

**Borough Council of King's Lynn  
and West Norfolk Local Plan  
2021-2039**



**Representation Form**

Consultation on additional evidence base documents, September 2023

Closing date for submitting representations: **11:59pm, Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> October 2023**

**Part A**

**Section 1: Personal Details**

<b>Title:</b>	
<b>First Name:</b>	
<b>Last Name:</b>	
<b>Job Title (where relevant):</b>	
<b>Organisation (where relevant):</b>	<b>Bennett Homes</b>
<b>Address:</b>	<b>c/o Agent</b>
<b>Postcode:</b>	
<b>Telephone:</b>	
<b>Email:</b>	

**Section 2: Agent Details (if applicable)**

Please supply the details below of any agent you have working on your behalf.

<b>Agent name:</b>	<b>James Alflatt</b>
<b>Address:</b>	<b>Bidwells LLP 16 Upper King Street Norwich</b>
<b>Postcode:</b>	<b>NR3 1HA</b>
<b>Telephone number:</b>	<b>[REDACTED]</b>
<b>Email:</b>	<b>[REDACTED]</b>

## Part B

Please fill in a separate form for each document

### Section 3: Representations

Which Document are you responding on?

Examination Library ref	Document name	Paragraph No(s)
F47	Topic Paper – Spatial Strategy & Settlement Hierarchy (August 2023)	Various – see refs below

#### Summary of Comments:

Please be as precise as possible as to why you support or object to the evidence and/or any suggested main modifications to the Plan contained in the document, providing the relevant paragraph and/or policy number for each point.

#### Inspectors Letter dated 30 January 2023 & Deletion of Strategic Growth Corridor (SGC)

The starting point of our representation is reflective of the concerns expressed by the Examining Inspectors in their correspondence to the Council on 30 January 2023, whereby the majority of proposed new development, particularly at West Winch, is reliant on road-based transport “with comparatively limited housing development at Downham Market and Watlington, which, with railway stations, appear to be more sustainable locations in transport terms”.

Bennett Homes contends that the Council has not addressed the Inspectors’ concerns, specifically explaining and justifying the proposed spatial strategy within the submitted plan. It is not simply about removing reference to the SGC, which in itself is not an ‘unsound’ proposition, but it is more about ensuring the settlement hierarchy and distribution of development reflects the spatial vision of the Plan, which the Strategic Growth Corridor forms a key part. The Council’s response to remove the SGC and therefore downgrade in the case of Watlington and Downham Market, the allocation of development to what are otherwise sustainable locations for growth, accessible by a number of sustainable transport modes, in favour of the West Winch Growth Area, which is heavily biased towards road transport and, therefore, does not align with national planning policy.

Bennett Homes considers the omission of the SGC goes to the heart of the submitted Plan, and for this reason, such fundamental elements of the Plan should not be addressed through modifications at this stage in the Examination with the changes now proposed. As drafted, the Council has undermined its own spatial vision for their submitted Plan, and instead the examination should be paused further whilst more detailed analysis is undertaken on the implications of such a significant change in the spatial vision and its impact on the settlement hierarchy is fully assessed.

Specifically, the Inspectors required an explanation on the “purpose of the Strategic Growth Corridor and the justification for the proposed distribution of housing growth within it, including the scale of housing growth at the WWGA, Downham Market and Watlington relative to the role of these settlements/locations within the hierarchy, their sustainability in terms of transport, facilities and infrastructure, and their population size and settlement needs.”

The revisions now proposed by the Council in this topic paper do not address this. The Council does not make any acknowledgement in the topic paper that Watlington remains the only village in the Borough with a mainline train station and regular rail service to King’s Lynn, Cambridge and London. It was on this basis that the Council in previous drafts of the Plan proposed an allocation of WAT1 for 115 dwellings to Watlington. Whilst the Council appears to now discredit this, on the basis of no local housing requirement, the current topic paper would indicate there is still a housing requirement for Watlington during the Plan period. This need is now further exacerbated by proposed allocation sites being consented for 100% affordable housing, thereby not providing the range and size of properties across the Plan period to meet local housing need required in accordance with national policy.

### Para 3

In para 3 of the consultation document, the Council suggest Watlington has a “lack of facilities”. This is directly contradicted by Appendix 1 Settlement Hierarchy table, and the comments within Appendix 2 (p20) where it states that Watlington has “a range of services and facilities (which) help meet the day to day needs of the residents.”

For the Council to suggest in this topic paper that limited growth to Watlington “reflects the lack of facilities to support without substantial investment in infrastructure, which is not planned” is irrational and misleading. In accordance with national policy, the village has the ability for new residents to access everyday services and facilities and employment by a variety of sustainable transport modes including rail.

