CROWLAND PARISH COUNCIL

Design and Access Statement
Proposed Residential Development, Replacement Allotments and New Cemetery Including Woodland Burial Plots, Associated Infrastructure and New Accesses.
Land North and South of James Road, Crowland

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Robert Doughty Consultancy Limited has been instructed by Crowland Parish Council to prepare and submit an Outline Planning Application for the redevelopment of an existing allotment with residential development and the creation of replacement allotments, a new cemetery with woodland burial plots and associated infrastructure. There will also be two new access points serving the new development, which lies either side of James Road.

1.2. As part of the residential development, the Parish Council will retain ownership of approximately 10 single storey dwellings, and it is the intention that these will be rented out to residents of Crowland who wish to move from, and free-up, existing family accommodation, but still live within the town.

1.3. The redevelopment of the existing allotments, which have not been extended over the years and indeed have had to be subdivided to cater for demand, will facilitate the provision of a greater number of allotments. These will have toilets, storage facilities and car parking, all of which are lacking with the current location. In addition, a new cemetery to cater for future requirements will be formed, together with the opportunity to provide woodland burial plots amongst the two deciduous copses that has been planted by the Parish Council.

2. SITE LOCATION AND CHARACTER

2.1. The existing allotments lie on the fringe of the large area of open space that is owned and managed by the Parish Council. The overall area provides for a variety of formal and informal recreation for the population from football and cricket to dog walking and sitting. On the periphery of the open space, there are a number of ancillary buildings and beyond this there are the Crowland Abbey and housing development of varying ages that line the approach roads into the town proper.

2.2. Up until approximately 25 years ago, the open space was in agricultural use and the introduction of maintained recreation provision, the construction of James Road and latterly the new A16 has changed the character of the area in the immediate vicinity of the site markedly.

2.3. Crowland Abbey forms an important architectural and historic hub within the town, but much has changed around it since the original abbey was first constructed in the eighth century.

2.4. The construction of the new A16 has had the impact of subdividing more of the surrounding farmland to the east of Crowland away from the town itself. James Road was itself constructed as a by-pass in 1971/2 and this now forms a much quieter road on the periphery of the settlement. The recent construction of the A16 has resulted in the effective enclosure of an area of land bordered by James Road to the north west, the link road between the A16 and James Road to the north east, the A16 to the south east and the B1040 to the south west. There are two distinct areas of maturing woodland along the James Road frontage and it is to the southeast where the new allotments and cemetery will be located.

2.5. The allotment land lies adjacent to James Road and is accessed off Thorney Road. The present access is half owned by the Parish Council and half by South Holland District Council. There is also an unmade track close to the junction of Thorney Road and James Road. The access off Thorney Road also provides access to the scout hut and to the open space for maintenance purposes.

2.6. There are a number of mature trees to the north of the allotments around the scout hut and a deciduous hedgerow along the north eastern boundary, which divides the allotments from the more formal open space beyond. There are no sheds etc within the allotment area and there is the occasional tree on the south eastern and eastern boundary.

2.7. The allotments are well enclosed, form a discrete area in comparison to the formal open space and there are limited views of the Abbey some 450m to the north west.

2.8. The character of the proposed allotment and cemetery land is very different to that on the north side of James Road. Here the land is obviously agricultural in nature with little landscaping other than that planted by the Parish Council to commemorate the Millennium and the centenary of the formation of the Parish Council. These two roughly triangular shaped copses of deciduous trees are relatively immature and would benefit from some thinning. Beyond the two copses the

land is open and there are wide views of the surrounding farmland and the new A16 road.

