

## **BRECKLAND COUNCIL**

### **At a Meeting of the**

### **POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW PANEL 1**

**Held on Thursday, 30 August 2007 at 10.00 am in  
Council Chamber, King's House, King Street, Thetford**

#### **PRESENT**

Mr J.D. Rogers (Chairman)	Mr A.P. Joel (Vice-Chairman)
Mr S.H. Chapman-Allen	Mr I.A.C. Monson
Mr R.P. Childerhouse	Mrs P. Quadling
Mr P.J. Duigan	Mrs P.A. Spencer

#### **Also Present**

Mr G.P. Balaam	Mr D.G. Mortimer
Mrs M.P. Chapman-Allen	Mr D.S. Myers
Mr J.P. Cowen	Mr B. Rose
Mr R.G. Kybird	Mrs A.L. Steward
Mr J.P. Labouchere	

#### **In Attendance**

Natalie Beal	- Planning Policy Officer (Growth Point)
Mark Broughton	- Scrutiny Officer
Ray Johnson	- Acting Operations Manager (Commercial Services)
Andrea Long	- Environmental Planning Manager
Stephen McGrath	- Principal Committee Officer
David Spencer	- Principal Planning Policy Officer
Nick Vass Bowen	- Senior Planning Policy Officer (Growth Point)
Elaine Wilkes	- Senior Committee Officer

#### **48/07 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 July 2007 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **49/07 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs L. Turner and Mr K. Martin.

#### **50/07 DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

The following personal interests were declared:

- Mr J.D. Rogers – Item 7: as a member of Norfolk County Council
- Mr R. Childerhouse – Item 8: as family are landowners within the district and have made representations as part of the LDF process
- Mr P. Cowen – Items 6 and 8: as professional architect in relation to planning matters
- Mr I. Monson – Item 7: as a member of Norfolk County Council
- Mr R. Kybird – Item 6: as professional builder in relation to

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- planning matters and as a resident of Thetford
- Mr S. Chapman-Allen – Item 6: as a member of the Moving Thetford Forward Group

**51/07 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING**

- Mr P. Cowen (for item 6)
- Mrs A. Steward – Executive Member (Housing & Planning)
- Mr D. Mortimer (for item 6)
- Mr P. Balaam (for item 6)
- Mr R. Kybird (for item 6)
- Mrs M. Chapman-Allen (for item 6)
- Mr B. Rose (for item 7)
- Mr J. Labouchere (for item 7)

**52/07 THETFORD GROWTH POINT STATUS (AGENDA ITEM 6)**

A presentation was given by the Environmental Planning Manager and the Senior Planning Policy Officer (Growth Point) to update members on the progress of the Thetford Growth Point project.

The presentation explained the background to the Thetford Growth Point Status (what it is, what it means), the relationship with the Regional Spatial Strategy, headline figures, an overview of the work under way and the links to the Local Development Framework.

A copy of the presentation slides is appended to these minutes for members' information.

With regard to the links to the Local Development Framework (LDF), it was explained that development of the Thetford Area Action Plan would incorporate detailed policies, including the allocation of land specific to Thetford, work on which was scheduled to start in early 2008. It was emphasised that there would be three opportunities for widespread public consultation and input into this document.

It was also explained that the Regional Spatial Strategy was a planning document covering the whole of the East of England region produced by the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA). It was a broad strategy which identified where development should take place and identified a number of areas where growth would take place. Thetford had been identified for 6000 homes growth. It was stressed that this was not a Breckland document but was something to which the Council's LDF needed to conform.

The Chairman also pointed out that once the Council had submitted its final LDF to the Government, its approval and/or amendment would be made by the Government's Inspector and neither the Council nor the public would be able to make further alterations after that point.

Concern was raised that the Thetford Growth Framework and Green Infrastructure Study were stated as being evidence based

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documents.

The Environmental Planning Manager replied that both Studies had been commissioned from an independent specialist company and that their report contained their professional judgements. However, it would be for the Council to consider and decide how to deal with their findings through the Thetford Area Action Plan. It would be up to the Council to determine whether or not it agreed with the Consultants' conclusions and then to make its own decisions on the way forward.

It was also pointed out that the document was still in its draft stage only at present. A member added that even as a draft document, there was concern that it should not have included certain names. The point was acknowledged and it was stated that there were potentially some changes to be made to the draft report.

In answer to a question about the delivery of the 6000 houses proposed to be built between 2001 and 2021, it was explained that 900 had so far been built.

A further question related to the issue of 'regeneration' in relation to the town centre and, bearing in mind that the existing study was based on the town as it existed, there was concern about the position in regard to the latest growth projections.

