

Greater Norwich Local Plan - New Settlements Topic Paper

Background

1. This paper adds further detail to paragraphs 4.58 to 4.64 of the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) Regulation 18 consultation document to assist responses to be made to question 12 on the potential for a new settlement in Greater Norwich.
2. To do this, it provides information on the Government's initiative to promote the development of new Garden Villages and Towns, examples of other new settlement initiatives in the region, and sets out suggestions for how potential locations for new settlement scale development could be assessed through the GNLP.
3. The government defines a Garden Village as new a settlement of between 1,500 and 10,000 homes and a Garden Town as a new settlement of more than 10,000 homes. The Greater Norwich Development Partnership (GNDP) favours a minimum size for a new settlement of 2,000 homes because this would better support a primary school, a small range of local shops and other services.
4. Two new settlement scale locations have been submitted through the Call for Sites for consideration for inclusion in the GNLP. These are a proposal around Honingham Thorpe to the west of Norwich and on land between Wymondham and Hethel. These sites are included in the Regulation 18 GNLP public consultation available from the [GNLP web site](#).
5. It is possible that additional sites with the potential for new settlement scale development could be submitted for consideration for inclusion in the GNLP through the Regulation 18 consultation or that additional sites could be identified through the plan making process.
6. Emerging New Town Development Corporation powers being established by the Government will provide a powerful tool to enable new settlements to be promoted by local councils.

Existing and emerging government policy

7. Existing and emerging government policy in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the 2017 Housing White Paper (HWP) support the development of new settlements built to Garden City principles (see Appendix 1 for a summary of the principles).
8. Existing national policy on new settlements in paragraph 52 of the NPPF states that:
The supply of new homes can sometimes be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or extensions to existing villages and towns that follow the principles of Garden Cities. Working with the support of their communities, local planning authorities should consider whether such opportunities provide the best way of achieving sustainable development. In doing

so, they should consider whether it is appropriate to establish Green Belt around or adjoining any such new development.

9. The HWP, providing more recent information on the direction of travel of government policy, states that:
Well-planned, well-designed, new communities have an important part to play in meeting our long-term housing needs. Provided they are supported by the necessary infrastructure, they are often more popular with local communities than piecemeal expansion of existing settlements.
10. Further to this, the HWP states government will support the delivery of new communities based on Garden City principles by:
 - ensuring that decisions on infrastructure investment take better account of the opportunities to support new communities;
 - legislating to enable the creation of locally accountable New Town Development Corporations *enabling local areas to use them as the delivery vehicle if they wish to* through changes to the New Towns Act, and
 - amending the NPPF to encourage a more proactive approach by authorities to bringing forward new settlements in their plans, as one means by which housing requirements can be addressed.
11. In January 2017 government announced¹ access to a £6 million fund over the next 2 financial years to support the delivery of 14 new garden villages. In addition to funding, the government has committed to providing support in terms of expertise, brokerage and the offer of new planning freedoms to support housing growth including, for example, ensuring that there is greater ability to resist speculative residential planning applications.
12. The funding document stated that a dedicated delivery vehicle (publicly-led bodies, public-private partnership arrangements or a statutory development corporation) could assist delivery. Expressions of interest for funding were required to be led by local authorities, with support from private sector developers and/or landowners.
13. The Government also stated that it may run a further call for expressions of interest for other places with proposals for new garden villages and that such projects will also have access to infrastructure funding programmes across government.
14. The prioritisation criteria for the funding document set out further detail on what government views as the key elements which new garden settlements must have:
 - Local leadership and community support (with Local Economic Partnership (LEP) support for larger settlements);
 - High quality, attractive and innovative design with significant green spaces and gardens;
 - Make use of public sector and brownfield land where possible;
 - Provide for local demand;
 - Viable and capable of accelerated delivery;

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/first-ever-garden-villages-named-with-government-support>

- Provide for starter homes, small builders and self-build;
- Assess and provide for infrastructure needs.

15. This approach has received broad support, most notably from the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA).

The size of new garden settlements

16. As set out above, Garden Villages are defined as settlements of 1,500/2,000 and 10,000 homes and Garden Towns as a development of more than 10,000 homes.

17. In order to have its own distinctive identity, to assist in supporting its own services, to provide for high quality green infrastructure and possibly a Green Belt as suggested for consideration in the NPPF, a new settlement built to Garden City principles should be freestanding rather than an extension to an existing urban area or large village. A freestanding new settlement is also more likely to have the opportunity of securing government funding.