2.9. A selection of photographs around the sites are set out below together with a site analysis of the area.



View towards site from James Road 1



View towards site from Thorney Road 2



View towards site from public open space 3



View of existing boundary hedgerows 4



View from James Road; existing allotments 5



View from B1040 towards proposed allotments/cemetery 6



View from A16 towards proposed allotments/cemetery 7



View within the spinney 8



View from allotments towards the Abbey 9



View from James Road towards the Abbey 10



View from B1040/A16 junction towards proposed allotments/cemetery 11





SITE ANALYSIS

KEY

- SITE BOUNDARY (Approximate)
- PREVAILING WINDS

Built Infrastructure

- EXISTING RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT
- EXISTING PUBLIC BUILDING
- LISTED BUILDINGS
- EXISTING ROADS
- CONSERVATION AREA
- SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

Landscape Infrastructure

- PUBLIC OPEN SPACE
- EXISTING TREES
- EXISTING HEDGES
- DITCHES/DRAINS
- EXISTING ALLOTMENTS
- 9m DRAINAGE EASEMENT

Access

- POTENTIAL SITE ACCESS POINTS
- EXISTING BUS STOP
- PUBLIC FOOTPATH

3. DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Use

3.1. It is proposed to redevelop the existing allotment land for dwellings and, having regard to the predominance of residential development in the immediate area together with ancillary residential uses such as formal and informal recreation uses, it is considered that this is the most appropriate form of development for the site.

3.2. There is a lack of a five year housing land supply in the south east Lincolnshire area and Crowland is classified as a sustainable settlement. The development of the site will, therefore, go towards much needed residential development in the town and district.

3.3. A replacement allotment area will enable more plots to be provided; the plots on the current site have traditionally been subdivided to cater for demand. The new plots will also have ancillary facilities for the gardeners including toilets and storage facilities, which they do not have at present.

3.4. At present there is approximately 5-10 years' capacity in the current graveyard at the Abbey. In the event that the Parish Council does not make suitable long term provision for burials in the parish, the role will in time be performed by the District Council and, in which case, there is no obligation for this to be done in the town itself. The Parish Council is, therefore, taking matters into its own hands and taking proactive steps to cater for the future needs of its community.

3.5. It is anticipated that an agreement with a suitable developer will result in the new allotments and cemetery being provided as part of the housing development. Equally, the Parish Council will receive approximately 10 residential units that it could rent out to those already living in the town who wish to down size from family accommodation but who still want to remain local.

3.6. The proposed land uses accord with the principles of South Holland Local Plan Policy SG3 in that they will continue to support the role of Crowland as an Area Centre as set out in Policy SG1. The development will also result in a sustainable form of development being on the edge of an Area Centre and where the nature of development will assist in meeting the needs of the settlement in both the short and long term.

3.7. The detailed policy considerations are set out in sections 4 and 5.

Layout

3.8. A masterplan of the site is submitted with this application and this indicates how the site could be developed with approximately 45 units. The plans also highlight a couple of options for the layout of the allotments.

3.9. The layout of the housing will be the subject of a subsequent Reserved Matters application in the event that Outline Planning Permission is granted. Notwithstanding the distance of some 450m from the site to the Abbey and the Crowland Conservation Area, the layout will need to respect this albeit distant relationship.

3.10. There is already a well-established line of semi-detached two storey dwellings along the Thorney Road frontage and the intention would be to ensure that the proposed dwellings on the application site present a softer edge to the open space beyond and, consequently, it is likely that single storey development would lie along the north eastern and north western boundaries.

3.11. It is anticipated that the proposed residential development will take advantage of the large amount of public open space within the settlement and not provide any open space within the proposal. The layout of the site will need to respond to the various constraints and opportunities present in the area such as the open views across the existing recreational area, the adjacent two storey development along Thorney Road and the longer distant views of the Abbey, together with the fringe of the Crowland Conservation Area. The indicative layout shows how the site could be developed with these issues in mind.

3.12. The impact of the development on the site and on the heritage assets is set out in the accompanying Heritage Statement and this concludes that there will be little impact on buildings and areas of acknowledged importance. In the event that it is concluded that there is less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm is outweighed by the wider benefit to the public of the proposal which addresses housing supply in the town and district, provides enhanced allotment facilities together with securing the long term burial requirements of the town.

3.13. The space around the Abbey has changed constantly over the centuries and this latest housing development results in little more than the evolution of the town and the requirements of the population.

3.14. To the south east of James Road, the character of the area is very different as set out earlier in this document. The development of the cemetery and the allotments is far simpler due in part to the nature of the development and the scale of the substantive parts of the proposal. The buildings that will support both uses will be located to take advantage of the existing copses together with a shared car parking area.