In reply, it was stated that a considerable amount of the original study was still relevant but the Growth Point funding included a sum to look at the town centre and its investment potential and therefore there was work to do to refresh the original study.

Again, it was stressed that the published document was a draft only and would be subject to comprehensive consultation before it was finalised.

A member asked about the timing of the various studies in the programme, bearing in mind that the Green Infrastructure Study was scheduled for completion by October but the Water Cycle Study was not due to commence until the end of September. The Water Cycle Study would have a significant impact on the hard and soft infrastructure proposals and he asked how it would be ensured that all aspects were incorporated into the various studies.

It was acknowledged that the timetable was not ideal and arose due to the late decision of the Environment Agency to require the Water Cycle Study. However, the respective consultants of the two studies were aware of the situation and would take account of each other's report. If it proved necessary, there would be scope in the programme to carry out additional work on this.

Concern was also raised about the issue of flood risk. The view was expressed that the draft published report did not adequately address the potential flood risk. Problems were already being experienced in the town from existing developments but the source was occurring downstream of the River Thet and there

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appeared to be no ownership of the issue by the relevant agencies. The proposed scale of further development in Thetford would exacerbate the problems and this needed to be taken into account.

In response, it was explained that this question was picked up in the existing study from the regional perspective and would provide further information. The Growth Point Project Group had direct input to the consultants and therefore was able to raise with them these considerations. Importantly, the Environment Agency was represented on the Project Group.

In relation to this issue, another member referred to the fact that the Norfolk Rivers Board was already concerned about the growing problem of removal of spate water (e.g. from heavy thunderstorms) and asked whether the LDF would be open for consultation for a long enough time to take account of the considerations of the Thetford Area Action Plan and regeneration issues.

It was explained that the LDF comprised a number of documents, of which the Thetford Area Action Plan was one. Work on the Area Action Plan had not yet started and would follow on from the Core Strategy document, so it was still 'live'.

In regard to the fact that the number of houses to be built was a Government decision, a member asked who decided where these houses would be developed and whether there would be a new estate.

It was replied that, in terms of decisions on development proposals, Breckland was the Planning Authority which would produce the final LDF document. However, there were many options on how this growth could be accommodated and these were still to be considered.

A member highlighted the fact that there had been an original reference to the upgrading of existing housing as part of the regeneration of the town and he asked whether there was now a shift away from that intention.

The Environmental Planning Manager responded that this question was unclear at present and was still to be considered. It had to be borne in mind that this was a 20-year strategy and therefore it would be necessary to look at the existing housing and not solely any new housing. No policy decisions had yet been taken. The report would provide potential ideas for the Council to consider in consultation with the community on how to go forward.

The draft report was very much a discussion document at this stage. The project also involved looking at the needs for employment and looking at Thetford in the wider picture. It was the opportunity to ensure that the plan for the town was right for the future.

The production of a Green Infrastructure Study was welcomed by

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a member, who said he would like to see this incorporate the issue of 'green bridges' to ensure there was an interconnection between all the open spaces etc.

It was confirmed that the study was looking at the existing links between the town and the forest.

So far as the draft published report was concerned, it was reiterated that this was a commissioned study to facilitate the Council's considerations and did not provide solutions or decisions. The study was necessary to ensure there was a comprehensive evidence base to support the eventual submission of the LDF by the Council to the Government Inspector, who would be looking for such evidence, and was necessary to avoid the final LDF not being accepted for lack of supporting evidence.

Returning to the point made about 'green bridges', a member commented that this was an issue nationally where this country was lagging behind other parts of Europe. She hoped the question of waste disposal would be looked at very carefully and also asked how public consultation would be carried out.

It was explained that there would be a public consultation on the final infrastructure study this year and the work on the Thetford Action Plan would commence in January 2008, the programme for which included public consultation periods.

Attention was drawn by a member to policy TH1 in the Regional Spatial Strategy, which included the need for development to be sensitive to the historic setting. He felt that this was not always taken into account by Planning Inspectors in deciding planning appeals and that this was something that needed to be given more weight in any planning policies.

The Environmental Planning Manager advised that the question of historic sensitivity to development was recognised at the regional level and therefore the cultural and heritage aspects of policies were being considered, particularly in regard to the town centre.

A member added that there were a number of town centre properties which, while in the conservation area, were not listed buildings but formed the character of the area and asked how these could be protected.

It was stated that the Historic Buildings Officer had highlighted a requirement for a specific piece of work to look at those important buildings which contributed to the character of the area.

It was also noted that while the Council could make reference to policy TH1, it could not be relied on as it was not specific, although the Council could rely on certain Planning Policy Statements. A key factor was for appropriate design solutions to be required. However, so far as changes to existing non-listed buildings were concerned, the planning process offered no assistance in this regard.

