

Dear Parishes

Please find below the response to Lanpro that William Nunn has asked the chief executive of Breckland to send on his behalf. Many thanks to those of you who wrote to William Nunn in the last few days as it was very helpful.

Best wishes

BILL BORRETT

Member for The Upper Wensum Ward
Breckland District Council

Dear Mr Leeming

Proposed Mid-Norfolk Garden Town

Thank you for your letter which I think you incorrectly dated 3 June. I think this should be 3 July. We welcomed the site visit on the 26 June, and your outline and explanation of the proposal and the work you have completed to date.

As already explained Breckland Council as the local planning authority have only in the last month been made aware of your proposal, and as yet have not had time to consider this formally through our council processes. In the meantime this is an officer response based on our current understanding of your proposal and the position the council is in through its own local plan making.

Under the Duty to Cooperate, the Council is committed to addressing housing need, both within and beyond the authority's boundaries. The Council welcomes innovative proposals to provide new housing, and we are always open to discussions regarding opportunities for a new settlement or Garden Town, where this is supported by evidence. Garden Towns/ villages can provide opportunities for the use of design as an exemplar to promote a step-change in the quality of built development.

Before giving an opinion the Council must be certain that any proposal represents a sustainable option for growth and that there are mechanisms to fund and deliver the infrastructure needed to support such bespoke expansion. Most significantly, there should be full and extensive public engagement from the outset, with parishes, community groups, and businesses to gain support and understanding. This needs to be led and supported by the promoters.

It is important that strategic scale development proposals to serve housing need beyond the District's boundaries are also supported by partner authorities, and ideally are highlighted within relevant Local Plans. Within Norfolk, all Local Planning Authorities have formed a cooperative Strategic Planning Member Forum, in addition to an officers group to produce a set of agreements on strategic planning issues known as the Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework (NSPF). The current agreement is that the Norfolk Planning Authorities will produce documents which provide for the development needs of their areas until at least 2036. This agreement is set to be reviewed in light of proposals set out in the consultation on the National Planning Policy Framework, and therefore there is scope in the near future to revisit this position in considering future housing needs.

The Council's proposed Local Plan strategy is at the final stages of Examination and will enable Breckland to meet objectively assessed housing need within the District. The approach focusses the distribution of that housing growth via strategic urban extensions to Thetford and Attleborough, aligned to the economic growth potential of the Cambridge to Norwich Technology corridor. Further sustainable growth is planned to be distributed across the remaining market towns, local service centre villages and other rural villages. The Local Plan did consider a new settlement as an option to meet housing need but the proposal had not been promoted to the Council at that time, and no suitable options for new settlements were identified.

The proposed Garden Town seeks to plan for a scale of growth significantly in excess of the current objectively assessed housing need for the District to 2036, and would serve housing need beyond Breckland's boundaries. Whilst the proposal for a new settlement does not align with the Council's current spatial vision for the District to 2036 as set out in its new Local Plan, or the current NSPF, the Council would be open to further discussion and consideration of any proposal which aligns with the Government's objective to significantly boost the supply of housing.

The Council considers that proposals for addressing future housing need should be considered as part of a wider discussion, held on a County-wide basis under the Duty to Cooperate to establish how Norfolk wishes to plan to meet need beyond the current round of plans that look to 2036. This could include whether a new freestanding settlement is an appropriate response to any future housing target, and if a new settlement is desirable, where best this might be sited. Any evidence you are able to provide to support the concept of a garden town in Breckland and inform such a discussion, would be helpful.

Like you, we await the government's issue of its next version of the Garden Town prospectus and its call for sites. During this period of consultation, it may be possible for Breckland Council to consider more formally and with its partnership authorities how it may or may not formally support the proposal based on what I have outlined above.

I do require clarification on a particular issue, which seems at odds to what I understood from our original discussion. Within your letter you set out that the Norfolk Railway Village Ltd (NRV) is looking to make a formal submission for the Mid Norfolk Garden Town (MNGT) proposal into the next round of UK Government's new garden town and village call-for-sites.

I have received a letter from the chairman of the Mid Norfolk Railway Trust, quite clearly setting out that they have no formal relationship with Lanpro, there has been nothing more than exploratory discussions, and have not entered into any formal agreements nor intend to do so in the foreseeable future. They stress they have had no involvement, control or input into the plans for the new township.

Your views on this would be welcomed.

Regards
Anna Graves

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