

Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk's
Response to
the Issues and Questions raised by Inspector David
Hogger
in relation to the
King's Lynn and West Norfolk Local Plan:
Site Allocations and Development Management
Policies

Issue 25: Heacham (G.47)

Examination November 2015

Table of abbreviations used with the Council's Statements

Abbreviation	Full Wording
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
BCKLWN	Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk
BDC	Breckland District Council
CLG	Communities and Local Government
CITB	Construction Industry Training Board
CS	Core Strategy
DM	Development Management
DPD	Development Plan Document
EA	Environment Agency
FDC	Fenland District Council
FRA	Flood Risk Assessment
GI	Green Infrastructure
GTANA	Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment
ha	Hectare
HELAA	Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment
HLF	Heritage Lottery Fund
HRA	Habitats Regulation Assessment
HSEHA	Health and Safety Executive Hazard Areas
IDB	Internal Drainage Board
KRSC	Key Rural Service Centres
KLATS	King's Lynn Area Transportation Strategy
LDS	Local Development Scheme
LLFA	Lead Local Flood Authority
LPSO	Local Plan Sustainability Óbjectives
NCC	Norfolk County Council
NE	Natural England
NP	Neighbourhood Plan
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NORA	The Nar Ouse Regeneration Area
NWT	Norfolk Wildlife Trust
OAN	Objectively Assessed Need
PPG	Planning Practice Guidance
PPTS	Planning Policy for Traveller Sites
RV	Rural Village
RAF	Royal Air Force
RLA	Residential Land Assessment
SA	Sustainability Appraisal
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SADMP	Site Allocation and Development Management Policies Plan
SCI	Statement of Community Involvement
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SFRA	Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
SHMA	Strategic Housing Market Assessment
SHLAA	Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment
SMP	Shoreline Management Plan
SPA	Special Protection Area
SSF	Site Sustainability Factors
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
SuDs	Sustainable Drainage systems
SVAH	Smaller Villages and Hamlets
SWMP	Surface Water Management Plan
THI	Townscape Heritage Initiative
UPC	Un -attributable Population Change

25.1

Is there evidence that any elements of the proposed development off Cheney Hill (G47.1) are not justified, sustainable, viable, available or deliverable? If such evidence exists what alternatives are available and have they been satisfactorily considered by the Council? Is there evidence that would support the provision of a Care Home at Heacham?

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Heacham is categorised in the Core Strategy policy CS02 The Settlement Hierarchy as a Key Rural Service Centre, and is one of the larger of our rural settlements.
- 1.2. Site G47.1 is proposed for the allocation of 60 houses and one of the two allocations in the village. It has been the Council's preferred site in Hunstanton through the Preferred Options and the Pre-Submission stage.
- 1.3. The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) scored the site as very positive for access to services, positive for flood risk and community/ social. There would be no impact on landscape, natural environment or economy (business), and the impact on heritage would be dependent upon implementation. All sites in Heacham scored negatively on economy (food production) and infrastructure, pollution and waste.
- 1.4. The Landowner and agent submitted a deliverability form in 2014 which stated the site was vacant, available and deliverable and could come forward within the first 5 years of the Plan. More recently an application has been submitted for the site F2.4, planning reference number 15/00352/OM. This outline application is for 69 dwellings and associated infrastructure, and illustrates that the site is deliverable and the landowner is keen for development on the site to commence in the short term. Consent was granted for this application on 8th October 2015.
- 1.5. In terms of stakeholder comments, Heacham Parish Council has raised concerns about levels of growth in Heacham if planning consents were given for large developments in addition to the proposed allocations. Furthermore they argue that the site area allocated is too large for the 60 homes allocated, and the site size should be reduced accordingly.

2. Alternative Options

2.1. The Council's SA details the consideration of alternative options and the reasons why these were not considered the most suitable for development.

