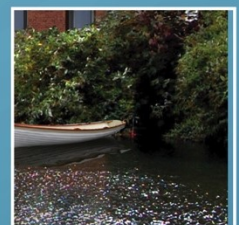
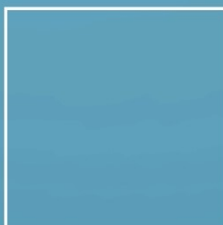
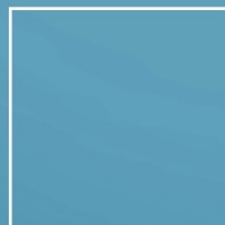
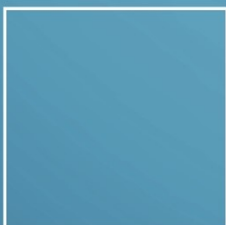
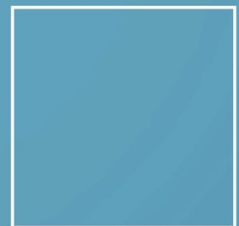


Draft GNLP:
Examination Stage

Matter 6 Homes (Policy 5) -
Issue 1 - Questions 6 and 7

January 2022



Issue Sheet

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Date: 16 January 2022

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of submission

1.1.1 This submission is made by Ian Reilly, Director of Planning, Lanpro.

1.1.2 The purpose of this submission is to respond to:

- Matter 6 Homes (Policy 5)
- Issue 1 - is the policy for affordable housing justified, effective and consistent with the evidence and national policy?
- Question 6 and 7

Q6. Is the requirement for purpose built student accommodation to provide the same percentages of affordable housing justified, practicable and deliverable and is it consistent with national policy?

Q7 Paragraph 281 of the Plan states that potentially the provision of affordable housing in relation to student accommodation could be in the form of a commuted sum and this is stated in the section of the policy under the heading 'Purpose Built Student Accommodation'. However, the section in the policy under the heading 'Affordable Housing' requires affordable housing on site other than in exceptional circumstances? Therefore, is the policy sufficiently clear as to be effective?

1.1.3 Our response will examine the above with regards to the NPPF and the tests of soundness and we would request that we be allowed to engage with the examination process in order to aid the Inspectors consideration of the above. The statement will also build on our previous comments to the Reg 18 and 19 consultation processes regarding this issue. At that stage we advised:

Lanpro object to Student accommodation schemes being asked to provide a commuted sum equivalent to the amount of affordable housing that would be expected if the site was developed for general needs housing. This will be very difficult to accurately assess without an alternative housing scheme being drawn up to take into account individual site constraints and viability and market factors. What will be the mechanism for agreeing this? It is too simplistic to consider doing it on a site area basis and is likely to delay schemes coming forward and potentially affect viability.

Student housing is meeting a particular identified housing need in its own right as evidenced by Norwich City Council's Student Accommodation Need Assessment.

1.2 NPPF

1.2.1 The NPPF advises that strategic policies include those which are associated with the delivery of affordable housing and Para 34 advises:

Plans should set out the contributions expected from development. This should include setting out the levels and types of affordable housing provision required, along with other infrastructure (such as that needed for education, health, transport, flood and water management, green and digital infrastructure). Such policies should not undermine the deliverability of the plan.

1.2.2 The NPPF Para 35 states:

Local plans and spatial development strategies are examined to assess whether they have been prepared in accordance with legal and procedural requirements, and whether they are sound. Plans are 'sound' if they are:

(a) Positively prepared – providing a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the area's objectively assessed needs; and is informed by agreements with other authorities, so that unmet need from neighbouring areas is accommodated where it is practical to do so and is consistent with achieving sustainable development;

(b) Justified – an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence;

(c) Effective – deliverable over the plan period, and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by the statement of common ground; and

(d) Consistent with national policy – enabling the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in this Framework and other statements of national planning policy, where relevant.

