



Land East of Norwich Road, Scole

1. Hopkins Homes are providing this consultation response in reply to the Regulation 19 Consultation of the emerging South Norfolk Village Clusters Housing Allocations Document by the requested submission deadline of 8th March 2023.
2. Hopkins Homes Ltd is the largest independent house building company in East Anglia with a reputation for delivering well designed, high quality residential and mixed-use development harmonising with its local context. In the past decade the company has succeeded in delivering sustainable developments which improve neighbourhoods, improve local infrastructure and add to local distinctiveness throughout South Norfolk and the wider Greater Norwich area.
3. We are aware that the proposed site allocations for Scole are being deferred to the emerging Diss & District Neighbourhood Plan, and in this regard, we are engaging with both Scole Parish Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to discuss potential development options on land east of Norwich Road, as shown below.



4. The land is the subject of an option agreement between the landowners and Hopkins Homes Ltd and has the potential to accommodate circa 110 dwellings, together with up to 1.7Ha of associated public open space.
5. The 5.2ha site is immediately to the north of the allocated housing site in the adopted Local Plan (Ref: SCO1). The site is bordered by existing residential development, together with the Village Hall and associated recreational playing fields to the south. Residential development, together with the village Primary School, lie along the opposite side of Norwich Road to the west, whilst the site is

largely enclosed by strong existing boundary hedging and trees, enabling it to sit quietly within its surroundings, with little by way of wider visual impact.

6. The proposed development of the site shown on the concept plan below would enable this limited visual impact to be maintained.



7. Whilst the Neighbourhood Plan is making clear and positive progress, in the event that circumstances changed and the Neighbourhood Plan did not progress as expected, the site could form part of the emerging South Norfolk Village Clusters Housing Allocations Document, with the settlement limit for the village extended to encompass the totality of this site.
8. The site is considered deliverable in that it is available now, in a suitable location and achievable with a realistic prospect of development being delivered well within the next 5 years.
9. The NPPF 2021 makes it clear at Paragraph 71 that *'Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services.'*



10. Scole has been previously classified as a 'Service Village' but it more readily functions as a 'Key Service Centre' village, whereby day to day services and facilities are close at hand such that development here would be in tune with the Core Planning Principles of the NPPF.
11. It has a population of close to 1,400 residents and approaching 600 dwellings. The village is well served by local education, sports and community facilities with good transport links to the nearby market town of Diss. The current local plan would see only 20 homes added to the housing stock over a 15-year period and this must be regarded as disproportionately low in the context of the growth aspirations of the Greater Norwich region in general.
12. Whilst planning application timeframes would need to be further discussed with the District Council having regard to Local Plan progress, theoretically, Hopkins Homes Ltd could progress an application on this site without delay, such that it could assist housing delivery within the next five years (with a projected delivery of 45 homes per full year).
13. In relation to biodiversity impacts, Hopkins Homes would submit that the development could be beneficial in that the biodiversity of the site is low and relatively benign at present, as highlighted by the recently undertaken Preliminary Ecological Assessment, which accompanies these Representations. The new development would add planting and native landscaping which would aid biodiversity objectives.
14. The site has also been the subject of a Desk-based Archaeological Assessment, which likewise confirms that whilst within an area of some archaeological interest, there are nonetheless unlikely to be any major archaeological constraints which would prevent the development of this site.
15. The site is within walking and cycling distance of key services, with the village benefitting from a Primary School, Village Hall, Public House and convenience store, with the market town of Diss less than two miles from the site.
16. There are no drainage or physical infrastructure issues which cannot be overcome by standard engineering solutions, thus the site is demonstrably deliverable in a sustainable and technically appropriate manner.
17. In conclusion, Hopkins Homes Ltd supports new housing development in Scole and will continue to engage with Scole Parish Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group regarding development opportunities.
18. Whilst the current omission of the site from the South Norfolk Village Clusters Housing Allocations Document is not considered to make the Document unsound, in the event that circumstances change and the Neighbourhood Plan is not progressed as expected, the site could be proposed as an Allocation within the emerging South Norfolk Village Clusters Housing Allocations Document, with the settlement limit for the village correspondingly extended to encompass the totality of this site.