

GNDP Questions December 16th 2020

Four questions have been asked. The questions and responses are below. In the case of the question on self-build (question 2), the submitted text has been edited to focus on the question asked due to its length. The edited questions and answers will be read out at the meeting. The full questions and answers will be included in the meeting's minutes.

Question 1 Green Belt – CPRE Norfolk

Question

CPRE Norfolk notes that the GNLP Reg 19 v1.4 at paragraph 117 states that: "*Greater Norwich does not have a nationally designated Green Belt. National policy is clear that new Green Belts should very rarely be established. Therefore, this plan will need to carry forward policies for protecting our valued landscapes.*"

We are concerned that the GNLP has reached this stage without a more thorough and detailed (at least one that is available publicly) consideration of the provision of a Green Belt for Norwich, preferably on the "green wedges" model. CPRE Norfolk would like an explanation as to why the exceptional circumstances for creation of a Green Belt for Norwich as required by the NPPF do not exist.

The wholly exceptional circumstances around the current Covid-19 crisis are just one example which demonstrates not only how essential it is to maintain and protect green spaces, but also how circumstances have changed since earlier drafts of the GNLP. Moreover, the Government's proposed changes to the planning system and housing requirements suggest that more robust protection of valued green spaces is now more pressing than ever, along with the long-term need for climate change mitigation which the provision of a Green Belt would help to guarantee.

GNLP Officer Response

The Green Belt issue was thoroughly addressed in the Regulation 18A consultation Growth Options document. This clearly set out the national policy requirement to demonstrate exceptional circumstances to establish a new Green Belt. All responses to the consultation are included in the Draft Statement of Consultation published in September 2018. No evidence has been provided at any stage through the Regulation 18 period that demonstrates such exceptional circumstances. The GNLP provides strong policies to protect green spaces and enhance green infrastructure.

Covid-19 is an exceptional circumstance nationally, it is not exceptional to the local plan area. The CPRE are correct to point out that the pandemic has reinforced the importance of green spaces, but in this respect the most significant need is for green space to be accessible. The function of Green Belts is not to provide accessible green space; this is best provided through a green infrastructure strategy. Similarly, the function of a Green Belt is not to address climate change. Indeed, because development may need to leap-frog Green Belts, they can be detrimental to climate change by extending commutes and other travel needs.

The issue may need to be reconsidered in the next local plan to address any relevant requirements of the proposed new planning system and to take account of any new settlement proposals.

Question 2 Self-Build – Louise Minkler

Question

The majority of the question is largely about the operation of the self-build register. This will be forwarded to each of the councils to respond to individually. The element of the question directly relevant to the Greater Norwich Local Plan is:

Could you please tell me if the local Norwich/ Norfolk framework will be encouraging and addressing this issue for legitimate self-builders to build a family forever home and not associating us under the same umbrella as small building companies for affordable housing, which is much easier for the companies to gain planning outside of the boundary than a legitimate self-build?

GMLP Officer Response

The emerging GMLP will help provide more opportunities for self-build on larger sites, smaller sites and as individual dwellings as follows:

1. Policy 5 provides for self-build plots on larger sites (except for flats). It states that *At least 5% of plots on residential proposals of 40 dwellings or more should provide serviced self/custom-build plots unless:*
 - *a lack of need for such plots can be demonstrated;*
 - *plots have been marketed for 12 months and have not been sold.*
2. Policy 7.4 promotes infill development within development boundaries and also allows for *Affordable housing led development, which may include an element of market housing (including self/custom build) if necessary, for viabilityadjacent or well related to settlement boundaries.*
3. Policy 7.5 will be most relevant to the situation described in the question. For every parish it promotes up to a total of 3 or 5 homes to be delivered as small scale-residential development *adjacent to a development boundary or on sites within or adjacent to a recognisable group of dwellings with Positive consideration given to self and custom build.*

Question 3 East Norwich Masterplan – Gail Mayhew

Question

I note that a new proposal is to allocate significant housing numbers to the East Norwich area and would like to ask the following question:

How do the GNDP intend to deliver the enabling, community and strategic infrastructure to unlock the East Norwich project including the Trowse Bridge which is of significant importance to the City & County's future economic positioning in relation to Cambridge, opening up the Nor-Cam corridor on a sustainable basis and to support sustainable movement into and out of the city? And

What are they prepared to commit to in this regard in terms of site assembly and control of the project, if individual owners do not commit to a single sustainable and comprehensive project with an equalisation joint venture agreement?

GNDP Officer Response

The GNDP intend to deliver the enabling, community and strategic infrastructure to unlock the East Norwich project through working closely with all the relevant landowners through a masterplan. The masterplan will be produced by consultants, with procurement being well advanced.

Funding for the masterplan is being provided from the site landowners and other partners in the East Norwich Partnership (a new public sector led partnership led by the city council) including Homes England and Network Rail. Significant additional funding has recently been secured from the Towns Fund both to progress the masterplan and to acquire land to maximise the chances of successful delivery. The masterplan's findings will inform implementation of the GNDP and ensure that possible blockages to delivery can be overcome.

The policy framework for this to be progressed is in policy 7.1 of the GNDP strategy and in the site allocation policy for East Norwich in the GNDP Sites document. The policies and masterplan will promote development of a high density sustainable mixed-use community, co-ordinate delivery of new transport infrastructure and services, enhance green links, provide for a local energy network, enhance heritage assets, protect Carrow Abbey County Wildlife Site and address local issues including the active railway, the protected minerals railhead and flood risk issues.

Question 4 Costessey Showground Site allocation Policy – Mr Milliken, Chair of Easton PC

Question

The inclusion of small-scale food retail, including an anchor unit selling a significant proportion of locally produced goods; café/restaurant/public house uses; and other leisure and service uses, to serve the wider function of the showground will also be considered. This has not been consulted on with the local community of Easton, how can this lawfully form part of the Reg 19 submission if the views of local people have not been taken into account?

As a Parish Council we are very concerned in relation to point 4, the interchange is at or near capacity for large portions of the day, conditions for improvements in the area still have not been advanced in relation to improvements across the A47.

Our initial thoughts are that the wording surrounding the expanded usage is too vague and open to interpretation, a pub/restaurant and hotel are already in operation on the Longwater interchange. Retail outlets should be located on the Longwater retail park which is in very close proximity of the showground. The wording other leisure and service uses is very vague and may lead to traffic levels far in excess of what the local network capacity can handle.

Will this amendment to the current policy be withdrawn and rewritten to add clarity before it is consulted on?

GNDP Chair's Response

Thank you for your question on policy COS 5/GNLP2074 Royal Norfolk Showground, Costessey included in the Publication draft Sites document of the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP).

If the proposed policy for the showground, along with other elements of the GNLP Sites document, are approved by the Greater Norwich Development Partnership (GNDP) on December 16th and then by the councils' cabinets in January 2021, the policy will form part of the Regulation 19 Publication draft GNLP.

The Publication draft GNLP will be made available from February 1st to March 15th 2021 for comments to be made on its soundness and legal compliance. These comments will be considered by elected members in deciding on whether to submit the GNLP in July 2021 and will assist the Inspector in deciding on the content of the subsequent examination on the plan. Current information on this next Regulation 19 stage of plan making available from here will be updated as we get closer to the February 1st.