

Breckland Council – Regulation 18 - Draft Local Plan Full Update

Swanton Morley Parish Council response on the future of Robertson Barracks

Observations

This site is prime to be converted and rebuilt to become either a prison and/or to house asylum seekers as a detention camp. As has been seen, at what was previously RAF Coltishall, with the building of HMP Bure and the temporary housing of asylum seekers (currently suspended). It would seem too far away from Dereham and the A47 connectivity links to be promoted as a potential hospital site. The MOD may reconsider its position prior to 2031 and becoming surplus. Government (Conservative commitment by 2030 and Labour when it can) is set to increase defence spending to 2.5% of GDP which could instigate a retention and need for the site. To be acceptable for residential development what key infrastructure requirement would be essential rather than desirable? As a settlement it will not be integrated in the medium term with Swanton Morley and effectively always be separate. This is supported by the design approach (b) to 'create an inclusive, resilient and safe community' – separate. In the longer term a masterplan could seek to establish linkage and connectivity through development along Worthing Road towards the northern parts of Swanton Morley, Primrose Lane and Grey Drive, which would bring another phase of housing growth.

Swanton Morley Parish Council Response

Should Robertson Barracks become surplus to the MOD requirements the Parish would welcome, although do have some concerns, the redevelopment of the site to residential use providing the necessary and appropriate infrastructure was delivered in a timely manner.

Key aspects required are:-

- Road network
- All utilities upgraded – water, sewerage, drainage, electric, broadband, etc....
- Safe pedestrian and cycle links to Swanton Morley • Protection of heritage asset (Control Tower)
- Protection of Wensum Valley environment
- Phasing of development
- Construction Traffic Plan
- Protection and enhancement of local health, education and public transport services

There are many justifiable concerns within the local community at the size of this proposal and the likely negative impact it would have on residents, their amenities, local services and infrastructure if not planned appropriately and delivered with the necessary infrastructure. Despite concerns about the number of new homes and likely impact locally, as a growth point, this development could, however, deliver many benefits for Swanton Morley and the

wider community. This could be an opportunity to bring considerable local investment, local employment and improvements to services, such as bus service and health care. The reuse of the site has the potential to enable community use of the on-site sports facilities, create small business and employment opportunities through the repurposing of existing buildings. Even the reuse of the existing very tall tower, as a shared mobile signal tower, could be used to resolve the poor signal strength in the wider area (which we all struggle with presently). As a site it is currently too isolated for this number of new homes in the countryside without significant investment in highways – this is likely to be a serious constraint for the site whatever its reuse is.