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Inspector's Request for Background Information

RAF Coltishall

Recognising the particular issues relating to the future use of the former RAF Coltishall asset, the Inspector hearing the Core Strategy Examination has asked the District Council to comment specifically on two issues relating to the Coltishall site. These questions, together with the Council's responses, are detailed below:-

i. A brief history of events leading to the present situation at Coltishall (say 1 or 2 pages maximum) and any publicly available position statements;

- i.1 The Government announced in the summer of 2004 that the RAF intended to withdraw operations from the RAF Coltishall facility by the end of 2006 when the Jaguar aircraft were to be decommissioned. In response, a Task Force of representatives comprising local MPs, members and officers from local authorities, the East of England Development Agency, Job Centre Plus, Business Link, the RAF, Defence Estates and local parish councils was established to assess the impact of the closure upon the local economy and communities and explore options for the future re-use / redevelopment of the asset.
- i.2 During the period November 2004 through until September 2005, much of the focus of the Task Force was on trying to quantify the impact of the closure on the local economy. This was estimated to be some £20million per annum through loss of local spending and contracts, the number of civilian jobs which would impact directly on the local area and the indirect impact of the closure on local service businesses.
- i.3 In August 2005, the Government confirmed that there would be no successive military use for the base and that the facility would therefore be advertised for disposal by Defence Estates following draw-down of the facility – anticipated to be in November 2006, six months after all flying operations at the base were to cease.
- i.4 Representatives of the local authorities therefore met with consultants GVA Grimley who had been appointed by Defence Estates to prepare a Baseline Report to support the disposal of the asset to discuss the potential of the site to accommodate future development proposals. These meetings concentrated on the planning policy context of the site and significantly highway infrastructure issues – as the RAF Coltishall site is not considered to be well served by strategic highway links (many of the routes serving the base experience capacity constraints) particularly to the south and west where roads serving the site cross the River Bure.
- i.5 Independently of the work with GVA Grimley, the local authorities produced a long list of possible future uses for the site and presented these to the Task Force in February 2006. Subsequently, the local authorities prepared a Position Paper, which was approved by North Norfolk District Council's Cabinet at its meeting of the 11th September 2006, which was made

available to Drivers Jonas to support the marketing of the site from November 2006. A copy of the local authority Position Paper is attached (Appendix A). At this time Defence Estates had intended to invite bids for the asset by mid January 2007 and achieve a sale in principle by the end of the 2006/07 financial year.

- i.6 Three weeks into the marketing process, the Immigration and Nationality Directorate of the Home Office expressed interest in acquiring the asset for use as a Detention Centre for Asylum Seekers whose applications for leave to remain had been unsuccessful and were therefore awaiting deportation. Because of this interest Defence Estates withdrew the asset from sale. Subsequently it is understood, but has not been officially confirmed to the District Council, that ownership of the asset has transferred from the Ministry of Defence to the Home Office. Discussions did take place between the authority and the Home Office during December 2006 about planning issues relating to any proposal to establish an Asylum Seekers Detention Centre at the Coltishall site, which in policy terms appeared to accord with statements made within the local authority Position Paper. No further discussions have been held with the authority about such a proposal during 2007.
- i.7 The Council has, through the preparation of the Core Strategy, considered the potential of the former RAF Coltishall site to accommodate future development, and decided (based upon the strategic infrastructure constraints – particularly highways), that this location was not appropriate for future large scale development. The Core Strategy therefore includes a policy EC4 which supports the principle of the re-use of existing buildings within the technical area of the site for business related purposes.

ii. The Council's formal view on how the recently mooted Eco town proposal for up to 10,000 homes and 2,000 jobs would relate to the Core Strategy having regard to the emerging RSS and the Government's recently published Housing Green Paper which floated the idea of 5 Eco Towns. The recent report to Cabinet and the formal minute of meeting could form the basis of this, along with any extra clarification Officers may wish to draw to my attention.

- ii.1 As detailed above, the District Council gave consideration to the potential of the former RAF Coltishall site to accommodate future residential and employment development during the preparation of the Core Strategy document. At that stage, the District Council did not support further large scale development at that location given the East of England Plan, proposed settlement hierarchy supporting existing centres in the district, the lack of infrastructure serving the site, its relatively remote location poorly served by public transport and the poor accessibility of the site to and from Norwich and main highway routes eg the A140.
- ii.2 Since submission of the Core Strategy, the Government has published its Housing Green Paper "Homes for the future: more affordable, more sustainable" in which the Government invites bids for the development of five eco-towns (increased to ten in a party conference speech by Gordon Brown PM). The Government guidance on eco-town proposals states that such proposals would provide new homes **additional** to those already proposed in existing or draft plans up to 2016. The guidance also states that eco-town proposals would be new proposals which are not currently identified within Regional Spatial Strategy and would need to be taken forward through local and regional planning processes using mini RSS reviews and if necessary the use of New Town powers.
- ii.3 The District Council has indicated 'in principle' support for an eco town at RAF Coltishall, but has not submitted proposals in its own right nor indicated support for any particular proposal. Any proposal for an eco-town at the former RAF Coltishall site would therefore need separate

consideration at a regional level through a review of the RSS and possibly through the preparation of an Area Action Plan. It is not intended that this issue should be addressed through the programmed public examination of the North Norfolk Core Strategy. The Cabinet resolution reads as follows:

That if the Cabinet is minded to indicate its support to DCLG of the principle of an eco-town development at the former RAF Coltishall site, it does so on the understanding that this support is subject to full and proper evaluation of the scheme in the context of the provision of sustainable development and the provision of the necessary investment being made in strategic transport and community infrastructure being provided. Otherwise the Council restates the policy position it has adopted with respect to the Coltishall site to date. I.e. That the site is not considered appropriate for further development given the prevailing settlement hierarchy of the district, the lack of infrastructure serving the site and the poor transport accessibility of the site to/from Norwich and principal highway routes.

- ii.4 The Council has received representations from the Coltishall Group plc, advised by Barton Willmore, in respect of the Submission Core strategy stating that the site should be identified as a location for future residential and employment growth and the Council understands that these matters will be considered by the Inspector on Day 12 of the Examination Programme (16th January 2008).
- ii.5 This same group has recently made a public statement in local media that it wishes to submit a bid in response to the Government's statement encouraging eco-towns by the end of October. This matter was discussed by the District Council's Cabinet at its meeting of the 8th October – a copy of the Cabinet report and decision is attached (Appendix B).

Appendix A

RAF Coltishall – Councils Position Paper

RAF COLTISHALL POSITION PAPER

This position paper has been prepared and agreed by Broadland District Council and North Norfolk District Council as local planning authorities for the areas covering the RAF Coltishall base and Norfolk County Council as Highway Authority.

