

Heritage Statement

Site	Land at Norwich Road, Aylsham (approx. 12.78 ha)
Policy	GNLP0596R
Heritage statement collated by	Adam Banham, Principal Planning Policy Officer, Greater Norwich Local Plan Team
Heritage statement reviewed by	Chris Bennett Senior Heritage & Design Officer, South Norfolk Council
Date undertaken:	May 2021

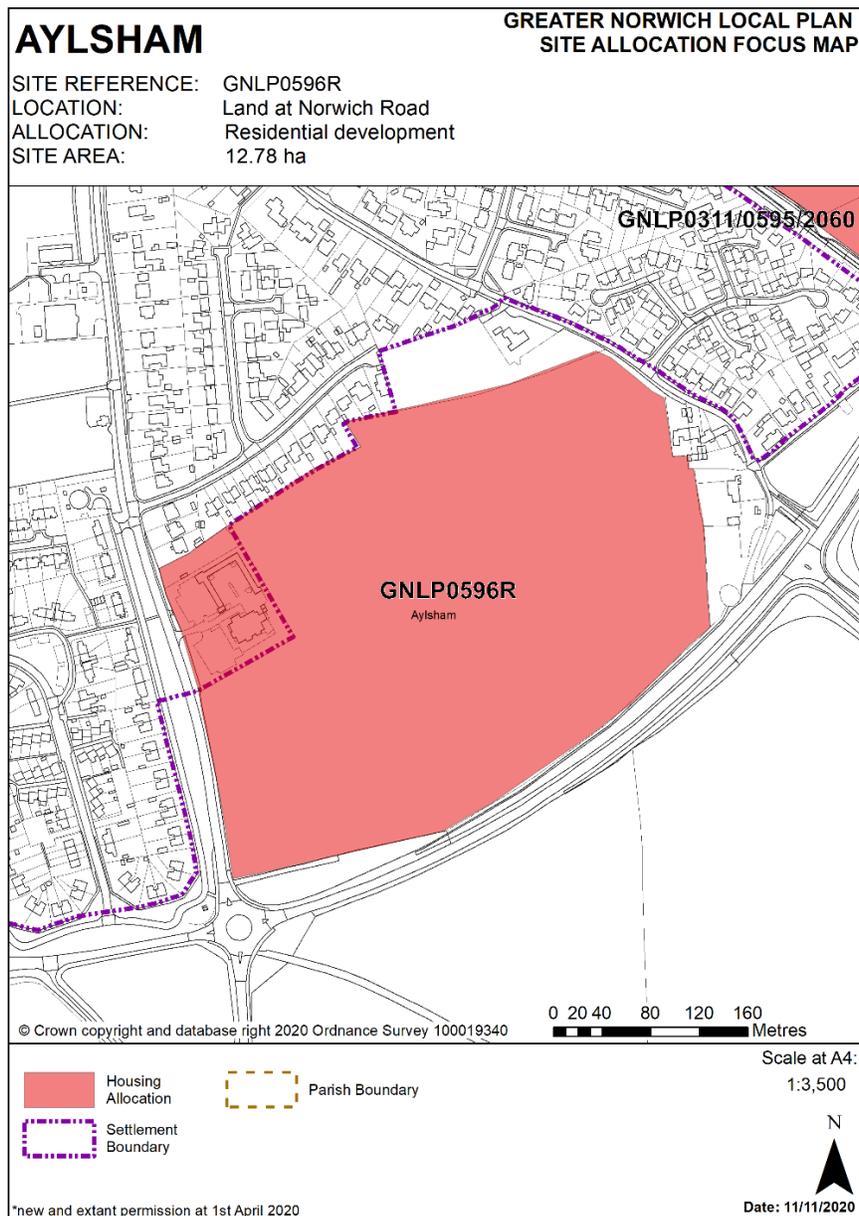


Figure 1: Site allocation

1. Proposed Allocation

- 1.1 GNLP0596R is a residential allocation for at least 255 homes. The mix of uses includes a 90 bed care unit/extra care housing, and 0.25 ha for community use to meet sustainable transport objectives.

2. Site Description

- 2.1 The site measures 12.78 ha and is located at the south-east edge of Aylsham. It is predominantly a gently sloping agricultural field in between existing homes and the physical boundary that is formed by the A140 bypass. The only building within the site curtilage is the now disused Aylsham Motel, which would be demolished as part of the development.





