

Southwell Town Council and the Local Community Response to the 'Housing Allocation' Report

A Planning Committee Working Group was set up by STC to make recommendations about Southwell's 'Housing Allocation' and to put these recommendations at a series of consultative public meetings. As a result of this extensive consultation we are making the following recommendations.

Whilst considering these recommendations we were guided by consideration of the Southwell Area Objectives in the Core Strategy document especially the **SoAP1 'Role and Setting of Southwell'**. For example, whilst recognising some sites needed to be close or slightly beyond the town's urban boundary, we were concerned about sites encroaching too far into the countryside to the west and south of the town. We also carefully considered the N/SH **Conservation Area Appraisal Document**, and a major consideration was the demands on the **town infrastructure**.

Finally, we have taken note of the **N/Sherwood DC's 'Housing Needs Assessment'** in its identification of Southwell having 'significant shortfalls in smaller properties including 1/2 bedroom flats and 2 bedroom bungalows'. **(5.16 DPD)**. We therefore expect that future housing in the town will comprise mainly of smaller dwellings.

Summary of Findings

1. Sites for Residential Development

We recommend that the 290 dwellings for Southwell are found from the following sites -: Greater detail on each site can be found in **Appendix 1**.

a) Preferred Sites

So/Ho/2. (Halam Rd/Allenby Rd East) 2.63 ha

This is considered suitable for lower density residential development comprising up to 3 bedroom houses and bungalows 65 dwellings

So/Ho/4 (Nottm Rd/Halloughton Rd 'Beckett's Field) 1.18 ha

We recommend medium density development, a mixture of smaller houses, apartments and bungalows. 60 dwellings

So/Ho/5 (Fiskerton Rd Depot) 0.38 ha

The density preferred would be close to, but still less than, Abbey Mews. The removal of the bypass from the Local Plan would assist finding the required number of dwellings. These should be mainly apartments. 25 dwellings

b) Alternative Sites

So/As/3 (Crew Lane Depot) 1.04 ha

This is a suitable site for development with a slightly higher density than Palmer's Court, nearby, comprising of mainly apartments with some small houses. 55 dwellings

So/As/4 (The Burgage – 'Rainbow's') 0.86 ha

We feel strongly that this should be a site for dwellings only. Offices and retail would be inappropriate here. This should be considered for a high density site comprising mainly apartments. 60 dwellings

c) Additional Site

Ref.08_0580 (South of Byron Gardens – ‘Tuck’s Field’) 0.27 ha

We understand this was omitted from the list as it was a marginally smaller site than the minimum requirement (0.3 ha). But we would urge this site should be included as it is close to the town centre and could be a high density site, comprising mainly apartments..

25 dwellings

If the Southwell Town Council views **on density** are not accepted we would support the Civic Society recommendation for an **enlarged So/AS/3** for housing, utilising **So/E2** (site for Employment use). Loss of Employment land could be compensated by enlarging the allocated **So/E1** to the east. We feel this is preferable to building houses on sites So/Ho/1, So/Ho/3 and So/Ho/6.

TOTAL 290 dwellings

2. Sites for Employment

We support the allocation of sites **SO/E/1** and **So/E/2** and with the removal of the bypass from the local plan we feel these two sites can supply the total employment land requirements.

3.1) Sites not suitable for Residential Development

We have taken into account the the Core Strategy policy for the Southwell area, **SoAP1**, ‘Role and Setting of Southwell’ when recommending refusal of these allocations. For detailed information on these sites please see **Appendix 1**.

a) Preferred sites

So/Ho/1 (Halam Rd/Allenby Rd to west)

We feel this would unnecessarily encroach into the countryside and towards Halam. Ho1 and Ho/2 sites are adjacent and the numbers of dwellings suggested for the two sites would not be sustainable.

So/Ho/3 (Halloughton Rd south)

Again we feel two adjacent development sites (So/Ho/3 and So/Ho/4) would create an even greater highway issue. Halloughton Rd already has a traffic problem because of its very narrow entrance leading into Westgate. This site also lies in a belt to the south of the town where it is important to maintain the visual quality of Southwell. Development here would encroach into the countryside. Additionally, the ‘Springfield’ site has a history of drainage and flooding issues.

So/Ho/6 (Lower Kirklington Rd/Southwell Nature Trail)

We consider the suggested development would encroach into the countryside and move the town close to Maythorne. We also feel that the Nature Reserve by Southwell Trail should be protected.

So/Mu/2 (Church St)

We feel strongly that this site should be kept purely as an open space. Being in the middle of the Conservation Area with site lines of Southwell Minster and adjacent to a SAM, a Heritage Asset (the Roman Villa) and listed buildings of outstanding architectural merit, it would be entirely inappropriate to have residential development here.

b) Alternative Sites

So/As/1 (off Halloughton Rd west)

We strongly feel that building houses here would impact adversely on the Conservation Area. Development here would be contrary to policies to protect the southern gateway views of Southwell. This is the iconic view of the town, Holy Trinity Church and the Minster as you travel from Brackenhurst.

