

## Proposed Residential Development On land south of Wicklewood Primary School, Wicklewood

### Representations in respect of the South Norfolk Village Clusters Housing Allocations Plan (Reg 19 Draft)

on behalf of Mr and Mrs A Cook

Ref: 043841

Site ref: VC WIC1

## REPRESENTATIONS TO VILLAGE CLUSTERS HOUSING ALLOCATIONS PLAN (REG 19 DRAFT)

### Land to the south of Wicklewood Primary School, Wicklewood (Ref: VC WIC1)

#### Introduction

**1.1** Brown & Co are instructed on behalf of Mr and Mrs A Cook to respond to the pre-submission draft Village Clusters Housing Allocations Plan (VCHAP) that is currently at its Regulation 19 consultation stage. Mr and Mrs Cook are promoting the site to the south of the primary school – Site Ref: **VC WIC1**.

**1.2** The Reg 19 VCHAP has the following draft policy for this site:

#### **Policy VC WIC1: Land to the south of Wicklewood Primary School**

1.63ha is allocated for up to 30 dwellings

The development of the site will be required to ensure:

- Landscaping of the southern and western boundaries of the site, respecting the need to integrate the site with the surrounding open rural landscape, as well as the retention and reinforcement of the existing hedgerow along the northern boundary;
- A layout that includes an area of open space around the existing village sign to create a gateway into the settlement;
- Off site highway works to include localised carriageway widening of The Green to a width of 5.5m between the site entrance and Hackford Road, a footpath along the site frontage to connect with Wicklewood Primary School and a crossing point across Hackford Road to improve connectivity to the existing settlement.

**1.3** Representations have previously been made during the ‘call for Sites’ consultation as part of the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP). The VCHAP has now reached Regulation 19 of its preparation, and the purpose of this consultation relates to the ‘Tests of Soundness’ and includes legal compliance as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. Representations to the Regulation 19 version of the VCHAP can only be made in relation to the legal compliance and soundness of the Plan, in other words whether the Plan has been appropriately prepared in accordance with all relevant procedural and legal requirements, and whether it meets the tests of soundness within paragraph 35 of the National Planning Policy Framework (hereinafter ‘NPPF’).

The purpose of this representation is to:

- a) **Support** the continued allocation of the site for residential development and to confirm that Mr and Mrs Cook are committed to working with the Council to deliver the aspirations as set out in draft Policy VC WIC1;
- b) **Suggest additional** wording of the proposed policy and propose alternative wording and seek amendments to the text to ensure that the policy is justified and effective; and

- c) **Respond** to other policies of relevance to delivering our proposals, where comment is necessary.

The VCHAP sets out three objectives:

**Objective 1 – Meet housing needs.** Deliver housing in accordance with GNLP housing target for the South Norfolk Village Clusters through the allocation of suitable, viable and deliverable development sites housing. (1200 new homes). Provide an appropriate mix of house types, sizes and tenures to allow for residents at different parts of life cycle e.g., first time buyers, those seeking family housing and those looking to downsize or move to more suitable accommodation in later life. Provide opportunities for ‘self-builds’ through the extension or amendment of settlement boundaries to allow ‘in-fill’ development in appropriate locations.

**Objective 2 – Protecting village communities and support rural services and facilities.** Provide opportunities for new housing development in a range of settlements within the village clusters, meeting the needs of a range of occupiers with the potential to support different local services and facilities and infrastructure where justified and appropriate.

**Objective 3 – Protect the character of villages and their settings.** Ensure that the scale, location and density of housing is well related to the form and character of existing villages, protects the historic environment, including protected landscapes, and ensures appropriate landscaping measures are delivered as part of new development.

**1.4** It is considered that the draft VCHAP is basically sound, as the strategy proposed is essentially justified and effective and provides a range of sites by which growth can come forward. The land south of the Primary School, offers an appropriate opportunity to deliver growth in a manner that is appropriate to the sustainable objectives of the emerging VCHAP and the NPPF. By undertaking this form of development on this site in a sustainable manner it would support the objectives of the emerging VCHAP.

