

The Greater Norwich Development Partnership

Joint Core Strategy.

Part of Norwich Policy Area - Examination in Public

April 2013

Statement of Common Ground
between

Greater Norwich Development Partnership and
Barratt Eastern Counties

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Barratt Eastern Counties is the developer of the proposed Eco-Community at Rackheath which will be a key element in delivering the housing targets within the Old Catton/Sprowston/Rackheath/Thorpe St Andrew Growth Triangle (the North East Growth Triangle). Previous representations by Barratts to the Joint Core Strategy were made in the name of Barratt Strategic but, as implementation approaches, the project has been moved to the relevant delivery arm Barratt Eastern Counties.
- 1.2. This Statement of Common Ground, agreed with GNDP, has been prepared to assist the Inspector in his consideration of certain elements of Matter 2 set out in his "Matters and Questions for Examination" which are relevant to the Rackheath Eco-Community.
- 1.3. The statement of common ground covers the following issues :
 - the relationship between Rackheath Eco-community and the Housing Trajectory in Appendix 6;
 - the provision of employment land at Rackheath;
 - the boundary of the Growth Triangle;
 - the achievement of a single co-ordinated approach to planning in the Growth Triangle;
 - The Broads Buffer Zone scheme;
 - viability and delivery.

2. The Housing Trajectory

- 2.1. In response to Matter 2(1.2), it is agreed that the Rackheath Eco-Community has not been implemented in accordance with the early years of the Housing Trajectory as set out in Appendix 6 of the JCS Submission Content. The delays to delivery have been due to a combination of factors including the uncertainty resulting from the legal challenge to the Joint Core Strategy, the prevailing national economic conditions; and the effect this has had on the national and local housing markets.
- 2.2. However, it is also agreed that, subject to the timely grant of planning permission, it is possible that the Rackheath Eco-community could be begun in 2015 and that the overall trajectory expectations for the Eco-Community could be met over the course of the plan period. It is currently anticipated that a hybrid planning application will be submitted in 2014, consisting of an outline planning application for the whole site with detailed approval sought for proposals for the first phase, the Exemplar, of at least 250 units. In order to facilitate this, a programme of ecological surveys is under way and detailed discussions will commence in May, led by the Environment Agency and also involving Anglian Water, regarding the design of the water strategy for the Eco-Community.
- 2.3. In light of the above, it is agreed that the greater certainty regarding the funding for the Northern Distributor Road and the intended programme for its consideration and decision making as a Development Consent Order application under the Planning Act 2008 results in a more resilient relationship between delivery of the housing, in and around Norwich including at Rackheath, and strategic highways infrastructure than was the case at the time of the previous Examination (Matter 2 (1.3)). As noted in a Statement of Common Ground submitted to that Examination, *"it is agreed that the NDR is not the only element to provide long term and sustainable access to the Growth Triangle"*. It was also noted in the previous Statement that *"the Rackheath Eco-Community has never considered itself to be dependent for direct access upon implementation of the NDR."* The Action Area Plan will be able to consider further the relationship between the phasing of development and of highways infrastructure.

3. The provision of employment land at Rackheath

- 3.1. In response to Matter 2(1.12), it is agreed that the evidence base setting out the need for 25 ha of employment land at Rackheath is as described in the Councils' response to this Matter. This level of provision equates approximately to that which was included in the Eco-towns submission and which was accepted by the Government.

4. The boundary of the North East Growth Triangle

4.1. Within the North East Growth Triangle, the boundaries of the Rackheath Eco-Community are broadly defined by :

- Wroxham Road to the north west;
- blocks of woodland around Bear's Grove to the north;
- the Norwich-Wroxham railway to the east;
- Green Lane West to the south.

4.2. These boundaries were selected because they are strong geographical features which contain land formerly used as an airfield and being largely in a single ownership. The area bounded by these features is acknowledged in the DCLG Sustainability Appraisal as having limited landscape, ecological and historic interest. It has been demonstrated that the comprehensive development of the Eco-Community can be accommodated within these boundaries.

