

# Public Document Pack



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To The Chairman and Members of the  
Development Control Committee

All other Members of the Council – for information

Your Ref:

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Date 30 May 2008

## AGENDA SUPPLEMENT

Dear Sir/Madam

### DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE - MONDAY 9 JUNE 2008

I refer to the agenda for the above-mentioned meeting and enclose the following items:

Item No	Report Title	Page Nos
8.	<u>Regional Spatial Strategy - East of England Plan</u> Report of the Strategic Director (Transformation).	75 - 80

Yours faithfully

*Helen McAleer*

Member Services Officer

**BRECKLAND COUNCIL****Report of the Director of Transformation**  
**DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE -9<sup>th</sup> June 2008****REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY – EAST OF ENGLAND PLAN****1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to highlight to members the key planning policy implications of the adoption of the Regional Spatial Strategy in May 2008.

**2. Recommendations**

- It is recommended that the Committee:
- 2.1 Note the contents of the report

**Note:** In preparing this report, due regard has been had to equality of opportunity, human rights, prevention of crime and disorder, environmental and risk management considerations as appropriate. Relevant officers have been consulted in relation to any legal, financial or human resources implications and comments received are reflected in the report.

**3. Information, Issues and Options****3.1 Background**

- 3.1.1 Members may recall that the Regional Spatial Strategy has been in production for the last few years. Issues and Options Consultation was undertaken in 2003, followed by further consultation in 2004 and the Plan was Examined by a Panel of Inspectors at the end of 2005. The Inspectors' Report was received in Summer 2006 and further consultation on the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes undertaken in 2007. The Plan was adopted in May 2008 and on adoption replaces the previous Regional Spatial Strategy (RPG 6, 2000). On adoption the Regional Plan becomes part of the Development Plan for the area and therefore is material in the determination of planning applications in Breckland (and also throughout the area covered by the Plan – e.g Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Essex). Applications in Breckland are also determined using the "saved policies from the "Breckland District Local Plan 1999 until the Local Development Framework Core Strategy is adopted.

**3.2 Issues**

- 3.2.1 As the most up-to-date part of the Development Plan available to Breckland the RSS introduces new issues in the consideration of the determination of planning applications. Principally these are related to Affordable Housing and Renewable Energy

**3.2.2 Affordable Housing**

Policy H2 of the Plan (reproduced at Appendix A) sets out the requirement for a regional target of 35% for affordable housing. The plan indicates that affordable housing targets should be based on need and also on robust and credible evidence to justify any targets set out in Local Development Frameworks. Members may wish to note that Breckland has been using a 30% target based on previous housing needs studies as a starting point for negotiation with developers. The adoption of the RSS immediately introduces the 35% within the policy framework. Breckland Strategic Housing Market Assessment indicated that a 45% target would be required to address the housing need in Breckland. Subsequent viability testing using sites in

various locations indicates that a 40% target would be appropriate as it would not prevent development coming forward. The Breckland LDF emerging Core Strategy (Preferred Options Jan 2008) currently contains a 40% target which can only be used in the determination of applications once the Core Strategy has been successfully tested through examination. Members may also wish to note that the time taken to produce the RSS has meant that the 35% figure has been in the public domain for some considerable time and therefore it will not come as a complete surprise to the development industry.

### 3.2.3 **Renewable Energy**

Policy ENG.1 of the Plan (reproduced at Appendix A) introduces the requirement that until a Local Development Framework is in place that says otherwise, new developments of 10 dwellings or more or 1000m<sup>2</sup> of non-residential floor space should secure at least 10% of their energy from decentralised and renewable or low carbon sources, unless it can be demonstrated that this is unfeasible or unviable. The onus is on the developer/applicant to prove this to the satisfaction of the council. Members may also wish to note that the 10% figure which originated from the policies of the London Borough of Merton and is often known as the “Merton Rule” is regarded as defensible and reasonable on appeal situations and is accepted throughout the development industry. The emerging Breckland LDF Core Strategy is currently promoting a 10% figure for Breckland and there was a good deal of debate amongst Members at the time that perhaps a higher figure should be sought.

### 3.2.4 **Implications for Local Development Framework**

Due to the fact that the RSS has taken some time to be adopted, Breckland has been preparing its Local Development Framework using it as a policy guide for the Issues and Options and the Preferred Options stages of the Core Strategy. The RSS provides the overall housing and jobs figures for Breckland – 15,200 homes to 2021 and 6,000 jobs, These are the basis on which the emerging Core Strategy has been prepared.

In addition the identification within the RSS of Thetford as a Key centre for Development and Change and the 6,000 new homes figure for the town were the basis on which the Council and its partners made a successful bid for Growth Point Status for the Town.

The RSS also sets out the settlement hierarchy within the region. Policy SS4 (reproduced at Appendix A) and its supporting text gives the policy hook in the RSS which Breckland has used to promote a number of service centre villages. The RSS also sets out the broad criteria for the identification of such settlements - the Breckland LDF providing more detail for such assessments.