Figure 2: Aerial photos¹

2.2 GNLP0596R is bounded on three sides by residential development at the edge of the town, and on the southern side by the A140 bypass, which separates it from the wider countryside beyond. Along the northern boundary is the rear gardens of properties on Copeman Road. Other boundaries adjacent to Buxton Road and Norwich Road are slightly more open and give glimpses into the site. On the southern boundary, adjacent to the A140, there is more landscaping which screens views into the site.

2.3 Most of the surrounding existing development around GNLP0596R dates to the 20th century and is along Norwich Road and Copeman Road. The exception is the Grade II Diggins Farmhouse, which lies to the east of the site. Diggins Farmhouse is the primary focus of this heritage assessment as other heritage assets are more distant and less likely to be affected.

2.4 The listing for Diggins Farmhouse by Historic England says:

Grade: II. C18. Red brick/steeply-pitched black-glazed pantile roof. Two storeys. Casements with flat gauged arches. Facade of four bays. Modillion eaves. Moulded brick string course and corner pilasters. Shaped gable to north. Internal gable chimney stacks. Lower wing on north side. Listing NGR: TG2003626089

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3. Heritage Assets

3.1 Aside from Diggins Farmhouse, other heritage assets are distant from GNLP0596R, and are also visually separated. Being obscured by a combination of topography, other buildings with lower heritage value, hedgerows and woodland. For reference purposes though the nearest four other heritage assets are listed below, and an explanation is given for why they have all been scoped out.

Table 1: Other nearby Heritage Assets 'Scoped Out' of this Assessment

Name	Grade	Listing	Assessment
The Orchards	II	1249156	Approximately 900 metres north from GNLP0596R, in a different character area, at the edge of the town's historic core, and within the Conservation Area.
The Manor House	II*	1372668	Approximately 900 metres north from GNLP0596R, in a different character area, at the edge of the town's historic core, and within the Conservation Area.
Spa Farm House	II	1051569	Approximately 600 metres west from GNLP0596R and visually separate due to other homes and the A140.
Bure Valley Farmhouse	II	1373005	Approximately 600 metres east from GNLP0596R and visually separate due to the A140.