It is intended to provide parties expressing interest in acquiring the RAF Coltishall site being marketed for disposal by Defence Estates with general information about the planning policy context of the site, the type and scale of development which the local planning authority might be prepared to accept in principle and contact details for local authority officers and parish councils.

The information provided in the document is intended for guidance purposes only and is without prejudice to any decision taken by the local planning authority in respect of proposals which may subsequently be submitted in respect of the site.

This paper is a public document, issued on 2nd November 2006.

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RAF Coltishall site

Position Paper as prepared by local authority partners – Broadland District Council, North Norfolk District Council and Norfolk County Council

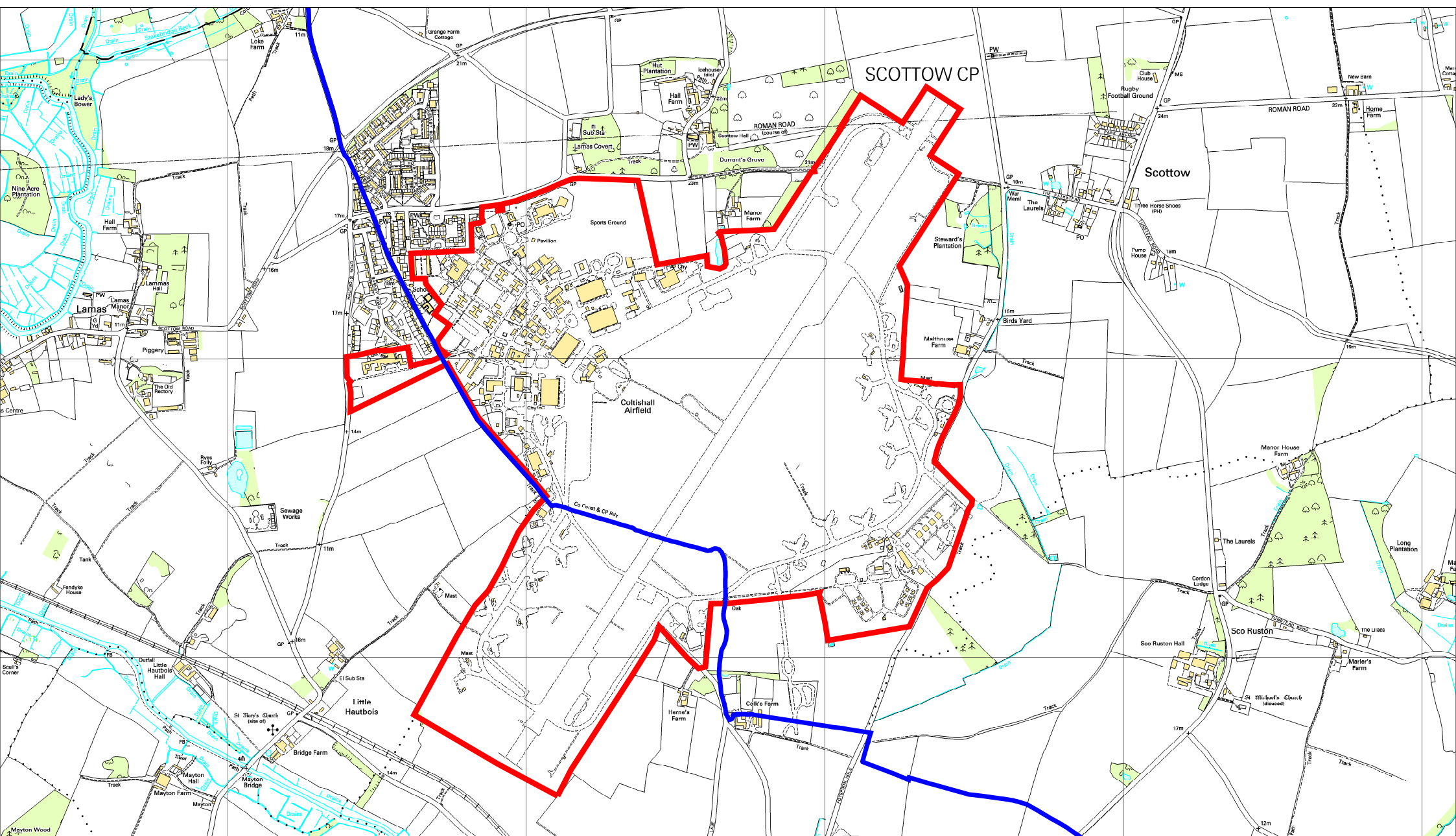
1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 In August 2005, twelve months after the Ministry of Defence (MoD) announced that operations at the RAF Coltishall air base would cease at December 2006, the Government formally confirmed that there would be no successive military use for the base and that it would therefore be advertised for disposal by Defence Estates.
- 1.2 The disposal of the RAF Coltishall asset raises a number of significant planning policy issues for the relevant local authorities – namely the Broadland and North Norfolk Districts as the local planning authorities and Norfolk County Council as highway authority. These relate to the context of the existing and emerging planning policy frameworks for the area and the way in which the local authorities will need to respond to enquiries from prospective purchasers of the facility about the potential future use / redevelopment of the asset over the coming months.
- 1.3 This paper is intended to support the disposal of the Coltishall asset by Defence Estates by stating the position of the local authorities in relation to the future use / redevelopment of the asset, which it is hoped will be helpful to prospective purchasers as an initial context setting / point of reference tool and to the local community. The Position Paper should be read in conjunction with the Baseline Report for the RAF Coltishall site prepared by Defence Estates, which provides a single source of relevant and detailed information pertaining to the site, and identifies development opportunities and constraints.
- 1.4 The Position Paper has been agreed with Broadland District Council and endorsed by North Norfolk District Council's Cabinet on 11th September 2006. The contents of the Paper as they relate to highways issues have been approved by Officers of Norfolk County Council's Planning and Transportation Department under delegated powers. The Paper therefore represents the Councils' current policy position with respect to the RAF Coltishall site. The content of the paper is not however intended to convey support for specific proposals and is without prejudice to decisions made by either local planning authority (or the highway authority) in respect of specific proposals or in the formulation of their respective Local Development Frameworks.

- 1.5 Local community and business representatives (including Parish Councils) were briefed on the issues associated with the disposal of RAF Coltishall on Friday 8th September 2006.

