

Great Norwich Local Plan – Regulation 18 consultation

Land off Jolly's Lane, Acle

representations of behalf of Mrs S Young and Mr S Wright

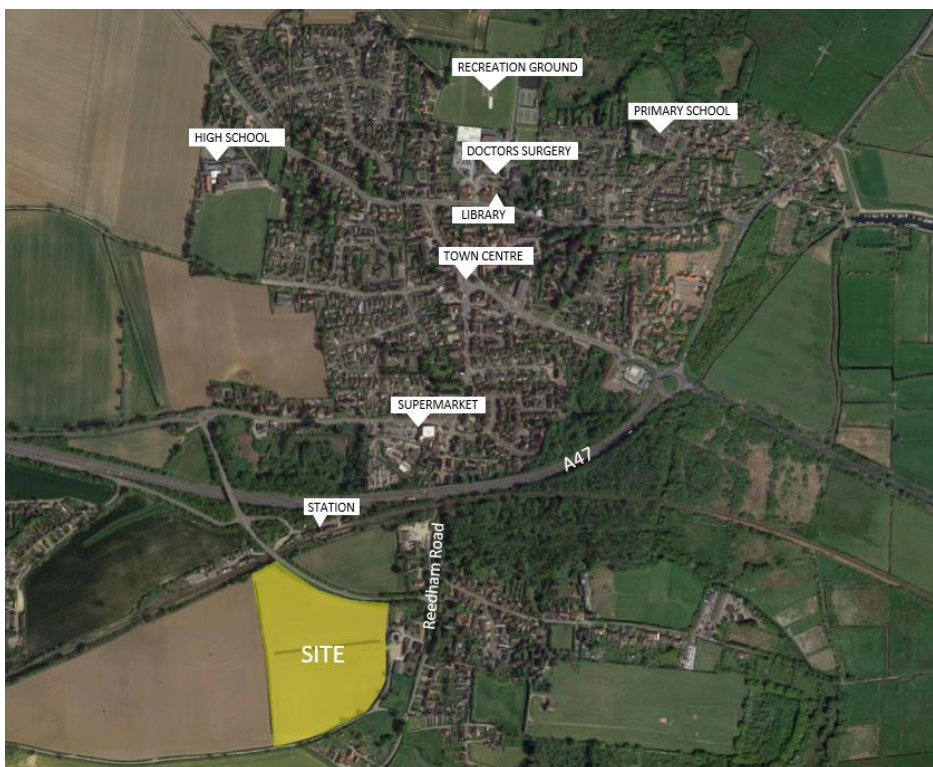
March 2018

Background

1. Brown & Co act for the landowners, Mrs S Young and Mr S Wright, in relation to land off Jolly's Lane, Acle.
2. The following comments are submitted in support of the suggested allocation of the land at Jolly's Lane (ref GNDP0421) for housing. It is considered that initially the two smaller fields at the eastern end of the site, which extend to around 6.8 hectares, could be developed for around 150 dwellings.
3. It is noted that the site is classified as being suitable for housing development in the Council's Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) 2017. However, a number of technical issues are identified as potential constraints on development, which are addressed below.

Access to services

4. Acle is a small market town located midway between Norwich and Gt Yarmouth, and is identified in the current Joint Core Strategy as a Key Service Centre. It benefits from a range of local facilities, including primary and secondary schools, a small supermarket, local shops, post office, medical practice, veterinary surgery, library, church, public house, social club and playing fields (see below). These facilities are capable of meeting many of the day-to-day needs of local residents. A number of businesses provide local employment opportunities. A wider range of higher order services, employment and leisure facilities are available in Norwich, Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft.



5. Although the site proposed for development is separated from the town centre by the A47 trunk road and main railway line, Reedham Road, which passes under both, would provide direct and convenient links to local facilities for future residents. Reedham Road is constructed to a good standard and benefits from streetlighting. Footways extend on its eastern side northwards to the town centre.

