Proposed New Settlement
Honingham Thorpe

Additional information in relation to Regulation 18 Consultation for Greater Norwich Local Plan

on behalf of Clarion Housing Group
Ref: 18/011

December 2018

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For and on behalf of Brown & Co.

Brown & Co is a leading provider of agency, professional and consultancy services across the whole range of rural, commercial, residential, and agricultural markets.

Date: December 2018.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This document is submitted by Brown & Co on behalf of the Clarion Housing Group in relation to its promotion of land to the west of Norwich for a proposed new settlement at Honingham Thorpe. Clarion Housing Group is one of the largest Housing Association Groups in England and owns or manages 125,000 homes and welcomes the opportunity to assist in the delivery of growth within Greater Norwich. Formed thorough the merger of Affinity Sutton and Circle Housing Clarion currently works in 176 local authorities, including those Councils that are preparing the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) – namely, Broadland, South Norfolk and Norwich City Councils. The Group has a strong local presence with over 4,200 properties in Broadland, and a further 650 homes in South Norfolk and Norwich. As a financially strong business for social purpose, the Clarion Housing Group have a long term relationship with the Greater Norwich area and are committed to investing in homes for residents as well as providing a range of community initiatives.

1.2 Honingham Thorpe is a mixed use development proposed by Clarion Housing Group to the south of the A47, between the villages of Honingham, Easton, Colton and Barford, in Norfolk. The site, currently undeveloped farmland, is adjacent to the committed Food Enterprise Park (FEP), which benefits from a recently approved Local Development Order and it is close to the urban extension to the south of Easton, comprising around 900 residential units.

1.3 We are currently preparing the proposals for the site which is based on the following:

- 72 hectares of employment space
- 189 hectares of residential development
- 66.5 hectares of Country Park
- 3.5 hectares of Nature Reserve

1.4 The broad parameters of the new settlement are fixed by the A47 trunk road and the land sloping away to the River Tud valley to the north, and the sensitive landscape associated with the River Yare valley to the south. Easton village and the Easton & Otley College are to the east whilst the villages of Colton and Honingham are to the west. This submission builds on the basic framework of the proposed settlement located within these parameters by providing additional technical information on the proposed new settlement. It also represents the initial work that specialist consultants have undertaken in dealing with some of the issues raised through the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA).

1.5 It is noted that the proposals in the emerging Local Plan have a general reference (GNLP0415R) although this has been subsequently sub-divided into areas A to F. The submissions contained in this document are a response to the whole area that forms the proposed new settlement of Honingham Thorpe.

1.6 The following initial technical reports have been undertaken and form part of this submission:

- Phase 1 – Transport Strategy;
- Flood Risk and Drainage Feasibility Study;

- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report;
- Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment.

These reports are summarised in Section 2.0.

1.7 Additional technical reports are being prepared that will form the basis of parameter plans and a masterplan to illustrate the benefits of bringing this potential strategic settlement forward to assist in the delivery of growth as part of the emerging Local Plan.

2. SUMMARY OF TECHNICAL REPORTS

Phase 1 – Transport Strategy

2.1 This technical report illustrates the transport implications of a first phase of the development and its deliverability without the reliance on the major committed infrastructure improvements such as the A47 North Tuddenham to Easton improvement scheme and the creation of the Norwich Western Link.

2.2 Currently, the area has limited services and facilities within the surrounding villages, within short distance from the site. Pedestrian infrastructure is limited, and the closest cycle routes are in Norwich. Public transport services are available at both Honingham and Easton. They include the fast service Excel, stopping at Easton, linking to both Norwich and King`s Lynn. Two Park and Ride sites are available within short driving distance from the site.

2.3 The site is in close proximity to the A47, which carries a strategic role within the region and which will benefit from important infrastructure improvements, namely its dualling between North Tuddenham and Easton, between 2021 and 2023, and the creation of the Norwich Western Link.

2.4 The stretch of the A47 in the vicinity of the site is classified as a “medium-low risk road” by the Road Safety Foundation’s ‘British Eurorap Results 2018: getting back on track’ Report.

2.5 In terms of accessibility the masterplan will ensure that the site is permeable, easily accessible and inclusive, and meets the best practice guidance set out in documents like Manual for Streets, Manual for Streets 2, Providing for Journeys on Foot and CIHT guidance.

