

SOUTH NORFOLK VILLAGE CLUSTERS HOUSING ALLOCATIONS PLAN (Reg 18)

CONSULTATION RESPONSE FROM: WORTWELL PARISH COUNCIL

5 JULY 2021

Background Information

Community Led Planning Workshops June 2018 to March 2019 - Richard Squires

In the period 2018/19 Councillors Worley and (then) Chairwoman Copeman attended the excellent community led Planning Training run by Richard Squires. As a result of this a great deal of work was carried out based on this training, towards a Neighbourhood Plan for Wortwell. The Pandemic put all of that on hold but the work and the research remain very relevant to the response we are now making to the South Norfolk District Council Village Cluster Consultation (SNDCVCC)

Based on the guidance provided by Richard, we conducted a village wide consultation and identified the demographics, looked at the geography and topography of the village, researched the environmental factors and began to draw up a list of factors for consideration with any future development.

We did not know then what we do now:

1. That the Greater Norwich plan would cascade to the Village Cluster Plan
2. That a pandemic would interrupt our plans

Specifics that we looked at:

1 Tenure

The size, type and tenure of the housing we would need for different groups in the community:

- (i) Young - wishing to stay in the village and get onto the housing ladder
- (ii) Young families wishing to step up to modest family homes
- (iii) Mature families looking to down size
- (iv) Elderly couples looking to switch to ground floor bungalow living

We identified that we had a need in all of these areas. Wortwell has over a hundred years of historical 'in fill' building while also leaving areas of rural visibility and access spread throughout the village and with sensitive boundary extensions. The Parish Council desire to continue this tradition.

2 Service vs Other Village

It should be noted at this point that we are NOT a Service Village as we have no shop, only one pub, a very limited bus service, primarily for school children to access schools in outlying areas as we do not have a school any more. Despite South Norfolk and Norfolk County Council confirming that we are designated an "Other" village, the classification could not be changed at the time. We understand this will be addressed at the next classification round, but for now we remain incorrectly designated as a service village.

Gathering of evidence

Following the advice from Richard Squires, the first step we took was to conduct a full Village Consultation in 2019. We identified from this that the village and therefore the Council supports small developments of up to 5 or 6 houses, scattered across the village that support the different demographic needs and are sympathetic to the existing buildings. For example the Holbrook Cottages in the centre of the village by the Bell Inn. The latter is one listed building of 27 around the village five of which surround the crossroads of Low Road and High Road

Existing evidence

- (I) Looking at past growth of the village we project a need for between 12 and 18 houses by 2034 - the next census and round of planning consultation
- (II) The village has specifically commented on the lack of free are for dog exercise - existing bye laws prohibit dogs from both playgrounds and dogs have to be kept on a lead around the village.
- (III) We do not have a village green or park area for residents to sit and reflect, meet up or pause on their walks from surrounding areas.
- (IV) We are a predominantly retired village - Half of the village are over 65 years of age and a further third are heading towards 50s.
- (V) Tenure and ownership is split between 201 owned residences, 24 socially rented and 21 privately rented or in shared ownership.
- (VI) Being a rural area the majority of households have two cars (99 households) or 3 cars (39 households) meaning that off road parking for any new developments would be essential for at least 2 cars per property and the required turning spaces. This does NOT allow for cars from visitors, caravans etc (a popular addition in the village)
- (VII) Only 137 residents are in full time employment

Wortwell Village Cluster Plan: Proposed plots for development

We would note from the outset that Wortwell Parish Council welcomes the movement away from the Greater Norwich Development Plan to the South Norfolk District Council (SNDC) Village Cluster Plan.

The emphasis that SNDC has placed on supporting smaller developments that in turn encourage small local builders to take up the construction opportunities offered by the increased housing needs is exactly the conclusion we came to ourselves.

We very much want to support the local economy, local employment, local apprenticeships and employ architects and building firms that understand our local, rural needs in both style and accessibility of housing.

