



# Rockland St Mary with Hellington Parish Council

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***Copy also posted on the Greater Norwich Local Plan "Have Your Say"***

## **Rockland St Mary with Hellington Parish Council response to GNLP call for sites ref: GNLP 0165 and GNLP 0531**

**We wish this to be considered as our responses to the GNLP consultation**

### **Parish council consultation process and response**

The Parish Council informed residents of the GNLP through council minutes, notices on the parish council noticeboard and door to door leafleting. It provided opportunities for residents to make their views known to the council by attending a Parish Council meeting, and by writing to or e-mailing the council with their views.

23 people attended the meeting. To date the Parish Council has received a total of 38 emails or letters. Of these, one was strongly in support of developing the large-scale site; another was strongly in support of further large development but preferably on land (not in the plan) closer to the centre of the village. Two responses suggested that a smaller development would provide more manageable and incremental growth.

The large majority of responses were very strongly opposed to large scale development.

The response below incorporates relevant legitimate considerations relating to the suitability assessment criteria and represents the clear majority view.

### **GNLP 0165 : OBJECT**

The site falls just outside the development boundary.

### **Access and flood risk**

The small greenfield site is just outside the development boundary at the entrance to this rural village. The site is on the corner of an uneven slope bounded by a sharply curving short hill and blind bend which **floods badly** during heavy rain. There is no footpath around the road perimeter of the site and there is currently no access to the site. It is difficult to envisage where a safe and suitable access/exit point could possibly be made.

### **Accessibility to services, utilities and utility infrastructure**

The site is very close to the small village primary school and quite near to the doctor's surgery, shop and bus stop.

### **Transport and Roads**

Residents at this far end of the village and parents with children at the school already have concerns over the speed and volume of traffic approaching and entering the village. Many parents park on the side of The Street which has a footpath to take their children to the primary school on School Lane; they have to do this, as School Lane is a narrow cul-de-sac with very limited parking. Parents with young children must cross The Street near the bend. There is no crossing patrol. An increase in throughput of traffic would exacerbate the dangers.

Construction work on the development would necessitate both the closing of roads which are essential for farm traffic and diverting the bus route to the other end of the village at Surlingham Lane (a kilometre away) which would make it impossible for many residents to access this form of transport.

### **In conclusion**

Rockland St Mary with Hellington Parish council objects to this site on the grounds that it is not viable for development as the dangerous corner location and impossibility of creating a safe access point make it totally unsuitable.

## **SITE GNLP 0531 OBJECT**

### **Site constraints**

This very large-scale site, on high quality agricultural land, is a *long way* from the development boundary.

### **Access**

Access points to the site are limited and dangerous. One possible access point is part of a public right of way at the 'blind' top of a hill where planning permission was recently refused for a dwelling directly opposite because of this danger. The second possible access point is just before a blind bend. Neither access point could be widened to be suitable for traffic as the adjoining land is privately owned. Any new access point would have to be on Lower Road (outside the 30mph zone and 20 metres from the marsh land of the Yare Flood plain) - a road already considered unsuitable in terms of traffic capacity and lack of footpath provision.

A public right of way crosses the site (access from New Inn Hill). Some of the site abuts a piece of land (privately owned,) which is subject to a restrictive agricultural covenant.

### **Accessibility to services, utilities and utility infrastructure**

Site 0531 is a long way from the limited facilities available in the village.

It is a 20 minute or one mile walk from New Inn Hill to the shop and part-time doctor's surgery, and a 25 minute walk to the small village primary school. The primary school has a maximum capacity for just 84 pupils and no surplus land for expansion. Indeed, the school has to make use of the village hall next door to provide sufficient facilities.

Much of the site is a long way from services such as gas and sewerage. (Some of the nearby properties are not connected to mains sewerage.) Broadband speeds are poor or variable as properties are a long way from the main cabling.

## **Flood Risk**

As much of the site slopes towards the flood plain and the few existing houses on both New Inn Hill and Lower Road, there would be difficulties in dealing with the huge volume of water excess/run off from a large-scale development. In previous years, water would cascade down the slope onto the gardens of the bungalows on New Inn Hill whenever the previous landowner inadvertently ploughed his fields so that furrows channelled the water towards them. Hard landscaping of the site would lead to a high volume of water running off towards these properties and those on Lower Road. Being so close to the Staithe (fed by the River Yare) any excess water would also add to the likelihood of the road flooding when high tides occur. Flood warnings are quite frequent at this end of the village.

