



# Land at Obthorpe Lane, Thurlby

South Kesteven Local Plan Regulation 18  
Representations

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Prepared on behalf of Allison Homes | April 24

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 These representations have been prepared on behalf of Allison Homes in response to the SKDC Regulation 18 Local Plan Consultation.
- 1.2 Allison Homes are promoting Land at Obthorpe Lane, Thurlby for approximately 86 dwellings.

## Scope and Structure of these Representations

- 1.3 These representations are made in relation to the promotion of Land at Obthorpe Lane, Thurlby ('the site'), for residential-led development. These representations address topics within the South Kesteven District Council (SKDC) Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation.
- 1.4 The purpose of these representations is to assist SKDC ('the Council') in formulating an approach within the emerging Local Plan that is both consistent with national planning policy and the tests of soundness. In this regard, our representations are mindful of the tests of soundness set out at paragraph 35 of the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') (December 2023).
- 1.5 At this early stage of plan-making, it is important that the Council pursues an approach that is consistent with national policy, effective, justified, and positively prepared, in order for the Local Plan to be found sound at examination. These representations comprise our recommendations to assist the Council in achieving such an approach as emerging plan progresses toward adoption.

## Policy Context

- 1.6 South Kesteven District Council (SKDC) adopted its 'Local Plan 2011-2036' in January 2020. The Plan sets out the spatial strategy to meet development needs.
- 1.7 The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) requires local planning authorities to review local plans at least once every 5 years from their adoption date. This is intended to ensure that planning policies remain relevant and effective.
- 1.8 The Inspector's final report on the current Local Plan committed the Council to undertake an early review of the Local Plan from April 2020. The Local Plan, which is the subject of this Regulation 18 Consultation, represents the progression of this review process and enables necessary updates of evidence including housing and employment need.
- 1.9 In this regard, Allison Homes supports the Council's commitment to the preparation of a new Local Plan to cover the South Kesteven administrative area.

## Structure of Representations

- 1.10 Our representations are set within the context in which we seek to highlight, where relevant, the opportunities that are presented for the emerging Local Plan to continue to allocate Land at Obthorpe Lane, Thurlby for development.
- 1.11 Accordingly, the following sections of these representations are set out as follows:

**Section 2:** Land at Obthorpe Lane, Thurlby

**Section 3:** Review of Local Plan Evidence Base (Sustainability Appraisal)

**Section 4:** Comments On Vision, Objectives and Policies

**Section 5:** Summary and Conclusions

- 1.12 We trust that our comments are of assistance to the Councils in formulating an approach that is positively prepared, effective, justified, and consistent with national policy, as the emerging Local Plan progresses toward adoption.

## 2. LAND AT OBTHORPE LANE, THURLBY

- 2.1 Land at Obthorpe Lane, Thurlby is proposed as a draft allocation within the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan for the residential development of around 86 dwellings. The site reference is SKPR-56.

### Site Characteristics and Context

- 2.2 The site at Obthorpe Lane, Thurlby is approximately 3.6ha and consists of flat agricultural land to the south of the village. The access to the site is proposed to be taken from the western boundary off Obthorpe Lane. To the north and west of the site are the rear gardens of existing dwellings, with agricultural land to the south and east.
- 2.3 Thurlby is proposed as a large village within the Regulation 18 Local Plan in combination with the village of Northorpe which is joint with Thurlby. Within the settlement, there are a variety of services and facilities including a local shop, primary school, post office and public house for local residents.
- 2.4 Technical work has been carried out by the Client to support this site coming forward as a housing allocation, to demonstrate that the site is suitable and deliverable.
- 2.5 BWB Consulting Ltd have prepared an Access Arrangement which shows that Obthorpe Lane will be widened to accommodate the increase in travel resulting from the development. In addition, a new footway is proposed to tie the site into the existing footway to improve pedestrian connectivity to and from the site and village.
- 2.6 Crestwood Environmental have prepared a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal to support the promotion of this site. The assessment concludes that the site does not fall within any risk categories of SSSI and would not pose any adverse impacts to any protected species. The site was found to be of low ecological importance and that the hedgerows within the site are of moderate importance. It is proposed that the habitats will be retained in addition to providing further habitats in line with national policy. The site has a low biodiversity baseline and there are opportunities for biodiversity enhancements to deliver net-gains.
- 2.7 Identified by Lockhart Garratt, within the site there are 38 trees. One of which is within Category A, four within Category B and the remaining within Category C. The trees identified within Category A and B are located along the western boundary of the site, where the border is shared with existing properties. It is proposed that these trees will be retained as part of the development proposals. There are opportunities within the site to enhance landscaping and tree cover as part of the development proposals.
- 2.8 RPS have prepared a Built Heritage Statement which identifies that there are no designated or non-designated built heritage assets within the boundary of the site. There are approximately 14 listed buildings, a Scheduled Monument and 28 non-designated assets within 1km of the site. The development of the site would result in a small visual change of the setting of the St Firmin Church but its considered there will be less that substantial harm to any heritage assets within proximity of the site, and any impact can be mitigated against

through careful design of the development layout. Additionally, RPS have provided an Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment, which identifies some area of medieval or post-medieval ridge and furrow, showing the sites history of being used for agricultural purposes. The assessment concludes that the limited archaeological potential identified does not pose a significant constraint to future development.