- 2.2. The allocated sites scored highest in the SA, and met policy requirements for the number of homes to be allocated. Sites 184, 206, 476, 482, 654, 883 and 1285 have been put forward for consideration as an alternative site(s). In the SA these sites scored reasonably well, but as discussed in the report the selection is dependent upon a judgement of the combination of advantages and disadvantages of the competing sites. In totality these sites are obviously far too large for allocation of 60 houses.
- 2.3. The landowners/ agents for these sites have submitted a planning application for 'the construction of a care home, housing with care facilities and 70 new homes. New allotments associated landscaping, SUDS ponds and associated works including an electricity substation and a pumping station are also proposed. Access to be off School Road (Ref 13/01541/OM). The application was refused on a number of grounds. The landowner then appealed against this decision, and the appeal was dismissed by an Inspector (see Appendix 1 for the report).
- 2.4. The Inspector in her report referred to two main issues. Firstly that it would harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area, that the landscape impact was significant enough to be a reason for refusal; and contrary to policy CS12 and the NPPF (paragraphs 7-14). Secondly, whether development of this scale, in this location would compromise the aims of the Local Plan to achieve sustainable patterns of development (paragraphs 15-23). The Inspector concluded that it would be contrary to CS policy and the plan-led system. The Council supports the issues raised in the Inspectors Decision, and therefore does not think that the scheme proposed would represent a sustainable form of development. The decision further supports the SA and the plan-making process. Recently the applicant/ appellant has looked to judicially review the Inspectors decision, and it is going back to EIP, the date is yet to be set.
- 2.5. The remaining site options proposed for Heacham, sites 943 and 1064, have identified constraints including flood risk and access to services. Therefore are the least sustainable options for development in the village.

3. Need for Specialist Housing

- 3.1. The Council has not disputed the significant need for specialist housing for the elderly in the north of the Borough. This is discussed in Issue Statement 10 for Hunstanton and also in evidence to the planning appeal referred to in the decision appended in Appendix 3.
- 3.2. However it is the view of the Borough Council that allocation F2.3 in Hunstanton is a more sustainable location for this scale of growth, than the

alternative proposed at Heacham. In Issue Statement 10 the Council has provided information and discussion that site F2.3 is viable, available and deliverable, and have submitted a Statement of Common Ground with the agent to clarify this. So while the Council acknowledges the need, it is not considered appropriate to allocate a further site in Heacham within this plan period. Particularly as the site would have a detrimental impact on the landscape.

- 3.3. The location of the specialist housing proposed in Heacham does not have local support, and representations to the planning application and to this Plan identify these objections. In contrast Hunstanton Town Council are keen to support this use on allocation F2.3.
- 3.4. The need does not outweigh these factors, as the Inspector concluded (Appendix 3). The applicant/ agent has not submitted any additional evidence to that submitted at the planning application appeal.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1. In conclusion the key points are:
 - 4.1.1. The allocation proposed (G47.1) is considered the most appropriate for the settlement of Heacham, having considered all reasonable alternatives
 - 4.1.2. The landowner is in support of the allocation and has already gained planning consent for 69 dwellings.
 - 4.1.3. We have the benefit of an appeal decision on an alternative site, which supports the Council's reasons for not selecting this particular site.
 - 4.1.4. From a wider perspective we have balanced the care home/ housing with care position and conclude that Hunstanton is the most appropriate location for this use.

Appendix 1



The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Hearing held on 27, 28 and 29 January 2015 Site visit made on 28 January 2015

by Joanna Reid BA(Hons) BArch(Hons) RIBA

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 27 February 2015

Appeal Ref: APP/V2635/A/14/2221650 Land off School Road, Heacham, Norfolk

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
- The appeal is made by Mr Andrew Savage, Broadland Housing Association and Townsfolk Ltd against the decision of the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk.
- The application Ref 13/01541/OM, dated 19 October 2013, was refused by notice dated 5 February 2014.
- The development proposed is "the construction of a care home, housing with care facilities and 70 new homes. New allotments, associated landscaping, SUDS ponds and associated works including an electricity substation and a pumping station are also proposed. Access to be off School Road".

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matters

- The application was made for outline planning permission with access for consideration at this time, and with appearance, landscaping, layout and scale, hereinafter referred to as the reserved matters, reserved for future consideration. Plan 30745-110-A02, which shows an indicative layout, and plans 30745/110/Arb/1-West and 30745/110/Arb/2-East, were submitted for illustrative purposes only.
- 3. The appellant had submitted a draft planning obligation, but the Council raised concerns about it at a late stage. Due to the number of signatories and their availability, a revised obligation could not be completed before the close of the hearing. In these exceptional circumstances, it was agreed that the completed obligation would be submitted to the Council by 16 February 2015, and that a certified copy would be sent to the Inspectorate at the same time. The Council would send any comments about the obligation by email to the Inspectorate by 18 February 2015. As the obligation was submitted in accordance with the agreed timetable, and the Council has not raised concerns about it, I shall deal with it later in this decision.
- 4. At the hearing the appellant agreed that, for the purposes of this appeal, it is not disputed that the Council can demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites. As concerns about this were not raised by other parties at the hearing, and as I do not consider that anyone's interests would be prejudiced, I shall deal with the appeal accordingly.

