

North Norfolk District Council

Explanatory Guidance: Approach to Small Growth Villages (Policy SS1)

Provides guidance for applicants, agents and planning officers regarding Policy SS1 Spatial Strategy of the North Norfolk Local Plan (2024-2040) in relation to Small Growth Villages and the operation of Criteria 3 and the associated Table 3: Small Growth Villages - Indicative Growth Figures.

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Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Small Growth Village approach	2
3. Details of Policy SS1 Spatial Strategy, Criteria 3.....	3
4. Location of development immediately adjacent to the defined Settlement Boundary.....	7
5. Monitoring and Implementation	9

Appendices

Appendix A: Policy SS1 Spatial Strategy and Table 3: Small Growth Villages - Indicative Growth Figures	10
Appendix B: Summary of Anglian Water position from March 2025	13
Appendix C: Glossary of Terms.....	14

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This guidance note sets out details in relation to the operation of Criteria 3 of Policy SS1 Spatial Strategy of the North Norfolk Local Plan (2024-2040) regarding Small Growth Villages (SGVs) and the associated Table 3: Small Growth Villages, which sets out the Indicative Growth Figures for each SGV identified.
- 1.2 It is designed to be read by applicants, agents and developers, in considering potential residential proposals which are immediately adjacent to an identified SGV, as well as planning officers, for the purposes of assessing the suitability of proposals against the criteria in the determination of relevant planning applications.
 - **A list of the 34 identified Small Growth Villages is set out in [Appendix A](#).**
 - **Their settlement boundaries are identified on the Local Plan [Policies Map](#)**
- 1.3 For reference, detailed information regarding the evidence underpinning the settlement hierarchy, distribution of growth methodology, and the specific designation of the Selected Settlements in the Spatial Strategy, including the Small Growth Villages and their settlement boundaries, can be found in the following Background Papers, which can be found in the Local Plan Examination Library on the Council's website:
 - [Background Paper 2: Distribution of Growth](#) [EL C2]
 - [Background Paper 11: Settlement Boundary Review: Small Growth Villages](#) [EL C11]
 - [Addendum to Background Paper 2: Distribution of Growth \(Small Growth Villages\)](#) [EL FC003]
 - [Addendum to Background Paper 11: Settlement Boundary Review \(Small Growth Villages\)](#) [EL FC004]
- 1.4 The evidence underpins and supports sustainable development in villages to maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of the identified Small Growth Villages in accordance with the [National Planning Policy Framework \(paragraph 83\)](#).

2. Small Growth Village approach

- 2.1 The purpose of the settlement hierarchy set out in Policy SS1 Spatial Strategy of the Local Plan is to provide proportionate growth opportunities for sustainable development in the North Norfolk district, which accords with national guidance relating to rural housing. In this regard, the majority of proposed development is allocated through the identification of sites in designated Large and Small Growth Towns, with other site allocations allotted to designated Large Growth Villages.
- 2.2 Small Growth Villages are different within the settlement hierarchy in that sites are not allocated and instead a series of requirements have been set out in Criteria 3 of Policy SS1, to ensure that residential development proposals are of an appropriate scale and design, as well as being located immediately adjacent to the villages settlement boundaries.
- The approach allows more flexibility by providing greater opportunity for a selection of sites to come forward and incentivises early delivery within the Small Growth Village tier of the hierarchy** through a first come, first served approach.
- 2.3 Policy SS1 designates 34 Small Growth Villages, where a housing growth allowance of approximately 9% is identified in [Table 3: Small Growth Villages - Indicative Growth Figures](#), which became live from the date the Local Plan was adopted on 17 December 2025. The number of proposed dwellings for each Small Growth Village is an indicative allowance and not a specific requirement. The indicative figures were derived from applying a percentage uplift to the published ONS population data (2016 mid estimates) for each parish divided by an average household size of 2.3 people.