The location abuts a Site of Important Nature Conservation (SINC). In addition from this site there are excellent views of Southwell Minster and so we recommend that the Southwell view sight line be extended to the west to include Ho/As/1.

We would suggest adding this site to the list of Southwell Non-suitable sites (Residential)

So/As/2 (off Kirklington Rd)

This site is located on an important approach to the town and with its close proximity to X5 the suggested site forms an odd extension to the town boundary.

3.2) Sites not suitable for employment

So/Mu/1

We consider the Burgage site to be suited for residential development only. Retail use would be inappropriate and would create unneeded conflict with the town centre.

4. Types of Housing Need

We understand that the numbers suggested at each of the housing sites is determined on a recommended density of 30 dwellings/ha. There is no suggestion in the document of what type or size of dwelling might be constructed. In the 'Allocations' document it is recognised that Southwell has 'a serious housing need' for smaller 1/2 bedroom units and bungalows, in fact more affordable housing. We urge that developers follow this direction and to assist this we recommend that the language of paragraphs 5.16,5.17,5.18 should become more positive. and less open ended (eg developers **will** cater for the specific needs not 'we **will expect** developers to cater for the specific needs').

5. Density of Sites

We recommend that allocated housing sites closer to the town centre should have a considerably higher density than the guideline of 30 dwellings/ha. This would be more sustainable especially for transport purposes and it would add to the economic vibrancy of the town centre. These town centre sites would seem to be more suited to smaller dwellings and apartments. A consequence of this would mean that fewer sites would be required on the periphery of the town. On these urban edge sites we recommend that the density is generally slightly more than 30 dwellings/ha .

6. Phased development

We urge that the development of 290 dwellings is 'phased' with the slow release of parcels of land This will put less pressure on any infrastructure issues.

7. Southwell bypass

We recommend that we ask the County Council to transfer the proposed bypass from Table 1 *Schemes with Safeguarded Routes* to Table 2 *Schemes which require further investigation* and also to delete the current line of the bypass. We would wish for our County Councillor to further this. We feel the presence of the bypass on the plan possibly limits the numbers of dwellings achievable on at least two of the sites which we are

proposing. and in addition that its continued presence in the plan is an encouragement to developers.

8. **Open Areas and Green Spaces**

We are not convinced that changing the term 'Green Wedge' to 'Main Open Areas' is a necessary improvement. People were familiar with 'Green Wedge' and so we would like to know why this change is necessary. We feel it is important to protect the landscape setting of the Conservation Area and we agree we need to preserve the important open spaces, both public and areas associated with the Prebendal houses within it. We hope that the Conservation Area Character Appraisal Document is still going to be used as a supplementary planning document as before.

We would also question why the Lowes Wong School playing fields and the Norwood Gardens play area are designated as 'public open spaces', while the key Minster School playing fields, the WMRG, the allotments, the Rugby Club ground, Brackenhurst Sports ground and the recently named Minster Fields are not.

9. **Infrastructure Issues**

There are concerns with residents and with the schools that the housing increase will impact adversely on school catchment areas and the local healthcare provision. (see **Appendix 2**. Letters from schools and medical and dental services). We maintain that there is a considerable mismatch between the building of 290 dwellings in the town and the revenue likely to be received from the CIL and from developers. We would therefore like to see a detailed breakdown of how NSDC would use the CIL and Section 106 money to improve and upgrade local services. From what we understand the only 'infrastructure improvement' project to be financed by the CIL is a traffic management scheme at the Church St/King's Street junction. How would the 'New Homes Bonus' apply to suggested development in Southwell ?

There are widespread concerns that the existing drainage and sewage system in the town is unsustainable and that improvements are required to support any further developments, such as the SUDS exemplar on Halam Road.

10. **The Localism agenda**

We note that the government states in its *Planning Powers for the People* that 'the local community will be in the driving seat and will be able to influence the shape of developments'. There is further reference to a need to 'protect wildlife, biodiversity and cultural heritage' whilst there will be 'a new designation to protect local green spaces in need of special protection'...We hope to see this in action in the Newark and Sherwood district.

11. **Cemetery**

We are pleased to see that there is a proposed cemetery extension shown on Map 6. There is a pressing need to find land for a new cemetery and we recognise that the location suggested would be ideal.

12. **Southwell Views Policy**

In line with the requirements of SoAP1, *Role and Setting of Southwell*, we would urge that the Minster View line from Nottingham Road should be extended to the **west** towards Stubbins Lane and Cundy Hill. This would cover the excellent views of the town from the Westhorpe area.