Instead, the Council continues to promote significant growth wedged between the edge of King’s Lynn, the parished areas of West Winch and North Runcton, which does not have the necessary connectivity to be nothing more than heavily reliant on road-based transport. With reference to the West Winch Growth Area Topic Paper, paras 39-42, given the Outline or Full Business Cases are yet to be submitted or indeed approved by the DfT, there is no certainty that this essential infrastructure will be funded to unlock the planned growth at West Winch within the Plan period.

Bennett Homes, therefore, object to the soundness of continuing with this approach, and it is not reasonable to continue the examination or indeed proceed to report on the examination of this Plan, until there is certainty that funding has been secured for this essential piece of road infrastructure. As without it, the delivery of growth in this area is not viable, and thereby makes the spatial strategy, distribution of housing and ultimately the Plan unsound. Furthermore, there is a threshold on growth of 350 units until infrastructure interventions are made.

Para 4

Limited growth to Downham Market was the strategy for the last plan, this plan should encourage further growth given Downham Market is the second largest town and has land available in closer proximity to the town's rail station. This would align with the Council's spatial strategy to focus growth along the SGC, and responds to the Inspector's concerns in their letter of 30 January 2023, whereby the spatial vision 'implies an increased rate of growth at Downham Market' which is not the current proposals at West Winch, where ironically, the more feasible commute to access train connections from the West Winch Growth Area will be Watlington rail station. This is supported by the Council's own evidence in the form of the West Winch sustainable transport document, the consultation feedback notes that over 40% identify Watlington Station as a destination they would like to be able to access. Surely, it would be more sustainable for these people to be better served living in Watlington with direct access to the Station, rather than in West Winch.

Para 6

Bennett Homes objects and disagrees with the intention of the Council to not appreciate the significance of a spatial land use planning document such as this, to remove reference to a fundamental element of its spatial vision in the form of the SGC. The Borough Council appears to consider it more an omission of a term rather than fully appreciating the spatial implications of why it was previously proposed by the Borough Council and included as a fundamental component of the Plan. This strategy was based upon evidence relating to the spatial importance of the A10 road corridor and mainline rail connection from King's Lynn to Cambridge, and London which provided the basis for a corridor of sustainable new growth to the Borough. This was a sound strategy in line with national policy, however, the distribution of growth is distorted around one growth area detached from the main settlement of King's Lynn severed by the physical barrier of the Hardwick roundabout, which is not conducive of achieving a sustainable form of development, at the scale now proposed by this plan.

Instead, para 6 now appears to state that the Borough Council are seeking to dilute and amend its spatial strategy to fit its distribution of housing, rather than the distribution of housing aligning with its spatial strategy.

It is on this basis that Bennett Homes contends that growth should be reduced at the West Winch Growth Area, given the uncertainties in the infrastructure funding, and divert this to Watlington with the reinstatement of the previous draft allocation of WAT 1 (115 dwellings) and additional allocations to Downham Market, reflecting land interests that have been previously promoted and discounted through this plan process to date.

Para 7

Deletion of Growth Rural Service Centre, in the case of Watlington, further undermines the unique function this village provides, to be grouped with the rest of Key Rural Service Centres. The recognition previously of Watlington as equidistant between the two largest settlements of King's Lynn and Downham Market, along the strategic growth corridor was sound, hence the Council's previous decision to allocate 115 dwellings there as WAT 1 reflecting the sustainability of the location. To move back now significantly from this position, does not reflect a sound approach to

delivering sustainable development in line with national policy. This approach does not acknowledge the unique characteristic of Watlington being the only village in the Borough with a mainline rail connection, an attribute no other KRSC can offer.

#### Para 27

Bennett Homes object to the movement of West Winch Growth Area to Tier 1 of the settlement hierarchy. By its very name it is divorced of the settlement edge of King's Lynn and physically separated by the major road barrier of the Hardwick Roundabout. Located within the parished areas of West Winch and North Runcton, we do not see how this forms an urban extension of King's Lynn. It should remain within tier 3 as a settlement adjacent to King's Lynn, particularly given the decision to reclassify West Lynn to Tier 3, which is better connected by river and road to the main settlement of King's Lynn and is no longer considered part of King's Lynn.

Bennett Homes considers that the Borough Council are seeking to formulate a spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy to support its pre-determined distribution of housing, rather than distributing the housing based upon achieving sustainable development and access by a number of sustainable transport modes. For this reason, this plan is outdated and not aligned with national policy, given its current presumption of road based biased to its transport options when developing its growth plans. In the advent of declared climate emergencies, having a road based focus to plan making is not a sustainable form of development across the Plan period.

#### Para 33

Bennett Homes questions the amount of windfall within the Council's housing trajectory. To have a consistent 299 dwellings from windfall per annum throughout much of the Plan period does appear unrealistic, given the amount of windfall which has been delivered in previous plan periods. The capacity to continue windfall at this rate must be challenged, as it remains a significant proportion of the overall plan requirement.

