

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW PANEL 1

**Held on Wednesday, 20 August 2008 at 10.00 am in
The Anglia Room, Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Dereham**

PRESENT

Mr J.D. Rogers (Chairman)	Mr I.A.C. Monson
Mr R.P. Childerhouse	Mrs P. Quadling
Mr P.J. Duigan	Mrs P.A. Spencer
Mr A.P. Joel (Vice-Chairman)	Mrs L.S. Turner
Mr K. Martin	

Also Present

Mr W.P. Borrett	Mr W.H.C. Smith
Councillor Claire Bowes	Mr A.C. Stasiak
Mrs S.R. Howard-Alpe	Mrs A.L. Steward
Mr B. Rose	

In Attendance

John Chinnery	- Solicitor & Standards Consultant
Andrea Long	- Environmental Planning Manager
Phil Mileham	- Senior Planning Policy Officer
David Spencer	- Principal Planning Policy Officer
Elaine Wilkes	- Senior Member Services Officer

48/08 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2008 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

49/08 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs. M.P. Chapman-Allen, Mr. J.P. Labouchere, Mr. M. Kiddle-Morris and Mr. M. Broughton.

50/08 DECLARATION OF INTEREST (AGENDA ITEM 4)

The following declarations were made:

1. Mr. W.P. Borrett – Personal and prejudicial interest in regard to LDF matters relating to North Elmham as landowner and a family member has land submitted under the LDF.
2. Councillor C. Bowes – Personal interest in regard to LDF and site specific matters relating to Watton, Saham Toney and Hilborough.
3. Mr. R. Childerhouse – Personal and prejudicial interest in relation to Weeting Local Service Centre allocation.
4. Mr. A.P. Joel – Personal interest in regard to LDF matters as a member of Old Buckenham Parish Council and has a friend and knows others who have submitted applications under the LDF.
5. Mr. I.A.C. Monson – Personal and prejudicial interest in relation to LDF site specifics relating to Oxborough.

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6. Mr. J.D. Rogers – Personal and prejudicial interest in regard to LDF and site specific matters as landowner in Carbrooke and submitted land application in LDF.
7. Mr. W.H.C. Smith – Personal and prejudicial interest by virtue of site specific land application for inclusion in LDF relating to Great Ellingham.
8. Mr. A.C. Stasiak – Personal interest as a close associate of the above-named Members.

51/08 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 5)

The following Members were in attendance:

- Councillor C. Bowes
- Mr. W.P. Borrett
- Mrs. S. Howard-Alpe
- Mr. B. Rose
- Mr. W.H.C. Smith – Executive Member (Business Transformation)
- Mr. A.C. Stasiak
- Mrs. A. Steward – Executive Member (Planning & the Environment)

52/08 GUIDELINES ON SUBMITTING THE LDF CORE STRATEGY (AGENDA ITEM 6)

The Principal Planning Policy Officer presented the report, which advised Members on the closing stages in the preparation for the submission of the Council's Local Development Framework Core Strategy and Development Control Policies document to the Secretary of State.

The report outlined the process and consultations that had taken place to date and explained that the next step in the process was effectively the Council's final opportunity to shape the document before it was submitted for Government Inspection and subjected to Public Examination.

Completion of the final document should involve no more than minor amendments, as any changes made should be within the scope of previous discussions and agreements and the submission document should focus on the comments received from the public consultation process and show how the Council had responded to those comments. It was also the opportunity to reinforce and bolster the submission documents to demonstrate that they met the tests of soundness (as set out in Appendix A to the report).

The documents were due to be submitted in November 2008 and the documents that would be considered by the Panel at its next meeting would be very similar to those presented previously, with only minor wording modifications made to enhance their overall soundness.

Following that, the documents would be submitted in accordance with the new Regulations and would be published and made available for comment for a period of six weeks, during which time key stakeholders (as listed in Appendix B of the report) would have the opportunity to submit representations, which would be referred to the Secretary of State for examination as part of the submission material. The purpose of this publication stage was to gather representations on the soundness of the development plan document, including a conformity statement from the

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Regional Planning Body. If there were any grave comments about the soundness of the document at this stage, there was an opportunity for the Council to withdraw its document and return to an earlier stage of the plan production.

The Panel was invited to note the contents of the report as an introduction to the next phase of the work programme for the Panel over the forthcoming months.

A member referred to the statement on flexibility of the Core Strategy in Appendix A (paragraph 4.4.6) as he understood that national policy would be changed in the future to require combined conformity with the regional economic strategy in addition to the regional spatial strategy. He asked whether the Council's LDF had sufficient flexibility to accommodate such a change.