3. Details of Policy SS1 Spatial Strategy, Criteria 3

3.1 Policy SS1 sets out in Criteria 3, the details of the requirements that, collectively, will need to be satisfied for residential developments to be supported in relation to the 34 designated Small Growth Villages.

3.2 **Criterion 3a. The site is immediately adjacent to the defined Settlement Boundary.**

Paragraph 4.1.9 of the supporting text to Policy SS1 explains that *'Suitable sites should be sufficiently close to a settlement so as to contribute to the extension of the settlementand should not be ruled out if they are physically separated by a road. Sites further afield that are judged to be more detached with clear separation by a parcel of land (e.g. a defined agricultural field) will not be supported.'*

Therefore, if a site is located immediately on the other side of a road to the defined settlement boundary, this can be considered as meeting the requirement. However, if there are other parcels of land that intervene, this is unlikely to meet the criteria as it would not be seen as an extension to the built form of the village.

3.3 **Criterion 3b. The number of new dwellings granted planning permission (less any lapsed) since the adoption of the Plan is not significantly more than the indicative growth figures for each settlement as set out in Table 3 'Small Growth Villages - Indicative Growth Figures'**

The indicative growth figures in [Table 3](#) are derived from applying a percentage uplift to the published ONS population data for each parish divided by an average household size of 2.3 (not the number of existing dwellings in a village). Monitoring post-adoption will be based upon annual completion of dwellings. The allowance is not capped, in order to allow flexibility, but **the growth allowances are not intended to be significantly overridden.**

The approach allows more flexibility by providing greater opportunity for a selection of sites to come forward and incentivises early delivery within the Small Growth Village tier of the hierarchy through a first come, first served approach. The indicative growth allowance is not a clear-cut cap to development for each individual settlement, but the cumulative level of development should not significantly exceed the 9% increase that Criterion 3 of Policy SS1 allows. An exception to this would be development through the rural exception Policy HOU3 Affordable Homes in the Countryside.

In terms of land supply figures, a number of the villages have potential constraints and as such, only 80% of the total potential yield can be taken into account when calculating the annual five year housing land supply as set out in para 7.1.5 of the Local Plan and in the local plan examination report, paragraph 52, examination reference [\[ER01\]](#).

3.4 **Criterion 3c. The proposal is small scale, incremental growth compatible with the form and character of the village and its landscape setting in terms of siting, scale, design, impact on heritage assets and historic character.**

This criterion seeks small scale development appropriate to the size, character and landscape setting of the relevant village. It links into a number of other local plan policies, in relation to the details of the acceptability of the siting, design, layout and potential impact on heritage assets. The following list of policies is not exhaustive but are the main policies that

will need to also be considered in conjunction with this requirement. Some are related to specific designations, such as the Norfolk Coast National Landscape and The Broads:

- Policy HC2: Provision & Retention of Open Spaces
- Policy HC7: Parking Provision
- Policy ENV1: Norfolk Coast National Landscape & The Broads
- Policy ENV2: Protection & Enhancement of Landscape & Settlement Character
- Policy ENV3: Heritage & Undeveloped Coast
- Policy ENV5: Impacts on Internationally Designated Sites: Recreational Impact Avoidance & Mitigation Strategy
- Policy ENV6: Protection of Amenity
- Policy ENV7: Protecting & Enhancing the Historic Environment
- Policy ENV8: High Quality Design
- Policy HOU2: Delivering the Right Mix of Homes
- Policy HOU8: Accessible & Adaptable Homes
- Policy HOU9: Minimum Space Standards

In addition, reference should be made to the [North Norfolk Design Guide](#) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), or any subsequent updated document, which provides guidance regarding new residential development.

