Stoke which links to Poringland further east still. It is quite unusual for a parish to have two settlements within and in many ways, that is another feature which adds to its charm.

In order to retain the sense of identity, a community such as Stoke Holy Cross cannot merge into the ever expanding city limits. As we know, we all need to play a part in reducing carbon dioxide emissions and one way to easily do so is to reduce the number of vehicle on the roads. By having a policy of encouraging bus companies to increase the regularity of buses and perhaps use slightly smaller vehicles on rural routes it would encourage people in rural locations to leave their own vehicles at home or even give them up completely. This would have the added benefit of reducing congestion and improving safety.

Despite Stoke Holy Cross being in a rural setting, there are surprisingly few public footpaths or green spaces. More development would inevitably put the space we have under even more pressure. As it is, people will get in their cars to drive to High Ash Farm, Dunstan Common and the Roman Town at Caistor. People without their own transport find it extremely difficult to access these spaces.