1.2.3 Para 65 of the NPPF states:

Where major development involving the provision of housing is proposed, planning policies and decisions should expect at least 10% of the total number of homes to be available for affordable home ownership, unless this would exceed the level of affordable housing required in the area, or significantly prejudice the ability to meet the identified affordable housing needs of specific groups. Exemptions to this 10% requirement should also be made where the site or proposed development:

(a) provides solely for Build to Rent homes;

(b) provides specialist accommodation for a group of people with specific needs (such as purpose-built accommodation for the elderly or students);

(c) is proposed to be developed by people who wish to build or commission their own homes; or

(d) is exclusively for affordable housing, an entry-level exception site or a rural exception site.

1.2.4 Para 119 states:

Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. Strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or 'brownfield' land.

1.3 Draft GNLP Policy 5

1.3.1 Emerging Policy 5 states:

Residential proposals should address the need for homes for all sectors of the community having regard to the latest housing evidence, including a variety of homes in terms of tenure and cost. New homes should provide for a good quality of life in mixed and inclusive communities and major development proposals should provide adaptable homes to meet varied and changing needs.

This will be achieved as follows:

Affordable Housing

Major residential development proposals and purpose-built student accommodation will provide:

- at least 33% affordable housing on-site across the plan area, except in Norwich City Centre where the requirement is at least 28%, or where.....*

.....Purpose-built Student Accommodation

Development proposals for purpose-built student accommodation will be supported at the UEA campus where they are in accordance with the UEA Development Framework Strategy (DFS).

Away from UEA campus, proposals for purpose-built student accommodation will be supported where the need for the development is justified by the current or proposed size of Norwich's higher educational institutions and the proposal will:

be in a location otherwise suitable for residential development with sustainable access to the institutions served;

be of a scale large enough to provide for high standards of student welfare;

contribute to a mixed and inclusive neighbourhood, not dominating existing residential communities;

provide a mix of accommodation types for a wide range of students; and

make provision for a policy compliant proportion of affordable housing that would be expected if the site were developed for general needs housing. Such provision may be made off-site through a commuted sum as set out in supplementary planning documents.

All consents will be restricted so the use of the accommodation is secured for students only.

- 1.3.2 The draft policy is clearly seeking affordable housing delivery from purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA). The policy requires that affordable housing provision should be given based on the site being developed for general needs housing, and then suggests that this provision could be made through an off site financial contribution; as based on supplementary planning documents.

2 Tests of Soundness

2.1 Justified

- 2.1.1 The requirement to provide affordable housing contributions from PBSA development is not considered to be justified. The City Council are encouraging the delivery of PBSA in order to reduce the trend of family housing being converted into HMO's, and therefore bring more affordable accommodation back into the private residential market. To introduce constraints on the delivery of PBSA will only result in the Council failing to meet its own objectives of delivering a choice of housing types.
- 2.1.2 The inclusion of PBSA in the housing delivery figures is not justified as they are not delivering what could be described as homes. The majority of PBSA developments do not meet with national space standards and are in essence no more than temporary accommodation, more akin to hotel developments, which are not included in the housing delivery calculations.
- 2.1.3 Furthermore, there is an evidenced need for this type of accommodation and until there is clear evidence that HMO's are being converted back to family housing its delivery has no influence on the overall housing delivery in the City area. That tipping point has not been reached.

2.2 Effective

- 2.2.1 PBSA developments in Norwich have successfully redeveloped some of the city's most challenging sites and provided positive economic impacts for the city as a whole. PBSA developments will continue to drive forward these positive outcomes. It is highly reasonable that PBSA developers have successfully transformed complex brownfield sites in Norwich because they are not burdened with affordable housing contributions and benefit from a low CIL rate; as residential sites these sites were not attractive from a viability or market demand perspective.
- 2.2.2 The introduction of affordable housing contributions from PBSA will introduce a barrier to development and will inevitably make some schemes unviable. This is not an effective way to ensure that brownfield sites are developed first, and that development of these sites is effective in helping the GNLP meet its overall objectives.