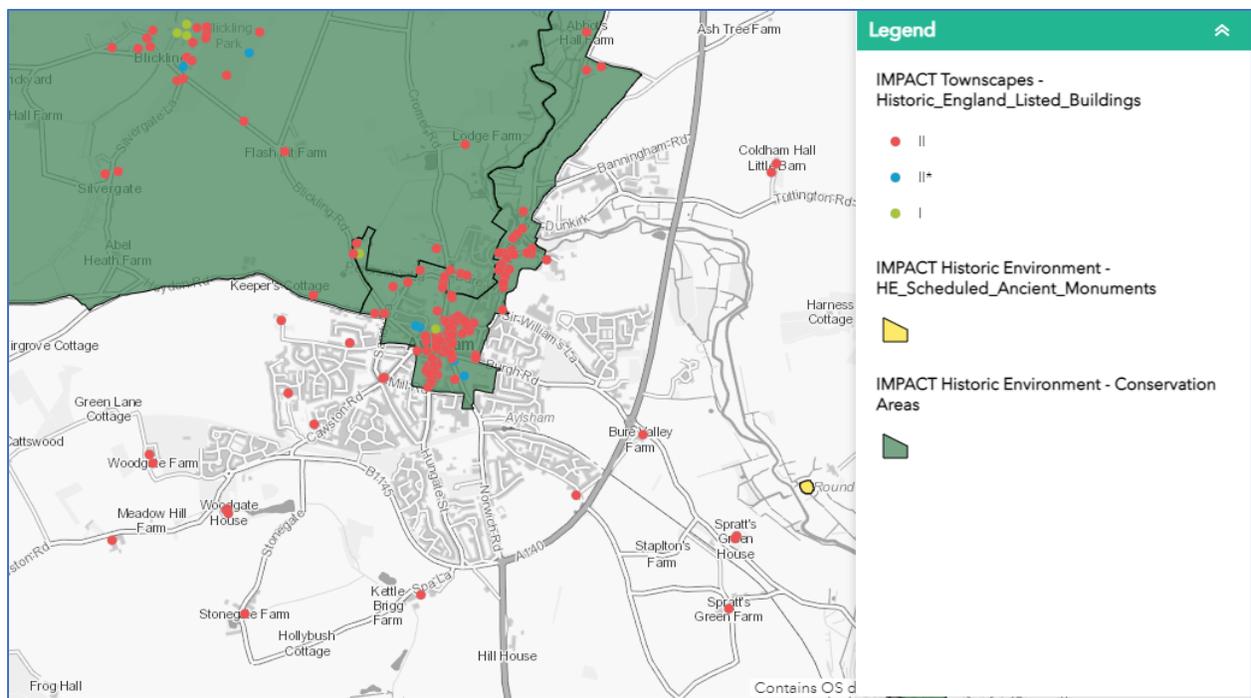


Figure 3: Heritage assets²

4. Relevant planning history

4.1 Given the relevance of Diggins Farmhouse it is appropriate to look at this building's recent planning history. This shows the building's continued occupation and that the qualities that merited its listing are being conserved. For reference, recent planning applications are summarised below.

Table 2: Recent Relevant Planning History for Diggins Farmhouse

20180056	Diggins Farmhouse, Old Buxton Road, Aylsham, NR11 6UB	Non-Material Amendment Following Planning Permission 20140890 - Changes to Windows & Doors	FINAL DECISION
20180069	Diggins Farmhouse, Old Buxton Road, Aylsham, NR11 6UB	Details of Condition 4 of Permission 20140890 - External Materials	FINAL DECISION
20140889	Diggins Farmhouse, Buxton Road, Aylsham, NR11 6UB	Demolish Part of the Wall Between the Dining Room and the Kitchen in the Farmhouse (Listed Building)	FINAL DECISION
20140890	Diggins Farmhouse, Old Buxton Road, Aylsham, NR11 6UB	Conversion of Detached Garage/Office/Store to Granny Annexe	FINAL DECISION

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5. What is the heritage of the site and why is it important

Archaeological Significance

- 5.1 In archaeological terms, the proximity of GNLP0596R to Aylsham and the River Bure creates the possibility for low to moderate interest. The Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER) cites the earliest find as a Mesolithic blade. Given the greenfield status of the site should any archaeological investigations be thought necessary these could be controlled by planning condition.

Architectural Significance

- 5.2 Most probably, the land comprising GNLP0596R was once part of Diggen's Farm. Therefore, development of GNLP0596R will further reduce the once agricultural setting of Diggen's Farm. Making Diggens Farmhouse appear even more as a building at the edge of Aylsham, rather than an isolated building rooted in its agricultural context.

Historic Significance

- 5.3 The historic significance of GNLP0596R on its own is low – due of course to its status as a mainly greenfield site. But its development will diminish further the once agricultural and countryside setting to Diggens Farmhouse. More broadly, it could be argued that development of GNLP0596R changes Aylsham by expanding the town further from its historic core.

Landscape Significance

- 5.4 Development of GNLP0596R will in landscape terms change the southern edge of Aylsham. Altering, and possibly making more prominent, the built edge of Aylsham from certain vantage points in the surrounding countryside. But the effect of this change on long views of heritage assets in the centre of Aylsham, other nearby settlements, and other individual heritage assets is considered nominal.

6. How will allocation and the development proposals impact upon this heritage and its significance?

Views

- 6.1 Other than Diggens Farmhouse, the views to or from heritage assets will not be affected by the development of GNLP0596R. A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, in support of the site's promotion on behalf of Norfolk Homes, explains in detail. Showing a Zone of Theoretical Visibility extends mainly to the south-east, with in most part the existing settlement of Aylsham, hedgerows and woodland blocks providing screening.

Layout, Height and Massing

- 6.2 Through design and layout decisions, GNLP0596R has potential for landscape screening improvements. Most notably along the southern boundary with the A140 and along the eastern boundary with Diggens Farmhouse. These are relatively commonplace solutions, and which have been put forward in the policy wording of GNLP0596R.
- 6.3 Whilst details are subject to future agreement at the planning application stage, mitigations are available through the layout and design of buildings. For example, to adjust the position, orientation and height of buildings to minimise adverse visual intrusion on Diggens Farmhouse. Another option could be to position the extra care housing scheme, community car parking, and supermarket away from Diggens Farmhouse – if these were considered to be potentially more visually intrusive on the heritage asset.
- 6.4 Careful design could also address potential flood risk. This being a matter raised by the residents of Diggens Farmhouse in a representation to the GNLP. That surface water drainage could affect the “farmhouse, its surrounds, the existing well and ground water level”. Such matters are typically dealt with by incorporation of a drainage lagoon, or other similar solution, which on a large greenfield site like GNLP0596R is thought feasible in principle.

