

**Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk,**

**Broadland Part of Norwich Policy Area Examination,**

**Resumed Hearing, Wednesday 24 July 2013**

**Opening Statement on resumed hearing,  
On behalf of the local planning authorities**

This opening statement is made on behalf of Broadland District, Norwich City and South Norfolk District Councils who have prepared and submitted these proposals for examination.

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to make this statement. It is helpful to be able to set out the context for the resumed hearing and the Leaders of the three Councils have asked me to stress the following points.

The Councils remain absolutely committed to working together and with partners to deliver these growth proposals.

Overall the Joint Core Strategy is an ambitious plan. It is a plan for the most significant and sustained period of growth in the history of the area. This level of growth is necessary to provide the jobs, the homes and the improvements to the environment that will benefit the current and future population of the area.

To deliver this level of growth it is vital that the right plans are put in place quickly. This will ensure that the growth will be sustainable, will protect and enhance the environment and will improve infrastructure to serve existing as well as new communities. The plan will enable the local Councils, working with the County Council and other key partners, to ensure that the necessary infrastructure is provided in a timely manner. It will also give confidence to the market to invest in

bringing sites forward, knowing that the Councils are committed to supporting this level of growth.

The local Councils have been consistent in their pursuit of growth. The submissions made to the Regional Spatial Strategy were successful in increasing the level of growth from that originally proposed. The Joint Core Strategy when adopted in 2011 sought to provide more than the minimum RSS targets, which themselves exceeded historic long-term building rates. The impacts of the recession have not been used to argue that the longer term needs have reduced. Indeed, both the local Councils and the County Council have invested considerable time and resources to bring forward plans and infrastructure to implement the proposals.

Considerable progress continues to be made on detailed plans to implement the Core Strategy proposals. The City Council has already submitted its proposed site allocations development plan document. Both South Norfolk and Broadland have consulted on their preferred options and are working towards their submission for examination. Should this part JCS be found sound, submission should follow swiftly.

The Community Infrastructure Levy has been introduced in Broadland and in the City, and will follow shortly in South Norfolk.

Delivery arrangements are being improved. A City Deal is being negotiated, the pooling of key funding sources to provide investment in enabling infrastructure is under discussion, and working arrangements with the Local Economic Partnership are being developed. Opportunities to secure funding and promote investment are being maximised.

Planning applications are being encouraged and dealt with in a positive manner. Over the past few months alone planning consents have been issued for more than 2500 dwellings. Even whilst the relevant plans are going through the plan preparation process, consents are being issued, both on emerging favoured sites and on windfall sites where they will not harm the strategy.

In line with the overall aims of the strategy the councils have also approved commercial applications to support jobs and other economic activity.

We now have planning consents in place for over 10,000 dwellings within the Norwich Policy Area. This is more than at any point over the previous economic cycle and is easily sufficient to support a level of delivery far in excess of what we are actually seeing in the current economic circumstances.

There are positive signals emerging that the housing market is starting to recover. Sales values and transaction levels are increasing. Housebuilders are looking to invest. The viability of development is improving and our further evidence addresses this in more detail.

As the market improves it is clear that the plan will result in a significant increase to the supply of housing. This will ensure both choice and competition in the market, and fully meet the objectively assessed housing needs.

We will very soon be able to demonstrate a five year land supply across all of the Norwich Policy Area rather than just particular parts of it at present. We have put forward information on the updated situation to you. This shows that two component parts of the NPA have or are close to a 5 year land supply already.

There has been some suggestion that the Councils have been persistent under deliverers of housing. This needs to be judged in a longer time frame, which takes account of the effect of the economic cycle. In the light of the persistent over delivery in relation to previous Structure Plan targets, and a positive approach to development management, the local Councils, singularly and collectively, utterly reject the description of being persistent under deliverers.

The mathematical calculations and discussions about the appropriate methodology for calculating housing land supply need to be tempered by a proper appreciation of the local housing market.

The scale of the recession that we are recovering from is such that increased housing delivery will not be turned on over night. For a number of years now average house building rates have been around 900 a year in the Norwich Policy Area. Irrespective of the number of allocations made or permissions granted, we will not see massive increases in completions in the next two years getting us back to or

beyond the rates of completion seen in 2007/08. It will take time for market confidence to grow and capacity to deliver to return.

By any reasonable assessment it is clear that adoption of the submitted Plan is likely to lead to an increase in housing land supply sufficient to demonstrably meet needs.

The planning process is not constraining delivery at this point in time and will not do so in future. Delivery has been constrained by wider economic factors.

To promote delivery it is vital that the JCS is adopted in full as soon as possible. This will allow us to direct our resources fully to its implementation.

As with any strategy, there is a risk that it will not be delivered in full, either due to the market or because other constraints cannot be overcome. This risk has been acknowledged by the Councils, and the suggested additional policy is an appropriate response. This policy is proportionate, reasonable and has teeth. However, it is critical that we get the opportunity to implement the favoured plan before any further review process is commenced. If not the strategy could be fundamentally undermined, eroding support for it and compromising partnership working.

Most of the proposals in the JCS have already been found sound and adopted. The Councils consider that the evidence demonstrates that the submitted proposals for this part of the JCS are also sound. Taken together, they provide an ambitious, robust, flexible and jointly agreed plan that will serve the population of the area well for many years to come.

23<sup>rd</sup> July 2013