### Summary

- 2.9 The Council have made a suitable choice in proposing the site as a draft housing allocation. We are fully supportive of the proposed allocation of the site as the settlement of Thurlby is an ideal location for future growth due to the presence of several facilities and services that are available.
- 2.10 The site is under the control of Allison Homes - a housebuilder with a strong track record of delivery in the District and surround area and the site would be delivered early on in the plan period.

### 3. SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL

- 3.1 AECOM have carried out an Interim Sustainability Appraisal ('SA') on behalf of South Kesteven District Council.
- 3.2 The SA Framework was informed by an initial scoping report which was carried out identifying a range of sustainability issues to focus on. To further support the Sustainability Appraisal, a Points of the Compass exercise was carried out, which assessed the key settlements, to identify the most appropriate locations for growth within each settlement. We agree that the Sustainability Appraisal and Points of the Compass exercise are necessary to find the most sustainable locations for growth.
- 3.3 The Appraisal scores the individual sites through 5 Red Amber Green (RAG) Rules which provides the benefit of clearly showing which sites are most appropriate to be allocated. Land at Obthorpe Lane, Thurlby has received a positive assessment within the Sustainability Appraisal, in regard to the access to public transportation in addition to the access of community services such as a local shop and primary education.
- 3.4 The Sustainability Appraisal correctly recognises that the site is not within proximity of any conservation areas, or any Grade I or Grade II\* Listed Buildings. The assessment identifies several biodiversity and geodiversity constraints however these are not within the immediate vicinity and all are over 400m from the site and will not be adversely effected by any development proposals.
- 3.5 We are pleased that the assessment of the site is positive, and that the Council have recognised in allocating this site that any impacts to biodiversity and geodiversity features within the local area have the ability to be mitigated against through careful design and planning, and through the inclusion of additional biodiversity within the site.

## 4. VISION AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT POLICIES

- 4.1 This section makes comments on the duration of the Plan Period alongside the Vision of the Draft Local Plan as well as other policies including in the Local Plan Review.

### Chapter 2 - South Kesteven District - Plan Period

- 4.2 The Regulation 18 consultation document highlights in paragraph 2.1 that the plan period for the emerging Local Plan will run from 1st April 2021 through to 1st April 2041. It is positive to see that the Council are seeking to plan for the longer period and preparing a document which covers 20 years. We are however concerned that upon adoption the Council may feel to meet the minimum requirements as outlined in paragraph 22 of the NPPF (2023).
- 4.3 Paragraph 22 of the NPPF requires “strategic policies should look ahead over a minimum 15 year period from adoption” and in our view the emerging SKDC Local Plan will not meet this. In order to provide a minimum 15 year period from adoption the plan will need to be adopted by 31st March 2026 at the very latest in order to provide the required time period. However, as the Local Plan has already experienced delays, it is reasonable to assume that further delays in timescales will be encountered.
- 4.4 By taking a positive and proactive approach to delivering to the plan period, the Council is able to ensure that the plan is robust and credible with the opportunity to deliver more housing across South Kesteven to meet local needs. We encourage the Council to extend the plan period by at least another two years to a time horizon of 2043 which will allow for any further delays in plan making whilst still ensuring that the minimum time period can be achieved.

### Chapter 3 - Vision and Strategic Objectives

- 4.5 Chapter 3 of the Regulation 18 Consultation sets out the Vision and the Objectives the Plan seeks to meet and provide.
- 4.6 The Vision provided has been updated to reflect the Council’s commitment to fight climate change, and create a successful and strong economy, whilst building sustainable communities that provide a high quality of life. The suggested Vision is realistic in its ability to be delivered through the provision of high quality housing and creating a strong economy.
- 4.7 We are support of the overall Vision in increasing the importance of tackling Climate Change as well as creating sustainable, diverse, and safe communities across the district. To strengthen the Vision to further ensure it is considered as sound, the Plan period should be increased, and the Vision should be amended accordingly to account for the additional years of the plan period.
- 4.8 The draft Plan also provides the strategic Objectives for the Local Plan moving forwards.
- 4.9 We consider that Objective 9 should be amended to take into the consideration in the extension of the Plan period, and increased need for housing across the district. However, we

are pleased to see that the Council have provided an approach and set Objectives which are largely pro-growth whilst requiring the provision of diverse and sustainable communities.