Scale

3.15. Typically, the proposed houses will measure 5m to the eaves and 7.5m to the ridge, and the single storey buildings will measure 2.5m to the eaves and 5m to the ridge. It is not proposed to advocate development any taller than two storeys adjacent to similar development, as this would not be in keeping with the surroundings. Again, the likely impact of this concept is set out in the accompanying Heritage Impact Statement.

Landscaping

3.16. The existing allotments benefit from landscaping both on the edge of the site and immediately adjacent to it. Other than for ornamental planting within individual plots, there is little need for additional structural planting.

3.17. The proposed burial ground and allotments will require structural landscaping to the site boundary and, in particular, the south eastern boundary adjacent to the new A16. Any new planting will need to take into account the internal drainage board's easements.

3.18. An ecological survey and tree report have been carried out in support of the application and these are set out in detail in separate documents. The ecological report identified that there are no protected species impacted upon by the development and that the semi-mature deciduous woodlands copses require management and some thinning, which can be carried out when the woodland burial plots are arranged. In general, the two copses will benefit from enhanced management.

Appearance

3.19. The details of the external appearance of the dwellings and ancillary buildings will be the subject of a subsequent Reserved Matters Application. The Parish Council is keen to work with a developer to ensure that the new development positively enhances the character of the area.

3.20. The site for the residential development is visible from James Road and there are wider views from within the adjacent open space area. The design and appearance will need to respect the character of the area, notwithstanding the local authority housing that fronts onto Thorney

Road. A suitable palette of materials will also need to be agreed to ensure that the development assimilates into the surroundings.

3.21. The buildings associated with the burial ground and allotments will be simple in design to reflect the edge of settlement location and character. The buildings will be single storey and the materials used in construction will ensure the design maintains a low profile.

3.22. The site opportunities and constraints are set out in the accompanying plan.



OPPORTUNITIES & CONSTRAINTS

Access

3.23. Access to the residential development will be via James Road and the Parish Council has approached the County Council as local highway authority to have the speed limit reduced from 50mph to 40mph. The volume of traffic on the road has dropped considerably following the construction of the A16. Discussions with the highway authority regarding the wider form and function of James Road in the aftermath of the construction of the new A16 will be ongoing.

3.24. There is good visibility in both directions and adequate space will be provided within the development for cars to enter, park and leave in forward gear. Roads will be constructed to adoptable standard to ensure refuse and emergency vehicles can circulate around the site.

3.25. The site is well connected with, and accessible on foot to, the rest of Crowland via an existing pedestrian access onto Thorney Road at the north western corner of the existing allotments. This will be incorporated into any subsequent development.

3.26. A second new access will be formed to serve both the burial ground and the allotments. Although a single point of access will be formed from James Road, once into the site the roadway will split to take into account the desire to separate those attending both sites. A small car park will serve both uses as parking requirements will fluctuate depending on demand.

3.27. Visibility splays at the junction with James Road are good and passing places will be provided within the site to avoid vehicles waiting on James Road.

3.28. The allotments and burial ground are well related to the town and both are within easy walking distance.

4. PLANNING POLICY

National Planning Policy

4.1. The National Planning Policy Framework (the "NPPF") sets out Central Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

4.2. Paragraphs 6 and 7 of the NPPF confirm the commitment to sustainable development based on three dimensions:

"*an economic role - contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;*

a social role - supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and

an environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy."

4.3. This is followed by a commitment to a presumption in favour of sustainable development and at paragraph 14, "For decision-taking this means:

- approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and
- where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
  - any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or
  - specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted."

4.4. Paragraph 49 confirms this to be the case by referring to housing applications and the presumption in favour of development where there is not a 5 year housing land supply.

4.5. Paragraphs 196 and 197 confirm that applications should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan and that in such cases Local Authorities should apply the presumption in favour of development.

The Development Plan

4.6. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that, "If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise."

4.7. The Development Plan for the purposes of this application is comprised of the saved policies of the South Holland Local Plan.

4.8. The National Planning Policy Framework and the evidence base for the emerging South East Lincolnshire Local Plan are material considerations in the determination of this application.