Based on the background above the aims and vision of the SNDC Village Cluster Plan and the blossoming Wortwell Parish Council Plan are, it would seem, perfectly aligned.

However. As we are able to be a great deal closer to what the village has clearly stated it wants and the needs identified above, we do wish to make changes to the current status of the rejected and accepted plans for Wortwell's housing development.

Consultation Response

SITE SN2036 LAND AT JUNCTION OF HIGH ROAD AND LOW ROAD WORTWELL

We reject the increase from the existing outlined planning agreement of 5 dwellings to 10

The site is in the very heart of the village and ten houses would be an overdevelopment of a site that is currently used as the main access for walkers, via a public footpath, between the centre of the village and the lakeside development and further rural walks beyond this field that in turn form part of a circuit back up Mill Lane to the Bell Inn.

This is a very beautiful meadow that allows for much habitat including nesting owls and bats and other wildlife something the landowner himself has promoted many times.

While the plan does suggest a 'small' increase from 5 to 10 In reality this is a doubling by 100% of the previously agreed development.

This decision will create an estate in the centre of the oldest part of the village and we know from the research above that it will also create a need for at least 20 cars being parked and the attending increase in traffic on a busy crossroads and blind bend.

Coupled with the need for turning space and with access directly onto a very short stretch of road between the main crossroads and a right hand bend in the road, which itself links to the aforementioned lane much used by walkers, will be problematic at best and dangerous at worse.

We have accepted that 5 was manageable and would tolerate it increasing by one further building to 6 but that we believe is the limit that such a site should allow.

To allow a small housing estate of 10 houses in the heart of the oldest part of the village would bring a dominance completely out of character with the rest of the area. It should be noted that SNDC has already rejected another site proposing four bungalows as looking too much like forming an estate.

The land has not itself flooded recently although it does get very wet and muddy during the winter months. However, the flooding in December of Redenhall Road, High Road, Low Road, the marshes and the field opposite this site does cause concern if this is even suitable at all for building land. We are aware that the land is very 'soft' and low lying, close to the water table. It may require a great deal of work to make the land stable enough for just five dwellings and the road infrastructure required. Ten would surely compromise the integrity of the land even further.

There is a stream running alongside the land which does run very fast in the winter. We have concerns that this stream would become polluted and compromised by such an extensive construction operation.

In summary: We already had concerns over the existing planning agreement for five dwellings (these were passed 13 years ago, although nothing has yet been built) But, we had accepted these as a fait accompli. Wortwell Parish Council formally objects and reject the proposed increase to ten dwellings. We further request that the five or six that are built are in keeping with immediate neighbourhood housing in the old Holbrook style. As a point of note the original outline application approval for five dwellings on this plot, from 2008, has never been acted on?

SITE SN4063 LAND AT MILL HILL, HIGH ROAD - REJECTED

We note that the land south of Wortwell previously offered for development of nine houses was rejected. Unlike the above site, developing this area would be in keeping with the requirements of the Village. It is sited right beside the previously completed social housing which is now maturing into a settled site. Provision of six houses would be our preferred number and we understand that the landowner will be resubmitting an amended plan, taking account of discussions we have had with the landowner, and provision of further amenities that suit the long term needs of the village.

By building 6 homes it remains commercially viable for the landowner/builder but reduces the impact on that site. In addition it is proposed that a landscaped area including an enclosed dog exercise area will be provided. If you refer to the consultation above, this is something that the village has been calling for and desire has escalated greatly over lockdown, with the number of dog owners increasing. We cannot provide land as a Parish Council but the landowner can. The provision of housing, shielded by the old oak trees from view, slightly further down the hill to improve visibility splay and access, is our preferred development.