Any LDF document that is produced by Breckland is required to be in conformity with the RSS and both the East of England Regional Assembly who initially produced the document and Go-East who are responsible for its later stages and its implementation consider that the Preferred Options of the Breckland Core Strategy are in conformity with the RSS.

## 3.3 Options

3.3.1 The report is for information only

## 3.4 Reasons for Recommendation(s)

3.4.1 The report is for information only

## 4. **Risk and Financial Implications**

### 4.1 Risk

4.1.1 I have completed the Risk Management questionnaire and can confirm that risk has

been given careful consideration, and that there are no significant risks identified associated with the information in this report

#### 4.2 Financial

4.2.1 There are no financial implications

#### 5. Legal Implications

5.1 There are no legal implications as a consequence of this report]

#### 6. Other Implications

- a) Equalities: None
- b) Section 17, Crime & Disorder Act 1998: None
- c) Section 40, Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006: None
- d) Human Resources: None
- e) Human Rights: None
- f) Other: [e.g. Children's Act 2004] None

#### 7. Alignment to Council Priorities

7.1 The Regional Spatial Strategy gives a very regional broad overview and policy direction for Local Development Framework Production. On this basis it will contribute to the Council's following priority:

- Building Safer and Stronger Communities
- Environment
- Prosperous Communities

#### 8. Ward/Community Affected

8.1 All Wards within Breckland are affected

#### Background Papers

[Regional Spatial Strategy – East of England Plan

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#### Key Decision Status (Executive Decisions only):

*This report is for noting only*

#### Appendices attached to this report:

Appendix A – Policies H2 and ENG1 from the Regional Spatial Strategy – East of England Plan May 2008]

- 5.4 Local planning authorities should plan for an upward trajectory of housing completions, seeking first to achieve the annual average development rates for 2006-21 as soon as possible, then to make up any shortfall from the period before that rate is achieved. It is important that policies in existing plans do not constrain inappropriately the build-up of the house building rate while development plan documents which give effect to this RSS are put in place.
- 5.5 PPS3 requires RSS to set the overall level of housing provision distributed amongst local planning authorities. The particular circumstances in the East of England justify the approach where the housing allocations should be regarded as a minimum targets pending the proposed review of this RSS. This is because the figure of 508,000 dwellings falls significantly short of what is needed based on evidence about housing pressure, affordability and household projections. The proposed review of this RSS, Policy IMP3, will bring forward proposals for higher growth during the period 2011 to 2021, as well as setting requirements to 2031.
- 5.6 PPS3 requires local planning authorities to plan for continuous delivery of housing for at least 15 years from the date of adoption of housing allocation development plan documents. As most will not be adopted until 2008 – 2010, this review of RSS will not provide for the full 15 years in many cases. The requirement to assume, in planning for housing delivery after 2021, the continuation of planned annual rates 2001 to 2021 or 2006 to 2021 whichever is the higher, provides a consistent approach to ensure the achievement of this aspect of PPS3. This requirement may be waived where preparation of Development Plan Documents is at an advanced stage and planning beyond 2021 would cause significant delay to adoption. Elsewhere, if it will not be possible to identify specific, developable sites for the whole 15 year period, it will be sufficient to indicate broad areas for growth after 2021. Robust evidence will be needed to justify not doing so, for example green belt constraints in districts not proposed for green belt review.

## **POLICY H2: Affordable Housing<sup>4</sup>**

Within the overall housing requirement in Policy H1, Development Plan Documents should set appropriate targets for affordable housing taking into account:

- the objectives of the RSS;
- local assessments of affordable housing need, as part of strategic housing market assessments;
- the need where appropriate to set specific, separate targets for social rented and intermediate housing;
- evidence of affordability pressures; and
- the Regional Housing Strategy.

At the regional level, delivery should be monitored against the target for some 35% of housing coming forward through planning permissions granted after publication of the RSS to be affordable.

- 5.7 The widening of the ratio of house prices to incomes makes it increasingly difficult for those on low incomes and many key workers to obtain decent accommodation in reasonable proximity to their workplace. An adequate supply of good, affordable housing is essential to the quality of life of those of the region's residents who cannot afford to compete in the open market.
- 5.8 Housing stress varies across the region and targets of more than 35% may be justified in the more pressurised areas. PPS3 indicates that separate targets should be set for social rented and intermediate housing where appropriate.
- 5.9 Based on studies of affordable housing commissioned by EERA and its partners in 2003/04, the region needs approximately 11,000 new affordable homes each year (7,200 social rented, 2,400 intermediate rent and 1,320 social rented backlog). The studies also indicated that about 13,200 additional units were needed to address un-met needs, e.g. homelessness, families in overcrowded accommodation and suppressed households.

<sup>4</sup> For the purposes of this policy the definition of affordable housing is as in Annex B of PPS3.