3.5 **[Criterion 3d. New dwellings on suitable sites within the defined settlement boundary, along with dwellings built under Policy SS3 'Community-Led Development', building conversions and dwelling subdivisions within the defined settlement boundary, and those provided through Policy HOU3 'Affordable Homes in the Countryside \(Rural Exceptions Housing\)' will not count towards the 9% indicative growth figure.](#)**

The residential development will need to be outside of the defined settlement in order to qualify under criteria 3. This distinction is made because, **any development within the settlement boundary, such as conversion or infill development, will not count towards meeting the indicative housing allowances of the Small Growth Villages.** Instead, any such development will be counted as windfall development for the purposes of the Housing Trajectory and housing numbers. Any growth permitted inside the settlement boundaries will not take account of the indicative growth allowance and will be seen as growth in addition to the SGV allowances.

3.6 **[3e. Safe and convenient access can be provided.](#)**

This requirement links to Policy CC9 Sustainable Transport, as any such residential scheme will need to achieve a suitable connection to the highway that is safe for all. A number of the villages identified as Small Growth Villages have limited existing footpaths/pavements, which will need to be considered, as highway advice is likely to raise the lack of footpath connectivity, for example, for safe accessibility to a school, as an issue.

3.7 **[3f. On larger sites, suitable schemes proposed in partnership with a registered provider that deliver a minimum of 50% affordable housing will receive more favourable consideration.](#)**

The delivery of affordable homes is a key priority of the Local Plan and the Council's current North Norfolk [Corporate Plan \(2023-2027\)](#). As such, this criterion seeks to encourage and support the delivery of higher amounts of affordable housing on larger sites adjacent to the

settlement boundaries of the Small Growth Villages. Any such scheme proposed in partnership with a registered provider which delivers a minimum of 50% affordable housing will receive more favourable consideration and greater weight in the planning balance.

All schemes will need to comply with the policy requirements for affordable housing as set out in **Policy HOU2 'Delivering the Right Mix of Homes'** as a minimum.

3.8 **Table 3 Small Growth Villages – Indicative Growth Figures**

As mentioned in paragraph 2.3 above, the number of proposed dwellings for each Small Growth Village set out in Table 3 of the Plan is an indicative allowance and not a specific requirement (see [Appendix A](#)). The indicative figures were derived from applying a 9% uplift to the published ONS (Office of National Statistics) population data (2016 mid estimates) for each parish divided by an average household size of 2.3 people.

As detailed in [Appendix A](#):

Footnote 1 confirms that for Policy HOU1 and housing land supply purposes, it is assumed that 80% of the overall indicative growth figure is delivered over the plan period, which equates to 743 dwellings.

Footnote 2 East and West Runton - explains that the indicative growth figure for the villages of East Runton and West Runton has been expressed as a combined amount (64 dwellings) because of the ONS data available and that the overall growth figure should be broadly distributed evenly between the two settlements - approximately 32 dwellings for each village.

Footnote 3 Constrained Small Growth Villages - confirms that the four villages of [Horning](#), [Potter Heigham](#), [Sea Palling](#) and [Walcott](#) are identified as having no indicative growth allowance apportioned to them.

The villages of Potter Heigham, Sea Palling and Walcott are constrained as the much of the land associated with the settlements fall within Flood Risk Zone 3b, where new housing development would not be granted planning permission. Therefore, no indicative housing growth is put forward for these settlements. However, some incremental growth could come forward through suitable sites outside the high-risk flooding areas, but such growth is not relied upon for the purposes of housing delivery through the local plan.

Horning is also identified as a Constrained Small Growth Village with an indicative growth figure of zero, as the settlement is subject to a [Joint Position Statement](#), local plan examination ref [EX012] and [Horning Statement of Fact](#) by Anglian Water local plan examination ref [EX013] (both August 2023) in regard to Horning (Knackers Wood) Water Recycling Centre (WRC). Issues in Horning relate to the WRC exceeding its permitted volumetric flow, which means there is not currently capacity to accommodate further foul flows, as there is an increased risk of further nutrient loading to the river and consequential deterioration in water quality. In addition, there would be increased risk of sewer flooding.