## 2. Comments on the proposed strategy

### Justified

**2.1** The NPPF indicates that, to be justified, a Plan should set an appropriate strategy based on robust and credible evidence, with suitable consideration given to reasonable alternatives. It is considered that the proposed strategy is compatible with the overall purpose of the plan, in particular the delivery of sustainable development. The VCHAP aims to deliver sustainable growth in the villages of South Norfolk, the aim of which echoes Government planning policy set out in the NPPF. Paragraph 79 of the NPPF states that:

*‘To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services. Where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby’*

**2.2** We believe therefore that the proposed strategy should focus on delivering a range of opportunities for development across the village clusters to ensure the delivery of growth in a sustainable manner. In essence, the growth needs to connect and enhance existing local services and access areas of open space and access to the countryside.

**2.3** The site is well placed to meet the VCHAP objectives, providing a range of house types, from smaller properties to larger, with the potential for self build plots. This mix of house types, sizes and tenures will allow for a range of future residents, from first time buyers to those seeking accommodation later in life.

**2.4** The VCHAP identifies Wicklewood as having a good range of facilities including a primary school, village hall, recreation field and a pub. There is also a regular bus service to Norwich and Wymondham. The settlement also lies in close proximity to the main settlement of Wymondham where a large range of services exist. The site is adjacent to the primary school, which goes to the very heart of the village clusters ethos. As such, the site is well placed to meet objective 2, which seeks to ensure that local services, facilities and infrastructure are supported.

**2.5** In order to meet climate change targets, housing need, and support sustainable growth, more is required than delivering housing units. Rather, the focus is shifted to the creation of beautiful places and vibrant, resilient communities. Residential development on this site can deliver a range of housing opportunities as well as significantly contribute to the green infrastructure and enhance the ecological value of the area. The site provides opportunities for enhanced landscaping through the provision of public open space, walks and wooded areas, thereby respecting the surrounding rural landscape and enhancing the space. The plan below at Figure 1 shows the proposed indicative layout.

### Effective

**2.6** In order to be considered effective, the NPPF states that the proposed strategy should be deliverable over the plan period. We believe with a suitably designed scheme, which recognises the constraints of the site could be delivered in such a way as to minimise landscape harm with the ecological and recreational benefits it potentially would bring. For the purposes of paragraph 47 of the NPPF, the site is deliverable as it is available now; achievable with a realistic prospect of delivering housing within five years.

**2.7** We are currently undertaking technical studies in relation to highways and landscape We do not believe there are any serious obstacles in delivering this site. There are no significant physical constraints to the development of the site and we are confident that this site can deliver housing units in the lifetime of the Plan.

**2.8** Demonstrating deliverability is fundamental to achieving a sustainable, well-planned development. As has been evidenced with Local Plans across the country, proposed allocations, particularly those for large-scale housing, can falter where it is considered that sufficient work has not been undertaken to robustly demonstrate their viability or deliverability. In order to provide an effective strategy that would deliver the requisite housing within the plan period to meet local needs, it is considered necessary to provide a range of sites to create a number of outlets for growth to ensure growth is achieved through the Plan period.

**2.9** The proposal site is within single landownership, as a result of which, there would be no disputes regarding which elements of the development come forward first, no time-consuming discussions around equalisation, and no negotiations over the distribution of infrastructure cost, all of which can cause significant delay and even permanently stall projects.

### 3. Proposed amendments to Policy

**3.1** We wish to see the following changes to the wording of the policy

**3.2** We agree with the allocation of the site. However, we believe an additional policy element should be added to allow for an extension to the proposed boundary to allow for a more comprehensive area of tree belt and open space to the south and west of the site.

**3.3** We believe that this change is necessary for the development of the site. Whilst we appreciate a notional boundary has been suggested, there is flexibility due to the family ownership and the need to ensure sufficient landscaping and open space. The plan below shows the suggestions for the tree belt.



Figure 1: indicative layout

## 4 Summary

**4.1** The VCHAP in its current form is considered to be sound as the strategy adequately delivers on the overall purpose of the plan in providing a range of development, in particular ensuring sustainable development underpins development schemes. We would support the distribution of growth insofar as it seeks to support the rural communities and sustain them for the foreseeable future. This is recognised in the draft VCHAP and we support this.

**4.2** The proposed development would make a positive contribution to the provision of market and affordable housing in the area. 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.

**4.3** We consider this form of development should be considered as part of the draft allocation for this village, led by the green credentials of the locality, given its close proximity to the school. It would result in tangible benefits for the community and provide housing in a holistic and sustainable way in order to create a vibrant and resilient community.