## **Chapter 4 - Sustainable Development in South Kesteven**

### **Policy SD1 – The Principles of Sustainable Development in South Kesteven**

- 4.10 Policy SD 1 seeks to deliver sustainable development in South Kesteven.
- 4.11 Although we are broadly supportive of the approach set out in Policy SD1, we would suggest that any further revisions to the policy provide greater clarity as to the expectations of how development proposals are to meet criteria within the policy. At the moment, it is unclear as to whether these requirements have to be met by development proposals and the relationship between them.

## **Chapter 6 - Spatial Strategy**

### **Policy SP1 – Spatial Strategy**

- 4.12 Policy SP1 outlines that the Local Plan is to deliver sustainable growth across the District. We are broadly supportive of the approach to propose development across the District in locations which are suitable and sustainable. This approach will allow for greater certainty that the needs of the District can be met in a positive and robust manner.
- 4.13 Policy SP1 is clear that the Council is using the Standard Method for identifying housing need as the starting point which we support and are not aware of any justified and objective evidence which suggests a lower figure should be used.

### **Settlement Hierarchy Assessment**

- 4.14 Appendix 2 of the Settlement Hierarchy Assessment provides the individual scoring of each settlement within the District, with the settlements with the higher scores being the most sustainable and suitable for growth.
- 4.15 The Thurlby and Northorpe area has received a total score of 44 within the settlement hierarchy assessment. This places Thurlby and Northorpe within the most sustainable settlements across the district, with the 9<sup>th</sup> highest score out of over 120 settlements assessed.
- 4.16 The assessment of Thurlby and Northorpe correctly identifies the services and facilities that are present, such as the primary school, public house, post office, bus services, and other facilities. This assessment recognises that the key facilities and services which are present in the village, in addition to the transportation services which can provide access to the market town of Bourne where a wider range of services can be found.
- 4.17 We agree with the overall methodology that settlement hierarchy has taken in its approach towards the large villages in South Kesteven, in addition to its identification Thurlby and Northorpe as a sustainable settlement in the district that is both suitable for future growth.

## **Chapter 7 - Housing Need**

- 4.18 It is pleasing to see the Council have used the Government's Standard Method in calculating the need for housing, in addition to the use of a 21% uplift, resulting in a total housing

requirement of 16,975 dwellings. To meet this requirement, the Council propose to allocate an additional 2,901 dwellings across 23 sites. It is important that the Council are satisfied that all sites put forward are suitable, available and deliverable, such as our Client's site at Gonerby Moor to ensure that the housing requirement will be delivered over the plan period.

#### **Policy H2 – Affordable Housing**

- 4.19 We acknowledge the importance of providing affordable housing options on large sites as this ensures a range of accommodation to come forward across South Kesteven.
- 4.20 The policy as presented in the Regulation 18 document includes a ranging percentage requirements which we understand will be refined as a result of the Whole Plan Viability Assessment. Alongside the Regulation 18 Local Plan, the Council have published a Whole Plan Viability Assessments prepared dated January 2024 which has been prepared by HDH Planning & Development Ltd and assumes a consistent 30% level of affordable housing for testing purposes along with a defined mix of tenure type. We are therefore unsure why the emerging policy has not reflected this evidence base at this stage.
- 4.21 Ahead of the Regulation 19 document, it will be essential that the Council provide clarity as to the level of affordable housing and the mix of tenures that are required to meet needs.

