

RESPONSE TO WEST SUFFOLK LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION ISSUES AND OPTIONS – REGULATION 18 STAGE

**KARRO FOODS SITE (SOUTH), HAVERHILL ROAD, LITTLE WRATTING,
HAVERHILL.**



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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 These representations are being made by Jaynic Properties Ltd to West Suffolk Council in response to the Council's Regulation 18 'Issues and Options' Consultation on their new Local Plan.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to continue to promote the site that is currently included in the Council's adopted Local Plan – the Rural Vision 2031 – as a 'rural employment area' under Policy RV4(k) at Wratting. These representations also seek to extend the site to the south to include the former private sports ground, which would be replaced with a new area of public open space, including a new sports pitch, on land to the south of the proposed extended employment site allocation.
- 1.3 The boundary of this land is shown in the location map below and is referred to as 'The Site' in the remainder of this report. Figure 2 overleaf shows the current 'General Employment Area' allocation (in blue) and the recreational open space allocation (in yellow), as set out in the current adopted Local Plan.

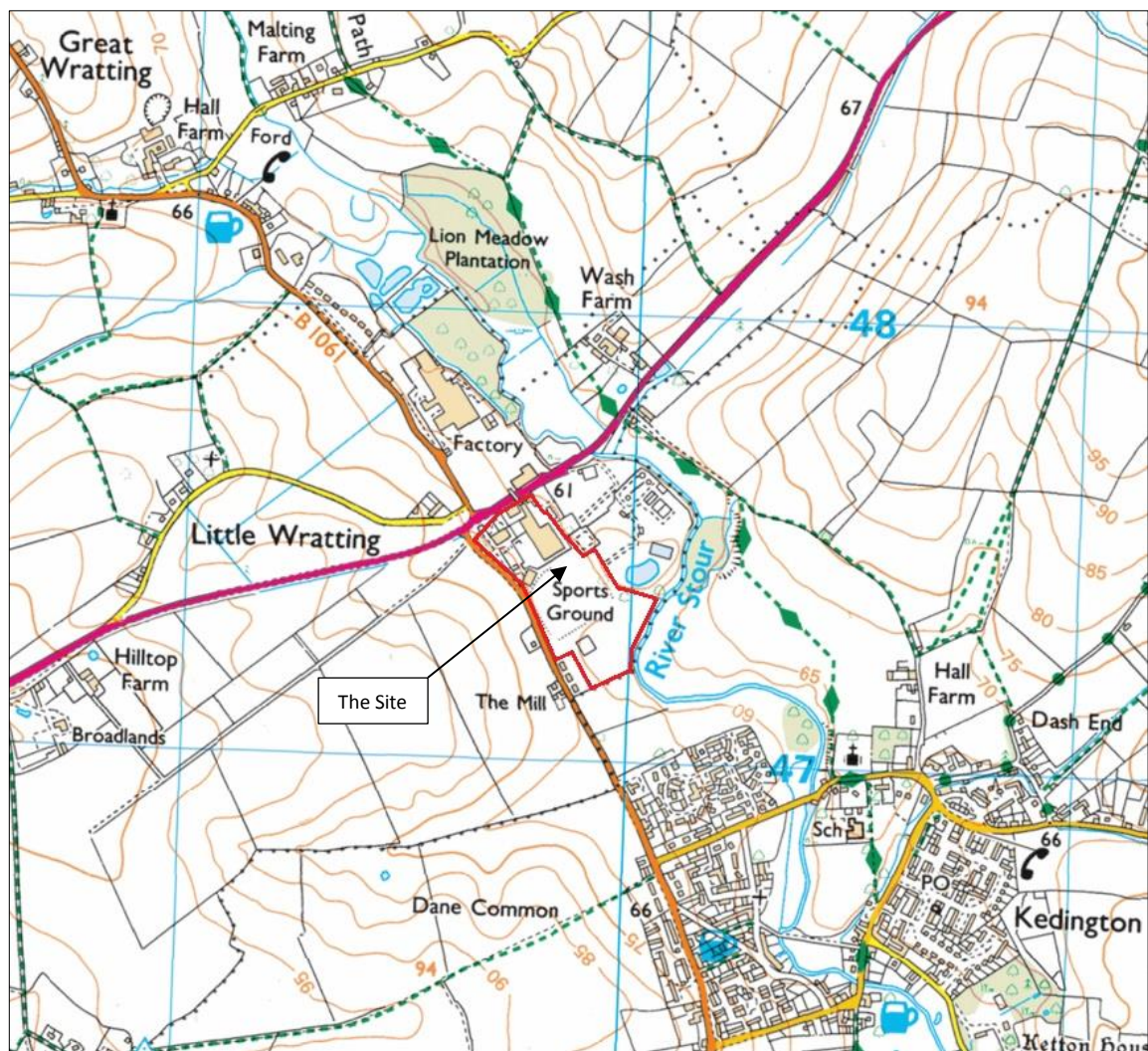


Figure 1: Site Location Map

Wratting Employment Area - Inset 56

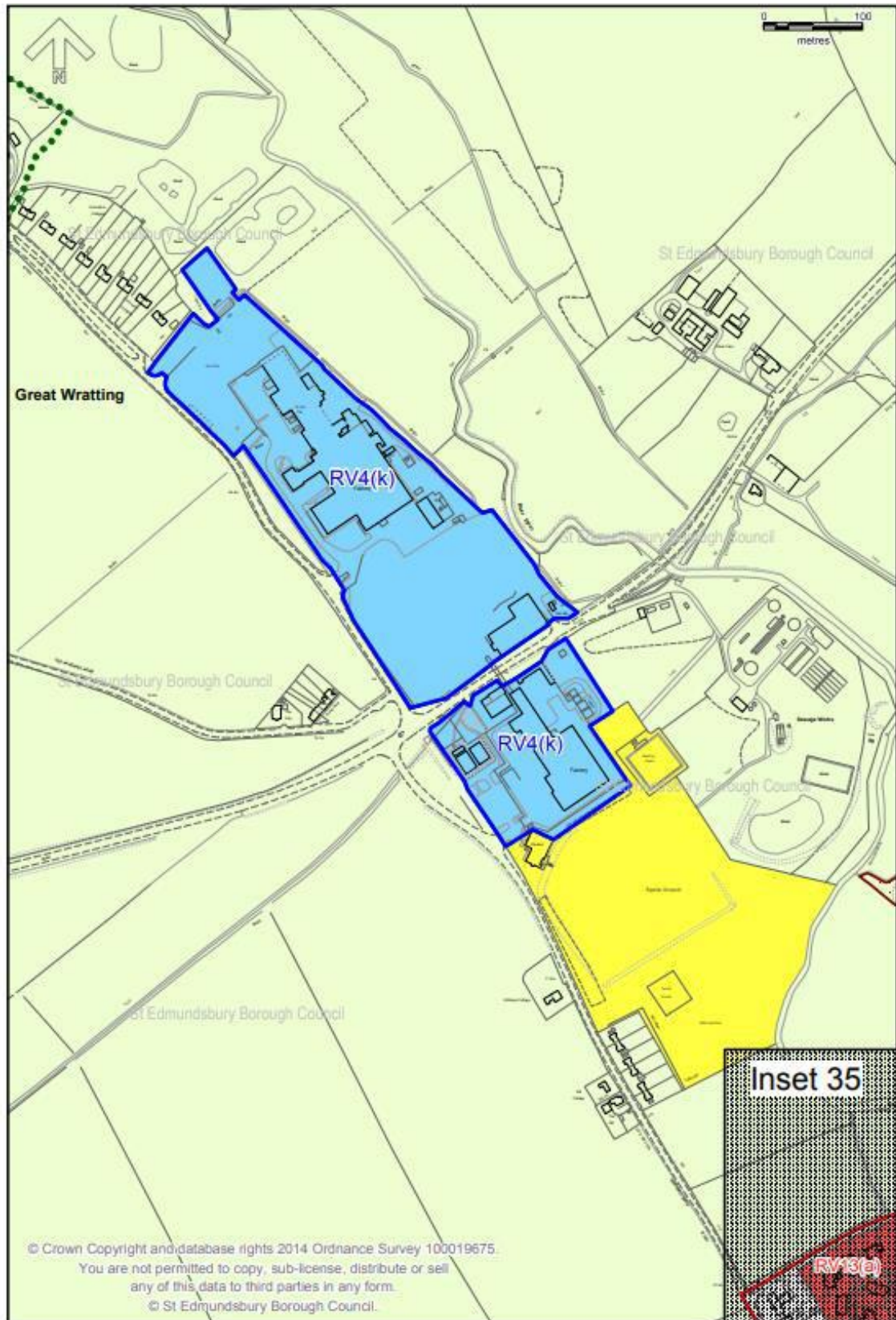


Figure 2: Extract from Rural Vision 2031 – Policies Map – Inset 56, Wratting Employment Area