Members were encouraged to submit any specific concerns in writing to the Growth Point Team.

The Executive Member advised that the whole planning policy process was being reviewed and that all views would be considered.

The item concluded with the Chairman thanking the officers for their very helpful presentation on this project.

**53/07 NORFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL: A47 TO A1067 LINK IMPROVEMENT CONSULTATION (AGENDA ITEM 7)**

The Principal Planning Policy Officer presented the report, which informed members of the content of a public consultation being made by the Norfolk County Council on route options for an improved link between the A47 and A1067. The options indicated improving links between Hockering at the A47 and Lenwade at the A1067. The southern half of any proposed link would be in Breckland. A copy of the consultation document had been circulated to members of the Panel and was otherwise available on line at <http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/A47toA1067link>

From the officers' analysis of the various route options, options 4 and 5 were strongly not supported on grounds of cost and impact.

The remaining options 1, 2 and 3 were considered acceptable, with option 2 being considered to offer the best combination of improving access and beneficial cost.

Mr S.G. Bambridge, one of the local ward members, had submitted written representations supporting option 1 as the preferred option.

In answer to a question from a member, the Principal Planning Policy Officer explained that a sixth option had been promoted locally, which would constitute a bypass for Weston Longville. This option would have involved construction of a considerable length of new road across the countryside, although it was not known if this was still being pursued locally as a realistic option.

The local ward member present drew attention to the fact that the Norfolk County Council's project for the improved link was fully funded. While the sixth option that had been put forward at the local level was by far the shortest route, it would be a virgin road at a much greater cost (£15m compared to the County Council's fully funded project cost of £9m) and was not something that could be done in phases. It was also pointed out that this sixth option had been excluded as an option several years ago as part of consultation around a proposed northern distributor road for Norwich.

In answer to a question, it was agreed that clarification was needed on the projected traffic movement figures and whether these were based on whether the northern distributor route was completed or not. It was considered that, should the northern

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distributor route be built, the current projection on traffic figures was under-estimated.

It was noted that the emphasis of the scheme had shifted and that it was now a more local scheme of travel to address vehicle movements from the A1067 Fakenham road to the A47. From figures currently available, there appeared to be very little movement in the opposite direction from Dereham to the north-west of Norwich.

It was agreed it would be very useful to seek greater clarification from the County Council on whether traffic movements from Dereham had been factored in.

A member was of the view that if the northern distributor route was built, it would be likely to increase use from Dereham.

Another member raised the need for awareness of the impact of increased lorry movements (some 60 vehicles per day) from the rendering plant at Witchingham which would have a significant on local villages as the bridge at Lenwade was the only one strengthened to take these vehicles.

The local ward member informed members that there was a lot of local feedback now in support of any of options 1, 2 or 3, provided that the road came out to the east of the present junction at Lenwade (the present junction at that point being considered to be the worst of all routes).

It was also noted that the present options would need to involve a new junction on to the A47. Members expressed concern that this could duplicate current efforts to improve local access on to the A47. The local Ward Member told the meeting that there were proposals under a Ministerial Direction to the Highways Agency for a new roundabout to be built at the Mattishall Road junction in 2008/09 and this would be in place before any proposed link road.

In conclusion, members concurred with the analysis of the options as contained in the report and felt that any of options 1, 2 and 3 could be supported, whilst noting some members' preference for option 1 together with the officers' recommendation in favour of option 2.

**RESOLVED** that the report, together with the views of the Panel, be agreed to form the basis of the Council's response to the consultation by the Norfolk County Council on the proposed improved link between the A47 and A1067.

Footnote: Mr J.D. Rogers and Mr. I.A.C.Monson abstained from voting on this matter.

#### **54/07 WORK PROGRAMME (AGENDA ITEM 8)**

In regard to the proposed report to the next meeting on the Snetterton Utilities Supply Project (as part of the REV Project), a member drew attention to the fact that there was to be a meeting

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D Spencer/  
Executive  
Member

the following week with Winchester Council to discuss central heating power options, which he felt needed to be taken into account. The Scrutiny Officer undertook to liaise with the Business Support Officer on this point.

It was noted that a report on Village Service Centres would be made to the next meeting.

The Panel also asked that periodic updates be given to future meetings on progress of the Thetford Growth Point project and on the A47-A1067 link improvements proposals.

**55/07 NEXT MEETING**

Arrangements for the next meeting on 18 September 2007 were noted.