2.0 Historic Overview and Description of Site and Surroundings

- 2.1 A site plan of RAF Coltishall is attached as Figure 1. The draw-down of operations at the RAF Coltishall base was announced by the MoD in mid 2004; commencing in Spring 2005 and final closure of the base planned for December 2006. In August 2005 the Government confirmed that there was no successive military use for the base and Defence Estates would therefore be tasked with arranging the disposal of the asset. It has since been confirmed that whilst most major operations will cease at the base by December 2006, continued MoD use will be made of the Jaguar flight simulator for training purposes until October 2007. Defence Estates has however advised that it is proposing to advertise the asset for disposal from October 2006, with the aim of achieving the sale of the site before April 2007.
- 2.2 RAF Coltishall was established as a bomber station, but pressed into use as a fighter station in May 1940 and has runways and hangar buildings associated with establishments built to support the Second World War effort. The base has remained as an operational facility in the period following the War. Except for a brief period as a Polish Air Force station, it has been retained as a fighter station. During the 1970s and 1980s, in addition to accommodating Jaguar squadrons, the base also served as an Air Sea Rescue base. It served as the lead Jaguar station from 1974 until April 2006, following the announcement that the base would be closed.
- 2.3 The RAF Coltishall site lies approximately 20 kilometres north of Norwich. It is situated 5 kilometres north of the village Coltishall, from which the base takes its name. The nearest settlements of any significant size to the base are Aylsham (population of some 5,600) approximately 9 kilometres to the north-west of the base and North Walsham (population of some 12,000) approximately 9 kilometres to the north-east. Both of these towns have historically had a relationship with the base in terms of providing accommodation for service families and in the provision of goods and services to service personnel and their families.
- 2.4 The base straddles the district council boundary between the Broadland and North Norfolk Districts as shown on Figure 2 – with the southern quarter of the main airfield, the officers mess and area of officers housing being located in the Broadland District and the northern three-quarters of the airfield, including most of the main technical site area of hangars, workshops, offices, single airmens accommodation blocks and areas of married airmens housing being in the North Norfolk District.
- 2.5 Those parts of the base in the Broadland District lie within the Mid Norfolk Parliamentary Constituency, the Aylsham and Wroxham Electoral Divisions of Norfolk County Council, the Buxton and Coltishall wards of Broadland District Council and the parishes of Buxton with Lamas and Coltishall; whilst those parts in the North Norfolk District lie within the North Norfolk Parliamentary Constituency; form part of the Hoveton and Stalham Electoral Division of Norfolk County Council, the Scottow ward of North Norfolk District Council and the parish of Scottow.
- 2.6 The RAF Coltishall site occupies a remote rural location and is accessed from a network of minor roads. The main access to the site is via the C245 to the B1150 at Scottow, which



- Key
- LPA administrative boundary
 - Main Site Disposal Area

Figure 2:
Plan showing Main Site Disposal Area and
LPA Boundaries

N NOT TO SCALE

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is a main distributor road that links Norwich to the south and North Walsham to the north. The B1150 through the village of Coltishall (to the south of the base) is narrow and lengths are subject to traffic management measures and a 20 mph speed limit. South of Coltishall village is a narrow bridge over the River Bure. The bridge is wide enough for two cars to pass with care, but not larger vehicles.

2.7 The base, including the areas of housing, comprises 285 hectares. The land which will be sold by Defence Estates (ie the secure airfield and its associated technical / administrative areas) amounts to circa 261 hectares. The base has a single runway which runs south-west to north-east (length - 2525 metres), extensive perimeter taxiways and a wide range of buildings / structures within the boundaries of the site. Most of the residential, community and technical buildings are concentrated in the north-west corner of the site area; although a large number of secure bunker type structures, served by internal roads, exist along the eastern boundary of the site. The majority of permanent buildings on the site are believed to date from the periods 1937 to 1940 and 1970 to 1989.

2.8 The existing land use zones as detailed within the Baseline Report (Table 2.1) are summarised below and shown visually on Figure 3:-

Zone No. <i>(also refer to Figure 3)</i>	Zone Name	Description <i>(and most closely related Use Class – refer to paragraph 2.11 of Baseline Report for further clarification on site’s lawful use)</i>	Approximate Area
1	Residential Estate	Beyond the station’s secure boundary to the north-west lies an area of rented MoD housing and ancillary community/welfare facilities. The housing density of Zone 1 is between 15 and 20 dwellings per hectare net.	25ha (9%)
2	Single Living Accommodation (SLA) and Ancillary Facilities	To the south-east of Zone 1 lies an area predominantly consisting of SLA (Officers, Sergeants and Junior Ranks) together with ancillary facilities (e.g. guardroom, dining and sports facilities). The Officers Mess and SLA is sited outside of the site’s secure boundary to the south of the Officers’ family quarters. This is the first Zone encountered when entering the base. The SLA buildings are military barracks and would fall within Use Class C2A : “Secure Residential Institutions” if they comprised a separate planning unit.	18ha (6%)
3	Recreation/ Amenity Space	Situated to the east of Zone 2 is an area used for formal recreation/sports purposes. This includes three full size sports pitches (football/rugby) as well as a large car park.	7ha (2%)
4	Technical/ Administrative	To the south of Zones 2 and 3 lies the base’s technical area which encompasses offices, workshops and storage facilities (e.g. hangars). The buildings within this Zone would most logically be considered to fall within Use Classes B1, B2 and B8 .	32ha (11%)
5	Airfield Runway	To the south-east of Zone 4 lies the airfield’s runway, which is aligned in a south-west to north-east direction. This Zone incorporates taxiways and aircraft external storage areas (protected by “Blast Walls”) as well as some ancillary buildings such as the control tower. No Use Class can be applied to a military airfield and it would therefore be considered sui generis .	175ha (62%)
6	Secure	To the south-east of the runway are situated a series	28ha

Zone No. (also refer to Figure 3)	Zone Name	Description (and most closely related Use Class – refer to paragraph 2.11 of Baseline Report for further clarification on site's lawful use)	Approximate Area
	Storage	of secure storage compounds (with security fencing and bunding). The compounds would be most appropriately classed as B8 .	(10%)

2.9 A table summarising the use of existing floorspace at RAF Coltishall is provided below:-

Use	Appropriate Use Class	Number of Buildings	Floorspace (% of total)	Potential Alternative Uses
Residential Accommodation	C2A/C3	22	30,545m ² (30%)	C2, C3 or B Uses
Office	B1	30	13,967m ² (10%)	B Uses
Industrial	B2	17	8,443m ² (11%)	B Uses
Storage	B8	92	37,498m ² (36%)	B2 or B8
Community Facilities	A1, D or <i>Sui Generis</i>	22	5,695m ² (6%)	B or D Uses
Temporary	B1/B8	71	3,759m ² (4%)	N/A
Plant and Ancillary Facilities	<i>Sui Generis</i>	57	2,949m ² (3%)	N/A
Total		311	102,856m² (100%)	

Footnote:- The Single Living Accommodation and messes would fall within Use Class C2A if they fell within their own planning unit; whereas the MoD owned housing / flats (comprising two dwellings and four blocks of flats) in the residential estate the majority of which is owned by Annington Homes fall within Use Class C3