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Main issues

- 5. From what I have said above, from my inspection of the site and its surroundings, and from the representations made at the hearing and in writing, I consider that the main issues in this appeal are:
 - The effect that the proposal would have on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, and
 - Whether the proposed development would compromise the aim of local policy to achieve sustainable patterns of development.

Reasons

The proposed development

6. The proposal includes a 60-bed care home with nursing, 60 housing with care units, and 70 open market dwellings. Housing with care offers independent living within self-contained dwellings with additional communal facilities including 24 hour care. There is no dispute between the main parties that there is at present a significant need for elderly persons' residential care places, and for housing with care for elderly persons, in the Borough. This matter attracts substantial weight in favour of the scheme.

Character and appearance

- 7. Heacham is a relatively large broadly crescent-plan village, roughly 3 miles from the centre of Hunstanton and about 14 miles from King's Lynn. The countryside to the east of the A149, which links these towns, slopes upwards to the east, and is within the Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Heacham lies mainly to the west of the A149. Due to the partly overgrown hedgerows and the intervening gently sloping topography, much of the village is not very prominent in views from the road. Travelling towards Hunstanton from the south, it is the church tower and development by the eastern tip of the crescent, around the junctions with Broadway and Lynn Road, which mainly draw attention to the presence of Heacham.
- 8. The appeal site includes agricultural land to the west of the A149, within the inner arc of the crescent, which would have vehicular and pedestrian access from School Road and a footpath access from the A149. The site is outside the development limits of Heacham defined in the King's Lynn & West Norfolk Local Plan (LP) and thus, it is, in policy terms, within the countryside. A short length of the north-west boundary adjoins back gardens within the development limits in Woodside Avenue and School Road, but otherwise the site is surrounded by land and a few buildings which are also within the countryside.
- 9. The agricultural buildings by the byway through the site, including the disused piggery buildings, are part of the intrinsic character of the countryside. Due to their generally low height and close farmyard grouping, they do not look out of place. Nearby, the village is largely characterised by linear development along the roads, and the small scale forms of the mainly detached dwellings and the few modest terraces. The paddocks and low-key outbuildings between back gardens on the south side of Broadway and the site maintain the general openness which is important to the rural character. The openness at the site and in the nearby countryside contributes positively to the setting of the village, and to the character of the wider countryside.

- 10. The site is within the Heacham character area (HCA) identified in the King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Landscape Character Assessment. Relevant characteristics of the HCA include its open character and gently sloping landform. The setting of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is not statutorily protected, but the land on the west side of the A149, with the village and coast beyond, provides its wider context. The A149 is a significant tourist route, which is used by many people each year travelling to and from the Norfolk Coast. Close by, regardless of their speed of travel, the local distinctiveness of the open countryside on both sides of the road is important to their appreciation of the mainly rural Borough.
- 11. The appellant's Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment says that, in terms of the landscape, the significance of the landscape effects of the proposal would be neutral, and that the proposal would have a negligible effect on visual amenity. It also explains that, due to the topographical change and the layering effect of existing hedgerows, the setting of the village would be preserved. However, in the views from School Road and the byway through the site, from the nearby dwellings and their gardens, and from the paddocks and fields around the site, the built form of the scheme would be harmfully out of keeping with the character and appearance of the countryside. Whilst it was suggested that landscaping could mitigate the effects of the development, for it to be effective, that too would be at odds with the current rural openness.
- 12. The development would be likely to have little impact on the present skyline of the village in most views. However, because its suburban appearance would be out of keeping with the character of the countryside, and because the development would erode the important rural openness, the proposal would harmfully intrude into the countryside. Due to its poor relationship and minimal connectivity with the village, even if most development were to be contained within the larger western part of the site, its incongruous appearance would be a discordant addition to its generally compact form. Thus, the development would harm the open setting of the village, and it would harmfully increase the prominence of the village in views from the A149.
- 13. The proposal would not extend the built form of the village beyond its furthest eastern or southern limits. However, the developed appearance of the site would also significantly detract from the openness and countryside character between Marea Meadows and South Moor Drive. Consequently, the existing fields to the west towards Cheney Hill would appear cut off from the surrounding countryside. As most of the site would be edged by countryside, the scheme also would look isolated from the existing pattern of development. Thus, the scheme would be contrary to the guidance for the HCA which seeks to ensure that any new small-scale development on the edges of Heacham responds to the existing settlement pattern.
- 14. For these reasons, I consider that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area. It would be contrary to Policy CS12 of the King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council Core Strategy (CS), which aims for new development to be sensitive to the surrounding area, and for proposals to demonstrate that their location will protect and enhance the special qualities and local distinctiveness of the area and distinctive settlement character, and the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework) which aims to take account of the different roles and character of different areas, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

