

Report to Wells Town Council (October 7th. 2019)

1. The Local Plan consultation conducted by the North Norfolk District Council was concluded on June 19th.
2. The Town Council produced its response following the conducting of a survey to all Wells residents which was reported to the July meeting of the Council and published in the Quay magazine.
3. At the same time Holkham estate, who the major landowner around the town produced a submission, through Savills their agents which, among other things, questioned the assessment of the District Council that Wells should be allocated a further 80 houses.¹ instead arguing that a more appropriate figure would be 130 houses.
 - a) The Savills' submission proposed that 60 houses be built between Holkham Road and Mill Road, 20 dwellings on Market Lane and 50 dwellings on Warham Road. The Local Plan included a larger site on Warham Road site as 'not preferred' The allocation of part of this site would be a change to the Local Plan if this were accepted.
 - b) It also recommended that the Council should commission a detailed assessment of Tourist Accommodation and the interrelationship with residential properties.
 - c) The submission proposed that there should be allocations for additional 'high quality new tourist development', including caravan and campsites, and such sites would not be within the AONB and may involve the re-use of farm buildings.
 - d) The submission put forward the issue of types of housing tenure, among which wished to include the idea of 'Build to Rent' which Holkham is apparently in favour of. This would help to address the shortage of housing for permanent residence.
4. Members of the Steering Group met with Peter Mitchell and James Bracey of Holkham on August 16th last at which a number of issues were raised. (This was reported verbally at the last Council Meeting). This was an exploratory meeting at which no decisions were made.
 - a) First, it was noted that the percentage of second and holiday homes (according to NNDC) has risen since 2016 from 31% to 34% and that the Wells survey had revealed an overwhelming preference for affordable housing for local people.
 - b) It was agreed two major objectives were shared: the delivery of housing for local people and the availability of employment. Holkham is a major employer locally, employing 380 people in the summer and 260 in the winter. The issue of Maryland (which Holkham does not own) was raised.
 - c) The question of affordable homes was raised both as to what proportion of new housing might be genuinely affordable and who would deliver it. Holkham were looking at the provision of from 45 to 50 affordable houses within the lifetime of the plan which might include houses for rent or with shared equity. David Fennell (NP/HfW) contended that HfW could, through government grants scheme, deliver a higher number of affordable homes and could demonstrate that there was a steady demand for houses for local people which would absorb the total allocation by NNDC. The possibility of Holkham working with HfW in the delivery of new realistically affordable homes was left open.
 - d) The parties agreed to meet once the position of the Warham Road site, as proposed by Savills, is made clearer.
 - a) The Steering Group met on September 17th. and discussed the Savills proposals and the issues raised at the Holkham meeting in some detail. The group's view is that current proposals do nothing to halt the rise in the number of second and holiday homes. The NNDC figure of a possible 45 affordable homes over the plan period, if the Warham Road site is released, means yet a further increase in the number of new open market homes built (though further work is needed to establish the level of second homes among newly built properties.) , The result might , in fact, be a further increase in the percentage of second and holiday homes. The present figure of 34% is an increase from 31% in 2016 (and from 21% in 2006.).² Given the overall agreement that more affordable homes are needed,

¹ These figures are for new allocations only and do not include houses built since 2016 and those for which planning permission has been granted. Nor does it include so called windfall housing where someone decides to build on land they own. The total allocated housing for the period 2016 to 2036 is 190 houses.

² 35% of the proposed 80 houses would be 28. If the Savill's proposal were accepted for a further 50 houses 35% of that number is 17 = 45. If the 50 site were agreed to be exceptions housing, the 17 figure could be increased.

there is some distance between the desire as expressed in the survey (and the submission of the Town Council) on the one hand and the views of Holkham as to the way forward. As soon as the Group have further proposals for the town Council's approval they will bring them before the Council.

Roger Arguile 29.9.2019