2.10 A Table summarising key types of floorspace at RAF Coltishall considered suitable for re-use as detailed within the Baseline Report (Table 5.4) is provided below:-

Use	Appropriate Use Class	Number of Buildings	Area	% (in floorspace terms)
Residential Accommodation	C2A / C3	22	33,458m ²	38%
Office	B1	23	8,385m ²	10%
Industrial	B2	16	8,155m ²	9%
Storage	B8	63	33,720m ²	38%
Community Facilities	A1, D or <i>Sui generis</i>	12	4,853m ²	5%
Total		136	88,571m²	100%

Footnote:- The Single Living Accommodation and messes would fall within Use Class C2A if they fell within their own planning unit; whereas the MoD owned housing / flats (comprising two dwellings and four blocks of flats) in the residential estate the majority of which is owned by Annington Homes fall within Use Class C3

- 2.11 The main areas of service housing together with the Coltishall Airfield school, a shop, church, family centre and officers mess, (which lie outside of the security fencing surrounding the base) are located to the north-west of the main Technical and Administrative area of the base, which itself is to the north-west of the main airfield. The Technical and Administrative Area comprises a number of two and three storey single person accommodation blocks, mess blocks, parade ground, various office, guardroom and workshop buildings of varying sizes and means of construction and four large hangar buildings surrounded by extensive concrete apron areas.
- 2.12 The housing stock on the RAF Coltishall site is owned by Annington Property Limited which leases the properties back to the MoD for occupation by service families. In response to the announcement made by the MoD that there would be no military use for the RAF Coltishall base beyond December 2006, Annington Homes issued a Press Statement, which confirmed that once use of the housing by service personnel and their families ceased, it would be Annington's intention to undertake refurbishment of the properties, infrastructure and amenity areas / areas of public open space, before offering the houses for sale on the open market. It is understood that the first of the 377 homes on the base will be available for market sale in early 2007.
- 2.13 The disposal of the residential estate by Annington Homes will be undertaken separately to the disposal of the main airbase asset by Defence Estates. The remainder of this Paper considers issues relating to the disposal of the airbase asset (ie the Technical site Area and airfield) only and therefore all further references to RAF Coltishall will be to the asset being advertised for disposal by Defence Estates.

3.0 Position of Defence Estates

- 3.1 In the period since 21st July 2004 when the Government first announced that the Jaguar squadrons would cease flying from the RAF Coltishall site in December 2006, the local authorities and Defence Estates have worked together through the Coltishall Task Force group of local stakeholders to consider a wide range of issues arising from the closure of the base including its future use / redevelopment.
- 3.2 Through meetings of the Task Force, Defence Estates has provided partners with a range of information about the base in the form of a Baseline Report on the asset. The Baseline Report has been endorsed by the Cabinets / Committees of Broadland and North Norfolk District Councils, as well as by Transport Officers of Norfolk County Council (through delegated powers). This Report will be made available to prospective purchasers and has informed the local authorities' consideration of the future re-use / redevelopment of the asset.
- 3.3 Representatives of Defence Estates and their planning consultants, GVA Grimley, have met with representatives of the local authorities on a number of occasions since September 2005 to discuss the current planning policy context relating to the RAF Coltishall site and explore potential future uses for the site. The planning policy context relating to the site as agreed by the local authorities and GVA Grimleys is detailed in the Baseline Report and summarised further below. Potential future land uses have been presented for consideration to the Task Force, further details of which are provided at Section 5 below.

4.0 Position of the Relevant Local Authorities

- 4.1 The two District Councils recognise that Defence Estates has a duty under Treasury Rules to dispose of the public asset on behalf of the MoD at the best consideration reasonably obtainable. However, the local planning authorities believe that prospective bidders should be mindful in the submission of any bids of the prevailing planning policy framework pertaining to the site. As local planning authorities the District Councils have statutory responsibilities in terms of environmental protection, planning policy and enforcement, and also a duty to their local communities in considering the wide range of issues relating to the future use and redevelopment of RAF Coltishall. The Councils therefore believe it is important to formally consider and, through the Task Force, adopt an initial position with respect to the disposal of the RAF Coltishall asset and communicate this position to prospective purchasers and the local community.
- 4.2 A starting point for the Councils in considering the future use / redevelopment potential of the Coltishall site is to consider the current planning policy context of the site in relation to national planning policy guidance and Development Plan policies. Under the current Development Plan comprising draft RSS14, the adopted Norfolk County Structure Plan (1999), the Broadland (2006) and North Norfolk (1998) Local Plans, the Coltishall site falls within the Countryside where new development is generally resisted (which is consistent with Planning Policy Statement 7). These broad policies of restraint will continue to apply in remote rural areas of the East of England under the new Regional Spatial Strategy and Local Development Frameworks where new land allocations for both residential and employment development will be concentrated on the existing towns and urban areas.
- 4.3 The two District Councils and Norfolk County Council in its role as highway authority believe that the rural location of and poor highway access to the RAF Coltishall site potentially present some constraints on the re-use / redevelopment of the base. It is accepted that during its operation the base generated traffic on the local road network, as detailed at Chapter 7 of the Baseline Report. However, the County Council will require any proposals for the re-use / redevelopment of the Coltishall asset to include a detailed Transport Assessment in order that consideration can be given to the impact of any new use within and beyond the immediate locality of the base. Chapter 7 of the Baseline Report summarises relevant transportation issues.
- 4.4 The adopted North Norfolk Local Plan identifies the areas of housing on the RAF Coltishall site as a “Selected Small Village” settlement (defined as “Coltishall Airbase”). In this respect, North Norfolk District Council accepts the established residential status of the areas of airmens married quarters housing on the base. In addition, in Selected Small Villages small-scale infill development of individual dwellings or small groups (up to 4 dwellings) which enhance the character of the settlement may be permitted. Officers of Broadland District Council have similarly confirmed that whilst the area of housing within its administrative area lies outside of any defined settlement boundary, they accept the continuing residential use of these properties (without the need for change of use applications).
- 4.5 The remainder of the base, including the area occupied by the technical and administrative buildings, does not have any special policy status or designation within the adopted Broadland or North Norfolk Local Plans. It therefore falls within the Countryside policy area. The North Norfolk Local Plan does however have a policy in respect of the re-use of redundant airfield sites – Policy 75: Former Military Airfields; although this does not specifically make reference to the RAF Coltishall site. Further consideration of these policies is provided below.