Sustainable patterns of development

- 15. The relevant policies of the CS are broadly in line with the Framework. CS Policy CS01 sets out the spatial strategy for the Borough. It aims, amongst other things, to foster sustainable communities with an appropriate range of facilities. The spatial strategy seeks to strike a balance between protecting and enhancing the built and natural environment of West Norfolk whilst facilitating sustainable growth in the most appropriate locations. In line with the Framework, it seeks to respond to, and deliver, identified economic, social and environmental objectives in the Borough's towns and places.
- 16. CS Policy CS02 sets out a settlement hierarchy which seeks to achieve this. Heacham is identified as a Key Rural Service Centre (KRSC) where limited growth of a scale and nature appropriate to secure its sustainability will be supported within its Development Limits. By contrast, it identifies the nearby main town of Hunstanton as a location where significant development will take place, with the aim of maintaining and enhancing its role in delivering essential convenience services, and opportunities for employment and residential development. By ranking settlements according to their size, range of services and facilities, and potential capacity for future growth, CS Policy CS02 aims for development of an appropriate scale to occur in the most sustainable locations.
- 17. CS Policy CS06 aims, amongst other things, to protect the countryside for its intrinsic character and beauty. Framework paragraph 55 states that, to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. CS Policy CS06 is in line with this because it includes provision for new homes within or adjacent to KRSCs in accordance with CS Policy CS02. Aside from existing completions and commitments, CS Policy CS09 aims for at least 660 new dwellings to be provided in the 20 identified KRSCs over the Plan period, and for new allocations of an appropriate scale reflecting location and function to be identified in the Site Allocations DPD.
- 18. The CS was informed by the 2008 Norfolk County Council Strategic Model of Care - Care Homes. So, CS Policy CS09 aims to provide for all sectors of the community including the elderly, and CS Policy CS13 seeks to deliver community well-being and enhance quality of life, in line with the Framework's aim to support local strategies to improve health and social wellbeing for all.
- 19. The Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Pre-Submission Document (EPD) accepts that some site allocations will be outside existing development limits. The EPD includes 2 preferred option sites for 66 new dwellings in Heacham, EDP Policy G47.1 Heacham Land off Cheney Hill for 60 dwellings, and EPD Policy 47.2 Heacham Land to the south of St Mary's Close for 6 dwellings. EPD Policies F2.3 and F2.5 Hunstanton Land south of Hunstanton Commercial Park propose 50 residential units including market housing, affordable housing and housing with care on the F2.3 site, and employment uses on the adjoining F2.5 site which could include a care home. Sites F2.3 and F2.5 are about half a mile from the town centre and, together, both could meet similar needs to the proposal. All of these proposed allocations have also been largely supported by local people and local organisations in both settlements during the EPD process. However, as the EPD has not been submitted for examination, it attracts comparatively little weight.

- 20. The 70 open market dwellings would be similar to the total emerging allocation for Heacham. With 60 housing with care dwellings as well this would roughly double that amount. With the 60-bed care home also, whilst a different use class, the scheme would be nearly 3 times the amount of the proposed allocation. So, whilst the Framework aims to boost significantly the supply of housing and the use of 'at least' in CS Policy CS09 does not rule out larger developments, the proposal would be substantially greater than the planned growth for Heacham.
- 21. This could mean that development needed to support the sustainability of other KRSCs would be reduced. Some KRSCs are much smaller, so that could mean little or no new development, which could have an adverse effect on their sustainability, and reduce the availability of shops and local services to occupiers in their rural hinterland. It would also fail to support the development of more sustainable main towns. Thus, the scheme would be at odds with the plan-led vision in the CS for the Borough.
- 22. Whilst the proposed community hub could help to facilitate social interaction, and the Travel Plan could reduce reliance on private motor vehicles, some future occupiers could feel cut off from much of the local community due to the poor relationship of the site to the form and fabric of the village. The limited range of facilities and services in Heacham would also restrict the choices available to future residents and their visitors. Furthermore, whilst the principle of the need for some open market dwellings to subsidise the care home and housing with care was accepted by the Council at the hearing, there was insufficient evidence to show that 70 open market dwellings would be necessary to ensure that the scheme would be viable.
- 23. Therefore, I consider that the proposed development would unacceptably compromise the aim of local policy to achieve sustainable patterns of development. It would be contrary to CS Policies CS01, CS02, CS06 and CS09, LP Policy 8/1 which aims to permit small groups of dwellings which comply with other relevant Plan policies in settled or built-up areas, and the Framework which aims for planning to be genuinely plan-led, empowering local people to shape their surroundings, with succinct local plans setting out a positive vision for the future of the area, and to actively manage patterns of growth and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable.