By this route, the town centre is approximately 750 metres from the proposed development site, and so would be readily accessible either on foot or by bicycle.

6. It is acknowledged that existing footways would need to be extended up to the proposed development site, but this could readily be secured through the normal planning process, as sufficient land is available within the site and the adjacent highway to enable this improvement. Subject to the extension of existing footways, safe walking routes to local schools would be available. Measured from the proposed site entrance, both Acle Primary School (1,450 metres) and Acle Academy (1,500 metres) would be within the maximum recommended walking distance of 2km.

7. A number of bus services operate through Acle providing frequent and regular connections to Norwich, Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft (First Connect services X1, X11 and 15). There are a number of bus stops in the vicinity of the site, including on Beighton Road, Leffins Way, Norwich Road and The Street, all of which are within a 15-minute walk. In addition, regular train services are available to Norwich and Great Yarmouth from Acle Station, which is around a short walk from the site, either via Leffins Lane or Reedham Road. A range of sustainable transport options would be available to future residents therefore.

8. Consequently, it is considered that the proposal development would benefit from good access to local services, and would accord with local and national planning policies which indicate that to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities.

9. It is acknowledged that due to the site's rural location, residents of the proposed development would be reliant to a degree on car travel for their main shopping and leisure trips. However, a number of sustainable transport options would nonetheless be available for access to both local facilities and higher order services, including walking, cycling and public transport. In these terms the development of the site would be consistent with national planning policy, which seeks to direct development to locations where a range of sustainable transport options are available, whilst acknowledging that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary from urban to rural areas.

Highway safety

10. It is proposed that the primary access to the development would be provided via a new entrance onto Leffins Lane, which adjoins the northern boundary of the site. This access would be constructed in accordance with relevant highway standards, as set out in the attached Transport Technical Note¹. A secondary or emergency access could be provided off Jolly's Lane, if required, together with associated improvements to the lane itself. Initial proposals for the design of the new entrance and off-site improvements are included in the Transport Technical Note. On this basis it is considered that safe and suitable vehicular access can be provided.

11. As there are currently no pedestrian facilities on Leffins Lane, a new footway is proposed on the southern side of the road, extending from Reedham Road to Station Road. Improvements to pedestrian facilities at the junction of Leffins Lane and Reedham Road are also proposed to provide safe links to existing footways and the town centre. To support increased pedestrian movement, it is proposed that the speed limit for this section of road be reduced to 40mph. Additional bus stops and shelters could also be provided in suitable locations close to the site. Subject to these improvements, it is considered that safe and convenient pedestrian links would be available from the site to the town centre and local facilities.

¹ Transport Technical Note, Royal HaskoningDHV, March 2018.

Local character

12. The site proposed for development falls within Landscape Character Area F2: Marsh Fringe – South Walsham to Reedham, as defined in Broadland’s Landscape Character Assessment.

Landscape planning guidelines for this area include conserving its diverse landscape character and mosaic of arable fields, pasture and woodland, ensuring that development responds well to settlement patterns and integrates into the landscape, and maintaining the landscape setting of market towns.

13. The land at Jolly’s Lane comprises an area of undeveloped agricultural land on the south-western edge of Acle. Its development for residential purposes would extend the built form of the town into the countryside and would result in some loss of openness. However, the site is well-contained visually by development to the east and by established hedgerows on all other sides. Furthermore, due to the screening effects of the local topography and existing vegetation, views of the site are generally confined to the immediate vicinity of the site.

14. Approaching from the north, some views across the northern half of the site would be available from Leffins Lane, but from here the proposed development would be set against a backdrop of trees and hedges, and would be seen in the context of the built up edge of the town and nearby major transport infrastructure. It is noted also that planning permission has been granted for housing and employment on the opposite side of New Reedham Road (LPA ref. 20141392).