18. Any freestanding sites of below 1,500/2,000 dwellings would be highly unlikely to be able to support new services and would consequently be an isolated group of houses in the open countryside. Such a scale of new settlement could not be built to Garden City principles.

19. Two long term approaches can be taken to different scales of freestanding new garden villages:

- a. Establish a small scale “freestanding linked new settlement” of 1,500/2,000 to 5,000 homes which would support local services such as a bus service, a primary school, local shops and community facilities and green spaces, but would generally have to rely on a neighbouring settlement or settlements for higher order functions such as a secondary school, significant employment and larger scale retail and community facilities. Such a scale of development could provide a sustainable community but would not be able to be fully built to Garden City principles which require the creation of a self-supporting mixed use community. As a rule of thumb based on regional and national examples, it is estimated that a “freestanding linked new settlement” would require from 200 to 500 hectares of land.
- b. Establish a larger scale freestanding new garden village of 5,000 dwellings plus which would rely on a neighbouring settlement for higher order functions in the early years of development until a critical mass of development is built. When fully developed in the long term the settlement would provide for most of its day to day needs within the new community, except the highest level facilities provided in and around a regional centre such as Norwich. Larger scale new settlements can provide a high quality public transport system, such as Bus Rapid Transit (if close to an existing

network), a secondary school², significant employment and larger scale retail and community facilities. This would enable the creation of a self-supporting, mixed use community built to Garden City principles. It is estimated that a larger scale freestanding new settlement would require at least 500 hectares of land.

The potential for new settlements

20. Greater Norwich has an established network of defined main towns, Aylsham, Diss, Harleston and Wymondham and key service centres (Acle, Blofield, Brundall, Hethersett, Hingham, Loddon/Chedgrave, Long Stratton, Pringland/Framingham Earl, Reepham and Wroxham). Significant growth is identified for and allocated around these centres and on the fringe of Norwich, most notably to the north east, through the JCS and other plans. Whilst there is currently no evidence that there is a need for the development of an additional town, the development of a freestanding new garden village could reduce the need for further allocations on greenfield sites around these locations through the GNLP.
21. Current evidence shows that the additional housing requirement for Greater Norwich from 2015 to 2036 to be identified through the GNLP through strategic growth location options is 3,900 dwellings³. Two of the growth options include the potential for a new settlement in or close to main transport corridors to provide 500 dwellings by 2036. This would meet around 1% of the total housing growth need to 2036 for Greater Norwich.
22. It is important to note that new settlements can be an expensive and slow means of meeting housing need. Their delivery can be risky and unpredictable and providing infrastructure to support them risks reducing funding for potentially more sustainably located extensions to existing settlements. New settlements are most likely to be developed in areas where there:
 - is major economic growth,
 - is significant demand for new housing, a buoyant and viable housing market and developer support for a new settlement;
 - are not obvious alternative locations for growth through extensions to existing settlements due to local constraints such as Green Belts, environmental constraints and designations restrictive to large scale development such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty or National Parks;
 - are local opportunities such as sustainably located ex-military bases.

² Secondary schools are widely recognised as being a key element of a large scale sustainable community. Research indicates that a minimum of 7-8,000 dwellings are required to provide a new secondary school of a scale that can deliver a wide curriculum. The North-east Growth Triangle in Broadland is planned to be of sufficient scale to support a secondary school. However, there is the potential to provide “all through schools” in smaller settlements as planned at Upper Heyford in Oxfordshire, which is planned for 5,000 homes.

