

1. What is the South Norfolk Village Clusters Housing Allocations Plan?

The South Norfolk Village Clusters Housing Allocations Plan (VCHAP) is a document that seeks to identify, or allocate, a series of smaller sites across the villages within the South Norfolk District in order to accommodate a minimum of 1,200 new homes.

The VCHAP is being prepared by South Norfolk Council and it is being developed alongside the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP).

The GNLP is being produced by Broadland District Council, Norwich City Council and South Norfolk Council working together with Norfolk County Council through the Greater Norwich Development Partnership (GNDP). The GNLP plans for the housing and jobs needs of the area to 2038. The GNLP sets out the requirement for the number of homes that need to be delivered as part of the VCHAP.

2. Who is making this VCHAP plan?

The Village Clusters Plan is being prepared by South Norfolk District Council. The development of the plan is overseen by the Regulation and Planning Policy Committee.

3. How do the GNLP and the VCHAP relate to one another?

The Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) is being produced by Broadland District Council, Norwich City Council and South Norfolk Council working together with Norfolk County Council through the Greater Norwich Development Partnership (GNDP). The Broads Authority is also part of the GNDP but produces a separate local plan.

The GNLP identifies the homes, jobs and infrastructure that needs to be planned for across the South Norfolk, Broadland and Norwich between now and 2038. The GNLP also provides updated policies to help guide and shape development. The GNLP is consistent with Government's planning policies as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The Regulation 19 Pre-Submission version of the Draft GNLP was subject to public consultation between 1st February and 22nd March 2021. It is intended that the GNLP will be submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination in July 2021.

In South Norfolk, the GNLP sets out areas for future development in the parishes situated in the Norwich fringe (such as Costessey, Cringleford and Trowse), the market towns and the larger villages (such as Hethersett and Poringland) , as well as all non-housing developments. The VCHAP deals with housing growth in the smaller rural settlements in the South Norfolk.

Policies 7.1 to 7.4 of the GNLP set out the policies for the distribution of growth across Greater Norwich Specifically, Policy 7.4 sets out the level of housing growth in the village clusters, including what is already permitted and what needs to be allocated. It notes that a separate South Norfolk Village Clusters Housing Allocations Local Plan will be produced to include sites for a minimum of 1,200 homes. This is in addition to the 1,392 homes in the South Norfolk village clusters that already had planning permission or were identified as an allocation as of 1 April 2020.

4. How does the VCHAP relate to the existing Local Plan documents?

The emerging GNLP and VCHAP documents are being prepared in the context of the existing Local Plan documents.

The current Local Plan documents in South Norfolk include:

- The Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk (2014), which sets out the strategic planning policies covering the three Districts;
- The South Norfolk Site Specific Allocations and Policies Document (2015), which sets out allocations for housing and other uses; and
- The South Norfolk Development Management Policies Document (2015) which sets out a number of non-site specific policies applicable to many types of development (highways, parking, design, landscaping, neighbour amenity etc.), as well as criteria based policies for various different types of development and policies applying to particular landscape designations.

When adopted the GNLP will replace the existing Joint Core Strategy (JCS) and will also replace those parts of the South Norfolk Site Specific Allocations and Policies Document which relate to the market towns, other larger settlements and the Norwich urban fringe in South Norfolk. The VCHAP will replace the remainder of the Site-Specific Allocations and Policies Document. The 2015 Development Management Policies Document will remain current until those policies are subject to review.

5. How does the VCHAP relate to both existing and emerging Neighbourhood Plans?

Some Town and Parish Councils have adopted Neighbourhood Plans in place whilst others are continuing to work on the production of their Neighbourhood Plans. These Neighbourhood Plan documents sit alongside the Local Plan and when adopted are also taken into account in determining planning applications. Most of these Neighbourhood Plans include more detailed Development Management policies that aim to shape development proposals to better reflect local circumstances.

Neighbourhood Plans can also allocate housing sites. Two emerging Neighbourhood Plans within the South Norfolk District are proposing to make their own housing allocations. These Neighbourhood Plans are (1) Dickleburgh & Rushall Neighbourhood Plan and (2) The Diss & District Neighbourhood Plan (covering the villages of Burston, Scole and Roydon).

Decisions relating to the allocation of these sites will be undertaken through the relevant Neighbourhood Plan. Sites promoted to SNC within these areas have been forwarded to the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Groups, they are also listed in the relevant section of the consultation document, but no conclusions or preferences are set out.

6. What is a 'Village Cluster'?

A 'village cluster' is a group of villages that share a range of services and facilities. Village clusters have been defined largely on the basis of primary school catchment areas, which are considered to provide a benchmark for social sustainability.

A total of 48 village cluster areas have been identified throughout the District. The parishes that fall in different clusters are set out in the consultation document.

The market towns, larger villages and the parishes situated in the Norwich urban fringe do not form part of a village cluster. These areas are being dealt with separately through the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP); however some Village Clusters are centred around a Primary School which is located in one of those larger settlements..