Anglian Water have committed to address a number of issues, as detailed in the Horning Statement of Fact August 2023. As of April 2026, although Anglian Water has updated its position (March 2025) and advised the authority that they are now in a position to withdraw their holding objection to development served by the Knackers Wood WRC (but replace it with a suggested planning condition attached to any permission), the Joint Position

Statement between North Norfolk District Council, The Broads Authority and the Environment Agency **remains in place. As such, new developments or changes to existing properties (commercial or domestic) that could increase foul water flows to the Horning WRC will not be looked upon favourably by the Environment Agency and the two Local Planning Authorities, until the excessive flows to Horning WRC have been addressed with confidence, or if further innovations in technology and permitting are introduced.**

This means that there is a presumption against developments that increase flows to the Horning WRC. Similarly, there will be a presumption against developments that rely upon standalone foul water treatment solutions in sewered areas as they too have the potential to adversely affect water quality and are not subject to the environmental monitoring of a regulated water company.

The Council's current position would not necessarily prevent some extensions to existing properties or commercial premises from being supported, where the proposal would not give rise to an increase in foul flows.

By way of further explanation, the Anglian Water change in position March 2025, as summarised in [Appendix B](#), is a result of enforcement action (by Environment Agency) in order to ensure Anglian Water address the current exceedance of their permit at the WRC. The fact that they have now secured investment in their business plan to help address this for 2025-2030 does not in itself mean there is now increased capacity. The investment is yet to take place, and the Business Plan has been referred to the Competition and Markets Authority and as such spending is only confirmed for year one at the moment (2025).

The Council, through the planning policy team, regularly reviews the position with The Broads Authority, Environment Agency and Anglian Water and it is unlikely that the current position will change in the medium term. The current joint position statement will only be lifted following successful dry weather flow testing over a 12-month period following any investment and will require the issuing of a new permit by the Environment Agency. Secondly, the investment confirmed by Anglian Water is around addressing historical exceedance and is unlikely to lead to headroom for future growth. This would potentially take us to 2031 at the earliest if the investment confirmed is not carried out until the end of the period.

4. Location of development immediately adjacent to the defined Settlement Boundary

4.1 As explained in paragraph 3.2 above, Criterion 3a requires a suitable site to be located **immediately adjacent to a defined settlement boundary**. The following series of diagrams shows scenarios where a site respectively would and wouldn't meet this requirement.

Scenarios meeting Criterion 3a - acceptable location of development

The five example sites below in Figure 1 would meet the requirements of criterion 3a being located either immediately adjacent to the defined settlement boundary or immediately located on the opposite side of a road to the settlement boundary.

Key:





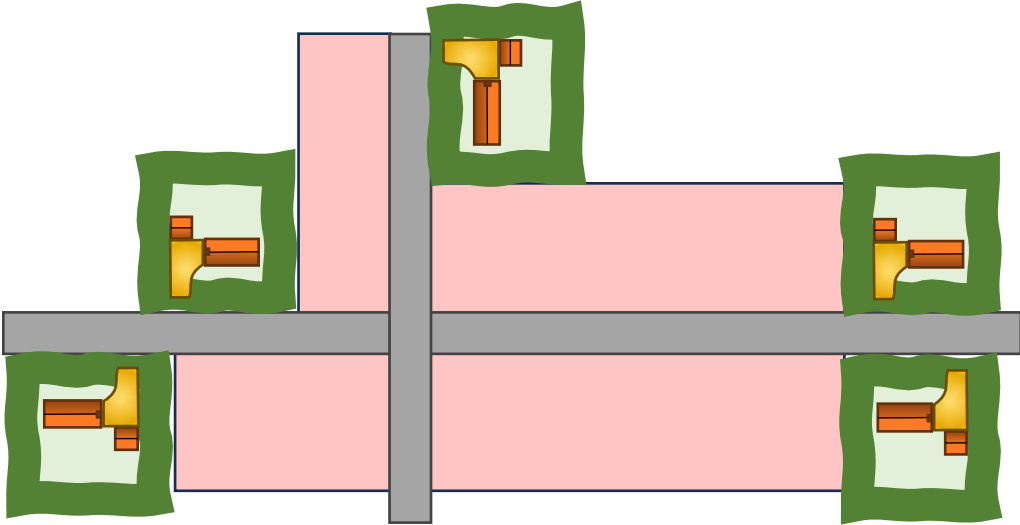
-  Proposed Residential curtilage/plot
-  Small Growth Village with defined settlement boundary
-  Separate parcel/ plot of land
-  Road