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M Broughton

D Spencer

A Long,  
D Spencer

The meeting closed at 11.30 am

CHAIRMAN

# Thetford Growth Point Status

## Policy Review and Development Panel 1

30 August 2007

Andrea Long, Nick Vass-Bowen and Natalie Beal  
Thetford Growth Point Team



# Introduction

- What it is
- What it means
- Regional Spatial Strategy
- Headline Figures
- Overview of work underway
- Links to Local Development Framework

# Growth Point Status-what it is

- National scheme to accelerate housing and employment growth in regional towns and cities - awarded October 2006
- Thetford is one of 29 Growth Points nationally and one of only three in the East of England (Norwich and Haven Gateway)
- Supported by funding from central government for infrastructure.
- Next funding period 2008/09 to 2010/11 (CSR)

# **Growth Point Status- what it means**

## **Partnership Working**

- Thetford Growth Point is a joint initiative between Breckland, Norfolk and Thetford Town Councils
- Delivery will be dependent on a wider partnership with service providers, landowners, key government agencies and the private sector

# Regional Spatial Strategy

Draft Policy TH1 in the Regional Spatial Strategy identifies the town as:

“ a Key Centre for Development and Change building on its role as an employment and service centre, its links to Norwich, Cambridge, Bury St Edmunds and London, and its position as an important gateway to The Brecks.”

It identifies the principal aims for the development of Thetford as:

- To increase the number of dwellings in and on the edge of the town by at least 6,000 between 2001 and 2021 through maximising sensitive development within the urban area which respects its historic settings and features and sustainable urban extensions;
- To Facilitate growth of a diversified employment base which will maintain the town's economic self-containment and reflect its role as a key settlement in the A11 corridor;
- To achieve renaissance of the town centre securing major improvements in the range and quality of its facilities and townscape while protecting and improving its historic attributes and natural setting; and
- To provide improved transport choices both within the urban area and between the town and its hinterland.

# Headline figures

900 of the 6000 houses already delivered with majority of rest in urban extensions (over 4000) and with remainder in the existing town area

- Employment study indicates 1500 to 2000 jobs but adopting 'interventionist' strategy to deliver target of 5000 jobs (economic restructuring and overcoming market failure – link to REV)

# Overview of work underway

- **£150,000 from Government in first funding period**
- **2007/08 for two further evidence base studies:**
  - ✓ Growth Framework and Infrastructure Study
  - ✓ Green Infrastructure Study
- **Programme of Development**
- **Additional work**
  - ✓ Water Cycle Study
  - ✓ Birds Project

## **Growth Framework and Infrastructure Study**

- Options for growth – residential, employment and services (includes sustainable urban extensions)
- How growth can deliver regeneration – town centre
- ‘Hard’ and ‘Soft’ infrastructure to support growth and regeneration
- Mechanisms and funding to deliver – including ‘tariff’ approach
- Draft Final consulted on
- To be completed end September

## **Green Infrastructure Study**

- Green Infrastructure Strategy
- Audit of existing Green infrastructure
- Green Infrastructure Vision for Thetford
- Developer Guidelines
- Identify Projects and Funding
- Draft Final out for consultation
- To be completed end September

## **Programme of Development**

- CLG requirement in advance of CSR
- Housing Trajectory
- Projects to support and help deliver housing included
- Essentially a bidding document
- Thetford aims to receive £25.5 million over three year period, 2008 to 2011.
- To be submitted by 1 October
- Examples include transport, energy study, delivery and design code

## **Water Cycle Study**

- Ensure that water supply, water quality, sewerage, flood risk management and drainage issues are addressed in the Thetford area to enable growth.
- Stage 1 – outline strategy. Details of infrastructure to support development, timing of provision, cost estimates, identify water efficiency measures, guidance for developers.
- Tenders received, interviews next week and appointment by end of September
- Stage 2 – Full strategy – informed by stage 1 but at this stage uncertain as to what would be required but focus will likely be on detailed engineering solutions.

## **Birds Project**

- 3 species of European protected birds close to Thetford
- Forest – Woodlark and Nightjar. Arable and Heaths – Stone Curlews.
- Protected at European level.
- Work is being carried out as part of the formal statutory plan making process to support the carrying out of Appropriate Assessment (European requirement).
- Natural England, RSPB, Breckland Council, UEA and Cambridge University involved.
- Particular issues of focus are visitation, disturbance and recreational pressure.
- Visitor survey underway.

# Links to the LDF

- **Core Strategy**
  - will develop spatial strategy for Breckland and determine broad locations and scale of growth in Thetford
  - Preferred Options will be consulted on this autumn – final Masterplan Report consulted on at same time?
- **Thetford Area Action Plan**
  - Will develop more detailed policies and proposals (including allocating land) specifically responding to needs of Thetford
  - Work will commence early next year
- Both documents will be informed by all the technical evidence base studies and will be consulted on