#### **Chapter 12 - South Kesteven Communities – Thurlby and Northorpe**

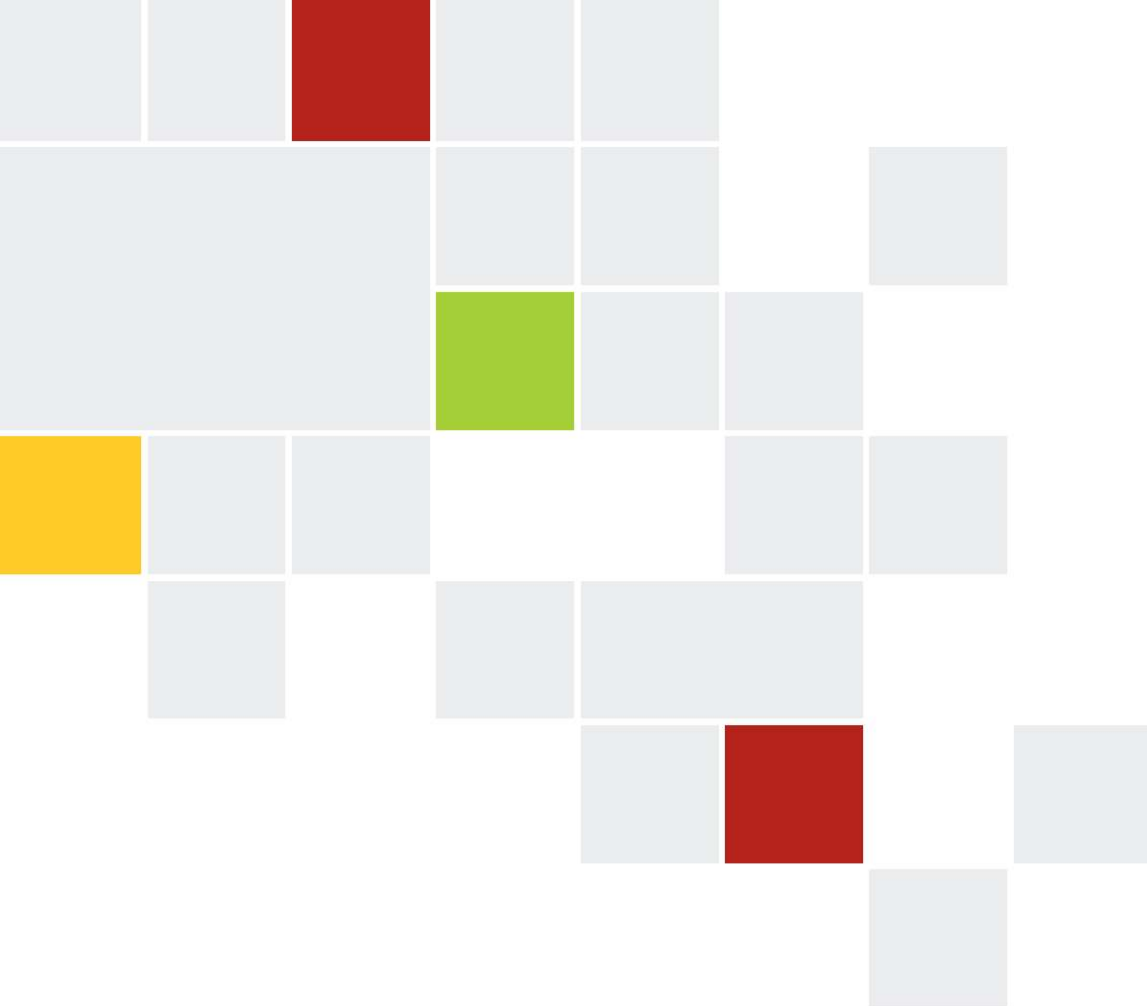
- 4.22 The Regulation 18 document includes a site specific allocation for Land at Obthorpe Lane, Thurlby to contribute towards the overall housing delivery and growth in South Kesteven which welcomed and supported.
- 4.23 It is set out within Chapter 12 in paragraph 12.94 that Thurlby and Northorpe have been classed as one large village due to the two villages being joint and have no separation. We agree that this is an appropriate approach due to the proximity of the settlements and the opportunities the two villages can provide for one another.

#### **New Policy – SKPR-56: Land at Obthorpe Lane**

- 4.24 Through the development of this site, there is the opportunity to create a well-connected development with the existing settlement of Thurlby. Additionally, there will be the opportunity to improve the access and Obthorpe Lane through criteria b of the new policy.
- 4.25 The site identified in Thurlby is capable of delivering sustainable development and Allison Homes are committed to bringing this site forward in a timely manner. The emerging allocation provides confidence that Thurlby is suitable for additional growth over the plan period
- 4.26 Within these representations, we have been able to show that Thurlby and Northorpe is a sustainable location for growth, with this site being a suitable option which is deliverable and readily available for residential development, which can provide benefits for both current and future residents.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 Boyer has prepared these representations on behalf of Allison Homes in response to the Local Plan Review undertaken by South Kesteven District Council ('SKDC').
- 5.2 These representations are made with respect to the ongoing promotion of Land at Obthorpe Lane, Thurlby, for residential development of around 86 dwellings with open space, landscaping, drainage, and associated infrastructure. The site is being promoted by a housebuilder, is available, suitable and deliverable within an early part of the plan period. Allison Homes are supportive of the Council's approach to proposing the site as a draft housing allocation.
- 5.3 Allison Homes considers that the approach set out in the Local Plan Consultation Document is capable to be found sound. The approach undertaken with regard to the housing requirement, and the associated Spatial Strategy, is consistent with national policy, effective, justified, and positively prepared.



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