2. BACKGROUND AND SITE CONTEXT

Historical Development

- 2.1 In 1958, a firm known as Haverhill Meat Products first started to cure bacon for the firm of J Sainsbury, who were its owners, at Blunt's Hall Farm, Little Wratting. A substantial meat products factory was built on the site in the 1960s, which by now had expanded to the land south of the Bury Road (A143) and by 1969 included a sports ground and pavilion for use by employees. The land south of Bury Road was eventually linked to the main factory in 1977 when a footbridge was installed across the main road. In 1988 the Haverhill Meat Products factory began to produce cooked meats for Sainsbury's supermarkets in a new part of the factory.
- 2.2 The Haverhill Meat Products factory opened a new abattoir on the south side of the Bury Road in 1993, and the firm became called Newmarket Foods for a time and later became part of Grampian Foods in 1998, but its main customer remained the supermarket chain of J Sainsbury's. For more than 30 years the site was Haverhill's largest employer with over 2,000 workers on the site at one stage.
- 2.3 In 2008 Dutch-based food producer Vion NV bought the business from Grampian Foods. Vion's UK pork facilities were located all over the UK. In 2012 a management 'buy-out' led by Seamus Carr, managing director of Vion's Pork Business Unit, saved the remaining 330 jobs at the factory and it then became part of the Karro Food Group.
- 2.4 Karro Food Group is one of the UKs leading meat processors with pork processing plants across the country. Karro is a leading producer of bacon, gammon, fresh pork, fresh and frozen sausages, ham and cooked meats. They supply high quality meat products to retail, food service and manufacturing customers across the UK.
- 2.5 Karro eventually closed the abattoir on the south site in 2015, along with the sports ground, and then applied to the Council to demolish the building, the details of which were approved in June 2016. The abattoir building has not yet been demolished, but Karro have reduced their operations to the north site only and are now working with Jaynic in regard to new employment development for the south site.

Planning History

- 2.6 The extensive planning history for the south site shows permission being granted for a series of extensions to the 'cooked meats plant' in the 1990s for Haverhill Meat Products, and the erection of the new abattoir in 1991 and enclosed bridge over the A143 for transporting carcasses and for personnel access. This permission also included the construction of a new vehicular access on to the B1061 (Haverhill Road) and extension of the car park.

- 2.7 In 2005 Grampian Foods sought to include a greater area of the south site within the Local Plan allocation for employment development, in order to expand the factory. This action was successful and the St Edmundsbury Borough Local Plan of 2006 (see Figure 3 below) showed the inclusion of the land to the east of the south site down to the River Stour, as well as part of the recreational open space area.