15. Approaching from the south, Jolly’s Lane has a more rural aspect, but development would again be seen set against a backdrop of existing trees/hedges. To maintain an appropriate soft edge to the town, it is anticipated that development would be set well back from the road behind generous landscaped open spaces. Existing hedgerows would also be supplemented by additional new planting where necessary to further mitigate the visual effects of development.

16. Consequently, it is considered that whilst the proposal would inevitably result in some loss of rural character (in common with other greenfield sites on the edge of the settlement), its impact on the landscape setting of the town and the character of the area generally would be limited and localised, and could be satisfactorily mitigated by sensitive new landscaping and layout proposals. The proposal would not conflict in principle therefore with the Council’s landscape guidelines.

17. Acle has a generally compact and nucleated form, with the majority of development being located to the north of the A47. However, the built footprint of the town also extends to the south of the A47, with areas of well-established housing along Reedham Road and to the east off Damgate Lane. Additionally, as noted above, land to the south of Acle Station has been granted permission for housing and employment development. The proposed development would consolidate this established pattern of development, whilst maintaining the generally compact form of the town. Although detailed proposals have not yet been drawn up, it is proposed that the form and density of the development would be consistent with existing and proposed housing nearby.

Flooding

18. The site proposed for development falls within Flood Zone 1 and so is considered to be at low risk of fluvial flooding. Small pockets of the site have been identified as being at risk of surface water flooding. However, it is considered that this flood risk could be managed satisfactorily as part of the overall surface water strategy for the development, which would be based on sustainable urban drainage principles. No risks of flooding from other sources, including sewerage systems and groundwater, have been identified.

Ecology

19. There are a number of protected sites in the locality, including the Broads SAC, Broadland Ramsar site and Broadland SPA. These sites are located around 360 metres away to the east, and are separated from the land at Jolly's Lane by intervening development off Reedham Road. Aside from existing boundary hedges and trees (which would be retained), the site proposed for development is considered to be of low ecological value, comprising two arable fields and lacking any other features of note. Due to the lack of scarce or specialist resources within the site, it is likely that any wildlife present will be part of a larger local population. The provision of new landscaped open spaces as part of the development would offer the opportunity to enhance biodiversity. Further detailed ecological assessment of the implications of the proposal will be undertaken and provided in due course.

Delivery of development

20. In relation to local infrastructure, it is noted that upgrades may be required to the sewerage system and to increase capacity at the waste water recycling centre. However, at this stage no other significant infrastructure constraints have been identified which would be likely to prevent the development of the site for housing. Nonetheless, an infrastructure study has been commissioned in order to identify any infrastructure improvements needed to facilitate the proposed development. This information will be forwarded as soon as it is available. The site is in a single ownership and no further land is needed to enable the land to be brought forward for development. The land is currently available for development and so, subject to approval being given, could deliver housing in the short term.

21. It is noted that land to the north, east and south of the town is generally constrained by significant flood risk, landscape and ecological considerations, whilst some locations to the west are affected by traffic noise from the A47. The land off Jolly's Lane is not impacted directly by these constraints, although it is acknowledged that the site comprises higher quality agricultural land, like many other sites on the outskirts of the town.

Benefits of development

22. The proposed development would make a positive contribution to the supply of 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, thus strengthening the local supply of housing land. New residents would add to the vitality of the local community. Given their accessibility, existing local businesses and services would be likely to derive support from the development due to the addition to the local economy of the spending power of new residents. The construction of the development would also provide some economic benefits, albeit temporary. In these respects, the proposal would support the social and economic dimensions of sustainability as defined in the NPPF.

23. Furthermore, it is considered that the Acle would represent a sustainable location for development of the scale envisaged, given the range of local services available and its good public transport links to larger centres nearby. The development would also be consistent with a number of the potential growth options identified in the draft Local Plan, including development along transport corridors, dispersal, dispersal plus new settlement and dispersal plus urban growth. By providing sufficient land of the right type in the right place to support growth the development would address the economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, as defined in the NPPF.