4.9. There is no emerging or adopted Neighbourhood Plan for Crowland.

South Holland Local Plan 2006 (Saved policies)

4.10. A number of the Saved Policies from the South Holland Local Plan, which was to cover the period to 2021, are pertinent to this proposal, specifically in relation to the level and distribution of growth.

4.11. Policies that have been taken into account are

SG1 – General Sustainable Development

SG3 – Settlement Hierarchy

SG7 – Energy Efficiency

HS6 – New Housing in Group Centres

HS8 – Affordable Housing

HS11 – Open Space in new Residential Developments

LT2 –Safeguarding Open Space for Sport, Leisure and Recreation

South East Lincolnshire Local Plan

4.12. The NPPF (paragraph 216) is clear that increasing weight should be given to draft policies as they progress through the different stages of production. The South East Lincolnshire Authorities have published an issues and options consultation on a draft Core Strategy in 2013, but have now resolved to prepare a single Local Plan, incorporating the Core Strategy and site allocations, which were to be subject to a separate Development Plan Document. As such, no policies have been

drafted. The Authorities have been preparing an evidence base to support the plan, pertinent in which are the Strategic Housing Market Assessments, which are the most recent assessment of housing needs in the area. The Peterborough Sub Regional Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) was updated and published in July 2014.

Housing Targets

4.13. The Local Plan of 2006 sets an annual target of 380 houses per annum for the 10 years to 2011 and 760 a year for the period 2011 to 2021 (Over the twenty years this averages at about 570 houses). This target, however, was not saved in 2009, due to divergence from the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) targets, which have also subsequently been revoked. The RSS, although based on increasing population projections, identified the need to review housing targets in the South Holland District to reflect the identified flood risk.

4.14. With the Local Plan targets being withdrawn and the RSS revocation, there is no agreed housing target for the South Holland area. Although the Core Strategy Issues and Options consultation published by the South East Lincolnshire Authorities in 2013 favoured a target of 470 homes a year for South Holland, based on the reduced National Housing and Population protections and the implications of the risk of flood in the area, the most recent review of the housing land supply monitored the figures against a target of 558. This figure, which was drawn from the then emerging, but now published, Peterborough Sub-Regional SHMA is more akin to the historic target levels for the District.

4.15. For Crowland, the Issues and Options paper suggested that the settlement is a sustainable location in South Holland and serves a role as a service centre for the surrounding area.

4.16. In order to support the role of Crowland and, as part of the wider strategy to promote development in a range of smaller communities lying outside the flood risk "ROY" zones, the Issues paper favoured a target of 300 dwellings in Crowland over the plan period. This was also against the context of the overall district housing target of 460 new dwellings per annum.

4.17. Since that time the Peterborough SHMA has been published, which would indicate that the District wide housing target will increase. The

South East Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee has also decided, as part of its decision to merge the Core Strategy and Allocations Development Plan Documents, to roll the plan period forward to 2036. This adds five years to the period anticipated by the Core Strategy Issues and Options paper.

4.18. It can be concluded, therefore, that the target for new homes in Crowland in the next iteration of the Local Plan will be higher than 300, to take account of the increased plan period and the higher housing target figures emerging from the SHMA. As Crowland lies outside the ROY zones, it may also be expected that the proportion of the overall housing targets may need to be directed to settlements such as Crowland.

4.19. The NPPF at paragraph 14 states that sustainable development means that Local Plans should plan for housing to meet the objectively assessed need for new homes. For decision makers this also means that consent should be granted for development where the plan is out of date.

Housing – the five year supply

4.20. From the Five Year Housing Land Supply Statement prepared by the Joint Planning Committee in 2013, there is clearly a shortfall against the required five year supply of housing land. The 2013 document stated that there was, in the Council's view, a 2.9 year supply of housing land at that time. As the Council had included a 20% buffer in the derivation of the five year target, there is a low build rate of new homes. This shortfall will over time contribute to a higher target and, until supply increases, further increase between the housing supply figures and the five year targets.

4.21. The local authority is preparing a Local Plan to cover South Holland and Boston, and it can be anticipated that this will provide the overall strategy to support housing provision in the area, and address any issues with the five year supply of housing. Until that time, however, sites such as this, which are capable of being developed within a five year period, seek to add to the short term supply of housing without undermining the strategic options that, rightly, should be addressed through the Local Plan process.