- 4.6 Under North Norfolk Local Plan Policy 5: The Countryside, new development is generally resisted, although the following proposals are acceptable in principle:-
- “(d) re-use and adaptation of buildings;”
 - “(i) new-build employment generating proposals where there are particular environmental or operational reasons for the development not being located in existing or proposed General or Village Employment Areas and which cannot be suitably accommodated within existing buildings”; and
 - “(m) recreation and tourism uses”
- subject to consideration of other policies such as Policy 29: The Re-Use and Adaptation of Buildings in the Countryside.
- 4.7 Policy 5 of the North Norfolk Local Plan is broadly consistent with the advice in Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (2004) which outlines that the Government is supportive to the re-use and replacement of appropriately located and suitably constructed existing buildings in the countryside, particularly for economic development purposes (paragraphs 17 and 19). Policy 29 of the Local Plan sets out detailed criteria for the re-use and adaptation of buildings in the countryside. In accordance with Policies 5 and 29 and the guidance in PPS7, the District Council will only consider proposals for replacement buildings in the Countryside where they are suitably located, of permanent design and construction and the proposed use is for economic development purposes. The replacement of buildings would generally be supported where this would result in a more acceptable and sustainable development than might be achieved through conversion (eg brings about environmental improvements).
- 4.8 Whilst the adopted North Norfolk Local Plan does not make specific policy reference to RAF Coltishall, the Plan does include the following text with reference to redundant airfield sites elsewhere in the district.
- Para 9.21 - “Redundant buildings on the former airfields at , can offer limited opportunities for employment development without detriment to the appearance or character of the rural area. The use of the hangars for bulk storage is particularly appropriate. The buildings represent under-utilised accommodation and their use for employment purposes would provide additional employment opportunities in rural areas that are otherwise sensitive to new development.”
 - Policy 75: Former Military Airfields – “The Council will encourage the use of existing buildings for employment generating purposes on the former military airfields at Development proposals for these buildings will be considered in accordance with Policy 29: The Reuse and Adaptation of Buildings in the Countryside and.....”
- 4.9 In considering the future use / redevelopment potential of a similar redundant military airfield site (RAF West Raynham) North Norfolk District Council sought a legal opinion as to the planning status of the site and of the need for future owners / users of the site to obtain planning permission for their proposed use. The Council asked for such advice in light of recent changes to planning legislation where the previous immunity of Crown land from planning control was removed by Section 79(1) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. This legislation inserted a new Section 292A in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 from the 6th August 2004, whereby the 1990 Act “binds the Crown” subject to certain express provision made by the newly amended Part 13 of the 1990 Act.

- 4.10 In the case of West Raynham, the District Council was advised that the historical use of the site was as a military airfield and that this use technically ceased when RAF (defence) operations at the base ceased. If such advice applies in respect of the RAF Coltishall site, the District Council would be of the view that, except for the areas of housing, any proposals for the remaining area of the site would require formal planning consent to be obtained for any new / alternative uses.
- 4.11 North Norfolk District Council has commenced preparation of a new Local Development Framework for the District and is undertaking "Preferred Options" consultation on Core Strategy and Site Specific Proposals documents during the period 25th September – 6th November 2006. The Core Strategy Preferred Options consultation document includes Policy Approach E3 – Redundant Defence Establishments, which includes reference to the RAF Coltishall site. This policy approach has not yet been the subject of any formal consultation or examination and could therefore be revised prior to adoption. However, the draft policy approach is currently worded as follows:-

EC3 - Redundant defence establishments

Preferred approach

Policies will set out a strategy for governing decisions on the general scale and type of new development on the following part or wholly redundant defence establishments, which may be subject to future development briefs:

- *Coltishall Airbase*
- *Sculthorpe Airbase (part)*
- *West Raynham Airbase*
- *Neatishead Radar base, (part)*

Development proposals at these sites will be considered against the following criteria:

- *the proposal is in accordance with the Council's preferred approach to the development in the Countryside;*
- *the proposal excludes permanent residential use (except for exception sites for affordable housing);*
- *no increase in gross floor space above that represented by existing permanent buildings will be permitted;*
- *the proposal is in accordance with all other policies in the Core Strategy; and*
- *the proposal, individually or cumulatively, would not be detrimental to the amenity of any nearby residents or other businesses. In particular, the expected level and nature of traffic generated by the proposal could be accommodated by the local road network without detriment to the amenity and character of the locality or highway or pedestrian safety.*

Where appropriate, policies will define a site area, a technical area (where new redevelopment will be directed), a non-technical area and MOD retained land. These areas are defined in order to maintain the present distribution and scale of development. The following map (Figure 4) shows the defined areas proposed for the RAF Coltishall establishment.

However, should proposals for a comprehensive redevelopment of the whole site come forward, the present distribution and scale of development could be reconsidered within the context of no overall increase in floor space on the site.

NORTH
NORFOLK
DISTRICT COUNCIL
official use only

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official use only

Broadland





- Key
-  LPA administrative boundary
 -  Main Site Disposal Area
 -  Technical Area
 -  Non-Technical Area

Figure 4:
Extract from Core Strategy Policy EL3:
RAF Coltishall Site

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prosecution or civil proceedings.
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- 4.12 Separate to considering the potential land-use and policy issues arising from the re-use / redevelopment of RAF Coltishall and, through the work of the Task Force, North Norfolk District Council has advised that it wishes to see heritage assets on the base – particularly the Spitfire Revetment to the south of Scottow Hall and wall paintings which are understood to exist in the cellars beneath the Officers' Mess preserved. The Council has also advised that it wishes to see a number of the trees within the Technical Site Area considered for protection given the important landscape contribution they make to the area. The Council has therefore commissioned a survey of trees on the site which is to be undertaken in September with the intention of considering Group or Individual Tree Preservation Orders. The Council does not believe that this will serve to constrain any re-use / redevelopment of the asset, rather that the retention of trees on the site as a landscape feature will serve to create an attractive parkland environment for successive occupiers of the site.
- 4.12 The parcel of land which lies within Broadland District Council's jurisdiction is relatively small. The majority of buildings within this parcel of land are residential properties which, as referred to above, are to be offered for sale by Annington Homes. The sale of these dwellings is not subject to control by the Local Planning Authority and therefore there is no relevant policy relating to this element of the site.
- 4.13 The only other significant building which lies within Broadland District Council's jurisdiction is the officers' mess. This building lies outside any designated settlement limit and therefore its conversion to alternative uses will be subject to Policy GS2 of the Broadland District Local Plan (Replacement) "Conversion of buildings in the countryside". Policy GS2 supports the conversion of the officers' mess to alternative uses subject to certain criteria and excluding a change of use to retail or uses which fall within Classes A2, A3, A4 or A5 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended). If it is proposed to convert the officer's mess to residential use Policy GS2 requires the applicant to demonstrate that there are exceptional and compelling reasons for the conversion to residential use in the interests of retaining the building's architectural or historic merit. Furthermore, it must be demonstrated that the building's retention cannot realistically be secured by means of conversion to other uses (excluding the uses referred to above).

