



Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk

Local Plan Review (submitted March 2022) Policy Note on Rural Settlements

January 2023

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Policy Note responds to Action points 12,13 and 21 of the Hearing Action Note [G12] and the Specification for Policy Note [G13] specifically:

- Explain the Plan’s proposed spatial strategy for rural settlements, including the role and function of Growth KRSCs, KRSCs, RVs, and SVAHs, in accommodating future development needs.
- Justify the level of growth and housing allocated to different rural settlements, having regard to the role of each tier in the settlement hierarchy.
- Review whether the Plan should set out a housing requirement for designated neighbourhood areas in the Borough, reflecting the strategy for the pattern and scale of development and any relevant allocations, and if not, provide a justification for departing from national policy in this regard.
- Review the various definitions of the ‘appropriate’ scale of development in the different tiers of rural settlements within the hierarchy and the spatial strategy in Policies LP01 and LP02 and consider amendments to make this clear and unambiguous.

2.0 Proposed spatial strategy for rural settlements

2.1 The spatial strategy distinguishes between GKRSCs and other rural settlements. The background paper, “Further Consideration of the Settlement Hierarchy” [D21], explains the rationale for the creation of GKRSCs, a new tier in the hierarchy. Marham (with RAF Marham) and Watlington were included within the category for the following reasons:

- **Marham** – plays host to one of the key employers in RAF Marham both in terms of primary and secondary employment; and
- **Watlington** – lies upon the main line railway, with a good range of local services [D21, p3].

2.2 The background paper also notes that the GKRSCs are not necessarily the largest villages, in terms of population [D21, p4 table] and/ or overall scoring. Instead, this designation is about the unique function, role and spatial situation of the two designated settlements.

2.3 [D21] page 3 also explains that the introduction of GKRSCs as a new category within the settlement hierarchy was in response to the chosen growth option. The Sustainability Appraisal [B3/ B4] assessed several growth options. The initial proposed approach [B4, Option 2A – A10 & Rail Line Growth Corridor], highlighted Marham and Watlington for designation as GKRSCs.

2.4 The chosen spatial strategy retained a focus upon the A10 & Rail Line Growth Corridor [B3, p36 – Option 7].

2.5 For Marham, Policy LP10 recognises the importance of RAF Marham to the economy of the Borough as a whole. LP10 *“strongly supports the roles that...RAF Marham play as local employers and as centres of excellence for...advanced engineering”* (Criterion 1). RAF

Marham, as critical to the Borough economy, is the main driver for proposing the designation of Marham as a GKRSC.

2.6 Further direction regarding development in the rural areas is provided through Policy LP41. This provides additional detail, supplementing relevant criteria within LP01/ LP02 regarding the spatial strategy/ settlement hierarchy. The supporting text to LP41 explains that: *“The [KRSCs] are identified as the focus for growth within the rural areas”* [LP21, MM p464]. This is further specified within relevant policy criteria:

- *“...the focus of most new development in the rural areas will be at [GKRSCs] and [KRSCs]...”* (Policy LP41(3)); and
- *“...in the Rural Villages and [SVHs], more modest levels of development...will be permitted to meet local needs and maintain the vitality of these communities where this can be achieved in a sustainable manner...”* (Policy LP41(6)).

2.7 The spatial strategy for the rural areas is therefore defined through policies LP01, LP02 and LP41. Main Modifications to Policies LP01/ LP02 have been suggested to ensure consistency between the three strategic policies [F21].

Suggested Main Modifications to policies LP01/ LP02 and supporting text, October 2022 [F21]

2.8 BCKLWN’s response to the IIQs [F18, MM p28/ MM p33], in turn, prompted several Suggested Main Modifications (SMMs). These are summarised, as follows:

- Policy LP01(8)(b): Rural and Coastal Areas – deletion of reference to GKRSCs/ KRSCs [F18, MM p28];
- Policy LP02: Settlement Hierarchy – deletion of criteria 1-5, to ensure alignment with LP01;
- Paragraph 4.2.1 – New 6-Tier settlement hierarchy (new Justification/ paragraph 4.2.2: rural settlements – Tiers 3-6).

2.9 SMM paragraph 4.2.2 [F21, MM p33] sets out the role, function and capacity for growth of different categories of rural settlement. In light of the Inspectors’ concern we now propose to place this modification into the Settlement Hierarchy Table in Policy LP02.

- Tier 3 (GKRSCs) – provide a range of services and facilities for the local population and wider rural areas and they are identified as being capable of accommodating further growth;
- Tier 4 (KRSCs) – help sustain the wider rural community/ provide a range of services that meet the daily needs of the residents;
- Tier 5 (Rural Villages) – limited but locally important roles in meeting the needs of the immediate village...may see some limited growth, which will help support surrounding rural areas; and
- Tier 6 (SVHs) – few or no services and as such, only very limited development will take place.