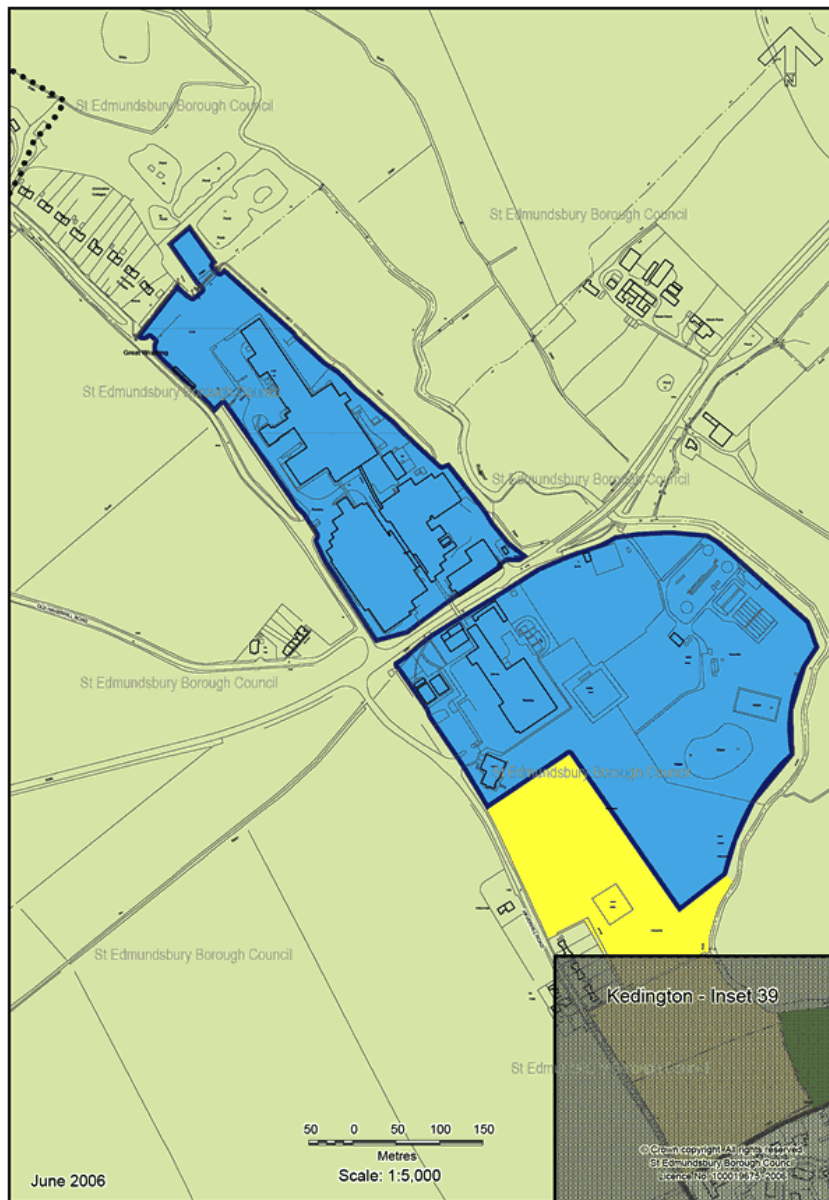


Figure 3: Extract from St Edmundsbury Borough Local Plan 2006 – Wratting Employment Area

- 2.8 As explained above, Grampian Foods sold the whole factory site to Vion NV in 2008 and the expansion plans were subsequently dropped. As a consequence, for the later Local Plan (Rural Vision 2031), which was adopted in 2014, the area of the employment site allocation to the south of the A143 was reduced to cover only the abattoir part of the factory site.

Site Context

- 2.9 The southern site of the former factory complex comprises approximately 2.6 hectares of brownfield land, which comprises the former abattoir building, stable block and footbridge of the A143. In addition, the site includes water storage tanks and extensive areas of hardstanding around the building and a large car park to the north side of the entrance access from Haverhill Road (B1061). The site is broadly rectangular in shape and has extensive frontage onto the A143 Bury Road and the B1061 Haverhill Road.
- 2.10 To the south of the redundant factory building is the former sports ground, which includes a pavilion building in the north-west corner of the sports ground and a former bowls green to the north-east. The sports ground has always been a privately owned facility, although it has not been used now for at least five years.
- 2.11 The settlement of Kedington is located 1km to the south-east of the site and the hamlets of Great Wratting and Little Wratting are located 1.1km to the north-west and 1.2km west of the site respectively. The town of Haverhill is also located 3km to the west of the site along the A143. The major mixed-use site allocation (including up to 2,500 dwellings), known as Great Wilsey Park is located to the north-east of Haverhill, south of Little Wratting, and will provide a major urban extension of the town over the next 20 years.
- 2.12 The south site is unconstrained, being located wholly within Flood Zone 1, with the least risk of flooding by rivers, and does not adjoin any sensitive heritage, landscape or ecological receptors. The site has a good existing access onto the B1061 Haverhill Road, which is adequate to serve all types of vehicles, including HGVs. The site also includes a 60 space car park at the entrance to the site.
- 2.13 Karro Foods intend to continue their operations on the northern factory site, but are now working with Jaynic to realise employment development on the southern site, following their approval of the plans to demolish the former abattoir building, stable block and footbridge over the A143, which were approved in June 2016.
- 2.14 Jaynic Properties Ltd intend to seek planning permission for employment uses, in accordance with the current Local Plan allocation, but also wish to see the extent of the employment site increased to include additional land to the south.