In summary: The provision of six homes on this site would meet the needs of a style of housing for young growing families, close to the village playing fields and the community centre and with access to the Woods and picnic areas the other side of the main road. This could provide the opportunity for those 'stuck' in tiny cottages to spread their wings and at the same time release smaller starter cottage houses to young people joining the housing ladder. We support this as a preferred site

SITE 2121 REVA LAND SOUTH OF HIGH ROAD WORTWELL - REJECTED

We prefer this site for development as it is intended to provide bungalow, single story dwellings in a peaceful part of the village with amazing views of both the Church and the rural landscape beyond. With only four dwellings being added it would not, as suggested, be forming an estate but rather a small cul de sac of dwellings which would be very attractive to the older residents of the village looking to downsize or to move to single level living. With plenty of room to build accessible pathways, road access and internal accessibility, these will fit the needs of our village perfectly. We also would not want to see any further development on this site but feel that three or four bungalows would be highly desirable as part of our overall village plan.

In summary: We would like the landowners offer of four bungalows sited on this piece of land to be accepted as part of the overall solution to the village housing needs, projected to 2034.

SN2006SL LAND NORTH OF HIGH ROAD BETWEEN NO 171 and MEADOW COTTAGE WORTWELL

The Parish Council and our Local District Councillor have been supporting this 'infill' build for some time. It is true that the land sits within a River Valley setting. The entire village of Wortwell sits within a River Valley setting. Development of this site would not lose or detract in any sense from the meadows opposite and would be an ideal place for two or three starter homes to be built in a similar style to the existing cottages.

Standing, as the land does, opposite the main bus stop and school pick up point, close to the main A143 and elevated high enough to never be a risk to flooding; this land is currently rough ground, with very little to favour it as it is used as an overflow for skips and rubbish and is in no way seen as a 'beauty spot'. However to own and live in a property with the amazing views across the meadows and river the other side of the road would be a stunning place to live. Suitable for people wanting to move into a rural location but still wanting easy access to main road links to Norwich, Ipswich and beyond it is an ideal location for infill.

In summary: We would like you to reconsider the rejection of this site as it forms the final piece of a jigsaw for the planning needs of this village.

OVERALL SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Wortwell Parish Council has considered all nine sites, both approved and rejected. After careful consideration we believe our solution is holistic, sustainable, manages carbon footprint and avoids a monopoly. It contributes to the local economy and offers a manageable scale of development across the village mindful of the impact on the environment and health and wellbeing of its residents.

By SNDC accepting the four sites mentioned above Wortwell Village will be able to:

1. Provide a fair share of allocation of housing to the needs of South Norfolk District Council - 18 homes
2. Meet the needs of the projected housing requirements for Wortwell for the period to 2034
3. Provide a mix of styles and types of housing in keeping with the mixed requirements, affordability, size and accessibility to amenities that the village requires
4. Provide a share of the development to four different landowners instead of giving a monopoly to one landowner
5. Provide a share of the development potentially to four different local building firms, in keeping with the ethos of the Village Cluster Plan to encourage investment in small businesses, local employment and the local economy
6. Spread the impact on the village across four smaller sites causing far less impact and containing disruption to traffic and daily lives whilst the developments are being built.
7. Provide the mix of starter homes, growing family homes, those looking to downsize and those looking for disability/retirement/accessible homes.
8. Put money back into the local community

We hope that we have explained our case well and that you will support us to retain the philosophy that we have had in our village for over a hundred years.

That philosophy that provides for what the villagers actually need and ask for, that enables their children to stay living in the village, grandchildren to stay living in the village and elderly people with increasing needs to also stay in the village. It also provides extension of housing capital to allow new people to be welcomed into our village too.

It is a culture and philosophy that Wortwell Parish Council supports and cherishes and we ask that South Norfolk District Council take on board our local knowledge, backed up by quality research and consultation, and our desires to support the village, and agree to releasing the above plots in the way we have outlined. We believe it supports the ethos of the District Council Planning Department in supporting its own Wider Spacial Strategy

Lua Leggett Parish Clerk
For and on behalf of Wortwell Parish Council
6 July 2021