3.0 Level of growth and housing allocated to different rural settlements

3.1 Housing figures have been updated as Suggested Main Modifications (SMMs) [F21, MM p28, October 2022]. This represents an updated distribution of growth across the rural areas (Table 1, below) [extracted from Homes Allocation data at F21, MM p28]. Figures for Smaller Villages and Hamlets (SVHs) are not included, as no allocations are proposed at these settlements. However, residual windfall development at SVHs is likely to continue throughout the Plan period.

Table 1				
Location	Homes Allocation	% total Homes Allocation (4,980)	No of settlements/ KRSC clusters	% total Homes Allocation per settlement
Borough	4,980			
GKRSCs	117	2.3%	2	1.2%
KRSCs	662	13.3%	23	0.6%
Rural Villages	115	2.3%	31	0.1%
TOTAL (rural settlements)	894	18.0%		

3.2 The mean quantum of growth per GKRSC settlement is 1.2% total allocations. The equivalent figure for KRSCs is 0.6%; i.e. 50% of that for GKRSCs. Finally, the figure for Rural Villages equates to 0.1%; that is 6% of the figure for GKRSCs, per settlement.

3.3 Overall, the figures at Tables 2 and 3 highlight GKRSCs as hosting the highest overall percentage of growth, per settlement. Analysis of the growth figures identifies GKRSCs as hosting over 1% of the total planned growth, per settlement. These figures demonstrate that the quantum of growth for rural settlements is proportionate to the chosen spatial strategy at LP01.

4.0 Setting a housing requirement for designated neighbourhood areas

4.1 The Plan, as submitted, does not set any indicative housing requirement for designated neighbourhood areas. Instead, it acknowledged that there are currently approximately 40 parishes involved in the Neighbourhood Plan process. Of these, 14 Plans are “made”, with others anticipated to come forward during 2023/24.

4.2 National Policy requires strategic policies in the Local Plan to: “set out a housing requirement for designated neighbourhood areas which reflects the overall strategy for the pattern and scale of development and any relevant allocations” (NPPF paragraph 66).

4.3 Whilst national policy requires the Local Plan to set a housing requirement for designated neighbourhood areas, it is for Parish Councils and other qualifying bodies to choose whether or not they allocate land for housing in their neighbourhood plans, planning practice guidance states that neighbourhood planning bodies are encouraged to plan to meet their housing requirement, and where possible to exceed it. As the Local Plan seeks to meet the housing needs for the Borough, the provision of additional housing figures to Neighbourhood Plan areas should be seen as an indication of the level of the approximate level of growth that could be planned for.

4.4 Further direction is provided in the Neighbourhood Planning guidance as to how a local authority could set a housing figure for a Neighbourhood Area, to fulfil the requirements of NPPF paragraph 66. This explains that: “While there is no set method for doing this, the general policy making process already undertaken by local authorities can continue to be used

to direct development requirements and balance needs and protections by taking into consideration relevant policies such as the spatial strategy, evidence such as the Housing and economic land availability assessment, and the characteristics of the neighbourhood area, including its population and role in providing services” (Paragraph: 101 Reference ID: 41-101-20190509).

- 4.5 In order to ensure that the Plan is consistent with paragraph 66 of the NPPF we will propose main modifications to include a housing requirement for each designated neighbourhood area. This will be done by taking into account commitments already planned for and any potentially suitable sites from the HELAA in each neighbourhood area. This approach will also be used for future designated neighbourhood areas where these are requested.

5.0 Definitions of ‘appropriate’ scale of development in the different tiers of rural settlements

- 5.1 The Inspectors have asked the Council to consider a clearer definition of the ‘appropriate’ scales of development in the different tiers of rural settlements within the settlement hierarchy in Policy LP02 and ensure consistency with the spatial strategy in Policy LP01.

- 5.2 In order to do this, we propose to assess the capacity for growth in the different tiers of rural settlements by looking at the allocations and existing commitments for each and using the average number for each tier to be used in a policy as follows:

The scale of proposed development is proportionate to the size and character of the existing settlement, up to a maximum of X homes;

I. X homes on any single small site adjoining a main town;

II. X homes on any single small site adjoining a growth key service village;

III. X homes on any single small site adjoining a key service village;

IV. X homes on any single small site adjoining rural villages;

b. individually and cumulatively, the size, appearance and layout of proposed homes does must not harm the character and value of any landscape or settlements potentially affected by the proposals; and

c. the development would contribute to the provision of a mix of different types and sizes of homes (including affordable homes) to reflect the Council’s expectations

- 5.3 Further main modifications will be proposed to remove the various definitions of the ‘appropriate’ scale of development. For the avoidance of doubt, the proposed main modifications will provide greater clarity as to what constitutes an ‘appropriate’ scale of growth for each type of rural settlement.