Demolition of Existing Buildings

- 6.5 Development of GNLP0596R would not involve the demolition of any heritage assets. Demolition of buildings is not a highly relevant issue, owing to the mainly greenfield character of the site. The one exception is the existing motel on Norwich Road, but this is a disused building of low architectural and heritage value and is separate from Diggens Farmhouse.

Impact Upon Conservation Areas

- 6.6 The nearest edge of the Aylsham Conservation Area is located approximately 800 metres to the north of GNLP0596R. A strong visual separation from Aylsham’s historic core comes from the existing buildings north of GNLP0596R, most of which are residential dwellings built during 20th century. The likely effect of GNLP0596R on the Conservation Area is therefore considered nominal.

7. Sustainability Appraisal Findings

- 7.1 The issues identified in this Heritage Assessment for GNLP0596R are also corroborated by the Sustainability Appraisal that supports the GNLP.
- 7.2 Paragraph F.13.4.19 of Volume 3 states: “Site GNLP0596R is located adjacent to the Grade II Listed Building ‘Diggens Farmhouse. The site policy states that the “development should conserve and where appropriate enhance the setting of the Grade II Diggens Farmhouse to the east of the site, including any contribution made to that significance by setting”. Alongside the requirements of GNLP and Local Plan policies, this would be expected to ensure that the character and setting of the Listed Building is conserved. Overall, a negligible impact on the historic environment would be expected.”

8. Summary

- 8.1 The development of GNLP0596R will not have any direct impact on the adjacent Grade II Diggens Farmhouse. But the proposed development is immediately adjacent to the farm house’s boundary, and so some further diminishment of the building’s original agricultural and countryside setting is acknowledged. Mitigations to address this impact do exist -- and have already been identified in the policy wording of GNLP0596R.
- 8.2 Mitigations are principally through the sensitive layout and design of GNLP0596R, especially at the eastern boundary. They are to create a sense of separation through the provision of open space immediately to the west of the Diggens Farmhouse boundary, and enhanced tree and hedgerow planting for landscape screening. These measures would largely mitigate the impact, especially given the context of Diggens Farmhouse already being at the built edge of Aylsham and inside the A140 bypass.

9. Justification for the Allocation

- 9.1 GNLP0596 has long been considered a reasonable alternative for inclusion in the GNLP and with the need to increase overall housing numbers in Aylsham was included in the Pre-submission draft in February 2021. The advantages of GNLP0596R are its proximity to the town centre and good access from Norwich Road. These benefits significantly outweigh the disbenefits and allocating GNLP0596R is therefore justified.
- 9.2 In their comments on GNLP0596R Historic England suggested open space and landscaping at the eastern end of the site to protect the significance of Diggens Farmhouse. A similar conclusion has already been reached by the promoter of GNLP0596R (Norfolk Homes) and mitigations are included in their indicative

masterplan. Consequently, it is with confidence GNLP0596R is included in the GNLP.

- 9.3 The heritage considerations of Diggens Farmhouse are clearly expressed in policy GNLP0596R, criterion 8. It says: “Any development should conserve and where appropriate enhance the setting of the Grade II Diggens Farmhouse to the east of the site, including any contribution made to that significance by setting.” No significant modifications are necessary, but should the appointed planning inspector wish to make modifications during the GNLP’s examination officers would have no objection.

References:

Broadland District Council, Planning Application Search

<https://secure.broadland.gov.uk/Northgate/PlanningExplorer/GeneralSearch.aspx>

Historic England

<https://historicengland.org.uk/>

Indicative Masterplan, on behalf of Norfolk Homes, March 2021

Norfolk Historic Environment Record <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/libraries-local-history-and-archives/archaeology-and-historic-environment/historic-environment-record>

Land at Norwich Road, Aylsham, Landscape and Visual Assessment, on behalf of Norfolk Homes, March 2021, November 2019

Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Greater Norwich Local Plan https://www.gnlp.org.uk/sites/gnlp/files/2021-01/LC-663_Vol_3of3_Appendices_3_250121LB_compressed_Jan_2021.pdf