7. How much more housing is being planned and why?

The principal aim of the Village Cluster Housing Allocation Plan (VCHAP) is to allocate a series of smaller sites to accommodate a minimum of 1,200 new homes across the villages within the South Norfolk District, in accordance with the requirements of the GNLP. The GNLP requirements derive from the Government's method for calculating Local Housing Need for the area.

Locating this level of growth in village clusters aims to promote social sustainability by supporting rural life and services. The provision of a range of relatively small allocation sites is also an expectation of the National Planning Policy Framework. This approach helps to support small and medium size builders, providing choice for the market and helping to ensure the delivery of housing in popular village locations.

The policies proposed within the VCHAP also aim to provide a range of sizes and tenures of new homes to meet needs of current and future residents in village clusters, including the provision of affordable housing.

In addition, people's recent experience of the Covid-19 pandemic has also driven an increased interest in homes in rural locations, which have easy access to the countryside. This increased interest is also fuelled by changing patterns of work, including an increased desire and understanding of the opportunity for remote home working enabled by improved communications, meaning that this increased demand for more rural locations could be set to continue well into the future.

8. What will be the impact on the countryside?

The majority of the sites being considered with the Village Cluster Housing Allocation Plan (VCHAP) are undeveloped sites on the edges of existing villages. The plan seeks to protect the countryside by choosing development sites that are well related to existing development as opposed to being in remote open countryside. The plan also take care to protected important landscapes, plants and wildlife.

9. There are not enough GPs at the local medical centre – how will they cope if more houses are built?

The NHS has programmes in place to address the current pressures on healthcare services. This includes new ways of working, use of new technology, and of course recruiting more doctors. Locally too, NHS organisations under the Norfolk and Waveney Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP), are finding ways to help keep people well, expand healthcare services, and to ensure services are better coordinated.

The Norfolk Health Protocol is a collaboration and engagement protocol between local planning authorities, the Norfolk and Waveney STP, clinical commissioning groups, health partners and Public Health Norfolk which seeks to plan for future growth and to promote wellbeing. By working together with local planning authorities NHS organisations can be clear about the locations and timing of new housing and jobs, and this enables informed decision-making about how and when to expand health facilities.

10. Will infrastructure and services be able to cope with the additional development?

Most of the allocations proposed within the South Norfolk Village Cluster Housing Allocations Plan (VCHAP) are relatively small scale. Therefore, in many instances this type of development is unlikely to have a significant impact on existing infrastructure and services. Some services like shops and pubs may benefit from additional customers.

The Council is however engaging with a number of services providers as part of the production of the plan, this includes the Clinical Commissioning Group, Norfolk County Council in its role as Education, Highway and Lead Local Flood Authority and Anglian Water. This will ensure that infrastructure issues are identified and understood as part of the plan making process.

The development of certain sites will require some local infrastructure upgrades, for example an extension of a footway to link the site to the village. The current consultation offers people the opportunity to indicate where there are specific requirements needed to enable the development of a particular site to happen.

All of the planned developments will also need to contribute to CIL and, in certain circumstances, contribute to infrastructure through S106 agreements. These contributions can be used to help ensure local infrastructure effectively supports growth.

11. What do the titles 'Regulation 18' and 'Regulation 19' mean and what happens next?

The regulation numbers come from the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. This is one of the main laws controlling plan making, which dictates the processes we must follow to prepare a local plan. The plan also has to be consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which sets out the government's planning policies for England.

Regulation 18 requires that the public, and a range of other stakeholders (e.g. parish councils, regulatory bodies, utility providers, developers/landowners etc.) be notified that the council is preparing a plan and that they are invited to comment about what that plan ought to contain.

Regulation 19 is a more formal stage that follows on from Regulation 18. Regulation 19 is not a consultation per se but rather allows stakeholders to submit representations in respect of whether the plan is: 1) legally and procedurally compliant; 2) Sound*; and 3) in compliance with the Duty to Cooperate. Representations made at Regulation 19 will be considered as part of any the independent examination into the Plan.

*Soundness is defined in paragraph 35 of the NPPF and requires a Local Plan to be positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy.

Following the Regulation 19 stage the Council will submit its final version of the VCHAP to an Inspector for independent examination. The Inspector will assess whether the Plan has met the three tests noted above.. Following the examination, the Inspector will advise whether or not the Plan can be adopted, and whether any amendments need to be made to the Plan.

12. What evidence have you based your decisions on?

To date over 450 sites have been promoted to the Council consideration. The starting point for site assessments has been the Norfolk-wide Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) Methodology (2016). This has been agreed as part of the Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework process and is considered to be consistent with Government guidance. The Norfolk HELAA methodology also forms the basis of the GNLP site assessments.

Whilst assessment against the HELAA methodology provides a starting point, the full site assessment is a more detailed process which includes looking at the planning history of the

site, undertaking a site visit and applying some more detailed and criteria specific to the VCHAP. The detailed criteria used to assess sites was agreed by the members of South Norfolk's Regulation and Planning Policy Committee in May 2020.