5.0 Potential future uses

- 5.1 The Councils have detailed at Section 4 above the prevailing planning policy context applicable to the RAF Coltishall site. In the first instance it is suggested that all proposals for the re-use / redevelopment of the asset should be considered against the policies detailed within the Development Plan.
- 5.2 Before turning to specific future uses, a summary of the Councils' in principle position regarding the future use / redevelopment of the RAF Coltishall site is provided below:-
- i) The Councils accept the civilian use of the MoD housing outside of the site's secure boundary. Small-scale residential infilling might be permitted in this area where it enhances local character;
 - ii) The re-use or redevelopment of permanent floorspace within the Technical Area will be supported where it is for economic development purposes or "countryside" uses (as defined by PPS7 and Local Plan policies; and

- iii) The wider airfield has more limited potential for new build development, although “countryside” uses (as defined by PPS7 and Local Plan policies) may be appropriate where there is no net increase in permanent floorspace.

5.3 The local planning authorities have begun to consider potential future uses which might be proposed for the RAF Coltishall site by potential purchasers and presented the list of uses outlined below to meetings of the Task Force for discussion earlier this year.

5.4 At this time, the list of uses is intended to be for discussion purposes only and does not represent the formal agreed position of the local authorities or imply that support would be forthcoming for them or a combination of uses. Indeed, given the scale of the asset, any proposed re-use / redevelopment of the site which required planning permission would require developers to undertake pre-application consultation with local community and stakeholder groups as detailed within the respective Statements of Community Involvement prepared by Broadland and North Norfolk District Councils.

5.5 The list of potential uses as prepared by the local planning authorities includes the following:-

■ Airfield Related

- Aerospace engineering
- Private airfield
- Air activity centre – e.g. micro-lights, gliding etc

■ Business Use

- Business park development
- R&D/science park development
- Manufacturing (B1/B2)
- Warehousing and distribution
- Open Storage
- Offices

■ Institutional Uses

- Migrant Worker Accommodation
- Prison
- Private School/College
- Residential Nursing / Care
- Sports Academy

■ Leisure

- Golf course
- Hotel development
- Motor sports use
- Equestrian facilities
- Outdoor pursuits type facility

■ Reclamation/Restoration

- Runway/Taxiways – taken up with waste material recycled for hardcore etc
- Clearance of some buildings with limited conversion potential
- Remediation/restoration of site to agricultural/ nature conservation
- Potential gravel/mineral extraction site and subsequent restoration

■ Renewables

- Bio-fuel plant (manufacture/power generation)

- Straw burning power station
- Green waste/composting facility
- Waste Incinerator

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Paper prepared by Steve Blatch, Strategic Director – Community, North Norfolk District Council
September 2006

Appendix B

Cabinet Report & Decision 8/10/07

Executive Summary

Our vision

We want everyone to have access to a decent home at a price they can afford, in a place where they want to live and work. Good quality, affordable housing enables stable and secure family lives: we are all healthier, happier and wealthier when we have decent homes close to schools, healthcare and transport links.

But this is not just an issue for families. Good housing can improve our social, environmental and economic well-being. It helps create better communities that can attract investment and skilled workers. And getting the design right can also improve the environment and reduce our carbon footprint.

Therefore, the strategic housing decisions we take collectively over the next few years are critical to the life chances of the next generation.

Section I: What's happened since 1997

Since 1997, housing has improved for many people. Homeowners have seen the value of their properties increase. Social tenants have seen massive improvements in the quality of their

homes. And concerted action has slashed homelessness and directly helped 77,000 households to buy their first homes.

All of this has been achieved in a climate of economic growth and stability – far removed from the boom and bust of previous decades. Low inflation and low interest rates have led to over 1 million more home owners over the last ten years.

We have achieved a great deal through our investment in housing over the past ten years. That investment means social housing now has over 1 million fewer non-decent homes and the number of private sector vulnerable households living in non-decent homes has been reduced by over 300,000. We have also cut the number of rough sleepers by over two thirds and ended the long-term use of bed and breakfast accommodation for families with children. Our investment has also helped improve demand for homes in some previously blighted urban areas.

The challenges we face

But we face new challenges today. Demand for homes to buy or rent is growing faster than supply. And as house prices have grown faster than wages, it is becoming increasingly difficult for young people to get a step on the housing ladder. And the challenges of climate change mean we need to provide greener, better-designed housing for the future.

This Green Paper sets out our proposals to improve the housing fabric of our society. We will work with our partners to provide:

- More homes to meet growing demand;
- Well-designed and greener homes, linked to good schools, transport and healthcare;
- More affordable homes to buy or rent.

Section II: More homes to meet growing demand

Our first challenge is to provide more homes. Housing supply has increased substantially in the last few years and is now at its highest level since the 1980s, but supply is still not keeping up with rising demand from our ageing, growing population.

Why we need more homes: While the housing stock is growing by 185,000 a year, the number of households is projected to grow at 223,000 a year, many of them people living alone.

New targets: That is why the Government is now setting a new housing target for 2016 of 240,000 additional homes a year to meet the growing demand and address affordability issues. The level of housing supply needs to increase over time towards this target and we believe that a total of three million new homes are needed by 2020, two million of them by 2016.

Delivering 2 million homes by 2016 and 3 million homes by 2020: Our proposals assume that housing supply will rise over time towards the 240,000 per year target in 2016, delivering approximately two million new homes by 2016 and continuing at around 240,000 homes per annum over the next four years to deliver an extra million new homes by 2020. The two million new homes that will be delivered by 2016 will include the following:

1.6 million homes are already in existing Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) and plans now in place including around 650,000 homes in Growth Areas with support from the 2003 Sustainable Communities Plan (e.g. Thames Gateway and Milton Keynes /South Midlands);

150,000-200,000 additional homes in the new round of RSS and plans now under consideration, including many smaller sites and urban area schemes, together with **further, partial RSS reviews** where they are needed; **100,000 extra homes in 45 towns and cities** that make up the **29 New Growth Points** which have already come forward in 2006

proposing high growth schemes. Those towns will be eligible for additional support and growth funding – comparable to support which Growth Areas receive, including access to a £300 million Community Infrastructure Fund for Growth Areas, New Growth Points and eco-towns;

An additional round of New Growth Points including for the first time the North. Our ambition would be to deliver around **50,000 new homes**. The final number will depend on the strength, costs and sustainability of bids coming forward; We are launching today an invitation for local authorities and developers to propose **5 new eco-town schemes**, with the entire community designed to be able to reach zero carbon standards. Each scheme could provide between 5,000 and 20,000 new homes giving a total of some **25-100,000 homes**. Final decisions will depend on the strength, costs and sustainability of the bids received.

Delivering homes where they are needed: Young families face problems finding affordable homes in every region, in urban and in rural areas. New housing is therefore needed throughout the country delivered in a way that is sensitive to local needs. We are extending the New Growth Points programmes to northern cities and towns.

