A. Introduction and Background

 A.1. The South Norfolk Village Clusters Housing Allocations Plan (The Village Clusters Plan) aims to deliver sustainable growth within the villages of South Norfolk. The Village Clusters Plan has been developed alongside the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) and in accordance with Government's national planning policies and guidance. The Plan allocates a series of smaller sites, typically within the range of 12 to 50 homes, across the 48 Village Clusters in South Norfolk, to accommodate at least 1,200 new homes in total. The Plan also defines the Settlement Limits for the villages within these clusters, making provision for further smaller sites and incorporating revisions to reflect development that has occurred, or has been permitted since the boundaries were last updated.

Support this - Bunwell has an ideal windfall site GNLP 2126 of 0.52 hectares which is conveniently placed in the village centre. The Settlement Limit passes across one third of the site. Given the above consultation statement, this would have been a good opportunity to reposition the Settlement Limit to the site borders for future development opportunities of the entire site. Other than three developed sites, no ‘provision’ whatsoever appears to have been made to the village limits and we would question the soundness of the Settlement Limit assessments by not doing so.

A.2. The Village Clusters Plan establishes the Objectives of the Plan, as well as detailed policies for those sites allocated within it. Following representations received in response to the Regulation 18 consultation it was determined that the inclusion of Core Policies would be a duplication of planning policies set out elsewhere, either in national policy or in the Local Plan, and therefore these have not been carried forward in this Plan.

A.3. The production of the South Norfolk Village Clusters Housing Allocation Plan has been supported by a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) which evaluate the plan and are also available for comment on legal and soundness compliance.

Don’t Support – We currently have two 2015 Site Specific Allocations in Bunwell with eleven 4/5 bedroom detached houses and only four 3 bedroom detached houses. Due to the high value of these properties, they are being purchased by retired couples and WFH professionals with no demands being placed upon developers for more competitively priced 2/3 bedroom houses. If National Framework targets are to be achieved, local planners must demand this of developers, in addition to Affordable. Also allow increased numbers of windful housing numbers where needed.

National Policy

A.4. Government planning policy is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). In terms of rural housing, paragraph 79 of the NPPF states that:

A.5. 'To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services. Where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby.'

Not Support - SNC must ensure the right number and mix of dwellings in addition to the Cluster Sites around primary schools. With electric vehicles coming on stream more and more, car pollution will be of reducing concern. Primary schools and their locations should not be to the exclusion of more windfall sites outside of these locations and settlement limits, where they are seen of benefit to the village. We appreciate that Affordable Housing is not included in the cap but the 3/5 windfall allocations are insufficient to offer the required choice in the buyer market and to inject the necessary village vitality.

A.6. This underpins the Village Clusters Plan, which looks at settlements both individually, but also, importantly, as part of a cluster of settlements many of which share local facilities and services.

A.7. Paragraph 69 of the NPPF notes the importance of small and medium sized sites, up to 1 hectare in size, in contributing to meeting housing needs, particularly in terms of the ability to deliver those sites quickly. This paragraph also encourages Councils to have Local Plan policies which support windfall development on non-allocated sites. The scale of the sites identified and allocated through the Village Clusters Plan, as well as the provision made for windfall development though amendments to existing Settlement Limit boundaries, delivers on these requirements.

Support but! - The Plan only makes allowance for 3–5 windfall dwellings during the Plan period up until 2038 excluding Affordable and some self-build. We consider this insufficient for balanced expansion. Bunwell, as an example, has a serious lack of new 2/3 bedroom houses under commercial builds which is adversely affecting the primary school intake to the point where a nursery class has now been created. To address the housing needs balance, allocated sites must have a significant number of 2/3 bedroom commercial build houses plus onsite Affordable Housing. Offsite Affordable is an option but it must be in the village concerned

The Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP)

A.8. South Norfolk Council is working with Broadland Council and Norwich City Council to produce the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP). Amongst other things, the GNLP identifies how many homes need to be built between 2018 and 2038. The basis for calculating the future requirements is the Government's December 2020 'standard method' for identifying local housing need. More details on the GNLP can be found at www.gnlp.org.uk.

A.9. The GNLP strategy focuses most of the planned growth in a strategic growth area that covers the Broadland Growth Triangle to the north-east of Norwich, Norwich and its wider urban area, and the A11 corridor including Hethersett and Wymondham. The latter is also referred to as the Cambridge Norwich Tech Corridor. Outside of these strategic growth areas the GNLP also allows for further growth in five Main Towns and the larger 'Key Service Centre' villages (such as Hingham, Loddon/Chedgrave and Poringland/Framingham Earl). The draft GNLP also requires some development to occur on smaller sites in the Village Clusters, as described in the GNLP such provision is made as it 'has the benefit of supporting small-scale builders, providing choice for the market and helping to ensure the delivery of housing in popular village locations.'