- 2.2.3 Furthermore, it is envisaged that the purpose of this policy objective is to ensure that greater levels of Affordable Housing are delivered in the GNLP area. However, the GNLP Viability Appraisal (Dec 2020) confirms that with regard to affordable housing no consideration has been given to student accommodation.
- 2.2.4 Therefore, there is a failure in the evidence base to understand the costs of delivering student accommodation and how affordable housing contributions will impact the delivery of PBSA. It is considered that the requirement for affordable housing contributions from PBSA will result in significant impacts on the delivery of that product. It is considered illogical that the GNLP would be reliant on PBSA delivering affordable housing to effectively meet its plan objectives without understanding how that would impact on the delivery of PBSA. Therefore, the policy will not be effective in delivering affordable housing.
- 2.2.5 On a practical matter it has also not been considered thoroughly how this contribution would be assessed, would developers have to provide floorplans and details of an alternative housing scheme to then have that examined for an affordable housing contribution? There has been no explanation of an effective mechanism for this contribution and the City's current Affordable Housing SPD and PBSA guide does not address this matter either.

2.3 Consistent with national policy

- 2.3.1 The delivery of affordable housing from PBSA developments directly conflicts with Paragraphs 65, 68 and 119 of the NPPF.

2.4 Conclusion on soundness

- 2.4.1 The delivery of affordable housing from PBSA is not consistent with national policy. The policy objective has also not been considered through the Councils viability studies and is therefore neither justified or going to be effective in delivering that objective. We would also question if there has been any thought given to an alternative of not pursuing affordable housing contributions from student accommodation, we have seen no evidence of that type of assessment.
- 2.4.2 Without understanding the alternatives, how it would be delivered or if it would impact on the viability of PBSA delivery, for which there is an evidenced need, the policy is not going to meet with its objectives and is therefore not considered to be sound.

3 Recommendation

3.1 Suggested Policy Wording

- 3.1.1 Based on the above we would suggest that reference to student accommodation be removed completely from Policy 5 and that a standalone policy be formulated to address matters such as need, location and development standards of PBSA.
- 3.1.2 Should student accommodation remain within Policy 5 we would suggest the following wording:

Affordable Housing

Major residential development proposals ~~and purpose-built student accommodation~~ will provide:

- at least 33% affordable housing on-site across the plan area, except in Norwich City Centre where the requirement is at least 28%, or where.....*

.....Purpose-built Student Accommodation

Development proposals for purpose-built student accommodation will be supported at the UEA campus where they are in accordance with the UEA Development Framework Strategy (DFS).

Away from UEA campus, proposals for purpose-built student accommodation will be supported where the need for the development is justified by the current or proposed size of Norwich's higher educational institutions and the proposal will:

be in a location otherwise suitable for residential development with sustainable access to the institutions served;

be of a scale large enough to provide for high standards of student welfare;

contribute to a mixed and inclusive neighbourhood, not dominating existing residential communities;

provide a mix of accommodation types for a wide range of students; and

~~*make provision for a policy compliant proportion of affordable housing that would be expected if the site were developed for general needs housing. Such provision may be made off-site through a commuted sum as set out in supplementary planning documents.*~~

All consents will be restricted so the use of the accommodation is secured for students only.

3.2 Further considerations

- 3.2.1 The proposed policy lacks support from its evidence base that this is an effective way to deliver both PBSA and affordable housing, both of which have a demonstrable need to be provided. Essentially the dynamic between the two has not been fully examined.
- 3.2.2 We would suggest that loading contributions onto the delivery of PBSA developments will have a negative impact on the redevelopment of many complex brownfield sites in the City. We would also suggest that greater engagement with PBSA developers is undertaken and viability testing for this specific matter is embarked upon by the GNLP. There are some very recent PBSA developments that have taken place in the City and it would seem that these would give an excellent opportunity to examine how contributions such as affordable housing would have impacted on their delivery.
- 3.2.3 PBSA benefits from a low CIL rate as they are categorised as sui-generis developments. It is unclear if this will remain the case. The proposal to obtain affordable housing from PBSA would indicate that the GNLP are proposing to move such development into a residential category, as it would be illogical to seek housing from a non-residential product. If not then surely it would be a requirement to undertake the same affordable housing assessment on all uses that are not residential. Should PBSA be moved to a different category then this again will have an influence on the viability of schemes, we would seek clarity on this matter from the GNLP.