



**NORTH NORFOLK
LOCAL PLAN
EXAMINATION
HEARING STATEMENT
– MATTER 2**

Quality Assurance

Site name:	North Norfolk Local Plan Examination
Client name:	ESCO Developments Ltd, Flagship Housing Developments Ltd and Lovell Partnerships Ltd
Type of report:	Hearing Statement – Matter 2
Prepared by:	Sarah Hornbrook MA (Cantab) MSc MRTPI
Signed	
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Reviewed by:	Iain Hill BSc Hons DipTP MRTPI
Signed	
Date	3 January 2024



1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Hearing Statement has been prepared by Bidwells LLP on behalf of ESCO Developments Ltd, Flagship Housing Developments Ltd and Lovell Partnerships Ltd (hereafter 'ESCO', 'Flagship', 'Lovell' or collectively, 'the Consortium') in support of representations made to the North Norfolk Local Plan. By way of background, the Consortium are promoting land North West of North Walsham (Site NW62/A) for residential-led development of approximately 1,800 dwellings, 7ha of employment land, community facilities and associated infrastructure.

- 1.2 This Statement provides the Consortium's response to Matter 2 (Spatial Strategy), Questions 2.1-2.3 of the Inspectors' Matters Issues and Questions, November 2023 [Document EH0003].

2.0 Matter 2: Spatial Strategy

Question 2.1 Is the proposed settlement hierarchy with five categories - Large Growth Towns, Small Growth Towns, Large Growth Villages, Small Growth Villages and Countryside - justified by the evidence?

- 2.1 The proposed settlement hierarchy, which includes the five settlement categories, is considered to be justified by evidence. The settlement hierarchy is based on the Local Plan's evidence base, with settlement categories reflecting the role of existing settlements in terms of employment, retail and service centres, and their capacity to accommodate further sustainable growth, as well as the availability of land promoted through the Local Plan process which has a realistic prospect of delivery during the Local Plan period.
- 2.2 The proposed settlement hierarchy meets the objectives of the Plan's Spatial Vision to enable delivery of the required housing, jobs and supporting infrastructure, whilst having regard to a number of constraints, notably environmental designations. On this basis, when evaluating the need to conserve and enhance the landscape and natural environment, whilst nurturing the significance of the Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which covers vast areas of the District, the proposed settlement hierarchy has identified settlements which are outside the more sensitive locations and have the capacity to accommodate further sustainable development.

Question 2.3 Does the evidence justify the inclusion of the particular settlements in each of the top three tiers – Large Growth Towns, Small Growth Towns and Large Growth Villages? Is the distinction between Large Growth Villages and Small Growth Villages distinct or have any been misclassified

- 2.3 The definition of each tier of the settlement hierarchy is clear, and the criteria/characteristics that have been used to justify a settlement's inclusion in a specific tier of the hierarchy are considered to be clearly articulated (see para 4.1.3 – 4.1.7 of the submitted Plan).
- 2.4 The inclusion of particular settlements in each of the top three tiers is justified and the distinction between Large Growth Towns and Small Growth Towns is clear. The three Large Growth Towns identified are spatially and functionally distinct from those identified as the Small Growth Towns, and evidently have more capacity to accommodate sustainable growth.
- 2.5 Cromer, Fakenham and North Walsham are the main centres of population within the District, and as the Large Growth Towns should be the focus for economic growth, providing a range of amenities, services and infrastructure to support sustainable housing.
- 2.6 The Large Growth Towns provide opportunities for strategic growth i.e. over 1,000 units. Developments of this scale are capable of providing a wide range of infrastructure improvements, such as schools, employment, health centres and green infrastructure, which will provide benefits to both existing and future residents.
- 2.7 This approach is entirely consistent with paragraph 74 of the NPPF, which advises that "The supply of large numbers of new homes can often be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns,

provided that they are well located and designed and supported by the necessary infrastructure and facilities.”

- 2.8 With specific reference to North Walsham, it is the largest town in the District, and therefore an existing centre for housing, employment and community infrastructure. The town provides access to a range of modes of transport, including rail and bus services that provide access to larger retail and employment opportunities within the County. North Walsham is evidently a highly sustainable location suitable for future growth.
- 2.9 Coupled with the sustainability of the location is the availability of land that is relatively unconstrained. Potential locations for development around North Walsham for future growth have been evaluated as part of the preparation of the Local Plan and have been demonstrated to be sustainable, available and deliverable. Further detail on the suitability of land around North Walsham for development is provided in the Consortium’s response to Matter 5, Question 5.6.2.



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