We also recommend that the Southwell View Line is extended to the **east** so that the south- east line moves in the direction of Church St/Fiskerton Road

Appendix 1

Housing - Southwell

A) Preferred Residential Sites

So/Ho/1 (Halam Rd/Allenby Rd West) 3.29 ha –

We would not include this area as it would encourage the unnecessary creep towards Halam. The current National Planning Policy Framework “attaches great importance to green belts in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment and checking the unrestricted sprawl...”

Because Ho/1 and 2 are so close, we believe that the total suggested numbers of dwellings are not sustainable within the infrastructure development. So/Ho/1 would lend itself to further sprawl to the west. Containing the area to one site alone (So/Ho/2) would allow essential and much needed, drainage work to be carried out.

In opposition to a recent planning application, STC were able to demonstrate that Severn Trent Water Authority was aware of drainage issues which have been ongoing for a number of years. Much of this has been brought about by the limited work carried out in the Hopkilm Lane area.

So/Ho/2 (Halam Rd/Allenby Rd East) 2.63 ha–

We feel that some of the DPD report comments for So/Ho/1 are relevant here, too. That assessment of the site against Spatial Policy 9 notes indicates that it is located on an important gateway into the town and, as a result, any development would need to be sensitive, incorporating, possibly, a strategic landscape buffer (SLB) to the west. There is a belt of trees which are protected under Tree Preservation Orders and should be accommodated under any development but the site is considered suitable for fringe lower density residential development. However, we believe that the whole area has issues regarding surface water drainage and this problem needs to be addressed prior to any development. (65)

So/Ho/3 (Halloughton Rd South) 1.82 ha –

This site lies in a visually important green belt of countryside to the south side of the town. This is at the most important entrance into Southwell. We are fully in agreement with the decision of the Planning Authority in 1993/4 that development here ‘would erode the rural setting of Southwell which would be to its detriment visuallyIt is important to seek to conserve and enhance the traditional form and character of Southwell together with its setting in the landscape.’ Again we stress that The National Planning Policy Framework ‘attaches great importance to green belts in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment and checking the unrestricted sprawl’.

The whole nature of the site known as ‘Springfield’ is subject to drainage and flooding issues. There would have to be a considerable amount of work –no doubt at great cost - to rectify the problems in this area.

Major drainage work has been carried out in the area recently to overcome constant problems with water which has run off to Nottingham Road. This has added to regular flooding at the entrance to the Minster School and supplemented the run-off from Park Lane. At least two houses in the area have experienced problems with excess water.

Thirdly, we are very concerned about the important issue raised with respect to the volume of cumulative traffic expected by the development of two adjacent areas. Halloughton Road

has for many years been a popular short cut for traffic from Nottingham Road to Westhorpe. Traffic has vastly increased since the Minster School was concentrated on one site. The main traffic problem is at the north end of the road where it joins with Westgate. This is a dangerous junction as the road, at this point, is very narrow, with no pavement. Vision for motorists is poor. Once again, costs to results ratio would be very high indeed. Much of any levy or new homes bonus would need to be used to address these serious traffic issues.

Whilst not a major planning consideration, it is understood that a parcel of land here has changed hands recently, possibly causing legal and financial problems.

Finally, this site should definitely not be considered as a precursor that could allow for the future development of the area shown as SO/AS/1 which we have asked to be removed or re-designated.

We believe that only **one** development should take place in this part of Southwell and the preference is that of So/Ho/4, which can be more readily integrated into the approach to the town, masked by the downward gradient and a bend in the road

So/Ho/4 (Halloughton Rd North, 'Beckett's Field') 1.18 ha –

In acknowledging the comments made in the document, we consider this as acceptable and recommend that medium density development similar to that of Abbey Mews be considered.

Much of the hedgerow should be retained as an SLB. This development would not have the same detrimental visual impact on the southern approach to the town as So/Ho/3. This site is located on probably the most important gateway into the town with one of the most iconic views of the Minster and, therefore, any development would also need to be sensitive to this. (60)

So/Ho/5 (Fiskerton Rd depot) 0.38 ha –

We agree with the comments in the report about this site. The removal of the bypass in the plan would get over the limitations on housing numbers for this site. If it were to suit the identified housing needs of Southwell, it is possible that the site could accept lower density additional dwellings – not unlike the Abbey Mews development on King Street but using a reduced dph formula. (25)

So/Ho/6 (Lower Kirklington Rd to Southwell Nature Trail) 3.95 ha –

We recommend that this is not appropriate for development.

As with So/Ho/1, development would mean an unnecessary creep into the countryside (in this case towards Maythorne). We strongly feel there is a need to protect the Southwell Nature Reserve Trail (SNRT) and to avoid the loss of valuable wild life. The STC view is much in line with recent government warning, referred to earlier, about development encroaching too much into the countryside.