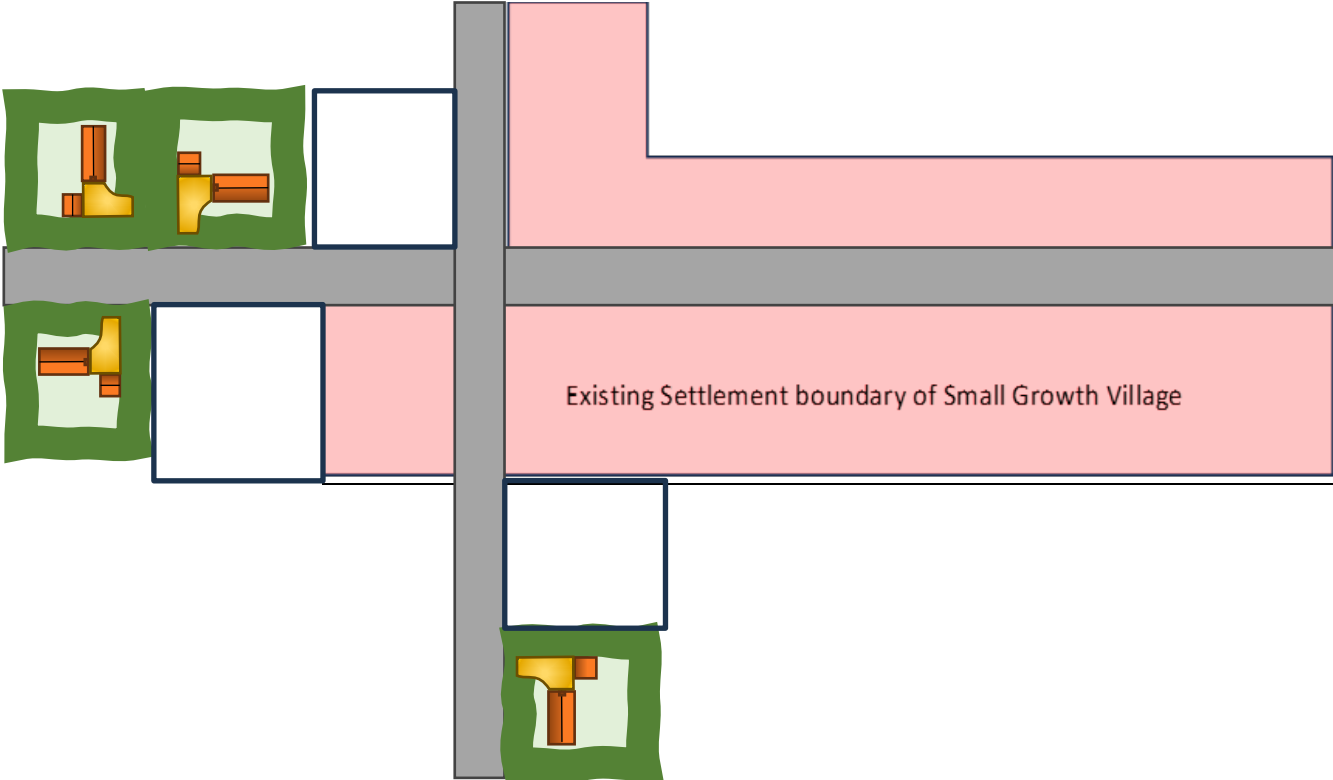
Figure 1: Example site locations that **meet** the test of 'immediately adjacent to the settlement boundary'



Scenarios that would not meet Criteria 3a - unacceptable location of development

The example four sites below in Figure 2 would not meet the requirements of criterion 3a as they are not located either immediately adjacent to the defined settlement boundary or immediately located on the opposite side of a road to the settlement boundary. There are distinct areas of land between the settlement boundary and the proposed sites.