Rural homes: We recognise that rural communities face particular pressures. We will set out measures to ensure more social and shared ownership homes are delivered in villages, as the Affordable Rural Housing Commission proposed. The Housing Corporation is investing £230 million to deliver around 6,300 homes in small towns and villages through its 2006–08 affordable housing programme. We will set a target for delivery of affordable housing in rural areas over the period 2008-11. We are also supporting seven new potential pilot Community Land Trusts in rural areas, giving local communities access to land for affordable house building.

Planning reviews: We will set up partial reviews of regional plans to increase regional and local targets and ensure the new eco-towns and additional Growth Points are properly handled in the planning system. Reviews of Regional Spatial Strategies will be carried out by 2011 to reflect plans for 240,000 homes a year by 2016.

Local planning incentives and enforcement: A new Housing and Planning Delivery Grant will direct extra resources to those councils who are delivering high levels of housing and to those councils who have identified at least 5 years worth of sites ready for development. Local councils will have to identify enough land to deliver the homes needed in their area over the next 15 years by rapidly implementing new planning policy for housing (PPS3). We are publishing new guidance showing how councils can find the land they need. Where councils have not identified enough land and do not grant sufficient planning permissions, planning inspectors will be more likely to overturn their decisions and give housing applications the go ahead at the appeal stage. We will also consult on ways to strengthen the requirement on developers to commence development or lose planning permission, and what more can be done to develop a consistent approach to the disclosure of land holdings.

Public sector land: We have raised our target to 200,000 new homes to be delivered on surplus public sector land by 2016, a significant increase from the previous target of 130,000 announced in the Pre-Budget Report. English Partnerships will set out new standards for housing on surplus Government land, which will increase the number of affordable homes developed, bring forward sites more quickly and ensure that design and environmental performance standards are raised to meet housing policy objectives.

Recycling homes and land: We also need to make the most of existing homes and buildings and disused land. We believe brownfield land should be the priority for development. The Government will continue with the national target that over 60% of homes should be built on brownfield land and every region and local authority will be expected to set their own target for

brownfield land use. The new homes agency¹ will work with local authorities to support them in their place-shaping role, including on how local authority and other disused land can be used to lever in private investment and transform communities. Councils, as part of their strategic housing role, need to reduce the number of homes that are left empty for long periods of time. We will explore a range of measures including the new Housing and Planning Delivery Grant.

Section III: Better homes: How we create places and homes that people want to live in

We don't just want to build *more* homes. We want them to be *better* homes, built to high standards, both in terms of design and environmental impact and homes that are part of mixed communities with good local facilities. Our new homes need to be part of the solution to climate change; not part of the problem. We will work with other government departments to make this a reality. We also want to improve the quality of existing social homes, so that everybody has decent housing.

Infrastructure funding: We have already delivered significant investment in infrastructure through mainstream government funding. £14 billion was spent on infrastructure in the three main regions of growth (London, the South East and East) during 2006-07. We are setting out new procedures to ensure mainstream programmes provide proper support for high growth areas. New settlements should be attractive places with good quality neighbourhoods and green public space that help create healthy communities. They must provide good local infrastructure – transport, schools and healthcare. Such provision will be central to our plans and we are proposing new procedures for councils and Government departments to plan for new schools, new health facilities and improved transport facilities. We are funding CABI Space to assist local authorities with their green space strategies, in order to provide more and better open spaces for people to use, including play areas for children. Green spaces are an essential part of our Growth Areas, New Growth Points and eco-towns programmes, where a tenth of Growth Area funding has been dedicated to improve parks, forests and green spaces since 2003. We will also continue with targeted funding for Growth Areas, New Growth Points and eco-towns including the new £300m Community Infrastructure Fund over the next three years. Announcements on levels of funding will be made in the Autumn.

Planning Gain: We also believe that more infrastructure funding could be drawn from the value uplift that the planning system generates. We propose a Planning-gain Supplement Bill – to ensure that local communities benefit from new developments. But if a better way is identified before this year's Pre-Budget Report of ensuring local communities receive significantly more of the benefit from planning gain, including to invest in necessary¹ infrastructure and transport, and it is demonstrated that it is a better alternative, the Government will be prepared to defer next session's legislation. This Green Paper sets out possible alternative approaches to facilitate discussion with key stakeholders.

Greener homes: New housing needs to be much more sustainable for the future. We need a revolution in the way we build, design and power our homes. A quarter of the UK's current carbon emissions (around 150 million tonnes of carbon dioxide each year) arise from how we heat, light and run our homes. We want to increase protection of the environment by cutting carbon emissions and we want all new homes to be zero carbon from 2016. We will strengthen building regulations by 25% in 2010 and by 44% in 2013 to set the standards we need to help achieve this. We will also set new minimum standards for water use in new homes cutting average water use by almost 20%. And we are consulting on how best to rate new homes against our Code for Sustainable Homes to inform consumers and help drive up

¹ This refers to the government's new delivery body for housing and regeneration, currently being consulted on as Communities England, in 'Delivering housing and regeneration: Communities England and the future of social housing regulation'. More information on the role of the new homes agency is given in Chapter 12: Implementation: A shared endeavour.

standards. We have set up a task group to look at research and work across the supply chain to deliver the improvements we need.

We will monitor closely the effectiveness of our new planning policy protecting new homes from flooding.

We are committed to the principles of the Green Belt. We will make no fundamental changes to Green Belt planning policy, as set out in Planning Policy Guidance note 2.

Well-designed and good quality homes: Our aim is to eliminate poorly-designed new housing, and make good and very good new development the norm. And we recognise that getting the design right can improve the quality of life for all members of the community, as well as improving the environment, creating safer and stronger communities and reducing our carbon footprint. We recognise the inspirational power of the very best and are encouraging innovative new designs of the highest standards, for example through competitions in eco-towns. These competitions will stimulate new architectural thinking on how to achieve a strong vision and identity in a range of new settlements and at individual building level, whilst reflecting local character and context.

We will work closely with the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) on its work with the public and private sectors to raise design standards. A light-touch review of CABE in the autumn will ensure we maximise its contribution to good design as we expand housing growth. We will also pilot a quality assurance programme with local authorities and developers, to explore ways to provide a meaningful concession to developers who meet quality benchmarks, with a view to speeding up the development process whilst safeguarding design outcomes.

Our new planning policy for housing (PPS3) ensures that housing developments reflect the varied needs of local communities, providing more affordable homes, proper infrastructure and high standards of design. And our *National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society*, to be published in the autumn, will set out more on ensuring housing growth responds to the needs of an ageing population.