3. PROPOSED REVISED SITE ALLOCATION

- 3.1 As explained above, the purpose of these representations is to both support the existing employment allocation for the former abattoir site, and to seek an extension to this employment allocation (of approximately 3ha) to the south – the area of the former sports pitch and pavilion – which is shown coloured blue in Figure 4 below. The extent of this area would be sufficient to include a substantial landscaped buffer zone along the southern boundary of the site.
- 3.2 In addition, it is suggested that the revised allocation in the emerging Local Plan still includes an area of recreational open space to the south of the revised employment site allocation, which would extend to approximately 2.5ha (shown yellow in Figure 4 below).

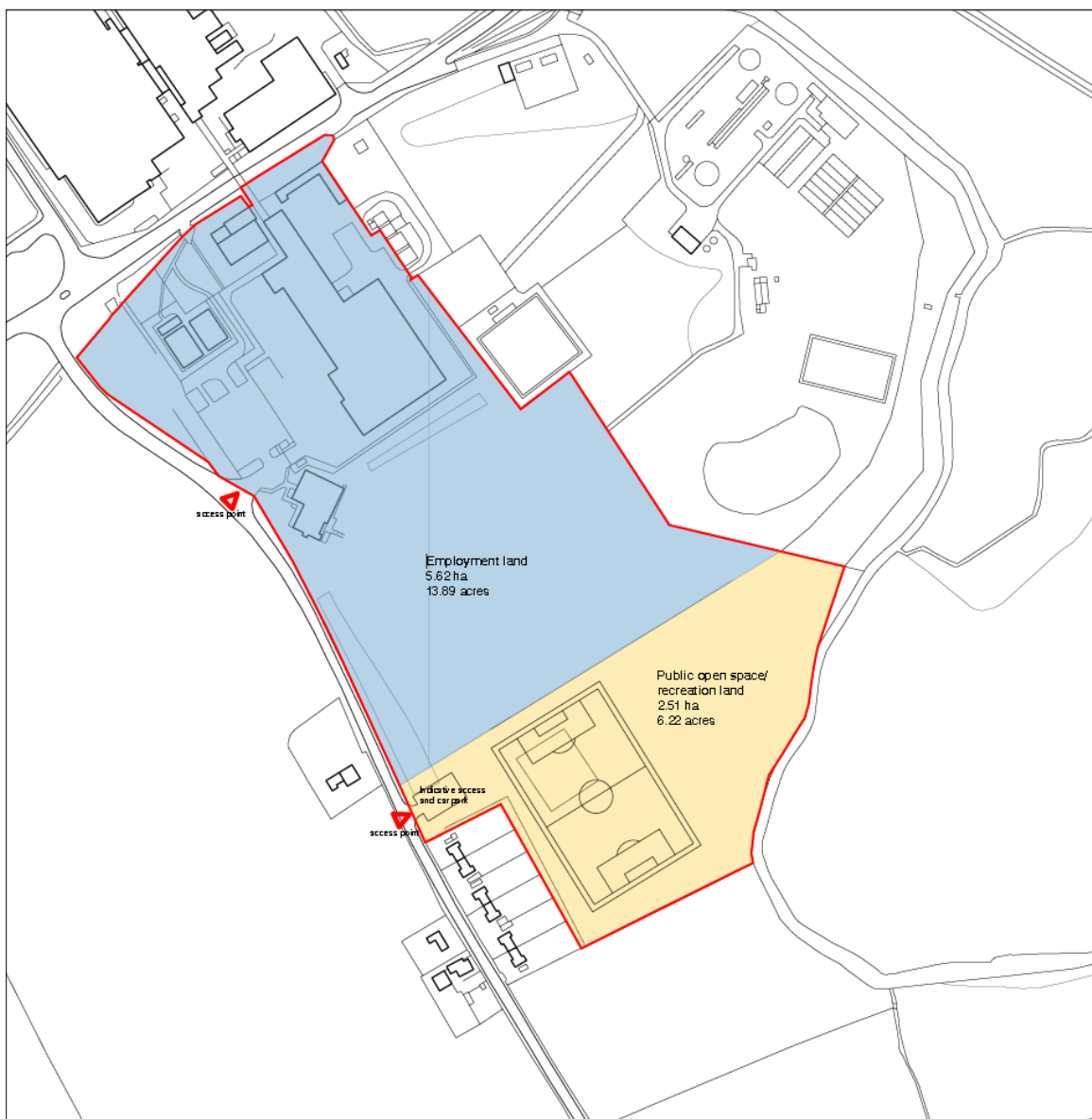


Figure 4: Proposed Site Allocation for Emerging Local Plan

- 3.3 The Site is well-located for access to the principal road network, especially the A143, which runs between Haverhill and Bury St Edmunds. Haverhill also enjoys good access to the A1307, which runs westwards to the A11/M11 and Cambridge, and the A1017. The site is unconstrained and has sufficient built-in infrastructure capacity (water, waste-water and electricity supply) to serve major employment development; it also enjoys a high standard of vehicular access from the B1061, which is also capable of serving a major employment allocation.
- 3.4 The sports pitch and facilities at the site have now fallen into disrepair and, despite being allocated in the existing Local Plan as recreational open space, have always been private for use by factory employees, and have never been open to the public. The proposed revised site allocation being put forward as part of these representations suggests that an area of around 2.5ha would be retained for *public* open space and could be laid out to provide new sport pitches and a car park for its users, with a new vehicular access from the B1061 within the existing 30mph speed limit area. This area would include the redundant tennis courts, which are now derelict and extend as far eastwards as the River Stour.
- 3.5 It is noted that several sites around Kedington were included as potential housing sites in the Council's Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA, February 2020), including Site WS125 – Land East of Haverhill Road, Kedington – for around 90 dwellings. This site immediately adjoins the southern boundary of the proposed area of new public open space and sports pitches suggested above. The new public open space and sports pitches would therefore be well-placed to serve existing and potential new housing areas in Kedington, as well as employees of new businesses on the employment allocation to the north.