³ See Reg. 18 consultation document at <http://www.gnlp.org.uk/>

23. Experience elsewhere in the region in Cambridgeshire provides examples. Cambridge has limited room for expansion and is surrounded by an extensive Green Belt, thus limiting the amount of sites available for urban extensions. In addition, there are large ex-military sites in sustainable locations available for development, there is a very high demand for new homes in this area with a rapidly expanding economy and development is highly viable. Growing and planned new settlements include:
- a. **Cambourne**, on the A428, which initially had a projected size of 4,250 dwellings, with a 2011 population of around 8,200. Two thousand additional dwellings, along with two additional primary schools, a second secondary school, an athletics track and funding towards a swimming pool, have recently been approved.
 - b. **Northstowe** which is planned to be a town of 10,000 homes, 11,000 jobs, convenience retailing, six primary schools, a secondary school, a post-16 education facility and a guided busway to Cambridge and Huntingdon on a former railway line.
 - c. **Alconbury Weald**, a former airfield adjacent to the A14 and the A141 north of Huntingdon. An outline planning application has been submitted for 5,000 homes to be delivered over 20 years. Homes will be built mainly at medium and low densities, with 10% apartments. The settlement will include local centres with primary schools and local services.
 - d. **Wyton Airfield**, between Huntingdon and St. Ives, which has been declared surplus to Ministry of Defence requirements. Crest Nicholson have consulted on a masterplan for 250 hectares of brownfield land for 4,500 new homes; 10 hectares of employment land; a local centre; primary and secondary schools; green infrastructure and sports facilities and transport improvements including links to the guided busway. Huntingdonshire District Council is supportive of the principle of the development of a new settlement, but will not include it in its local plan until funding is available for the road infrastructure required.
24. North Essex is also an area with highly viable development in a rapidly growing economy with very high demand for new homes. Three large new settlements in the early stage of planning known as the "[North Essex Garden Communities](#)" are along the A120 road:
- a. West of Braintree (which could deliver up to 10,000 homes);
 - b. West of Colchester (up to 24,000 homes);
 - c. East of Colchester (up to 9,000 homes).
25. A joint company has been formed by the four local authorities⁴ to take forward the North Essex proposals. The councils will act as lead developer to ensure the new communities adhere to Garden City principles, to promote an "infrastructure first" approach and to control the speed of build. Local plans promoting the new settlements are close to submission and it is anticipated that development will commence in 2021.

⁴ Braintree, Tendring and Colchester districts and Essex County Council.

26. Since new settlements require significant investment in infrastructure, they can be challenging to deliver if effective mechanisms for securing the uplift in land values and to assist in providing infrastructure are not put in place. Therefore it is expected that a legal agreement would be required to ensure sufficient investment is available for any new settlements to be taken forward through the plan making process. If this is not achieved then there is the very real risk that Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) or other funding that could support potentially better value for money growth elsewhere might be diverted to a new settlement.
27. Any new settlement development, particularly a larger scale garden village or town, would be a long term project continuing well beyond the GNLP end date of 2036. However, as promoted by the HWP, new settlement development using the type of public sector intervention envisaged by the government through revisions to the New Towns Act could speed up delivery. In parallel with this, a positive approach to investing the uplift in the value of land resulting from its allocation back into the development from the landowner and developer could significantly speed up delivery. This further confirms that it is very likely that any new settlement allocation would need to be accompanied by a legal agreement to ensure that land value uplifts are invested in the new community.

Assessing proposed locations in Greater Norwich

28. As referenced in paragraph 3 above, two sites submitted through the Call for Sites potentially provide the amount of land that could support a new settlement. These are at Honingham Thorpe (including land in Barford, Easton, Marlingford and Colton) and land to the west of Hethel and east of Wymondham.
29. The Honingham Thorpe site (site reference GNLP 0415 A to G in the Site Proposals document) is 360 hectares and is proposed for housing (4,000 homes), employment and a country park.
30. The Hethel site (site reference GNLP1055 West of Hethel, Stanfield Hall Estate, Stanfield Road) is 364 hectares and is proposed to be a garden village with housing, hi-tech employment uses and community facilities.
31. Site maps are available in the Site Proposals consultation document available from the [GNLP web site](#).
32. Other potential sites may be identified, possibly through the Regulation 18 consultation and emerging powers flagged up through the HWP for land assembly, strongly suggest that government considers that other locations could also be considered.
33. In 2012 an evidence study was done for Greater Norwich to assess the potential for a new settlement to the south of Norwich, around Mangreen. It looked at three options:

