

Proposed Residential Development On land at Church Road, Woodton

Submission of Representations relating to South Norfolk Village Clusters Housing Allocations Plan (Reg 18 Draft)

on behalf of EA Mayhew and Sons Ltd and ESCO Developments

Ltd

Ref: 027457

Site ref: SN0278

REPRESENTATIONS TO SOUTH NORFOLK VILLAGE CLUSTERS HOUSING ALLOCATIONS PLAN (REG 18 DRAFT) AUGUST 2021

Land at Church Road, Woodton (Ref: SN0278)

Introduction

1. The following comments are submitted in support of the allocation of the land at Church Road, Woodton (Ref: SN0278) for housing.
2. Representations for this site were submitted to the previous Reg 18 Consultation rounds for the Draft Local Plan in March 2020, and previously in May 2019.
3. The following Representations both reiterate information already submitted in support of the site, as well as comments on the status of the site in light of the current consultation.

Comments on Draft Village Clusters Document

4. The main aim of the Plan is to allocate a series of smaller sites, typically within the range of 12 to 50 homes, across the 48 Village Clusters in South Norfolk in order to provide at least 1,200 new homes in accordance with the requirements of Draft Greater Norwich Local Plan Policy 7.4. The intention is to distribute development across the District in order to support the sustainability of rural settlements and address the needs of small and medium developers, in line with the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (hereinafter 'NPPF').
5. The Plan has sought to assess parishes, in unison and individually, in terms of their provision of local services and facilities. In line with the approach as set out within the Greater Norwich Local Plan (hereinafter 'GNLP') each of the 'Clusters' are centred around the local primary school, with the associated catchment areas serving as a proxy for social sustainability. The availability of other services and facilities has also been considered, and has informed the site assessment process. The assessment has been informed by the Norfolk-wide Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) Methodology (2016), site visit, planning history, and Landscape Character Assessment amongst others.
6. Woodton is identified as forming part of the village cluster that includes Woodton and Bedingham. The cluster is identified as having a pub, church, post office, village hall, primary school and playing field. In addition, a café, farm shop and delicatessen are provided at Old Hall Farm, north of the village.
7. The Village Clusters plan should be read alongside the Emerging Draft Local Plan which states that, for those sites that make the best use of the site available and are able to offer additional benefits, a larger number of units will be considered. Whilst the majority of sites will be in the 12 - 25 units range on sites of up to 1 hectare, there will be circumstances where a larger site may be the most appropriate option, including where the site clearly makes the best use of the site available.
8. We agree with the allocation of the site south of Church Road (0278). However, we believe the site can accommodate in the order of 50 units, to include the entire site, as set out in the accompanying plan which shows the development in two phases.
9. The clusters document states that the development of the south of the site may be acceptable should better links with the south of the village be made available through the development of the site. The development of the site would provide a pedestrian link to the rest of the village, which was put forward as part of the previous representations. This is discussed in more detail in the

following sections. However, in essence, it is considered that the land proposed at Woodton is extremely well placed, given its location next to the primary school, its sustainable location, plus the benefits the scheme would bring to the village. As previously documented, the development of the entire site south of Church Road would enable the benefits to be brought forward and would allow a more comprehensive scheme that would focus development to the south of Church Road. The benefits and justification for a scheme of 50 units are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Layout

10. The layout submitted shows a proposed scheme of approximately 50 units, over two phases. The scheme includes a range of dwelling sizes and types proposed, vehicular and pedestrian access, areas of open space, walks, and a community garden, which the school children would have access to.

11. Areas of public open space would be provided to the east, and south in the form of a meadow with a walkway connecting the site to Woodyard Square and the village beyond. The areas to the east would act as buffers between the proposal scheme and those properties to the east that back onto the site. A community garden is also proposed to the east of the site, which would be used by the residents of the scheme as an amenity area or to grow produce, and would also be available for the primary school to use.

12. The southern area provides a meadow creating a communal green space for informal children's play area as well as dog walking, and a pedestrian link to the south of the site which would link through the Woodyard Square close to the south west corner of the proposed development. This would provide a key alternative pedestrian link from the village to the primary school, thereby providing an alternative safe route to the school both for the rest of the village and the future occupants.

Figure 1: indicative layout for 25 units (Phase 1)





Figure 2: indicative layout for 50 units
(Phase 1 and 2)



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Highway access

13. Vehicular access is provided directly off Church Road (B1527) and a footway constructed on the south side of Church Road from the access to the B1332. This is in addition to the footpath across the recreational ground to the school. The development will not generate significant amounts of traffic movements and roads in the area are suitable to accommodate this modest increase.

14. It is also proposed to reduce the speed limit (from 40mph to 30mph) along the B1332. A review of the existing vehicle actuated sign and signs/markings will also be undertaken to optimise compliance with the proposed speed limit reduction.

15. As previously discussed, a new pedestrian link will be provided to the south of the site, which will connect the site to the rest of the village through the Woodyard Square development.

16. As such, it is considered that the development can be delivered with no detriment to the highway network. A highways technical note is provided as supplementary information.

Benefits/Impact

Access to services/Facilities

17. Woodton is described in the current Local Plan as a Service Village. It benefits from a pub, church, post office/shop, village hall, primary school and playing field. A café, farm shop and delicatessen are provided at Old Hall Farm, north of the village. The village's pub and existing shop is about 350m from the site and would be readily accessible from it on foot or by bicycle.

