

Local Plan Site Allocations - Cromer

Summary: To consider a potential additional Local Plan Site Allocation in Cromer

Recommendations: **1. That land of Roughton Road (site references C19 and C19/1 are not included as a proposed allocation in the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan.**

Cabinet Member(s)	Ward(s) affected
Cllr J Toye	All
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 At the meeting in Sept Members considered options for site allocations in Cromer. It was resolved to include three sites in the Regulation 19 consultation version of the Local Plan which taken together are suitable for the delivery of around 600 homes. Members may recall that this figure of approximately 600 dwellings is set out in the Plan as a target for delivery on allocated sites for Cromer.
- 1.2 Leading into the previous meeting, and subsequently, representations have been made about the suitability of an additional site in Roughton Road expressing concerns that the site does not appear to have been adequately considered in previous reports.
- 1.3 This report considers the suitability of this site for allocation in the Plan.

2. Background to site selection in Cromer

2.1 Cromer is identified as one of the Large Growth Towns in the Draft Plan and requires land to be identified in the town (adjacent parishes) for around 600 dwellings. This number is much lower than both Fakenham and North Walsham, which are the other two Large Growth Towns in the Plan. This reflects the degree to which growth in Cromer is constrained by the North Sea, the surrounding Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and other localised constraints. Set against this, Cromer has amongst the highest numbers of people in housing need and the range of supporting services that is available is comparatively good.

2.2 Given this, it is strategically important that the town makes a significant contribution toward addressing the overall housing requirement and other development needs in the District and that sites are identified which are suitable to provide a land supply both early in, and throughout the Plan period, whilst also mitigating environmental and other potential adverse impacts.

The sites so far identified for inclusion in the Plan are:

Land west of Pine Tree Farm (the enlarged 'Gurney' site) – proposed to be allocated in the Draft Plan for approx. 400 dwellings, elderly care and replacement football club facilities

Land at Cromer High Station – A small site for around 20 units rolled forward from the existing adopted Plan.

Land at the former Golf Practice Ground, Overstrand Road – proposed for approx. 180 dwellings and elderly persons accommodation.

2.3 Collectively, these three sites deliver around 600 dwellings, which is the 'target' for allocated sites for Cromer included in the Draft Plan.

3. Updated Position (Sites C19 and C19/1).

Sites C19 and C19a are essentially the same areas of land with alternative access arrangements, one option with access to Roughton Road (not being promoted), and the second with access to Burnt Hills and Metton Road.

These sites are not new, they were put forward via the original call for sites process at the start of Plan preparation and identified at Regulation 18 stage as non-preferred sites and were subject to public consultation on that basis. They are also a small part of the site which was subject to the withdrawn planning application covering this and site references C44 and C18 (Plan attached – **Appendix 4**)

As such they have been subject to detailed appraisal and Sustainability Appraisal and have been reported to the Working Party as non-preferred options in the Site Booklets which have accompanied the site selection reports to the Working Party. (Extract attached as **Appendix 4**).

The only notable change relates to highway considerations. As initially promoted this site was considered both individually and as part of a larger scheme. In both cases the Highway Authority maintained an in principle highway objection due to the likelihood of increased traffic using Roughton Road. More recently, the owner has confirmed that access could be provided from the adjacent housing development (Burnt Hills) with a possible secondary/ emergency access to Metton Road. On the basis of a scheme for no more than around 70-80 units the Highway Authority have indicated that an objection on highway safety grounds would be difficult to sustain.

Officer's previous recommendations not to include this area were based in part on the highway objection but also included the sites designation as part of the Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the national policy presumption that significant developments should not be built within such designations. The site is also somewhat peripheral when compared to the proposed allocations and is on the margins of acceptable walking distances to key facilities.

The site promoters point out that not only is the site deliverable, and in their view suitable, its allocation would add flexibility and improve the prospects of sufficient growth being delivered in Cromer. Furthermore whilst the site is within the AONB they argue the impacts of development would be comparatively modest.

Given that the authority has already identified sufficient sites around Cromer to address the Plan target for the town it is not necessary to allocate further sites merely to achieve the numeric target. The proposed allocations identified so far are also in the AONB but are better located and in the case of the Norwich Road allocation

would offer significant public benefits. Officers consider that the allocation of further AONB land is not justified and would conflict with national policy.

5. Recommendations

1. That land off Roughton Road (site references C19 and C19/1) are not included as a proposed allocation in the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan.

6. Legal Implications and Risks

- 6.1 The Council must produce a Local Plan which complies with various regulatory and legal requirements and in determining its policy approaches and site allocations must be justified and underpinned by up to date and proportionate evidence, the application of a consistent methodology and take account of public feedback and national policy and guidance.
- 6.2 Preparation of the Plan is subject to regulatory requirements, legal and soundness tests, and reputational risks particularly in relation to development site selection.

7. Financial Implications and Risks

- 7.1 Failure to undertake plan preparation in accordance with the regulations and NPPF is likely to render the plan 'unsound' at examination and result in the need to return to earlier stages. Substantial additional costs would be incurred.

Appendices

Appendix 4 – Site Appraisal details and Regulation 18 consultation responses summary for Cromer (Site Assessment Booklet).