- 3.6 For the above reasons, it is recommended that the allocations shown in the current Local Plan (Rural Vision 2031) are revised in the emerging new Local Plan as set out in Figure 4 above.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 This report has been prepared in response to the West Suffolk Local Plan Issues and Options (Regulation 18) Consultation and seeks to continue to promote the site that is currently included in the Council's adopted Local Plan as a 'rural employment area' under Policy RV4(k) at Wratting. These representations also seek to extend the Site to the south to include the former private sports ground, which is unused and would be replaced by a new area of public open space, including a new sports pitch, on land to the south of the proposed extended employment site allocation.
- 8.2 The Site has a long and established history of industrial and employment use for nearly 50 years, and is well-located to existing settlements and the principal road network. The Site is also well-located in the context of new major site allocations for housing and other uses. The current employment site allocation (as shown in the Rural Vision 2031 Local Plan), has been enlarged in the past to accommodate an extension to the existing employment use of the Site and it makes sound economic and planning sense to maximise the available land within the Site for employment purposes, given the location of the site and its current infrastructure and services, as well as its very low level of constraints to redevelopment.
- 8.3 While the proposed extended employment site allocation would include an area of redundant sports pitches that have not been used for many years, it is suggested that the revised site allocation retains approximately 2.5ha of this area for new public open space and sports pitches, which could be provided as part of the overall development of the site under the revised site allocation. Such provision would also include a new access onto the B1061 to serve the open space/sports pitches, as well as a new car park.
- 8.4 For all the above reasons, it is submitted that the new Local Plan should include the revised employment and recreational open space site allocation shown in Figure 4 above.