

# **Written Statement: South Norfolk Village Clusters Housing Allocations Plan (SNVCP) Examination**

**Submitted by:**

Councillor Richard Elliott, Wicklewood Ward

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## **Wicklewood (Cluster 45) - MIQ C45a-C45d**

There is significant local concern regarding the proposed extension of the settlement boundary in Wicklewood to accommodate large-scale housing development. Residents and stakeholders question why there is not a stronger preference within the VCHAP for smaller-scale sites that could be sensitively integrated within the existing development boundary, rather than expanding into open countryside. The allocation of major development sites—particularly those highly visible and outside the established village edge—not only lacks public support but also appears unjustified when considering local needs, infrastructure capacity, and the rural character of Wicklewood.

Importantly, the Parish Council has taken a diligent, objective, and considered approach in formulating its response to these proposals. Their assessment is based on careful analysis of local evidence, infrastructure constraints, and the long-term interests of the community. I fully support the Parish Council's position and commend their commitment to ensuring that any future development is genuinely sustainable, proportionate, and reflective of local priorities.

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The exclusion of smaller, less intrusive sites in favour of a single, large allocation disregards both community sentiment and the principles of sustainable, proportionate growth. Large-scale development on open countryside would cause irreversible harm to valued views and the rural setting that defines the village's identity. The evidence suggests that such an approach is fundamentally unsound, with no robust justification for imposing a disproportionate burden on Wicklewood compared to other clusters. A more balanced, community-focused strategy—prioritizing modest, well-integrated sites within the existing boundary—is urgently needed to ensure that future growth is genuinely sustainable and supported by those most affected.

### **Allocations: 52 dwellings (WIC1: 40, WIC2: 12)**

**Site Assessments:** Both sites are prominent in the landscape, with WIC1 adjacent to the primary school but requiring significant highways and drainage works. WIC2 is a settlement limit extension with access and infrastructure constraints.

### **Significant Visual Impact:**

The main allocation (WIC1) is sited on open farmland to the south of the village, in a highly visible location. Development here would have a major adverse effect on cherished views across open countryside, which are valued by the community and contribute to the rural character and sense of place in Wicklewood. The site is not screened by existing development and notwithstanding plans for some landscaping would be visible from multiple public vantage points, including Hackford Road, The Green, and the approach from the west. The loss of these open views would be irreversible and would fundamentally alter the visual experience of the village edge.

### **Exclusion of Smaller, Less Intrusive Sites:**

The plan provides unconvincing evidence for the exclusion of other smaller site allocations that would have minimal visual impact and could be accommodated within the existing settlement boundaries. Several such sites were promoted and assessed, some of which would have integrated well with the established built form, preserved key views, and maintained the rural edge.

However, these options were passed over in favour of a single larger sites, apparently for reasons of expediency in meeting the overall housing target.

**Infrastructure:** School capacity is a concern; highways and utilities require upgrades. Delivery statements indicate that while the sites are available, there are unresolved issues regarding access and viability.

**Disproportion:** Wicklewood's allocation is more than double the cluster average, with significant landscape and infrastructure impacts.

### **Evidence of Disproportionate Allocation**

This evidence supports the argument that the SNVCP allocations for Wicklewood is not only disproportionate in absolute terms, but also fundamentally unfair when compared to its existing share of the district's housing.

A review of the VCHAP allocations table (see MIQ B4, B9) shows that Wicklewood is among the most heavily loaded clusters, while many others receive minimal or no allocations. This creates a pattern of growth that is inconsistent with the GNLP's aim for balanced, sustainable development across clusters.

**Disproportionate Allocations: Quantitative Comparison of Existing and Proposed Homes**

Based on Census data 2021 the village of Wicklewood accounts for only 1.74% of all existing homes in the South Norfolk village clusters, yet it is allocated 3.94%, more than double for its relative size, of all new homes proposed in the VCHAP.

This demonstrates the inequality and disproportionality of the allocation, with Wicklewood being required to absorb a far greater share of growth than is justified by its current scale, character, or infrastructure.

The combination of high absolute numbers and an unjustified buffer results in Wicklewood being subject to a scale and intensity of development that is not only disproportionate within the district but also inconsistent with the GNLP's vision for rural clusters.

**Conclusion**

The SNVCP allocation for Wicklewood is fundamentally unsound and unsustainable in its current form. The plan requires the village to absorb a scale of development that is wholly disproportionate to its existing size, rural character, and infrastructure. The evidence shows that Wicklewood is being asked to accommodate more than double its fair share of new homes, on sites that are both highly prominent in the landscape and outside the established development boundary.

The proposed development would cause irreversible harm to cherished views, open countryside, and the rural setting that defines Wicklewood's identity. The exclusion of smaller, less intrusive sites in favour of large, visually and environmentally damaging allocations is not justified by robust evidence or

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community need. The plan also fails to address unresolved infrastructure, access, and viability issues, further undermining the deliverability of the proposed sites.

The use of an unjustified buffer inflates the allocation, compounding the risk of overdevelopment and under-delivery, and setting a precedent for unsustainable expansion that could permanently alter the character of the village.

The decision to prioritize large development sites beyond the established settlement limits, rather than selecting smaller, less intrusive locations within the current boundary, undermines the principles of balanced and sustainable growth. This approach disregards community preferences and exposes Wicklewood to significant and irreversible changes to its rural character and landscape. By favouring expansive allocations on open countryside, the plan risks setting a precedent for further unsustainable expansion, threatening the distinctiveness and long-term sustainability of the village and similar rural communities.

A more balanced, evidence-led, and community-focused approach is urgently needed to ensure that future growth is genuinely sustainable, proportionate, and supported by those most affected.