

# Case study

## Acle – Land north of Norwich Road, Land Promotion

### Key details

**Client** – Norfolk County Council

**Date** – July 2005 to May 2016

**Site value** - £3.5m

### NPS services

Planning Consultancy



### Project overview

The NPS Planning Consultancy Team is commissioned by Norfolk County Council to periodically review their agricultural land holding (known as the County Farms Estate). The aim of this is to identify land which could be used to deliver growth in the County where District Councils identify a need in development plan documents.

The County Farms estates covers some 16,000 acres in Norfolk, much of which is in rural, unsustainable locations with little or no potential to deliver growth.

In the Norwich area, the strategic planning guidance (contained in the area Joint Core Strategy) identified potential for housing growth in a number of areas, including the town of Acle, located some 8 miles to the east of Norwich (in Broadland District).

In 2005, the Planning Consultancy Team advised the client of the potential long-term benefit of strategic tree planting to

the west of Acle to create a new landscape feature. This would filter views/screen land which could be promoted for future development. This was planted in 2006.

In December 2011, NPS approached Broadland District Council to highlight the development potential of the site to accommodate growth in Acle. At the early 'Call for Sites' stage, NPS prepared a Development Vision to detail the opportunity that the site presented, how the site could be developed to accommodate a suitable level of growth for the town and how this would deliver a sustainable extension to the town.

### Challenges / issues

In promoting the site for development, there was a need for NPS to demonstrate at an early stage that development of the site would:

- integrate successfully into the existing town
- use the challenging site levels to deliver a high quality layout
- provide safe access with strong links to the town centre, to show its accessibility
- overcome all infrastructure and servicing obstacles
- discharge surface water using a sustainable drainage system to control discharge rates from the site and flood risk on and off the site
- safeguard and record archaeological interest on the site
- provide a viable mixed tenure development including securing affordable housing at an acceptable level to meet need in the area.

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In addition, there were a number of other sites promoted to accommodate growth; therefore, it was essential that all the above matters were properly and fully justified to offer confidence to the Local Planning Authority that the site represented the optimum location to accommodate the majority of housing growth required in the town.

### Approach

The tree planting that created the new landscape feature at the edge of Acle was beneficial in promoting the site, as it was no longer seen in a context of unrestricted views over the countryside.

In the plan-making process, the approach involved establishing and maintaining strong relationships with Council Planning Officers, with regular

engagement, especially at key stages during the preparation of the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD). This ensured land promotion of the site in an effective manner.

The early establishment of such a relationship is critical to ensure that a site is promoted credibly and to allow for any issues that may arise to be addressed at an early stage to give confidence to the Local Planning Authority.

As part of the process, early consultation with key stakeholders was undertaken, including statutory consultees, such as Highways England, County Highway Authority, Environment Agency and Natural England. This was critical in formulating sustainable proposals. In addition, engagement with local residents and the Parish Council was

important to understand sensitivities and inform the development proposals.

The approach adopted offered confidence that the site could be delivered for housing to the Local Planning Authority. As a result, whilst the Site Allocation document was in preparation, to encourage the early delivery of housing, Broadland Council were supportive of NPS preparing an early planning application, in advance of the adoption of the Site Allocations DPD.

### Outcomes / added value

In July 2014, an outline planning application was submitted to Broadland District Council for 5.5 ha of land for housing and associated open space. Planning permission, linked to a Section 106 agreement, was granted in January 2015.

In May 2016, the Site Allocations DPD was adopted. Therefore, the permission was granted some 16 months in advance of the adoption of the Site Allocations DPD. On receipt of planning permission, the site value was estimated at £3.5m. The agricultural value of the land was £100k. A local development company is currently preparing a detailed planning application to deliver the 140 dwellings on the site.

Following the adoption of the Site Allocations DPD, Broadland Council is starting to review the need for future growth in the town. As part of this, NPS has started the process of promoting further land to the west of the initial land promoted to accommodate a further 100+ dwellings.