2.6 Sustainable access will be achieved from the first phase of the development. Improvements will be made to the existing network where limited infrastructure is provided at present, comprising the creation of a 3m wide, shared footway/cycleway on the (unnamed) road running along the Food Enterprise Park and connecting to Easton, to the east. Furthermore, should the committed pedestrian/cycle improvements proposed as part of the Easton Village Growth not be delivered, the Client will commit to provide such improvements, which were welcomed and agreed with NCC.

2.7 A primary school will be created from Phase I and ensure that the pupils of the proposed residential properties would be able to access the new facility within recommended distances and safety standards. To improve connectivity, it is also proposed to enhance the route between the Food Enterprise Park and Easton and Otley College.

2.8 The reduction in the reliance on the use of the private vehicle will be promoted and enforced by a travel plan, for the future residents, employees, students and users of the site.

2.9 The site, from Phase I, will additionally benefit from a new Bus Rapid Transport (BRT) being proposed along Dereham Road (New Costessey) and that will be extended to Easton. Further stakeholder engagement will take place with NCC to find the best solutions to connect the site with the BRT route. It is proposed that the existing route is extended to our site to enhance connections with the new community. Alternative options to provide public transport within the site are available.

2.10 The vehicular access strategy for the site is subject to further review in liaison with Highways England (HE) and Norfolk County Council (NCC), after undertaking strategic transport modelling which will include the A47 North Tuddenham to Easton improvement scheme and Norwich Western Link. At present the alignment for the A47 is fixed and the details for the junctions will now be further developed. The last iterations of the plans illustrate a vehicular access to the site via a large new roundabout on the A47, following the dualling to be completed by 2023.

2.11 In assessing the likely impact on the road network, the Forecast Travel Demand associated with the first phase of the development was estimated using a first principle approach, based on a combination of TRICS data and Census statistics. It was chosen to make very robust assumptions, such as the adoption of high vehicular trip rates and no internalisation of trips, to convince the key stakeholders on the deliverability of the first phase of the development. Particularly, trip rates used in the assessment were considerably higher than those used in other planning applications, such as the planning permission for the Easton Village.

2.12 Impact at the junctions in the vicinity of the site would be negligible. The Easton roundabout, due to be removed by the new A47 alignment between 2021 and 2023, is predicted to operate within maximum theoretical capacity with the additional development traffic. The Honingham roundabout, similarly due to be removed, is predicted to exceed its capacity, with or without the addition of the development traffic; a mitigation solution at the junction, deemed disproportionate in relation to the actual impact of the development and therefore unnecessary, is however available, to more than offset the development impact. At the Longwater Interchange, the south dumbbell roundabout is predicted to operate within capacity in its committed layout, while the north roundabout would exceed capacity in a Future Base (2023) scenario, with or without the development traffic. Also, in this case, a possible solution, subject to highway boundary data and design, is available, should it be deemed necessary, albeit disproportionate to the actual impact of the development.

2.13 In conclusion, the site will be designed and assessed in accordance with national, regional and local policies and best practice. As stressed by the NPPF, *"the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development"*. That is the principle that is guiding the masterplan development process, to help achieving sustainable access.

2.14 The central importance of the sustainability of the site is acknowledged; improvements to pedestrian, cycle and public transport infrastructure are proposed as part of a first phase of the development. The site will serve as the new centre of a regeneration of the whole surrounding area, which has, at present, limited connections with the surrounding towns and Norwich. It will enhance connections with Easton, the new village to the south of it, as well as the Food Enterprise Park.

2.15 Impact on the surrounding highway network would be negligible, particularly in consideration of the conservative assumptions made throughout the whole assessment, such as high trip rates, no internalisation of trips and unmitigated traffic growth. In addition, major infrastructure improvements in the area will take place by 2023, including the A47 North Tuddenham to Easton improvement scheme and Norwich Western Link.

2.16 It is considered that a first phase of the site, as demonstrated in this report, would not result in a detrimental impact on the highway network.

Flood Risk and Drainage Feasibility Study

2.17 This Feasibility Study provides an initial high-level Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy for the proposed development site at Honingham Thorpe, Norfolk, and is based upon existing publicly available data. It aims to assess the flood risk and drainage constraints to inform the decision-making process as to whether the site is suitable for development given the existing flood risk and possible drainage strategies available.

2.18 Located between the River Tud to the north and the River Yare to the south; the site has a bedrock geology of White Chalk, and the superficial drift aquifer is a mixed lithology which is expected to be largely permeable. The bedrock aquifer is classified as Principle Aquifer. The superficial drift aquifer is classified as Secondary (Undifferentiated) aquifer.