- i. 1,800 dwellings – expansion of Swardeston and Mulbarton;
 - ii. 7,000 dwellings – new town south and east of Swardeston;
 - iii. 7,000 dwellings – a new town between Swardeston, Swainsthorpe and Mulbarton.
34. The study concluded that while there would be no problems for the sites associated with water supply, waste water, flood risk or waste disposal, it was not possible to recommend one option over another. A key conclusion identified was that there were significant transport constraints related to crossing the Norwich - London railway line and linking to the A140.
35. No sites have been submitted in the immediate Mangreen area through the Call for Sites for the GNLP. Significant sites have been submitted to the east and north of Mulbarton, totalling 155 hectares, however this is below the minimum new settlement site size of 200 hectares identified above. In addition, transport constraints restrict the potential for development in this area, particularly as there are generally significant costs associated with providing new roads which cross railways.
36. The following broad criteria, which can be amended further as necessary, could be used to assess the suitability of locations for new settlement development through the GNLP:
- a. Sufficient land has been submitted for the development of a freestanding garden village consisting of a minimum of 2,000 homes, along with a primary school, local employment, green infrastructure and a local retail centre;
 - b. The site could have the potential to be expanded in the longer term to provide a larger freestanding community with a greater variety of services;
 - c. There is easy access, particularly on foot and by bicycle, to primary and secondary schools and an existing range of retail, health and leisure services in an existing settlement to support the early years of development of the community and to provide choice;
 - d. Market interest in providing new settlement scale development in the location can be proved, with clear evidence of the viability and deliverability;
 - e. There is the potential for high quality public transport access. This could be a bus rapid transit (BRT) route, a high quality bus route or a railway station with good existing services, or the capacity for a reasonable level of service;
 - f. There is good access to the primary/trunk road network including the A47, A11, A140, A143, A146, A1270 (NDR);
 - g. There is easy access to strategic employment locations;
 - h. The site is in the ownership of a limited number of owners or there is potential for a legally enforceable land equalisation agreement for a number of landowners to work together;
 - i. There is a commitment to achieving high quality, imaginative and sustainable design and to build the settlement to Garden City principles;
 - j. The landowner/developer/consortium is committed to having a strong vision and to ongoing community engagement;

- k. There is a commitment to working with the councils to sign a legal agreement to establish a delivery vehicle, to invest much of the uplift in land value into infrastructure on-site, to community ownership of land and a long term commitment to stewardship of assets;
- l. The site will provide for a broad mix of housing types and tenures including starter homes and opportunities for self-build;
- m. The site can support generous provision of open space including a strong Green Infrastructure network that incorporates existing features and provides effective links to surrounding areas;
- n. The site has the potential to be developed without having a negative impact on areas designated for their local, national or international environmental value and would not be in an area of significant landscape sensitivity;
- o. The site will not be subject to conflicts with existing uses which could not be readily be mitigated;
- p. The site would minimise the use of high quality agricultural land;
- q. There are limited flood risk areas and the site could readily be designed to increase impermeable surfaces;
- r. The site would have not have negative impact on defined heritage assets;
- s. Development of the site would not lead to the sterilisation of mineral assets.

Conclusion

37. In addition to the submitted site for new settlements at Honingham Thorpe and between Wymondham and Hethel, other areas may be submitted through the Regulation 18 consultation. Emerging powers for land assembly suggest that further areas with potential for new settlement development could be considered, providing they meet the criteria set out in this paper.
38. At this point in time the overall case for a new settlement in Greater Norwich is by no means clear. There are not the local constraints to developing sustainable locations on the edge of existing settlements in Greater Norwich that apply in some other parts of the region and the country. The need to identify sites for 3,900 additional dwellings through the growth options in the GNLP could arguably be more sustainably and cost effectively achieved through the development of alternative sites rather than focussing on new settlements which could be difficult and costly to get off the ground.
39. Therefore, given the difficulty in providing infrastructure to support new settlement growth, and to avoid having a negative impact on other growth promoted through the GNLP, it is essential that a legal commitment is made by landowners and prospective developers with the councils if a new settlement is to be progressed. This would involve a commitment to re-invest substantial amounts of the profit resulting from the uplift in land values following the granting of any planning permission into the long term provision of infrastructure to support a new settlement.

Appendix 1 Garden City Principles

The Town and Country Planning Association defines Garden City principles as:

A Garden City is a holistically planned new settlement which enhances the natural environment and offers high-quality affordable housing and locally accessible work in beautiful, healthy and sociable communities. The Garden City principles are an indivisible and interlocking framework for their delivery, and include:

- *Land value capture for the benefit of the community;*
- *Strong vision, leadership and community engagement;*
- *Community ownership of land and long-term stewardship of assets;*
- *Mixed-tenure homes and housing types that are genuinely affordable;*
- *A wide range of local jobs in the Garden City within easy commuting distance of homes;*
- *Beautifully and imaginatively designed homes with gardens, combining the best of town and country to create healthy communities, and including opportunities to grow food;*
- *Development that enhances the natural environment, providing a comprehensive green infrastructure network and net biodiversity gains, and that uses zero-carbon and energy-positive technology to ensure climate resilience;*
- *Strong cultural, recreational and shopping facilities in walkable, vibrant, sociable neighbourhoods;*
- *Integrated and accessible transport systems, with walking, cycling and public transport designed to be the most attractive forms of local transport.*