Distribution of Growth – the suitability of Crowland

4.22. The NPPF is clear that, when meeting the "Objectively Assessed Need", proposals should be sustainable in terms of social, environmental and economic criteria.

4.23. Crowland has long been identified as one of South Holland's main service centres, after the larger towns of Spalding and Holbeach. Furthermore the Authorities are seeking to direct development to those areas of lesser risk of flooding identified by the Coastal Study and the Strategic Flood Risk Assessments. Crowland is one such area. The settlement, therefore, not only has a history as a major service centre, and, therefore, a sustainable location for new growth as reflected by the growth targets discussed in the recent Core Strategy Issues and Options paper, but is also one of the preferred locations for growth in terms of flood risk.

Site Suitability

4.24. The site lies outside the defined settlement curtilage of Crowland as shown on the 2006 Local Plan. The housing proposal is in close proximity to the services provided within the town, including the Health Centre and shops in the settlement and the employment area on Harvester Way.

4.25. The proposed allotments, cemetery and woodland burial areas lie between James Road and the route of the A16, but will similarly be accessible to the people of Crowland.

4.26. The housing site would be built on the site of the existing allotments, which are part of a wider area of open space, owned and managed by the applicant for the people of Crowland. The replacement allotments, are adjacent to the current facility and are, therefore, readily accessible to local people. The Cemetery will be a new facility, adding to the overall provision of open space in the area, lying, as it does, outside the protected open space identified in the 2006 Local Plan.

4.27. The development proposal is, therefore, in accordance with Policy LT2, which seeks to protect open space, because the allotments that would be lost to building would be replaced and improved as part of an expansion of open space provision in the area, on land owned by the applicant, who, as the Parish Council, manage open spaces in the area.

5. OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

5.1. A Flood Risk Assessment has been produced in support of the application and this concludes that the site is safe from flooding from tidal and fluvial events following the impact of climate change.

6. STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

6.1. The applicant has consulted with and informed Parishioners throughout the development of these proposals. Updates have been published periodically in the Crowland Town Magazine, a monthly publication delivered free to every household in the town. Additionally, two open exhibitions staffed by representatives of the applicant have been held, where visitors have been invited to give their opinions on the proposals, as well having the opportunity to review the proposals in considerable detail and request further information if required. These events were advertised in the Crowland Town Magazine, and on flyers that were also delivered to every household. Notices were posted on two notice boards in the town.

6.2. The first exhibition was held in August 2013, when the reasons behind the proposals were explained together with potential development opportunities that the applicant was exploring. Approximately 50 Parishioners attended, and the overwhelming majority supported the proposals. The applicant took this as a mandate to develop the proposals further.

6.3. The second exhibition was held in February 2015, by which time the draft planning application had been developed. The details of the application was available for public scrutiny, together with a repeat explanation of the reasons for and benefits of the proposals. Approximately 100 Parishioners attended. Of those who expressed an opinion, 100% understood the reasons for pursuing the application at this time, and 94% supported these proposals.

6.4. Additionally, in February 2015 a private briefing was given to the local MP, who supported the proposal, praising the Parish Council for its initiative.

6.5. Prior to the applicant initiating these proposals, the Crowland Community and Parish Plan published in 2012 by a community group independent of, though supported by, the applicant, identified a high

proportion of respondents desiring development in the town that is unlikely to be provided by private or public bodies without the initiatives currently being proposed by the applicant.

7. CONCLUSIONS

7.1. South Holland District has an identified 5 year housing land supply shortage and, accordingly, sustainable development should be approved in accordance with paragraph 49 of the NPPF.

7.2. Crowland is identified as an Area Centre in the adopted South Holland Local Plan and also scored highly in the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal 2013.

7.3. The proposal will assist in meeting the shortfall in housing land and will also result in a form of development that has been specifically identified by the applicant following consultation with its Parishioners.

7.4. Specialist reports have been prepared that address all the material considerations likely to arise during the consideration of the proposal and there are no adverse impacts identified in the reports that are either outweighed by the wider community benefits of the development, or can be mitigated by suitable planning conditions.

7.5. The proposal accords with the provisions of the development plan and up to date guidance as set out in the NPPF.