2.19 The site is located predominantly within Flood Zone 1, with small areas at the southern extent of the site in Flood Zone 2 and 3, however these are proposed as open public spaces. The risk of fluvial flooding is low across the majority of the site, except for the small areas in Flood Zone 2 and 3, were the risk is medium to high;

2.20 Flooding from groundwater may pose a risk to the site; however, this will require further investigation. The risk of flooding from surface water is low for the majority of the site, however in low-lying areas mainly to the south there is a medium to high risk. In terms of the risk of flooding from sewers or reservoirs this is likely to be low.

2.21 The Sequential Test and vulnerability assessment concludes that the proposed development of the Site is acceptable. Preliminary greenfield runoff rates and indicative surface water volume storage estimates have been calculated based on 40%, 60% and 80% of the site being impermeable post-development.

2.22 The mitigation measures for the proposed development will include the provision of comprehensive sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS) within the overall design of the new settlement. These SuDS will be designed as part of a green network linking the Country Park to the new settlement.

On the basis of the currently available data this Feasibility Study concludes that the site is suitable for the proposed development.

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

2.23 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) has been undertaken for the site to consider the initial ecological implications for the proposed new settlement.

2.24 A desk study and Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey were completed in November 2018.

2.25 The desk study found that there are no statutory designated sites within or close to the site. There are, however, three County Wildlife Sites (CWS) wholly or partly within the site (all located in the far south) and a large number of CWSs in the surrounding area. There is also a Geodiversity Site (Marlingford Quarry) to the south of the site. Biological records returned in the desk study included numerous records of birds and small numbers of records of terrestrial and riparian mammals, reptiles, amphibians and fish.

2.26 The Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey found that the vast majority of the site is dominated by arable fields which are bounded by hedgerows, most of which have multiple mature oak trees. Plantation woodlands are also fairly common, particularly in the north-west and the south of the site. There are also some significant areas of grassland along the River Yare in the south of the site. Also located in the south of the site is Colton Wood, an ancient replanted mixed woodland. There are small areas of other habitats, such as ponds, buildings/hard-standing (i.e. farm-yards) and tracks across the site.

2.27 The proposal would focus development within those parts of the site with relatively low ecological value. The areas proposed to become Country Park and Nature Reserve cover the more ecologically valued habitats at the site, including those designated as CWSs.

2.28 Additional surveys will be required for various protected species and valued habitats, to further inform understanding of ecological constraints at the site. This will then feed into the future design of the proposal. Overall, based on current information, there are no known ecological constraints across the whole site which would prevent new settlement in this locality.

2.29 Ecological constraints and opportunities are noted and mapped. Constraints relate mainly to existing habitats and features of relative ecological value, such as woodlands, hedgerows and grasslands. Retaining these features will improve the prospect of successfully creating a green network throughout the developed site, using the existing features as the foundation for such a network. There are also substantial opportunities for ecological enhancement at the site, associated with a new settlement. Enhancement would focus on increasing the quantity, improving the quality and enhancing the connectivity of habitats and features at the site.

Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment

2.30 A desk-based assessment (DBA) has been undertaken across the proposed new settlement. Most of the site consists of a gently rolling plateau used for agriculture, dropping down to the River Tud in the north and River Yare in the south. The DBA has identified and mapped heritage assets from prehistory to the modern period. There are no designated heritage assets within the site and a limited number in the adjacent area.

2.32 The initial research shows limited evidence of any potential archaeological finds across the proposed new settlement area. Further work will be needed in the northern section of the site around the villages of Colton, Easton and Honingham. At this stage, we believe these features can be retained within the open spaces proposed for the new settlement.

2.33 Overall, the historic mapping suggests that all of the site was used for arable cultivation during the past medieval and modern periods. In conclusion, whilst further work will be needed, the initial results of the DBA show that there are no significant archaeological issues that would preclude the delivery of the new settlement.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 This document provides a summary of the initial technical work undertaken on these proposals for a new settlement for Honingham Thorpe. The detailed reports accompany this submission as separate documents.

3.2 Additional technical reports are being prepared and coordinated as part of bringing forward proposals for the site. It is our intention to share this information to deal with the issues raised via the HELAA exercise and provide greater certainty on the delivery of a new settlement at Honingham Thorpe.