

GNLP – Reg 18 Consultation Response

Site GNLP0514 – context

The site is adjacent to the Tollgate Way, a major local road that links the Bowthorpe residential developed area to the B1108. The B1108 links the University of East Anglia (UEA), Norwich Research Park, John Innes Centre and the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital to the A47 Southern Bypass.

The topography of the site means the site has a low area along the riverbank of the River Yare to its northern boundary, the site then has a significant height increase to a large flat area that is adjacent to a row of terrace houses and two new recently built large executive homes. Across the road from the site is the Spire Hospital and Clinic while further down the Old Watton Road is the Oakwood House Residential and Care Home.

Assessment – 14 categories – 9 green and 5 amber

Site GNLP has significantly more ‘green’ category assessments (9 ‘green’ in total with only 5 ‘amber’) compared to what is being considered as a ‘reasonable alternative’ site GNLP0253 (with only 2 ‘green’ in total and 12 ‘amber’) – this seems very inconsistent.

Looking in turn at each of the ‘amber’ assessments for site GNLP0514: -

Site Access: The site already has two well defined and used accesses close to the Tollgate Way, where the Spire Hospital and Clinic are accessed. How can this be rated as ‘amber’?

Significant Landscape: The site is mainly poor-quality vegetation, brambles and trees of category ‘C’ or below. There is an area of recently planted young trees acting as a buffer to the site from Tollgate Way. Development on the site would enhance the riverbank and landscape setting improving what is the current situation. Should be rated as ‘green’.

Biodiversity & Geodiversity: The development of the site would create the opportunity to dramatically improve the biodiversity, enabling the enhancement of both habitat and flora.

Historic Environment: There is no historic environment. The Bowthorpe Marsh Nature Reserve is located a distance to the north across the Tollgate Way link road and beside the large electrical substation. There is no impact on the historic environment, this should be rated as ‘green’.

Transport & Roads: The site is extremely well served with roads and transport and should be rated as ‘green’.

The local public transport runs from the hub at the N&N Hospital, through the Research Park along the B1108 and links to the UEA and along Tollgate Way to the residential areas of Bowthorpe.

The local road network is very good with the B1108 serving the N&N Hospital, the Research Park and UEA, while the Tollgate Way links the residential areas of Bowthorpe and the Spire Hospital to these and other local facilities.

Stage 3

The consultation comments raised concerns regarding impacts on the strategic green infrastructure corridor, effects on biodiversity & peoples wellbeing and no nearby facilities/services.

These comments seem at odds with the site. Specifically, the site is not part of any strategic green infrastructure corridor as this all is located to the north of the site on the northern side of River Yare where the Yare Valley flood plane is situated. This would be untouched by any development on this site.

Development on the site would create the opportunity to enhance biodiversity, especially relating to improving the river scene.

There is no effect from development on people's wellbeing. Again, there is the opportunity through development to enhance biodiversity and create vistas and views across the River Yare (that do not currently exist) that would improve the landscape views from windows for patients of the Hospital, Clinic and residents of the Oakwood House Residential and Care Home.

There are plenty of nearby accessible facilities and services all within walking distances. Many of which are used by existing residents and staff of the Hospital, Clinic and Research Park. The closest school is less than 2 miles away and accessible along a highways footpath. While the parish church is located a few hundred meters along the Old Watton Road. What an amazing location to access easily many local facilities (hence the 'green' assessment at Stage 2) and the availability of public transport to facilitate easy access to the City centre.

The 'discussion of submitted sites' at Stage 4 fails to recognise the minimal impact of this small site or the positive opportunities of a small cluster of homes in such a sustainable location would bring.

The site 'could not offer a safe walking route to the catchment primary school at Little Melton...' – across the A47 Southern Bypass - but this is not the closest school, which is in Bowthorpe and does have a safe highways footpath that other children already use.

Stage 7 – Appraisal as 'Unreasonable Site.

The site is adjacent to existing housing and, if a settlement limit was in place, would be classed as infill. The site meets the requirements of emerging policy 7.1 – The Norwich Urban Area including the fringe parishes – is in a very sustainable location and should be allocated to meet the housing need and shortfall in identified housing numbers (currently shown as 'elsewhere in the urban area total' of 2,995).

As the site is in Colney, a village that forms part of policy 7.4 – Village Clusters – the site could be allocated through the separate South Norfolk Site Allocations.

Policy 7.5 – Small Scale Windfall Housing Development – could be used to facilitate incremental smaller scale development or self/custom build as the site satisfies the policy requirements.

The development would not encroach on the open character of the river valley as this is located to the north of the site. Development could in many ways actually enhance the landscape and improve biodiversity.

The existing trees are of category 'C' or below, with most being established as a buffer to the large road linking through to Bowthorpe. Any development of the site would enhance the landscape character and create opportunities to improve biodiversity and improve the river scene.

Flood risk is being misrepresented and in direct contradiction to the official assessment. The site is adjacent to the River Yare, the flood plane is to the north of the site while the small area along the riverbank would remain undeveloped. The HELLA Comparison table rates the site as 'green' for flood risk.

It should be recognised that the catchment school is due to be redefined. As Little Melton is now across the Southern Bypass it is unreasonable to assess 'no safe route' as material while there is a closer newer school less than 2 miles away (a County Council stipulation) with a safe highways adopted and maintained footpath / cycleway that local children from the area already make use of.

Site GNLP0514 should be reassessed. It is not fair to classify it as unreasonable. The site is a 'reasonable site' being sustainable by all the recognised definitions - its proximity to two hospitals and adjacent to surrounding housing, local employment at the research park or easy access to the City centre through public transport – with development on the site having no negative impacts on a very good local road network.

Assessment – 14 categories – 9 green and 5 amber – come on.

Site GNLP0514 should be the "preferred site" in the absence of any choice of alternative suitable sites. It also will help with the requirement of at least 10% smaller sites in the National Planning Policy Framework.