Where does the Council see much of this windfall being delivered? Whilst the Council in the updated Housing Supply document identify 2647 homes from consents on unallocated land (windfall) a significant proportion of these gained consent when the Council did not have a 5-year land supply around 2017. Many of these 5-year land supply sites boosted historic windfall levels. Therefore, without the speculative development opportunities that arise from the Council having a five-year supply of housing land, we doubt whether the assumed rate of windfall of around 299 dwellings per annum can be maintained through the Plan period.

Similarly, the methodology for calculation of windfall requirement (para 36 – 41), appears to be based upon existing no. of households when compared as a proportion of total households in the tier. This should be based more on local housing need rather than using existing population size as a proxy for future need. It should also identify the type of housing in need, given that in the case of Watlington, the proposed allocation site has now been consented and delivered as an affordable housing scheme, which does much to respond to the shortfall in affordable housing in the village. However, this does nothing to provide a range, size and type of housing for the private market throughout the Plan period in line with national policy.

## Indicative Housing for Neighbourhood Areas

Whilst the Council's methodology used for calculating the housing requirement remains challengeable, it is important to note that in the case of Watlington, the Neighbourhood Plan has now been submitted for examination. Within the submitted Neighbourhood Plan, there is no proposal to allocate any further land for development on the basis no appropriate sites were put forward, which is contrary to our own land promotions and the evidence base of the Neighbourhood Plan. In such scenarios, the Borough Council should have a fallback position should either neighbourhood plan not come forward in all areas, or alternatively, as in Watlington's case does not allocate sufficient land, or indeed for those already adopted, are now out of date with the housing requirements now set by the emerging Local Plan.

## Plan Period & BNG

Bennett Homes contends that whilst not directly relevant to specific parts of this topic paper, the following does have implications for its contents and the soundness of the Plan going forward.

With the delays in the examination of the Plan, caused by the adjournment of the hearings in January 2023, coupled with the additional consultation and inherent delays around when hearings shall resume, this has realistically caused a year's delay. For this reason, notwithstanding the representations made here, in the event the Plan is found to be sound, the Plan period at point of adoption would be less than 15 years, inconsistent with the NPPF and NPPG. Therefore, we suggest as part of this delay, the Borough Council seeks to move the Plan period forward a further year to address this, resulting in the Plan period being 2040. With this in mind, and the additional housing supply required to fulfil this extended plan period, with land available and suitable and under the control of Bennett Homes in both Watlington and Downham Market, would be able to fulfil additional supply, without undermining the overall spatial strategy of the Plan.

With regards to BNG, now the mandatory introduction of this is now confirmed by Government in January 2024 for major development projects, this has the potential to significantly impact the developable areas of major development sites. At the time, the Plan was prepared by the Borough Council, there is no evidence to indicate that BNG and its implications were sufficiently assessed by the Council in determining the capacity of proposed allocation sites. With this in mind, it is our contention that there is a real risk of under delivery of housing on a number of the proposed allocation sites, a shortfall which needs to be acknowledged and addressed through the identification of further sites within sustainable locations such as Watlington and Downham Market. The intention would be for this to bolster the supply of housing delivery, which may otherwise be suppressed across the Plan period with this mandatory requirement of achieving 10% BNG from Jan 2024.

(Continue on a separate sheet if necessary.)

Please note you should cover succinctly all the information, evidence and supporting information necessary to support/justify your comments.

#### Section 4: Examination Hearings

This consultation may be followed by further Examination Hearing sessions, at the discretion of the Planning Inspectors. Do you consider it necessary to participate in Examination Hearing sessions? *(Please select one answer)*

No, I do not wish to participate at the Examination Hearing

Yes, I wish to participate at the examination hearing

#### Section 5: Data Protection


Do you wish to be notified further about the Local Plan Examination process, at any of the following stages?

Schedule of Main Modifications stage (following hearings)	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Publication of Inspector's Report	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Adoption of Local Plan	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

*In complying with the General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018, King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council confirms that it will process personal data gathered from this form only for the purposes relating to the consultation. It is intended to publish responses to this consultation on the Borough Council's website. However, it should be noted that all personal information (except for names and organisation name, where appropriate) will not be published.*

*When you give consent for us to process data, you have the right to withdraw that consent at any time. If you wish to withdraw your consent, you must notify us at [lpr@west-norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:lpr@west-norfolk.gov.uk) or 01553 616200.*

#### Section 6: Signature and Date of Representation

<b>Please sign and date below:</b>	
<b>Signature: (electronic signatures are acceptable)</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	<b>20 October 2023</b>

Please note that, to be considered, your representation will need to be received by **11:59pm on Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> October 2023.**