Other matters

24. Other points in favour of the scheme, including non-seasonal employment, training opportunities, and the community hub, have been taken into account. However, matters including affordable housing, public open space, biodiversity mitigation and enhancement, and asbestos removal, would be necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, so they do not weigh in favour. I have also had regard to my colleagues' appeal decisions ref APP/R3325/A/11/2149385 and APP/G2245/A/11/2162801. In the former decision, the proposal included the refurbishment of existing retail units and my colleague took into account the considerable demand for care for the elderly in that specific area. In the latter decision, the need for specialised housing/care for the elderly was consistent with, but not necessary to, my colleague's overall conclusion. So, their circumstances differ from the proposal before me, which has been dealt with on its merits, and in accordance with its site specific circumstances and relevant Development Plan and national policy.

- 25. Moreover, the Framework explains that there are 3 mutually dependent roles to sustainable development which should be sought jointly and simultaneously. The scheme would provide social gains including the provision of the care home, housing with care and market housing. The economic gains would include jobs during design and construction, and for 80 or so staff thereafter. However, these gains would be outweighed by the environmental harm that the proposal would cause to the character and appearance of the surrounding area, and due to its poor location in relation to the village and the Borough. So, the proposal would not amount to sustainable development.
- 26. A number of matters were put forward in the revised planning obligation that I referred to earlier. None of these matters, either singly or together, would overcome the unacceptability of the development that I have found. So, it is not necessary for me to consider whether the planning obligation would satisfy all 3 of the statutory tests in Regulation 122 of *The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010*, and in paragraph 204 of the Framework.

Conclusions

27. I therefore conclude that, whilst the need for elderly persons' care with nursing and elderly persons' housing with care attracts substantial weight, it would not outweigh the harm that the proposal would cause to the character and appearance of the area, and by its inappropriate location. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal fails.

Joanna Reid

INSPECTOR

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Interested person

DOCUMENTS PUT IN AT THE HEARING

- 1 Appearances for the appellant.
- 2 The Council's letter dated 21 January 2015 to the Planning Inspectorate and enclosures.
- 3 Draft planning obligation, put in by the Council.
- 4 Report on the Agricultural Premises at Marea Farm dated 22 January 2015, put in by the appellant.
- 5 Liz Lake Associates Landscape and Visual Issues report and appendices dated January 2015, put in by the appellant.
- 6 Sustainable Communities Partnership Ltd Need Case dated January 2015, put in by the appellant.
- 7 La Ronde Wright report dated January 2015, put in by the appellant.
- 8 Appeal decision ref APP/G2245/A/11/2162801, put in by the appellant.
- 9 Appeal decision ref APP/R3325/A/11/2149385, put in by the appellant.
- 10 Plan 30745-110-A02, put in by the main parties.
- 11 Extracts from the Borough of King's Lynn & West Norfolk Site Specific Allocations and Policies DPD and Community Infrastructure Levy Viability Study, put in by the Council.
- 12 Care beds reckoner, put in by the appellant.
- 13 Details of Halesworth Healthcare Village, put in by the appellant.
- Notice of decision and report for application ref 12/01728/FM, put in by the Council.
- 15 Letter from Heacham Group Practice dated 28 January 2015, put in by the Council.
- 16 Extracts from Sevenoaks District Council Allocations and Development Management Plan Draft for Submission and Appendix 3, put in by the appellant.
- 17 Summary of the appellant's representations on the EPD.
- 18 Draft planning obligation and plan, put in by the appellant.
- 19 Draft planning obligation, put in by the Council.
- 20 Extract from Fields in Trust *Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play*, put in by the Council.
- 21 CS Policies CS08, CS11 and CS14, put in by the Council.
- 22 Additional conditions suggested by the Council.
- 23 The Council's closing submissions.
- 24 Closing remarks on behalf of the appellant.

DOCUMENTS PUT IN AFTER THE HEARING

- 25 Certified copy of completed planning obligation dated 13 February 2015, put in by the appellant.
- 26 The Council's email to The Planning Inspectorate of 18 February 2015 16:33.