

Regional Planning Panel Standing Committee

23rd January 2009

Subject: Breckland Council - Core Strategy and Development Control Policies: Proposed Submission Document

Report by: Report by Regional Secretariat

Purpose

To give a response to Breckland Council's Core Strategy and Development Control Policies: Proposed Submission document.

Recommendation

The Standing Committee is asked to consider the recommendation that the comments in Appendix A form the basis of a response to the above consultation document.

1. Introduction

1.1 Breckland Council has published for consultation the proposed submission version of its Core Strategy and Development Control Policies Development Plan Document (DPD). This, the principle document within the Council's Local Development Framework (LDF) contains the overall vision, objectives and spatial strategy for the district to 2026.

1.2 The closing date for comments is Monday 16th February 2009. Further details can be found on the Council's website at:

<http://www.breckland.gov.uk/brecklandcouncil/environment/planning/planningpolicy/localdevelopmentframework.htm>

1.3 A copy of the Core Strategy Key Diagram is included at Appendix B.

2. Background

2.1 Breckland is a large rural district within the County of Norfolk, covering an area of some 1295 sq. km's (500 sq. miles). Approximately half of the population, which stands at around 129,900 (2007 est.), live within the five main towns of Thetford, Attleborough, Dereham, Swaffham and Watton. Two strategic roads pass through the district; the A11 which connects Norwich to Cambridge, and the A47 which connects Great Yarmouth and Norwich to Kings Lynn. Rail services, via Thetford and Attleborough, connect to services at Norwich, Cambridge and Peterborough.

2.2 The district has a rich landscape, consisting of large areas of protected heath and forest (the 'brecks') to the south and west, and mainly agricultural land to the north and east. The former supports a number of important wildlife species.

2.3 Thetford, Norfolk's fourth largest settlement, is the principle retail, service and employment centre within Breckland. Lying roughly equidistant from Norwich and Cambridge it was identified as a New Growth Point in October 2006, in recognition of its potential to grow and to benefit from growth. Further details in relation to growth at Thetford will be implemented by the Council through the relevant Area Action Plan¹.

3. Regional context

3.1 Regional planning guidance for Breckland is now contained within the adopted East of England Plan (May 2008), hereafter referred to as the RSS. This replaces Regional Planning Guidance for East Anglia (RPG6) and its interpretation at the county level in the Norfolk Structure Plan.

3.2 The RSS proposes that a minimum 15,200 new homes and an indicative 6,000 new jobs should be provided across the district as a whole by 2021. Thetford, which is identified as a Key Centre, which will be encouraged to grow by 6,000 dwellings as part of a renaissance of the town centre.

3.3 In assessing this submission document all policies within the RSS have been considered.

4. Comments

4.1 Breckland Council's Core Strategy submission document responds well to the East of England Plan. In accepting that opportunities to deliver new growth on previously developed land within the district are limited, there are no significant divergences from regional policy.

4.2 The role of Thetford as a focus for housing and employment lead growth comes across strongly, as do policies that seek to protect and enhance the unique landscape and biological heritage of the area.

5. Recommendations

5.1 The Standing Committee is asked to consider the recommendation that the comments in Appendix A form the basis of a response to Breckland Council's Core Strategy and Development Control Policies: Proposed Submission document.

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¹ EERA response to Thetford Area Action Plan Issues & Options consultation (July 2008)

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT DOCUMENT CHECKLIST

PART ONE – DOCUMENT INFORMATION

LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY	Breckland Council
DOCUMENT TITLE	Core Strategy and Development Control Policies
DOCUMENT TYPE	Development Plan Document (DPD)
DOCUMENT STAGE	Proposed Submission document
CONSULTATION START DATE	5th January 2009
CONSULTATION END DATE	16th February 2009

PART TWO – GENERAL POINTS

QUESTION	ANSWER	COMMENTS
Does the area covered lie within the Eastern Region?	Yes	
Are all references to the RSS correct?	Yes	
Does the area covered include a Key Centre for Development & Change?	Yes	Thetford is identified as a Key Centre for Development & Change (RSS policy TH1).
Are there any key issues covered by the document that are of strategic or regional importance?	Yes	The protection of internationally significant wildlife sites whilst supporting growth is of regional significance.

PART THREE – CONSISTENCY / CONFORMITY CHECKLIST

(Where local policy has been referenced against a relevant RSS policy, and there is no comment, it is considered to be in general conformity.)

* SO = Strategic Objective / SS1 = Spatial Strategy / CP = Core Strategy Policy / DC = Development Control Policy