18. There are frequent bus services running from the village to Norwich City Centre, Bungay and Halesworth (Konect Service 87, 88 and 88X), with some services running on Sunday. The nearest main bus stops to the site are located (via new footway link) approximately 300m to the east on Norwich Road, opposite and adjacent to Woodton Primary School. With further bus stops located in the village centre (a bus stop is also located on Church Road). Norwich train station is located approximately 16.7km, and the railway station in Beccles is located approximately 17.9km from the site, both offering services operating to London.

19. The B1527 provides a link to the A140 and Long Stratton to the west, whilst the B1332 to the east of the village provides links to Norwich and Bungay.

20. Woodton is located a short distance to the north-west of the market town of Bungay, which provides a range of higher order services including retail, leisure and social facilities, as well as employment. Bungay is approximately 8.5km away from the proposed site.

21. Accordingly, it is considered that the proposed development would benefit from good access to local services, and would accord with local and national planning policies which indicate that to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Given their accessibility, existing local businesses and services would be likely to derive support from the development due to the addition to the local economy of the spending power of new residents. In these respects, the proposal would support the social and economic dimensions of sustainability as defined in the NPPF.

Scheme benefits

22. The proposed development for 50 units would deliver a range of property types, open space, a community garden, pedestrian links and walks. Discussions are also ongoing with the school as to how the development could assist with improvements to the school, along with discussions with the landowner regarding the provision of a potential shop. The promoter has worked with the landowner, school, playing field committee and Saffron Homes throughout the formation of the

development scheme to bring forward a cohesive proposal, which has benefits to the village at its core.

23. The scheme also has the potential to bring about opportunities for self-build units, as well as potential live work units, given the shift in requirements since the pandemic.

24. Not only is the site in very close proximity to the school, but provides a safe walking route for the rest of the village, avoiding the B1332. This not only connects the village to the development but provides a direct and safe walking route to the primary school, a key test in the cluster village assessment. The pedestrian links to the south also provide connectivity from the rest of the village to the playing field and the school.

25. This community centred scheme, therefore, brings about significant benefits for the village and the school, as well as providing a well-designed, sustainable housing scheme that makes the best possible use of the available site. The scheme is capable of bringing forward sufficient housing numbers within a single site to meet the requirements and expectations for the Woodton cluster.

Heritage assets

26. There are two listed buildings in the vicinity of the site, The Manor Farmhouse, which is located approximately 195m away to the north, and The Old Rectory, which is located 195m away to the north-east of the site on Norwich Road. The significance of these Grade II listed brick and timber framed houses appears to derive principally from their architectural form/details and historic fabric, together with their setting in grounds on the edge of the village. Given the separation of these listed buildings from the site and the screening effects of intervening vegetation, it is considered that the proposed development would not have a material impact on the setting of either of the listed buildings. Several other listed buildings north and south off Norwich Road have sufficient screening effects of vegetation.

Landscape/Local Character

27. The land proposed for development comprises an open field located just off Church Road to the north of the village. The proposed development would be located slightly to the east opposite to existing residential development and is well related to the school, so would not appear out of place. From Norwich Road, views of the proposed houses would be limited as the site will be screened by a series of established hedgerows and trees. Consequently, whilst the proposal would inevitably result in a loss of openness from Church Road, its impact on the landscape setting of the village and the character of the area generally would be extremely limited.

28. The established pattern of development in the vicinity is mixed, but is made up predominantly of detached and semi-detached houses and bungalows set in good sized plots. The village has a predominantly nucleated settlement pattern based around Hempnall Road, The Street, Triple Plea Road and Chapel Hill. Some limited estate scale development has taken place in the village. The proposal would not appear out of place with this pattern of existing development, but would also have its own character, offering a scheme that provides key services for existing and future residents as well as a community centred development encouraging walking and central shared spaces for the occupants. The development would be well screened.

Utilities Infrastructure

29. It is not considered that there is any fundamental impediment to the delivery of the site through any constraints relating to utilities infrastructure. The increase in capacity can be built into the new development. The attached supplementary information in relation to Utilities confirms the capacity for the scheme. Early consultation with Anglian Water has confirmed that there is capacity for the

amount of dwellings proposed. The attached report from Anglian Water confirms the capacity, following consultation with Utilities Consultants.

Flooding

30. The site falls entirely within Flood Risk Zone 1. As such, the site is at the lowest risk of flooding. However, further technical work, including a site-specific flood risk assessment, would be commissioned with any forthcoming planning application to demonstrate that the proposed development would not be at risk of flooding or be likely to result in an increased flood risk elsewhere in the locality. The attached supplementary information demonstrates the site's minimal risk of flooding.

Delivery of development

31. As already noted, no significant infrastructure constraints have been identified to date which would be likely to delay or impede the development of the site for housing. The site is in a single ownership and no further land is needed to enable the land to be brought forward for development. The land is currently available for development and so, subject to approval being given, could deliver housing in the short term.

32. A developer has been identified (Saffron Housing) to partner with ESCO Developments Ltd throughout the process and any future planning application. This adds a greater level of certainty in terms of the delivery of the development. The attached letter from Saffron Housing demonstrates their commitment to this site and the ability to deliver the development within the next 3 years.

33. The proposed development would make a positive contribution to the supply of high quality housing in the area and could facilitate improvements to the local utilities capacity. The proposal would also add to the range of housing sites available in the locality, providing flexibility and a wider choice of development opportunities to the market, and thus strengthening the local supply of housing land. By providing sufficient land of the right type in the right place to support growth, the development would address the economic dimension of sustainable development, as defined in the NPPF.