Support – There is deep concern that sensible windfall housing development in Village Clusters and Non Village Clusters will be constrained to the point where villages may not be allowed to expand as they might wish and need. This could have the detrimental effect of removing beneficial housing opportunities for young families, retirees, local first time buyers and small builders with the consequences of collapsing local infrastructure and local business services. For some villages the suggested figures of 3 – 5 windfall dwellings over the Plan period simply isn’t enough. If the right mix is not achieved the primary schools will suffer too.

A.10. Overall, 5.5% of the GNLP growth is assigned to the Village Clusters in South Norfolk. Half of that growth has either already been built during 2018/19 and 2019/20, or is on sites which already have planning permission, or are allocated in the current South Norfolk Site Specific Allocations and Policies (2015). All bar two of those 2015 Local Plan allocations are carried forward in this Plan. To meet the remaining requirements of the GNLP, the South Norfolk Village Clusters Housing Allocations Plan needs to identify sites for at least a further 1,200 new homes. These are made up of:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Source** | **Dwellings** |
| New Village Cluster Plan Allocations | 1,102 |
| Carried Forward 2015 Allocations | Net Gain of 4 |
| 2015 Allocations not carried forward | Loss of 13 |
| Neighbourhood Plan Allocations | 135 |
| **Total** | **1,228** |

A.11. A list of sites that make up these numbers can be found in Appendix A.

A.12. Non-housing sites in the South Norfolk Village Clusters, such as employment allocations or stand-alone sites for specific uses, such as sports and recreation facilities, are still dealt with through the GNLP.

Village Clusters

A.13. There are 48 Village Clusters in South Norfolk. Some contain a single parish, whilst others contain multiple parishes. In line with the approach set out in the GNLP, each one is centred around the local Primary School. Where that primary school is within a larger settlement outside of a Village Cluster, the remaining rural parishes still form a cluster in the Village Clusters Plan e.g. Brockdish, Needham, Wortwell and Starston are within the catchment of Harleston Primary School, but those four parishes form a cluster in this Plan. The Primary School catchment has been taken as a proxy for social sustainability, However the Council also recognises that many other facilities are important to local communities and has therefore undertaken an audit of other facilities and services within the clusters, to inform the Site Assessment process (see details below).

A.14. The sites within the Village Clusters are split into two categories

* new Allocations, these are sites typically proposed for between 12 to 50 dwellings, which will go to meeting the 1,200 dwelling requirement in the GNLP, noted above; and
* Settlement Limit Extensions, for sites smaller than 12 dwellings, these will not count towards the 1,200 dwelling requirement, but will help ensure that the 'windfall allowance' in the GNLP is achieved.

Support- We understand the windfall allowance overall is 800 dwellings with a ‘maximum’ of 3/5 dwellings per village. This excludes affordable housing and some self-builds. We question however the 3/5 ‘maximum’ hard and fast figures and consider individual village allowances should allow some flexibility and discretion where an increase is fully justified, even if outside settlement limits.

A.15. The threshold of 12 dwellings is consistent with the GNLP and reflects the fact that sites smaller than this are less likely to achieve the required element of affordable housing. Settlement Limit extensions also offer the opportunity for 'self-build' development, as required through Government policy, particularly where those sites have been proposed by the site owner who wishes to build or commission their own home.

Support - We fully support this approach, however, caution needs to be exercised where sites have multiple dwellings planned for potential self-build. Experience has shown that instead of the usual phased roll out with a single developer, the multiple construction of all site dwellings at one time can bring congestion, excessive noise and chaotic conditions to main village thoroughfares and local residents.

The Regulation 19 Publication of the South Norfolk Village Clusters Housing Allocation

A.16. This is the Publication draft version of the South Norfolk Village Clusters Housing Allocation Plan (also referred to as the 'Regulation 19 Pre-submission Draft Plan'). This document sets out the Council's chosen Plan which it intends to submit for Examination in Public.

A.17. The Regulation 19 version follows on from the earlier Regulation 18 consultation version which sought views on the sites that had been promoted to the Council for consideration, as well as on other changes to the Settlement Limits and the Plan Objectives. During the current Regulation 19 publication period, comments must be limited to matters of legal and soundness compliance and to be duly made representations must be submitted during the specified time period, further details can be found at www.southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk/vchap. Following the close of the publication period, the Plan, any duly made representations, and the supporting evidence documents will be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for Examination by a Government appointed Planning Inspector. The duly made representations will help to inform the content of the Examination of the Plan.

