

**NORTH NORFOLK
LOCAL PLAN
EXAMINATION
HEARING STATEMENT
– MATTER 2**

Quality Assurance

Site name: North Norfolk Local Plan Examination

Client name: Hopkins Homes Ltd

Type of report: Hearing Statement – Matter 2

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Signed 

Date 5 January 2024

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Signed 

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Hearing Statement has been prepared by Bidwells LLP on behalf of Hopkins Homes Ltd in support of representations made to the North Norfolk Local Plan. By way of background, Hopkins Homes Ltd are promoting land at Norwich Road and Nursery Drive (NW01/B) for residential-led development of 343 dwellings, and associated infrastructure.
- 1.2 At the time of writing this Statement, hybrid planning applications are at an advanced stage of determination covering both the allocated land under the existing Local Plan, and the proposed allocation of the submitted North Norfolk Local Plan.
- 1.3 The applications are registered under planning references: PF/22/1596 and PF/22/1784 and form a hybrid planning application comprising of the following elements:
1. Full Planning Application for the construction of 343 dwellings (including affordable homes), garages, parking, vehicular access onto Ewing Road and Hornbeam Road, public open spaces, play areas, landscaping, drainage and other associated infrastructure;
 2. Outline Planning Application with all matters reserved for a phased development comprising 7 serviced self-build plots and associated infrastructure; and
 3. Outline Planning Application with all matters reserved for the construction of an elderly care facility and associated infrastructure, landscaping and open space.
- 1.4 This Statement provides Hopkins Homes Ltd's response to Matter 2 (Spatial Strategy), Questions 2.1-2.5 of the Inspectors' Matters Issues and Questions, November 2023 [Document EH0003].

2.0 Matter 2: Spatial Strategy

Question 2.1 Is the proposed settlement hierarchy with five categories - Large Growth Towns, Small Growth Towns, Large Growth Villages, Small Growth Villages and Countryside - justified by the evidence?

- 2.1 Hopkins Homes Ltd agrees with the proposed settlement hierarchy with the five categories which have been informed by the Local Plan's evidence base, reflecting the role of these existing settlements in terms of employment, retail and service centres, and their capacity to take further sustainable growth, and the availability of land promoted through the Local Plan process which has a real prospect of delivery in the Local Plan period.
- 2.2 The proposed settlement hierarchy meets the objectives of the Plan's Spatial Vision to enable growth of the required housing, jobs and supporting infrastructure, whilst doing this in the knowledge that the district is sensitive to change, with its natural environment an important asset to its continued success as a popular tourist destination from which a larger proportion of the district's prosperity and economic growth is derived. On this basis, when evaluating the needs to conserve and enhance the landscape and natural environment, whilst nurturing the significance of the Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Beauty which covers vast areas of the district, the proposed settlement hierarchy identified those settlements which are outside these more sensitive locations and have the capacity to accommodate further sustainable development.
- 2.3 The concentration of growth in key locations, helps support and enhance sustainable transport options, which acknowledges the Council's need to move the district towards net zero and increasing resilience to climate change.

Question 2.3 Does the evidence justify the inclusion of the particular settlements in each of the top three tiers – Large Growth Towns, Small Growth Towns and Large Growth Villages? Is the distinction between Large Growth Villages and Small Growth Villages distinct or have any been misclassified

- 2.4 The definition of each tier of the settlement hierarchy is clear, and the criteria/characteristics that have been used to justify a settlement's inclusion in a specific tier of the hierarchy are considered to be clearly articulated (see para 4.1.3 – 4.1.7 of the submitted Plan).
- 2.5 The inclusion of particular settlements in each of the top three tiers is justified and the distinction between Large Growth Towns and Small Growth Towns is clear. The three Large Growth Towns identified are spatially and functionally distinct from those identified in the Small Growth Towns, and arguably have less capacity to accommodate more sustainable growth without being detrimental to enhancing the character and natural environment adjoining these Small Growth Town locations.
- 2.6 For example, in the case of North Walsham, it is proposed as a Large Growth Town. North Walsham in the previous Local Plan and now this submitted Plan, remains a focus for growth and one of the districts main centres for population, housing, employment and community infrastructure. With the ability to access a frequent rail and bus services to larger retail and employment locations such as Norwich, with onward travel to other parts of the UK through the mainline rail network, has all the necessary characteristics to be independently a sustainable

location, but also with easy access to larger regional centres via sustainable transport modes to deliver sustainable growth. Coupled with this is the availability of land, and those areas identified for additional growth around North Walsham have been evaluated and have been demonstrated to be sustainable, available and deliverable for the proposed development.

- 2.7 In the specific case of the proposed allocation NW01/B, Land at Norwich Road, through application ref: PF/22/1596, the supporting technical evidence has demonstrated that with appropriate standard, tried and tested mitigations measures in place, the proposed allocated development can be delivered in a sustainable way which does not damage the more sensitive environments of the district, and will enhance the local landscape through high quality design, provision of public open spaces in excess of policy requirements in locations which are not currently publicly accessible, whilst also delivering, in advance of mandatory requirements, over 10% net gain in biodiversity and environmental enhancement.

Question 2.4 How has the proportion of new development in Large Growth Towns (about 50% of the total) been derived? Is this a 'top down' policy decision or the consequence of assessing site opportunities? How have the lower proportions of development in Small Growth Towns and Large Growth Villages been derived, and do these proportions suitably reflect the relative sustainability of the settlements?

- 2.8 Hopkins Homes Ltd considers that the proportion of new development identified for the Large Growth Towns has been predicated on the basis of the following criteria identified by the Council:

- The level of supporting services and infrastructure in each place;
- The character of each settlement;
- The extent to which future development may be constrained by environmental, social and economic considerations;
- The identified development needs and particularly, the need for affordable homes;
- The wider community benefits which may be delivered by growth in a particular location; and
- The availability of suitable development sites.

- 2.9 The sites identified in the Large Growth Towns have positively responded to this criteria, however, importantly, the proposed settlement hierarchy has been identified to fulfil the Council's overall spatial vision and objectives which is about an approach which delivers sufficient homes, of the right type and built in the right locations, consistent with national policy, whilst also being sensitive to the district's landscape and natural environment. The majority of growth is focussed in locations such as North Walsham where suitable and available sites exist. This strategy will also deliver development with access to sustainable transport modes to assist in the delivery of mitigating and building resilience to climate change whilst meeting the housing and economic needs of the district in a sustainable way.



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