



The countryside charity
Norfolk

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Working locally and nationally to
promote, protect and enhance a
beautiful and thriving countryside
for everyone's benefit.

Dear Parish / Town Council,

Ben Goldsborough MP and the Leader of South Norfolk Council, Daniel Elmer, are backing plans for a new town in South Norfolk. CPRE Norfolk thinks this is a terrible idea.

The Government is looking to build around 12 new towns in England and will select the sites from the 100 areas that have been put forward for consideration (the South Norfolk proposal is one of these). Each new town would contain at least 10,000 houses. To put this in perspective this is a town twice the size of Diss.

Mr Elmer (Conservative) is suggesting that a new town would be beneficial because the concentration of development in one location could relieve the development pressures experienced by other settlements. He has stated that he would only support plans for a new town if it did not result in an increased housing target. In saying this he is implying that if a new town was built there could be some kind of trade-off whereby some of the allocated sites that make up the 45,000 housing target in the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) could be withdrawn. This is not the case - under current planning regulations there is no mechanism for removing an allocated site from an adopted local plan.

Therefore if a new town is built in South Norfolk, the 10,000 houses it would contain will be additional to the 45,000 houses identified in the current local plan target as it is not possible to remove sites already allocated from the plan. A member of the GNLP planning policy team has confirmed these facts in a phone conversation with CPRE Norfolk.

House builders and landowners with sites worth millions of pounds already allocated within the GNLP will not give up those allocations nor are they required to. As a consequence, a new town would not relieve development pressures on other settlements.

The GNLP covers South Norfolk, Broadland and Norwich. It is a new and up to date local plan (adopted March 2024), therefore it did not suffer an upward revision of its housing target (also known as the housing potential) when the freshly elected Labour government re-introduced mandatory housing targets – the target of 45,050 new houses by 2038 (the plan's end date) remains in place.

The 45,000 GNLP housing target is already far too large and is unlikely to be achieved – it includes sites for 30,000 houses rolled over from the previous local plan (The Joint Core Strategy) which were never built out. There is a long track record of builders land-banking sites and CPRE Norfolk expects that by 2038 a large number of sites included in the target will remain undeveloped. Government ministers misunderstand how the housing market operates when they state that they are backing the builders not the blockers because the builders are the blockers. There is absolutely no need to add any extra housing to the existing target.

A new town of 24,000 people (10,000 houses x average UK household size of 2.4) located somewhere in South Norfolk is a preposterous idea and is not needed. It would consume a large area of countryside and contribute to a further degradation of the attractive and distinctive rural landscape of South Norfolk.

CPRE Norfolk therefore asks your council to support its opposition to a new town in South Norfolk. Please tell Ben Goldsborough and Daniel Elmer that you oppose this proposal and feel free to quote any of the information provided in this Email in your correspondence with them. Please also ask your local district and county councillors to oppose the new town proposal.

Yours Faithfully,

David Hook
Chairman, Vision for Norfolk Committee / CPRE Norfolk

February 2025

FOOTNOTE

As well as opposing the proposal for a new town in South Norfolk CPRE Norfolk is asking the government to:

1. Tackle land banking (The November 2023 CMA report found that the top 11 housebuilders controlled a total of 1.17m plots of land banked plots)
2. Insist on the phasing of development – i.e. existing allocated sites must be built out first before new allocations can be developed
3. Make better use of empty properties - there are just short of 700,000 empty and unfurnished homes in England, according to the most recent government figures. Of those, 261,471 are classed as “long-term empty,” meaning no-one has lived there for six months or more (source BBC)
4. Encourage conversion of redundant retail and office space in to residential usage – lots of potential here and in the right place to rejuvenate town centres
5. Prioritise the provision of social rented housing to address the needs of those who are less well off
6. Prioritise the use of Brownfield sites
7. Scrap the recently introduced formula that this government insists local authorities use to calculate housing targets. It is producing unnecessarily large targets that several Norfolk local authorities are having great problems allocating sites for. More and more countryside is being consumed by housing as developers cherry pick the most attractive sites and land bank the rest. The previous formula (although not perfect) was better and should be returned to.