The assessment of sites was also supported by a technical consultation with both internal consultees on landscape, heritage and environmental protection issues, as well as a range of external stakeholders, on issues such as highways, utilities and minerals and waste. The technical consultation included issues such as flood risk and ecology, although further detailed technical comments on these issues are expected to be provided in response to this consultation.

13. What are the supporting documents to the VCHAP?

The following documents have been prepared to accompany this plan, these are listed below, and you are able to make comments on these documents as part of this consultation:

- Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Report

The SA is an appraisal of the economic, environmental and social effects of a plan from the outset of the preparation process to allow decisions to be made that accord with sustainable development.

- Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA)

Councils are required by law to prepare an HRA that assesses the impact of a local plan on sites that are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, these are known as "Habitat Sites". The legislation requires that an 'appropriate assessment' is carried out for plans or project that are likely to have a significant effect on a Habitat Site or Sites. This process requires detailed consideration of the potential for the plan or project, taking account of the mitigation proposed, to affect the conservation objectives of the site(s) concerned, to ensure no no significant impact will occur.

- Site Assessment Booklets and Map Booklets

The Site Assessment Booklets contain all the site assessment forms that have been carried out (including preferred, shortlisted and rejected sites) as part of the VCHAP. These are grouped together by village cluster.

Maps of all of the sites have been prepared. These are also grouped together by cluster. Map booklets include individual settlement maps within the cluster showing each of the promoted sites within a settlement as well as an overall cluster scale map which shows all sites promoted within a cluster.

- The Equalities Impact Assessment (EquIA)

Local authorities are required to undertake an EquIA under The Equality Act 2010; this stems from the duty placed on local authorities to eliminate unlawful discrimination in carrying out its functions, and to promote equality of opportunity.

This EquIA reviews the first stage of The Village Clusters Plan preparation (Regulation 18) in order to assess any potential impact on equalities of the Objectives

for the Village Clusters Plan and the Core Policies being proposed to be included in the plan and from the methods of consultation.

- Statement of Consultation

Local Plan documents are required to have undergone suitable community and stakeholder involvement in their preparation, as required by Regulation 18 of the Town and Country (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The details of who will be involved in the process of local plan document production, using different methods and at different stages, is set out in South Norfolk Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), adopted in 2017 (with amendments in 2019 and 2020).

This Statement of Consultation details the programme of community and stakeholder consultation that has been carried out in the development of the South Norfolk Village Clusters Housing Allocations document.

- Greater Norwich Water Cycle Study

This Outline Water Cycle Study (WCS) forms an important part of the evidence base that will help the authorities determine the most appropriate options for development (with respect to water infrastructure and the water environment) to be identified in the new Local Plan.

Planned future development throughout the study area has been assessed with regards to water supply capacity, wastewater capacity and associated environmental capacity. Any water quality issues arising, water infrastructure upgrades and potential constraints have subsequently been identified and reported, wherever possible. This WCS then provides information at a level suitable to demonstrate that there are workable solutions to key constraints to deliver future development.

- Greater Norwich Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (Level 1) (2017)

This document was prepared as a Final Report for the Greater Norwich Partnership. The main purpose of this 2017 SFRA is to inform the selection of options for the Local Plan allocations and support determination of planning applications within the Great Norwich area.

- Greater Norwich Local Plan Viability Appraisal (2020)

This demonstrates that the type of sites being allocated through the Village Clusters Plan can be viably delivered with the relevant supporting infrastructure and affordable housing.

14. Where are we now and how do I comment?

We are currently at the Regulation 18 public consultation stage of the VCHAP. This consultation sets out the proposed Objectives for the VCHAP, as well as a set of Core Policies that will apply to all of the preferred allocation sites. The Core Policies cover standard requirements to deliver sustainable development, housing mix on preferred sites, and design standards

The Council has assessed almost 450 sites for possible inclusion in the VCHAP and, following this detailed assessment, the Regulation 18 consultation categorises sites as 'Preferred', 'Shortlisted (reasonable alternative)' or 'Rejected (unreasonable)' and seeks your comments on these.

This consultation offers you the opportunity to comment on those sites that have been selected by the Council as preferred options for allocation. It also gives you the chance to comment on sites that have not been selected as preferred sites or submit alternative sites, not yet considered

Finally, you also have the opportunity to comment on the Sustainability Appraisal and Habitat Regulations Assessment that has been prepared alongside the plan.

To make comments, please visit the 'Have Your Say' console, within the virtual exhibition hall or direct from the website at www.south-norfolk.gov.uk/document/1. This will take you to our online consultation system, where you can find the part of the plan you wish to comment on, write your comments and submit them. You will be required to register with the system in order to submit your response.

The Consultation runs from 9am Monday 7 June to 5pm on Monday 2 August.

If you have difficulties in making your comments then please contact the Place Shaping Team on 01508 533805, localplan.snc@southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk, or via a webchat through the virtual exhibition between 10am and 2pm on Tuesdays and 2pm and 6pm on Thursdays throughout the consultation.