QUESTION	RSS POLICY	LOCAL POLICY *	COMMENTS
Is there a clear push for sustainable development?	SS1	All	There is a clear focus on the ideals of sustainable development.
Does policy seek to maximise the use of previously developed land (PDL)?	SS2	SO14 CP1 Para 3.15	<p>The Assembly acknowledges that local evidence points towards a limited supply of suitable brownfield sites and is pleased to note that local policy CP1 gives priority to their re-use. However, it is disappointing to see that the target for delivering new housing on such sites has dropped from 30% (at the Preferred Options stage) to what is described as ‘a more achievable’ target of 25%.</p> <p>If the region as a whole is to achieve its 60% target then shortfalls in any one district will, inevitably, have to be met elsewhere. The Assembly urges the Council to: ensure that the potential of these sites is maximised; provide assurance that the target does not fall further; and closely monitor progress against this target.</p>
Is there a clear pattern of development for Key Centres and / or other urban and rural areas?	SS3 SS4	SS1 (TH1) DC5	The Core Strategy is consistent with the aims of RSS policy SS3 (TH1) in that Thetford is the main focus for growth. Policy DC5 supports the provision of affordable housing in rural areas.
Is the role of city & town centres clear? Is there a clear retail hierarchy?	SS6	SS1, DC9	
Is there a Green Belt policy?	SS7		Not applicable. There is no designated green belt within the district.
Is there a policy dealing with land in the urban fringe, if appropriate?	SS8	CP11,	
Is the RSS employment target met?	E1	SO3, CP3	

QUESTION	RSS POLICY	LOCAL POLICY *	COMMENTS
Is employment land protected, and is its designated usage consistent with relevant RSS policies?	E2 - E4	SS1, CP3, DC6, DC7	
Is there a policy on tourism?	E6	CP3(d), DC8	
Is the RSS housing target met?	H1	SO1, CP1	
Is there an affordable housing policy and does it meet the RSS target?	H2	SO2, DC4, & DC5	Informed by appropriate housing needs studies, the Council seeks to provide some 40% of the total number of housing units as affordable (DC4). With the exception of a reference to 'tenure', it is surprising that no mention is made of the affordable housing target within the wording of policy CP1.
Is there a clear policy for meeting the needs of Gypsies & Travellers?	H3	CP2, (CP1)	The inclusion of an assessment of the needs of Travelling Showpeople within local policy CP2 is welcomed. Provision for the Gypsy & Traveller community as a whole beyond 2011 should be made in accordance with the most up-to-date regional guidance.
Are cultural issues addressed?	C1, C2	DC11, DC19	
Does local policy seek to change or influence travel behaviour?	T2, T7, T9	SO18, CP13 DC16, DC21	Accessibility to services and facilities by means of public and other non-motorised forms of transport are identified as a key issue, particularly in a district where car-use predominates.
Are any major transport generators covered by appropriate policies?	E7, T11, T12	(DC20, DC22)	There are no major transport generators within the district. The A11 forms an important route through the district with linkages beyond the boundary to the sea-ports at Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft, and the airports at Norwich and Stansted. Local policies DC20 & DC22 seek to ensure that the A11, and other important 'Corridors of Movement', will not be adversely affected by new development proposals.
Do any transport schemes being promoted match regional priorities?	T15	(Para 2.4)	The Spatial Portrait acknowledges that dualling of the A11 south-east of Thetford will help sustain the further economic growth of the district. Elsewhere, the importance of the 'A11 Corridor' as a whole is broadly recognised.

QUESTION	RSS POLICY	LOCAL POLICY *	COMMENTS
Is there a policy relating to green infrastructure?	ENV1	SS1, CP6 DC11	
Are landscape, wildlife & geological conservation covered by appropriate policies?	ENV2, ENV3	SO8, SS1, CP10 - 11	
Does policy seek to protect agricultural land and soils, and / or promote rural diversification schemes?	ENV4	CP8, DC24	
Are woodlands protected?	ENV5	CP6, CP10 DC12	
Is conservation and enhancement of the historic environment addressed?	ENV6	SO9, SS1, CP6, CP10, DC3, 17, 18	
Does policy seek to achieve a high quality built environment?	ENV7	SO9, SO10, DC16	
Does policy seek to reduce carbon emissions? Is there a policy on renewable energy technologies (including the setting of a target)?	ENG1 ENG2	SO10, SO12 (CP9), CP12 DC14 - 15	(Local requirements for on-site provision will be set out in the Councils Development Control Policies DPD.)
Is there a policy on water efficiency?	WAT1	SO16, CP8	
Is Flood Risk Management addressed? Are Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUD) technologies promoted?	WAT4	SO13, CP8, DC13	
Is waste management addressed?	WM1 - 8	SO17, CP9	
Are there any policies relating to mineral resources?	M1		Mineral matters will be addressed through the Norfolk Minerals and Waste LDF.

QUESTION	RSS POLICY	LOCAL POLICY *	COMMENTS
Are any policies developed in accordance with any policies for key centres for development and change?	TH1	Various e.g. SS1, CP3	The Core Strategy echoes the development proposals set out for Thetford in the RSS.
Are there any policies relating to implementation and monitoring?	IMP1 & IMP2	Chapter 5	

PART FOUR – OVERALL ASSESSMENT

QUESTION	ANSWER	COMMENTS
<p>Is the Core Strategy in general conformity with the RSS?</p> <p>(If not, what is needed to rectify this?)</p>	Yes	<p>Breckland Council's Core Strategy submission document responds well to the East of England Plan. In accepting that opportunities to deliver new growth on previously developed land within the district are limited, there are no significant divergences from regional policy.</p> <p>The role of Thetford as a focus for housing and employment lead growth comes across strongly, as do policies that seek to protect and enhance the unique landscape and biological heritage of the area.</p>

Breckland Council - Core Strategy and Development Control Policies: Key Diagram

[Source: Core Strategy & DCP consultation document, page 28]