Figure 2: Example site locations that **do not meet** the test of ‘immediately adjacent to the settlement boundary’



5. Monitoring and Implementation

- 5.1 Criteria 3 of Policy SS1 became operational upon the adoption of the Local Plan on 17 December 2025. One of the Key Indicators for 'Strategic Objective 3 'Meeting Accommodation needs' relates to monitoring growth levels in Small Growth Villages, where the position for each Small Growth Village will be tracked in terms of any planning permissions being granted (outline or full consent), as well as any lapsed permissions and completions.
- 5.2 The updated position will be published in the Annual Monitoring report, published every year and available to view on the [Council's website](#).

Appendix A: Policy SS1 Spatial Strategy and Table 3: Small Growth Villages - Indicative Growth Figures

Policy SS1 Spatial Strategy

1. The majority of new development will be located in the larger towns and villages in the District having regard to their role as employment, retail and service centres, the identified need for new development and their individual capacity to accommodate sustainable growth. Major development will not be permitted in the Norfolk Coast National Landscape unless there are exceptional circumstances, and it can be demonstrated that the proposal is in the public interest. Development will be located where it minimises the risk from flooding and coastal erosion and mitigates and adapts to the impacts of climate change.

Selected Settlements

Cromer, Fakenham and North Walsham are defined as **Large Growth Towns** where a high proportion (approximately 50%) of new housing, commercial and other developments will be located.

Holt, Hoveton, Sheringham, Stalham, and Wells next the Sea are defined as **Small Growth Towns** where a lesser quantity of development will be located.

Blakeney, Briston, Ludham and Mundesley are defined as **Large Growth Villages** recognising their wider role as local service centres in meeting the needs of residents and those of a wider rural hinterland.

A small amount of development will be focused in and adjacent to the defined Small Growth Villages reflecting their limited service role to help address housing needs and support vitality and sustainability across the rural area. The Small Growth Villages are:

Aldborough, Bacton, Badersfield, Beeston Regis, Binham, Catfield, Corpusty & Saxthorpe, East Runton, Erpingham, Felmingham, Great Ryburgh, Happisburgh, High Kelling, Horning, Itteringham, Langham, Little Snoring, Little Walsingham, Neatishead, Northrepps, Overstrand, Potter Heigham, Roughton, Sculthorpe, Sea Palling, Southrepps, Stibbard, Sutton, Tunstead, Trunch, Walcott, West Runton, Worstead and Weybourne.

2. Development will be permitted within the defined **Settlement Boundaries** of the Selected Settlements subject to compliance with the policies of this Plan. Within **designated Residential Areas**, residential and compatible small scale non-residential developments will be permitted.
3. **Outside of the defined boundaries of Small Growth Villages residential development will be permitted where all of the following criteria are satisfied:**
 - a. **The site is immediately adjacent to the defined Settlement Boundary;**
 - b. **The number of new dwellings granted planning permission (less any lapsed) since the adoption of the Plan is not significantly more than the indicative growth figures for each settlement as set out in Table 3 'Small Growth Villages - Indicative Growth Figures';**

c. The proposal is small scale, incremental growth compatible with the form and character of the village and its landscape setting in terms of siting, scale, design, impact on heritage assets and historic character;

d. New dwellings on suitable sites within the defined settlement boundary, along with dwellings built under Policy SS3 'Community-Led Development', building conversions and dwelling subdivisions within the defined settlement boundary, and those provided through Policy HOU3 'Affordable Homes in the Countryside (Rural Exceptions Housing)' will not count towards the 9% indicative growth figure;

e. Safe and convenient access can be provided;

f. On larger sites, suitable schemes proposed in partnership with a registered provider that deliver a minimum of 50% affordable housing will receive more favourable consideration.