The Environmental Planning Manager replied that it was expected that the Government would produce new policies but such changes would take time before they took effect. The Core Strategy had been developed to allow for changes and, at this stage, national and economic strategies had been embedded in the LDF as far as possible.

A further question was asked about what, if any, national or local performance indicators the Council would be required to meet in regard to the Core Strategy and their impact on the Council's Annual Delivery Plan.

It was explained that there were existing performance indicators in place, such as national PI 159 on land supply, together with other regulations and guidance on monitoring LDF and it was felt these could be covered through the Annual Monitoring Plan.

A member stated that one of the key requirements of LDFs was to support the sustainable community strategy and asked how this would be monitored by the Council, for example through Development Control Committee or the Overview and Scrutiny Commission.

The Environmental Planning Manager advised that monitoring would be carried out by the Environmental Planning Team in the main, supported through the links with Development Services. The monitoring processes would pick up and highlight any changes on progress which could then be addressed as or if necessary.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

53/08 BRECKLAND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK: CORE STRATEGY FOR THE RURAL AREA (AGENDA ITEM 7)

The Senior Planning Policy Officer presented the report which provided Members with an analysis of the larger villages in Breckland that had the potential to accommodate sustainable growth as part of the Core Strategy for the Breckland LDF.

Revisions to national planning policies and the emerging Regional Plan recognised that larger villages had a role to play in providing employment, services and housing to meet local needs and work to date on the Council's Core Strategy had consistently proposed that there were a number of larger

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villages in Breckland that could fulfil the role of Local Service Centres.

These proposals had produced significant consultation at the various stages of the consultation process and it was important that this locally determined element of the LDF was considered and a view given on what formed the basis of the forthcoming submission of the Core Strategy to the Planning Inspectorate.

The Panel was accordingly invited to consider the policy response to Local Service Centre villages in Breckland as the basis for submission to the Planning Inspectorate in November 2008 and to consider the role of non-Local Service Centre villages and the strategy for the rural area in general.

The report set out the context for the Strategy for the rural area and the regional assessment criteria.

From the responses to the consultations to date, there had been no substantial objections to the rural strategy as a whole or to the overall approach proposed through the suite of positive policies developed to support the larger and smaller villages in the rural areas.

The recent Matthew Taylor Report – “Living, Working Countryside” to the Government recognised the tensions in national policies and, in particular, highlighted the low supply of affordable housing in rural areas. The Council’s policies were aimed at positively supporting housing in rural Breckland, as well as reflecting other Council strategies.

So far as the assessment criteria for Local Service Centre villages were concerned, it was evident that not all of these could be met, specifically so far as primary health care facilities were concerned, as these were not generally found in the villages. A balance, therefore, had to be drawn. In the Breckland context, the approach had been taken that where villages met three or four of the criteria these should be evidenced and justified for selection as Local Service Centres.

The Panel then discussed various aspects of the approach to the selection of local service centres and, in particular, whether the adoption of a one- or two-tier category of villages was desirable.

Referring to the proposed two-tier category (i.e. tier 1: those villages identified for development and tier 2: those for service protection only), one member felt that the second tier was key for Breckland, as it highlighted the wider understanding in the Regional Plan and the LDF of the issue of protection, which was an important message for the primary health care and other county service providers. However, he was concerned that the proposals appeared to indicate that those smaller villages with less than two service facilities would lose their settlement boundaries. This raised serious implications for their future, since he felt they would be very unlikely to benefit from any windfall housing or exception sites, ultimately leading to their decline.

The Senior Planning Policy Officer agreed that it was important to have a clear strategy to enhance and protect services which gave a clear message to other stakeholders. He accepted that the two-tier concept in the submission document had not been clearly understood during the consultation process and the wording would be clarified. So far as the

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issue of development boundaries was concerned, however, this would be dealt with under the later site specifics stage of the LDF.

Another member asked how the Council could protect those services which were not within its control, for example the closure of shops and post offices and the issue of public transport.

It was explained that these issues were highlighted and promoted in the LDF to link to other Local Authority policies and strategies and, in this way, the Council could have some influence in the treatment of such issues by others. A member concurred by saying that the Council's Sustainable Community Strategy included reference to the strengthening of services in Local Service Centres and the market towns in the LDF, thereby reinforcing this approach at the wider level. The point was also made that Members had the opportunity to raise issues at County level through their County Council representatives.

In answer to other questions, it was explained that the Annual Monitoring Plan would highlight and give an opportunity to look at the impact on villages from the withdrawal of any existing services from local service centre villages during the life of the LDF. It was also unlikely that the Planning Inspector would decide to include a village as a local service centre for growth as opposed to service protection only, for example in the case of Necton, which had a high level of existing planning permissions and where there were constraints on further development due to flooding issues at the present time, but from which the village might recover to support growth in the future.