## **Impact**

### **Traffic and transport issues**

Because Site 0531 is a long way from the key facilities, the number of cars resulting from a development of 200 houses would lead to a significant increase in the volume of traffic along the fairly narrow road into the village and cause major parking issues at these facilities. There is no regular bus service from Lower Road or New Inn Hill. The very limited 85 bus service means that the vast majority of working adults are dependent on cars as their means of transport. As the site provides no employment opportunities, there would be an increase in commuter traffic on a road that has no scope for improvement.

There are over *ten* concealed or partially concealed entrances from New Inn Hill to Lower Road: one of which is a car park, another leads to a playground, and one is a slip-way for launching boats. Part of the marsh grazing land is accessed via Lower Road near to the possible site access point. At the Staithe, pleasure boats are moored in close proximity to the road and opposite the New Inn Pub. Creating a much greater volume of traffic would significantly increase the risk of accidents at this popular tourist spot. The village Community Speedwatch team has over a year's worth of data to support the fact that speeding remains a problem at this part of the village.

Access points to the site are on a popular and much used National Cycle Route (Lower Road and New Inn Hill) and close to the Wherryman's' Way – a walk popular with ramblers and birdwatchers. A significant increase in traffic on this narrow country road would be very dangerous to walkers and cyclists.

Residents have already expressed concerns to the Parish Council about the increased volume of traffic coming into the village as a consequence of drivers from (ever-expanding) Loddon wishing to avoid the busy and hazardous A146. The existing road cannot accommodate a further increase in traffic arising from such a large-scale development.

### **Biodiversity, geodiversity and compatibility with neighbouring uses**

Much of the site is within 50 -100 metres of the Broads Authority Boundary, some of it just 20 metres away and separated only by the narrow road. The Broads area that it borders is a flood plain and a site of special scientific interest. The Broads area is also a designated and strictly controlled conservation area and this large-scale site would directly border it.

The site borders a very successful conservation area that Claxton Manor Estate funds for the benefit of local residents and the indigenous Norfolk flora and fauna. Part of the conservation

programme was designed to encourage an increase in raptor (including the rare marsh harrier) and owl populations. In the past four years the Estate has erected numerous nesting boxes and planted new mixed woodlands with the aim of enhancing the area for future generations. The Estate has made a significant effort to restore and re-route both a public right of way and permissive rights of way to support the conservation project and it has become a haven for wildlife.

The site is very close to Rockland Broad, Wheatfen Nature Reserve and protected marsh land some of which is owned by the RSPB and other organisations with an interest in conservation. It is part of the Yare Valley bee corridor and is *much* closer than 3000 metres to Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Ramsar sites and designated Nature Reserves.

### **Significant Landscapes and Open Space**

The development site is at the very top of New Inn Hill -some 20 metres above sea level and one of the highest points in the area. 200 houses at this height would severely blight the landscape and open space because they would be very visible from a long distance (from the marshes, the Broad, the nature reserves, Wherryman's Way walks and from popular walks in the opposite direction (Hellington and Claxton).

Such a large-scale development would be totally out of keeping with the character of this end of the village which is a popular attraction for visitors and residents who value the precious diversity of wildlife. It would be incompatible with the designated conservation area that is so close to one side and the historic and listed buildings on the other side of the site.

As planning permission was recently refused for a proposed single dwelling directly opposite to Site 0531 at the top of New Inn Hill for reasons that included "impact on the character and landscape of the rural area" as well as "being outside the development boundary", it would be illogical to grant permission for housing on this site and of this scale where it would be completely unrelated to the existing village and its services.

### **In conclusion**

Rockland St Mary with Hellington Parish Council objects to site 0531 because high-density development is incompatible with key environmental neighbouring uses; the road capacity is highly unsuitable and there are no safe or suitable access points to a development of this size. The council considers the site therefore totally unsuitable for development.

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