

Planning Policy Team
South Norfolk Council
The Horizon Centre,
Broadland Business Park,
Peachman Way,
Norwich,
NR7 0WF

26th January 2024

Lanpro Project Number: 5051

Dear Planning Policy Team,

South Norfolk Villages Clusters Housing Allocations Plan – Consultation on Alternative Sites & Focused Changes (Regulation 18) – Land at Bobbins Way, Swardeston (Policy VC SWA1)

I am writing on behalf of my client Bennett Homes, who have instructed Lanpro to submit representations in relation to Land at Bobbins Way, Swardeston ('the Site') (see Appendix 1 – Land shaded in green) as part of the South Norfolk Villages Clusters Housing Allocations Plan (VCHAP) – Consultation on Alternative Sites & Focused Changes (Regulation 18).

The Consultation focuses on small number of parishes, which includes Swardeston. The consultation is a result of one site no longer being deliverable and another site's housing numbers being reduced to address heritage concerns. The consultation therefore seeks focused changes to make up the resulting shortfall in order to deliver the housing numbers required.

The Site

The Site is identified as 'VC SWA1' within the South Norfolk VCHAP (Regulation 18) and is located immediately adjacent to the settlement boundary on the eastern side of Swardeston. The Site comprises of brownfield land formerly occupied by a plant nursery, with redundant greenhouses and a former farm shop remaining on the Site.

The Site is situated between two Bennett Homes sites. 'Land off Bobbins Way' comprises of 38 dwellings and has been built out to the west and south. 'Land at the Junction of Gowthorpe Lane and Main Road' is located immediately to the north and is an allocated site and currently has a planning application under consideration for a development of 43 dwellings.

Swardeston is grouped along with Mulbarton, Bracon Ash and East Carleton to form a 'Village Cluster'. Within the village cluster a good range of services and community facilities are available. Public transportation is available approximately 350m from the Site boundary on Main Road with bus services operated by First Group (Service 37 and 37B) and Coach Services (37A). These provide a bi-hourly service between the hours of 7am and 7pm.

Representations and the Current Allocation

Lanpro have previously made representations on behalf of Bennett Homes in relation to the Site, which highlighted the lack of constraints and the potential for the Site to provide for additional dwellings. South Norfolk's VCHAP allocates 1.0ha of the Site for approximately 20 dwellings, however, land amounting to 1.6ha at the Site has previously been promoted.

The Regulation 19 Pre-submission Draft allocation wording of the VCHAP requires '*the introduction of an appropriate boundary to the east of the site to contain it within the landscape and integrate it into the rural context*'. Within the draft supporting policy wording it states that '*a contiguous boundary to the east of these sites (The Bennett Homes sites) will contain the development within the wider landscape, minimising the visual impact of the built form...*'.

Proposal

Bennett Homes continues to support the allocation of VC SWA1 for residential development. As previously set out and confirmed through the draft allocation and recent development within Swardeston, the village is considered to be a sustainable location for new housing development. Furthermore, the allocation benefits from having a reputable housebuilder onboard who has a track record of delivering high-quality residential development within Swardeston, as well as within the wider district of South Norfolk.

Whilst our client recognises the need to identify a specific area for the allocation, it is considered that the approach taken by the Council to limit the eastern boundary of the allocation to a straight line matched to that of the adjacent sites, is arbitrary. It is noted that this approach results in a 50m x 100m strip of unused land between the allocation and the field boundary being leftover, which is not considered to make efficient use of the land available.

It is considered that a more contextual approach and a more appropriate edge to the Site would be the field boundary to the east, increasing its Site from approximately 1ha to 1.6ha. Bennett Homes propose focusing residential development on the western portion of the Site (on approximately 1.2ha of the Site), providing 30 dwellings which would result in a gross density of 18.75 dwellings per hectare. The remaining land, all of which steps outside of the current proposed allocation, would be primarily used for biodiversity net gain, public open space and sustainable drainage. It is considered that this would help to provide an appropriate landscaped transition from urban to countryside on the eastern boundary, whilst also enabling an uplift in the number of houses delivered on the Site.

Bennett Homes would welcome a discussion on how this approach can be secured within any allocation wording.

Consideration of the landscape impact of increasing the size of the allocation site has been had below. Overall, there are limited locations in which a larger allocation site would be potentially visible from. It is considered that there would be no harm to any receptors to the west of the Site, as the majority of this land is already residential, and the additional land would not compromise any important or protected views.

To the east, it is considered that there are limited public vantage points from which the larger allocation would be viewable from, with any views principally from Gowthorpe Lane. However, the extensive roadside vegetation limits these views to just a single field access and a small number of residential/holiday let properties, all of which are located at least 230m away, and would view the additional land within the context of existing/allocated adjacent development.

The nearest Public Right of Way (Swardeston Footpath 6) is located 130m from the allocation boundary of the Site. Allowing a larger allocation would reduce this distance to approximately 95m. However, it is considered that a more appropriate urban to countryside transition can be established and therefore the limited amount of new build development in the landscape would be appropriately screened and reduce any potential impact on receptors using the Public Right of Way.

Further to the above, Bennett Homes wishes to make the Council aware of an additional area of land which Bennett Homes can make available for residential development (see Appendix 1 – Land shaded in red), should the Council require additional housing numbers. This Site again could be appropriately landscaped to transition from urban to countryside and could provide direct access to Swardeston Footpath 6.

Conclusion

Overall, Bennett Homes continues to support the allocation for VC SWA1 and it is considered that the Site is a sustainable location for residential development. Bennett Homes have a track record of building high-quality development within Swardeston and could deliver an additional 10 residential dwellings at the Site, helping the Council to achieve the housing numbers required within the VCHAP.

It is considered that the allocation of an additional 0.6ha at the Site would not result in any landscape harm and that the benefits of providing an urban to countryside transition could provide some enhancements, as well as the benefits of 10 additional houses. Additional land is available immediately adjacent to the allocation site, should the Council need to bolster their housing delivery.

Should you require any further information in respect of the Site, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely,

Dean Starkey

Dean Starkey MRTPI

Senior Planner

Appendix 1 Land Mapping