It was also pointed out that the concept of local service centres was not to compete with the market towns but rather to offer day-to-day choice. New allocations in the villages should be based on what enhanced them, not just in terms of housing but also in terms of services.

Affordable housing in the countryside was recognised as a key issue in the LDF and development would still occur in the rural area, where there was a forecast of 3000 housing windfall. The local service centre villages were those where the Council would make positive allocations for development over the 15-year period of the Plan. For those centres not being promoted for growth, there would still be some smaller development potential, for example from barn conversions, replacement dwellings etc.

Members also spoke in favour of policies that would encourage small businesses and employment in the villages, in addition to affordable housing, to support sustainability and foster the live-work balance.

The need for consistency in the approach adopted towards the rural areas and Local Service Centres was stressed.

The Core Strategy, together with the identification of Local Service Centre villages, positively responded to issues of employment and to give a policy framework to enable and support businesses; although there was no specific reference to the term 'live-work', the mechanisms and framework for such was enshrined within the policies. A member asked that thought be given as to how the 'live-work' concept might be highlighted in the document.

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Each of the candidate Local Service Centres were then considered in detail based on the analysis of the Local Service Centre villages and the policy responses, consultation comments received and options available, as set out in the report.

It was noted that in terms of Local Service Centres promoted for Growth that they should generally meet at least four of the Regional Criteria. Great Ellingham only met three criteria and the Parish Council objected to the identification as an LSC for growth during the Preferred Options Consultation. Members therefore considered that Great Ellingham should be removed as an LSC for growth and be put in the second tier, consistent with the LSCs in that category.

In considering Weeting in the list of candidate villages, it was highlighted that there were a number of nearby designated European environmental habitats and the impact of growth on them was being investigated through the Appropriate Assessment process as it was an issue that would impact upon the ability of the village to be a Local Service Centre for Growth. In addition, during discussion, a question was raised as to the level of housing growth supported by the Parish Council (i.e. 50 or 100 houses) and it was agreed this needed to be clarified.

In considering the summary of comments in Table 2 of the report, the Panel concurred with the view that there was no evidence to justify the inclusion of Kenninghall and Bawdeswell as candidate Local Service Centres on the grounds that they did not meet the criteria.

The Panel also considered the position of the village of Carbrooke which had also previously been raised as a candidate Local Service Centre but again concurred with the view that there was no evidence to support its inclusion.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the Panel concurs with the assessment criteria used to identify villages as Local Service Centres as set out in paragraph 3.2.15 of the report, i.e. that they meet at least four of the Regional Plan criteria, with the presence of primary healthcare facilities being afforded less weight in terms of satisfying the criteria as this is considered to be less critical in meeting day to day needs, and taking into account the following additional factors: a) community views (including parish plans/appraisals), b) environmental factors (e.g. biodiversity, landscape, flood risk), c) infrastructure capacity, and d) existing levels of committed development;
- (2) based on the detailed analysis of candidate Local Service Centre Villages, the following options be recommended for inclusion in the Core Strategy:
 - a) **Local Service Centre Villages allocated for growth –**
 - Harling (for 50 homes, subject to review in five years' time)
 - Narborough (for up to 50 houses)
 - Shipdham (for 100 homes)
 - Swanton Morley (for 50 homes)
 - Weeting (number of houses to be clarified)

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b) Local Service Centre Villages allocated for service protection only –

- Banham
- Great Ellingham
- Litcham
- Mattishall
- Mundford
- Necton
- North Elmham
- Old Buckenham
- Saham Toney

- (3) the Panel concurs with the view that there is no evidence to justify the inclusion of the parishes of Kenninghall, Bawdeswell or Carbrooke as candidate Local Service Centres;
- (4) subject to the above, the Strategy for the Rural Area as outlined in the report be supported.

54/08 WORK PROGRAMME (AGENDA ITEM 8)

The Environmental Planning Manager advised that there were no items ready to bring forward to the meeting provisionally scheduled for 2nd September and it was therefore proposed that that meeting be cancelled.

It was intended to bring the final draft of the Core Strategy and Development Control Policies document to the meeting on 23rd September. This meeting was anticipated to last into the afternoon due to the size of the documents to be considered.

55/08 NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 9)

RESOLVED that

- (1) the meeting provisionally scheduled for 2 September 2008 be cancelled; and
- (2) allowance be made for the meeting scheduled for 23 September 2008 to be extended into the afternoon and a buffet lunch be provided.

The meeting closed at 12.55 pm

CHAIRMAN