4.3. The Eco-Community at Rackheath was designated by the Government as one of four Eco-towns in Annex A to the Planning Policy Statement on Eco-towns published as a supplement to Planning Policy Statement 1 in July 2009. This being the case, the boundaries noted above, which formed part of the Eco-towns submission to the Government, have the support of national policy. While most of the Planning Policy Statement regime has subsequently been dismantled and replaced by the National Planning Policy Framework, the supplement to Planning Policy Statement 1 has not been rescinded. It is therefore agreed that the Rackheath element of the North East Growth Triangle has been tested and incorporated as national policy (Matter 2 (1.13)).

5. A co-ordinated approach to planning in the North East Growth Triangle

5.1. In response to Matter 2(1.14), it is agreed that the submitted JCS provides sufficient strategic guidance for achieving a single co-ordinated approach to the future planning of the North East Growth Triangle. Further policies to guide development in the area will be provided by the Action Area Plan, the initial stage of which is currently out to consultation until 10th June. The developers will work closely with the planning authorities to ensure consistency between proposals for the Eco-Community and those of the JCS and Action Area Plan.

6. The Broads Buffer Zone scheme

6.1. The sensitivity of The Broads has been recognised throughout the JCS process. The JCS submitted policy 10 and paragraph 6.24 provide the policy

requirement for the Broads Buffer Zone and set out its function. Policy 10 requires that "A significant area north of Rackheath will be provided as green space to act as an ecological buffer zone and ensure no significant adverse impacts on the Broads SAC, Broadland SPA and Broadland Ramsar site". Further to this, the delivery of the necessary green infrastructure is identified as a "Key dependency". Paragraph 6.24 of the JCS states "Provision of significant levels of local green infrastructure is essential to ensure the long-term sustainability of the proposed development areas. It must also be sufficient in scale and type to ensure that there are no potential impacts on nearby sites of international biodiversity importance."

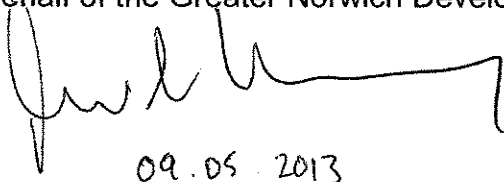
- 6.2. In developing the Eco-towns submission for Rackheath, meetings were held between the developers and Natural England and at a very early stage an environmental workshop was convened which included representatives from this body, the Environment Agency and local nature conservation bodies. The Habitat Regulations Assessment which accompanied the Joint Core Strategy established the requirement to provide a landscape buffer to the north of development at Rackheath and to provide recreational open space of a scale and typology to mitigate recreational impact upon sensitive European Environmental Sites. The concept of a Broads Buffer Zone was then incorporated in the masterplan for the Eco-Community. The Area Action Plan will also be able to include policies to protect The Broads environment.
- 6.3. It is agreed that, once the content for the outline planning application for Rackheath Eco-Community has been firmed up, a Habitats Regulation Assessment will be undertaken in parallel with the Environmental Impact Assessment. The Habitats Regulation Assessment will, should potentially adverse effects on the integrity of The Broads designated sites be identified, include a range of mitigation measures. Such measures would be delivered by means of conditions on any planning permission or by way of a s106 agreement.

7. Viability and Delivery

- 7.1. The Eco-towns location decision statement published by DCLG in July 2009 concluded that the location [Rackheath] "*has demonstrated that it can meet the sustainability and deliverability requirements to be successfully developed as an Eco-town*".
- 7.2. The developers of the Rackheath Eco-Community are confident that this element of the North East Growth Triangle is viable and can be effectively delivered (Mattter 2 (1.18)). The vast majority of the land is in a single ownership and development agreements are in place. It is agreed that the developers are working with the local authorities and other bodies to ensure that the outline planning application will be based on a viable masterplan,

taking account inter alia of all associated infrastructure costs and measures necessary to deliver its low carbon credentials.

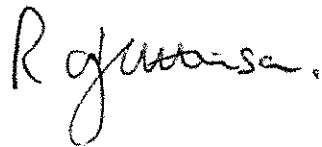
Signed on behalf of the Greater Norwich Development Partnership :

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'John' followed by a long horizontal stroke.

Date

09.05.2013

Signed on behalf of Barratt Eastern Counties :

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R. G. G. G.' followed by a long horizontal stroke.

Date 24/04/13