## Section 9

# Carbon Dioxide Emissions and Renewable Energy

- 9.1** The UK Government, as a signatory to the Climate Convention, is actively seeking to achieve its commitments under the Kyoto Protocol to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 12.5% below 1990 levels by 2012. It set higher carbon reduction targets in the Climate Change Programme, 2000, and aims to reduce domestic emissions by 20% by 2010. The Climate Change Programme, 2006 sets out the Government's current policies and priorities for action. In November 2007 it published its Climate Change Bill which aims to reduce carbon dioxide emissions through domestic and international action to 26-32% below 1990 levels by 2020 and to at least 60% by 2050. This target will be reviewed, based on a report from the independent committee on climate change.
- 9.2** The 2007 Housing Green Paper establishes targets for all new homes to emit 25% less carbon from 2010, 44% less from 2013 and to be carbon zero from 2016. The 2008 Budget set out the Government's intention for all new non domestic buildings to be carbon zero from 2019. The supplement to PPS1, Planning and Climate Change, December 2007, makes clear that tackling climate change is a key Government priority for the planning system. It sets out how planning should shape places which produce lower emissions and are resilient and appropriate for the climate change now accepted as inevitable.

### **POLICY ENG1: Carbon Dioxide Emissions and Energy Performance**

Working with regional partners, EERA should consider the performance of the spatial strategy on mitigating and adapting to climate change through its monitoring framework and develop clear yardsticks against which future trends can be measured, which should inform the review of the RSS and the preparation of Local Development Documents.

To meet regional and national targets for reducing climate change emissions, new development should be located and designed to optimise its carbon performance. Local authorities should:

- encourage the supply of energy from decentralised, renewable and low carbon energy sources and through Development Plan Documents set ambitious but viable proportions of the energy supply of new development to be secured from such sources and the development thresholds to which such targets would apply. In the interim, before targets are set in Development Plan Documents, new development of more than 10 dwellings or 1000m<sup>2</sup> of non-residential floorspace should secure at least 10% of their energy from decentralised and renewable or low-carbon sources, unless this is not feasible or viable; and
- promote innovation through incentivisation, master planning and development briefs which, particularly in key centres for development and change, seek to maximise opportunities for developments to achieve, and where possible exceed national targets for the consumption of energy. To help realise higher levels of ambition local authorities should encourage energy service companies (ESCOs) and similar energy saving initiatives.

- 9.3** For the East of England, the combination of vulnerability to the effects of climate change and the level of development with its potential contribution to emissions means that addressing climate change is particularly urgent and challenging. The concentration of research expertise on climate change within the region and the work being done by partners including the Sustainable Development Round Table, Climate Change Partnership, Regional Cities East and other cities, means

## **POLICY SS4: Towns other than Key Centres and Rural Areas**

Local Development Documents should define the approach to development in towns other than those listed in Policy SS3 and in rural areas. Such towns include selected market towns and others with the potential to increase their economic and social sustainability through measures to:

- support urban and rural renaissance;
- secure appropriate amounts of new housing, including affordable housing, local employment and other facilities; and
- improve the town's accessibility, especially by public transport.

Local Development Documents should also consider the potential of other key service centres to accommodate development which is sympathetic to local character and of an appropriate scale and nature in relation to local housing and employment needs.

For other rural settlements they should seek to support the viability of agriculture and other economic activities, diversification of the economy, the provision of housing for local needs and the sustainability of local services.

- 3.16** The RSS seeks to locate the majority of new development in and adjacent to the key centres for development and change, and to protect the quality and character of the region's rural areas. However, within that broad approach, Policy SS4 recognises the role of market towns and larger villages in providing employment and services to their rural hinterlands and meeting housing needs.
- 3.17** Key service centres are large villages with a good level of services, which might include:
- a primary school within the settlement and a secondary school within the settlement or easily accessible by public transport;
  - primary health care facilities;
  - a range of retail and service provision capable of meeting day-to-day needs, particularly for convenience shopping;
  - local employment opportunities; and
  - frequent public transport to higher order settlements.
- 3.18** Many villages have very limited local services and are dependent on key service centres, market towns, and main urban areas for everyday needs. The main challenges are securing small-scale local employment opportunities and supporting the needs of agriculture, improving public transport access to higher order settlements, providing housing for the full range of local needs and supporting the sustainability of local services.
- 3.19** The growth of villages has been unable to halt the closure of village services and commuting has increased dramatically. Careful examination of how a settlement or groups of settlements function is required, as well as analysis of the service base to determine the best solutions for each area.
- 3.20** There is an acute shortage of affordable housing in many rural areas. Responding to this challenge is a priority if significant sectors of the community are not to be excluded by high house prices. Effective use should be made of rural exceptions policies to deliver affordable housing. The provision of new homes in market and other towns can increase support for services such as schools, health facilities and shops. In the context of maintaining and improving the self-sufficiency of such towns, local authorities should seek to achieve an improved housing-employment balance to minimise commuting. Other rural settlements, including small villages, may have local housing needs that can best be met at those settlements