Section IV: Making housing more affordable

House prices have doubled in real terms in the last decade. The average house now costs over £210,000, over 8 times the average salary. This has made it more difficult for young people and families to buy their own home. Although building more homes is essential to tackle long term affordability pressures, more support is also needed to help young people and families over the next few years. While we have focused on improving the quality of social housing since 1997, we now need to develop more affordable homes both to rent and to buy, including increasing provision of family housing. Local authorities will have new opportunities to build and manage new houses as well as Housing Associations and the private sector.

We plan a £8 billion programme for affordable housing in 2008-11, a £3 billion increase compared to the previous three years.

At least 70,000 more affordable homes a year by 2010–11: We want to ensure there are more affordable homes and more opportunities for people to get on the housing ladder. Government will help deliver at least 180,000 new affordable homes over the next three years, and more than 70,000 affordable homes a year by 2010-11 – with an ambition to increase further in the next spending review.

At least 45,000 new social homes a year by 2010-11 – a 50% increase in social housing in 3 years, more than doubling new provision since 2004-05, and **a goal of 50,000 new social rented homes a year**, in the next spending review period.

We will significantly expand the programme of converting temporary accommodation into settled homes, adding to the number of homes which will become intermediate or social housing.

Over 25,000 shared ownership and shared equity homes a year funded mainly by the Housing Corporation (or its successor the new homes agency) to particularly help key workers and others who cannot afford to buy near where they work.

Thousands more shared ownership homes through local housing companies and public sector land. We will use public sector land to deliver additional shared ownership homes without grant. We will set out more details on the scale of this programme as the work with local housing companies progresses.

Rural Affordable Housing: The new homes agency will work with rural councils so that they can meet the particular pressures faced by rural communities by supporting social housing and shared ownership homes in villages and rural areas as well as in larger towns. Later in the year, building on advice from the regional assemblies we will set a target for rural affordable housing for 2008-11.

Local Housing Companies: We are setting out proposals for new local housing companies that local councils can establish (in partnership with the new homes agency) in particular to deliver shared ownership homes and homes for first time buyers built on local council land. We believe these have the potential to deliver tens of thousands of shared ownership homes over the next five years.

Private Sector Shared Equity: We believe the private sector can play a greater role in offering shared equity mortgages or shared ownership homes, and we want to see far more competitive products on offer. Communities and Local Government are appointing Brian Pomeroy, to help us follow up on the Shared Equity Task Force report and advise us on ways to develop the private sector shared equity market. We have already launched a shared equity competition for lenders to develop more shared equity and we are now announcing a new 17.5% government equity loan product. Through this, we aim to increase both the range of private sector organisations involved in this area and the competitiveness of products available.

Improving the way the mortgage market works: We want to look at ways to help mortgage lenders finance mortgages, including more affordable longer-term fixed rate mortgages.

Wider delivery of affordable housing in mixed communities: We want to see a wider range of organisations bringing in more resources to build affordable housing. The first ten Arms Length Management Organisations and other local authority companies have prequalified to bid for social housing grant, and more will have an opportunity to pre-qualify next year. We are setting out new ways for councils to use their land and resources to build homes, and are seeking views on changes to the treatment of rents and capital receipts from additional homes which would incentivise this. We also want to promote greater private sector involvement in increasing social housing.

Section V: Delivery: how we make it happen

More skilled workers: We need enough appropriately skilled workers to deliver our housing ambitions. This means improved training and tackling recruitment and retention difficulties in key areas and a focus on ensuring we have enough skilled professionals, construction workers and planning officers to meet our ambitions.

Implementation: a shared endeavour: This Green Paper sets out a scale of ambition to

provide more housing than seen in this country for a generation. If we are to build these much needed homes we must join in a shared endeavour – with political leadership and delivery support shared between national, regional and local levels; with private, public and third sector providers all playing full roles; and involving local communities.

Everyone needs to take responsibility and account for the part they play in delivery. Communities and Local Government and English Partnerships are working with the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit to design a delivery mechanism to ensure this ambitious, cross government programme is realised. We want to see local people effectively involved in the debate about housing growth and infrastructure provision in their communities.

Local authorities have a critical role to play in achieving a major increase in new homes and their strategic housing role is at the heart of achieving our ambitions for housing supply. We want to see local authorities step up to play a stronger role in addressing the housing needs of all their residents, as part of their strategic housing role.

And we want home builders to rise to the challenge faced by the new targets for housing delivery, working with us to bring forward more land and tackle quickly any operational barriers to our plans.

Supporting documents

Alongside this Green Paper we are publishing a series of documents providing more detail on this package of investment and reform:

- Eco-towns Prospectus – setting out a vision and specification for local authorities and developers, including an invitation to propose at least five new eco-towns;
- Building a Greener Future – our strategy and timetable for achieving zero-carbon homes by 2016;
- Building Regulations, Energy Efficiency Requirements for New Dwellings, a forward look at what the standards may be in 2010 and 2013;
- Water Efficiency in New Buildings – our joint policy statement with Defra;
- Improving the Sustainability of New Homes – making a rating against the Code for Sustainable Homes mandatory;
- Strategic Land Availability Assessment: Practice Guidance – to provide local planning authorities with advice on identifying land for housing and assessing deliverability;
- Impact Assessment for the Homes for the future: more affordable, more sustainable;
- Regulatory Impact Assessment for Energy Efficiency Requirements for New Dwellings;
- Regulatory Impact Assessment for Building a Greener Future.
- Draft Guidance on Planning Performance Agreements; and
- Provisional Allocations to Local Authorities of the Second Tranche of Planning Delivery Grant for 2007-08.

GOVERNMENT HOUSING GREEN PAPER “HOMES FOR THE FUTURE: MORE AFFORDABLE, MORE SUSTAINABLE”

The Cabinet considered item 1 of the Officers reports on the sustainability and affordability of new homes that could be built on a former RAF site, with considerable attention given to the environmental factors.

It was explained that there was a need within North Norfolk for more sustainable and eco-friendly housing to be provided. The new settlements were to additionally provide a wide range of services. It has previously been proposed that RAF Coltishall was a potential site where this could

proceed. Members agreed that if development was to proceed, the military history attached to the site should be protected.

Concern was expressed that the accessibility and infrastructure of the proposed development site would rely heavily on financial investment due to the lack of public transport in the area. It was suggested that the disused railway line had received only minimal development on it, the track bed had been retained and therefore there was a significant opportunity to improve infrastructure.

It was explained that little progression could be made at this time and that the next stage would be on the 9 October 2007 when the target of available housing was to be allocated nationally and the planning teams pre-examination meeting had been held.

RESOLVED

- a) to agree the report as the basis for a response to the Consultation on the Housing Green Paper, to be forwarded to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

- b) that the Cabinet indicates its support to DCLG of the principle of an Eco-town development at the former RAF Coltishall site, on the understanding that this support is subject to a full and proper evaluation of the scheme in the context of sustainable development and the necessary investment in strategic transport and community infrastructure.