4. The rest of North Norfolk, including all settlements not listed above, is designated as **Countryside Policy Area** where development will be limited to those types allowed for in **Policy SS2 'Development in the Countryside'**.

Settlement (Parish)	Indicative Growth Figures (Dwellings) ⁽¹⁾
Aldborough	22
Bacton	45
Badersfield (Scottow)	70
Beeston Regis	43
Binham	11
Catfield	39
Corpusty & Saxthorpe	29
East & West Runton	64 ⁽²⁾
Erpingham	29
Felmingham	23
Great Ryburgh	26
Happisburgh	36
High Kelling	20
Horning	0
Itteringham	5
Langham	15
Little Snoring	24
Little Walsingham (Walsingham)	31
Neatishead	21
Northrepps	43
Overstrand	38
Potter Heigham ⁽³⁾	0

Roughton	37
Sculthorpe	28
Sea Palling	0
Southrepps	34
Stibbard	13
Sutton	46
Trunch	37
Tunstead	42
Walcott ⁽³⁾	0
Weybourne	20
Worstead	38
Total Housing Delivery @ 9%	929

Table 3 Small Growth Villages - Indicative Growth Figures

1. For Policy HOU1 and Housing Land Supply purposes it is assumed that 80% of the overall indicative growth figure is delivered over the plan period i.e. 743 dwellings.
2. Housing figures in Small Growth Villages are based on ONS 2016 population projection data. The data available combines East & West Runton for this table - the indicative housing growth figures should be broadly distributed evenly between the two settlements.
3. Indicates that although the settlement has the services and facilities to be considered a Small Growth Village, the settlement is environmentally constrained and no growth is relied upon. Settlement referred to as a 'Constrained Small Growth Village'. Growth could however come forward through any suitable sites if the constraints can be overcome.

Appendix B: Summary of Anglian Water position from March 2025

Since January 2025, Anglian Water (AW) had issued holding objections for planning applications which would be served by the Horning-Knackers Wood Water Recycling Centre (WRC).

Funding has now been confirmed for the Horning-Knackers Wood WRC, and as such, AW can withdraw their holding objections, and instead request the imposition of a planning condition as follows:

- This site is within the catchment of Horning-Knackers Wood Water Recycling Centre (WRC), which currently lacks the capacity to accommodate the additional flows generated by the proposed development. However, Horning-Knackers Wood WRC is included within our Business Plan as a named growth scheme with investment delivery planned between 2025-2030. To ensure there is no pollution or deterioration in the receiving watercourse due to the additional foul flows that would arise from the development, we recommend a planning condition is applied if permission is granted.

Condition: Prior to occupation written confirmation from Anglian Water must be submitted confirming there is sufficient headroom at the water recycling centre to accommodate the foul flows from the development site.

Reason: to protect water quality, prevent pollution and secure sustainable development having regard to paragraphs 7/8 and 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Please note that the change from holding objection to planning condition relates only to the Water Recycling Centre part of AW planning responses.

If there is an AW objection to a particular application for another aspect, such as asset encroachment, the used water network, surface water drainage, or water supply, then the objection for these aspects remains.

Appendix C: Glossary of Terms

Distribution of Growth	Refers to the spatial strategy that determines where new housing, employment, infrastructure, and services will be located over the local plan period.
Settlement Boundary	A planning policy tool that establishes the built-up areas of towns and villages by spatially defining their geographical on a map.
Settlement Hierarchy	A planning approach that classifies and ranks towns and villages by factors including size, population and availability of services and facilities, focusing the majority of sustainable development in towns.
Small Growth Village (SGV)	The fourth tier in the North Norfolk settlement hierarchy, where a prescribed level of services and facilities have been identified.
Spatial Strategy	An overarching policy framework that directs the scale and pattern of growth in terms of housing, employment, infrastructure etc. across a local authority area.