A.18. Each allocation comprises both a site specific policy and background text. The background text sets out the key issues identified during the evidence gathering stage, as well as matters that the Council wishes to bring to the attention of the site developer. This supporting information should be read in conjunction with the specific policy requirements as it has informed the requirements of the policy.

A.19. Maps detailing the boundaries of the site have been produced for each of the allocations and are included alongside the policies. Also included within this document are maps that illustrate the Settlement Limits, which incorporate amendments since the 2015 Local Plan as set out in the relevant chapters of the document. The complete set of maps promoted for consideration as part of the Village Cluster Housing Allocation Plan process is available within the online consultation material.

Existing Planning Policies and Neighbourhood Plans

A.20. Whilst the South Norfolk Village Clusters Housing Allocation Plan has been prepared alongside the GNLP, this is in the context of other planning documents which already exist or are also being prepared.

A.21. Currently Local Plan Policies for the village cluster settlements in South Norfolk are set out in variety of documents, these include:

* The Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk (2014), which sets out the strategic planning policies covering the three Districts;
* The South Norfolk Site Specific Allocations and Policies Document (2015), which sets out allocations for housing and other uses;
* The South Norfolk Development Management Policies Document (2015) which sets out a number of non-site specific policies applicable many types of development (highways, parking, design, landscaping, neighbour amenity etc.) as well as criteria based polices for various different types of development, and policies applying to particular landscape designations.

A.22. When adopted the GNLP will replace the existing Joint Core Strategy (JCS) and will also replace the parts of the South Norfolk Site Specific Allocations and Policies relating to the larger settlements in South Norfolk. The Village Clusters Plan will then replace the remainder of the Site Specific Allocations and Policies document. Sites that were allocated in the 2015 Site Specific Allocations and Policies document but have either not yet come forward for development, or have not been substantively constructed, have been reviewed and included in the Village Clusters Plan as 'carried forward' allocations if the Council considers that the site remains a reasonable option for development. These allocations have been updated to reflect subsequent planning permissions and/or further information about the site(s) and local context that has emerged through the development of this Plan. The 2015 Development Management Policies Document will remain in place.

A.23. Some Town and Parish Councils have, and are continuing to, produce Neighbourhood Plans, which sit alongside the Local Plan and when adopted, are also used to determine planning applications. Most of these Neighbourhood Plans include more detailed Development Management policies, which aim to shape development proposals to better reflect local circumstances. However, currently two Neighbourhood Plans, Dickleburgh and Diss and District (which includes the Village Cluster parishes of Burston, Roydon and Scole) are proposing to make their own allocations and our approach to these clusters is set out in the specific chapters below. For more information about Neighbourhood Plans in South Norfolk, please visit <https://www.southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plans>.

## . The Plan Objectives

A.24. The following sets out the three Objectives which the Village Clusters Plan is aiming to achieve through the allocation of appropriate sites and the amendment of Settlement Limits.

We are concerned that without the necessary attention, action and ongoing vigilance to the points we have detailed above and those stated by South Norfolk Council, we simply shall not realise the required and desired Cluster Village and Non Cluster Village housing in support of our communities and schools.

Re SNVC Objective 2, equally important is the urgent need to address the current significant infrastructure failings which can only get worse if not addressed e.g. the Bunwell mains sewage system. So far the huge development of Wymondham has seen no improvements. Action not just words is what is required now.

SNVC Objective 1 - Meet housing needs

Deliver housing in accordance with the Greater Norwich Local Plan housing target for the South Norfolk Village Clusters through the allocation of suitable, viable and deliverable development sites for housing.

Provide an appropriate mix of house types, sizes and tenures to allow for residents at different stages of their life cycle e.g. first time buyers, those seeking family housing and those looking to downsize or move to more suitable accommodation in later life.

Provide opportunities for 'self-builds' through the extension or amendment of settlement boundaries to allow 'in-fill' development in appropriate locations.

SNVC Objective 2 - Protect village communities and support rural services and facilities

Provide opportunities for new housing development in a range of settlements within the village clusters, meeting the needs of a range of occupiers with the potential to support different local services and facilities. Seek to deliver improvements to local services, facilities and infrastructure where justified and appropriate.

SNVC Objective 3 - Protect the character of villages and their settings

Ensure that the scale, location and density of housing is well related to the form and character of existing villages, protects the historic environment, including protected landscapes, and ensures appropriate landscaping measures are delivered as part of new development.

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