It is known locally that this area is subject to water drainage problems, particularly along the side of the SNRT. Also the site is immediately adjacent to the Southwell Views area. In the light of these concerns we believe this site should not be considered for development.

B) Alternative Residential Sites

So/AS/1 (west of Halloughton Rd) 14.16 ha –

We do not consider this to be a suitable site, in fact much of the commentary lends itself to exclude this site.

We feel development in this location would impact on the setting of the Conservation Area. Also a small proportion of the site is designated as a Main Open Area (MOA), and we would not consider the removal or amendment of the boundary. In addition the site abuts a Site of Important Nature Conservation (SINC).

We also feel strongly that the site is within the Southwell Minster sight line. In our summary we have recommended that the Southwell View sight line should be extended to the west to cover this area. The footpaths within this site are very popular with local people and we are concerned that development would obscure views of the Minster and further afield.

As referred to earlier in our response, current National Planning Policy Framework 'attaches great importance to green belts in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment and checking the unrestricted sprawl'. Development on this site would be contrary to policies to protect the southern gateway views of Southwell. Of all the gateways into the town this southern gateway is the iconic one.

If this site was ever developed for housing it would create huge traffic problems. At the moment conditions along Halloughton Road are hazardous, especially, at the junction with Westgate, which has a very narrow entrance and one where visibility for motorists is limited. With development likely in Beckett's Field any suggestion of extra housing in Ho/As/1 would be foolish.

Access constraints should not be linked to the potential development of the nearby proposed site (So/Ho/3). Finally, the numbers of dwellings is not required under the suggested allocation for Southwell.

Additionally, this area was not offered up as part of the SHLAA scheme but suggested by planning officers. STC and residents would designate this as X1a or X6 and add to the Southwell Non-suitable sites (Residential) or simply remove it completely.

So/AS/2 (off Kirklington Rd) 2.78 ha –

The site is located on an important approach to the town and, as a result, should not be considered for any development. With its close proximity to X5, this forms an odd extension to the town boundary.

So/AS/3 (Crew Lane depot) 1.04 ha–

We consider that SO/AS/3 is a suitable site for development with a slightly higher density than Palmers Court nearby, although smaller dwellings could be expected on this site. By excluding the bypass this whole site could accommodate mixed-use development comprising of small-scale office and retail units. This would allow the removal of So/Mu/1.

Much needed facilities would be provided in the Easthorpe area, where retail outlets have dwindled over the years. This would add to the community and to the amenities of that area

and remove the constraints of being in a Conservation Area. Housing development in keeping with nearby Palmers Court is recommended

(55)

So/AS/4 (The Burgage – ‘Rainbows’) 0.86 ha –

We consider this to be a suitable site for dwellings only. Office and retail in particular, would not be appropriate as this could threaten the vibrancy in the Town Centre.

We consider the site to be ideal for high density development, up to 80 dph (70 dwellings) which is 20% less than Abbey Mews and should comprise a mix of small dwellings and apartments.

By concentrating a larger residential development close to the centre of the town it is anticipated that the shopping area will become rejuvenated. Large open spaces need not be incorporated into the development as residents will benefit by having the open Burgage area adjacent to the dwellings.

(60)

C) Additional Residential Sites

08_0580 (south of Byron Gardens, ‘Tuck’s Field’) 0.27 ha

This was not included as its area narrowly missed the minimum requirement. We feel strongly that this site is well placed for taking housing, being relatively close to the town centre.

(25)

D) Mixed Use Sites

So/Mu/1 (The Burgage – ‘Rainbows’) Up to 0.5 ha

We do not consider this is a suitable site for office development and retail. Retail on this site might well affect the vibrancy of the nearby town centre. We strongly feel this site is ideal for high density housing development (Ho/As/4)

So/MU/2 (Church St- ex Minster School)

This is not an appropriate location for any housing development. Located in the middle of the Conservation Area with sight lines of Southwell Minster and surrounded by buildings of outstanding architectural merit we strongly feel this should be left as open space. The site includes archaeological remains of national significance and is clearly regarded by the community as a Heritage Asset. We furthermore agree with the report’s comment ‘that the assessment of the site against Spatial Policy 9 notes that a large proportion of the site is within a Scheduled Ancient Monument’. We also agree that a small part of the site is subject to flood risk with 10% of the site within Flood Zones 2 and 3. The site should be left as Open space, allowing in time for it to become a Heritage Park. This would be of much greater value to the community.

E) Employment Sites

So/E/1 and So/E/2 (Southwell East)

We support the allocation of these two sites. With the removal of the bypass from the plan, we believe these two sites could supply the total employment required.

If the STC views on density are not accepted we would support the Southwell Civic Society recommendation for an enlarged SO/Ho/3 for housing, utilising So/E2. Loss of Employment land could be compensated by enlarging the allocated So/E1 to the east.