

BRECKLAND PARTNERSHIP

19 FEBRUARY 2009

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The Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) & Local Development Framework (LDF)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update the LSP Board Members on progress with the Local Development Framework (LDF) and to provide further clarification on the relationship between the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and the LDF Core Strategy.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the LSP Board:

- 2.1 Note [for information and planning purposes] the contents of this report
- 2.2 Due consideration is given to the role of the LSP Board in co-ordinating & managing the growth agenda in Breckland.

3. Background

What is the Local Development Framework (LDF)?

3.1.1 The LDF is the spatial strategy for the area. It aims to: Set a spatial vision for the area with clear economic, social and environmental objectives; Consider the needs and aspirations of Breckland residents; and Achieve an integrated approach to regeneration and the delivery of required development

3.1.2 The Breckland LDF is made up of a number of documents which will enable and manage future land-use and development in the District. The overarching document is the Core Strategy and Policies document from which the Area Action Plans will be developed for Attleborough and Thetford together with a Site Specifics document for the rest of the District.

How do the LDF and SCS link?

3.1.3 The Local Government White Paper outlines the need for coherence between the LSP's Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and the Local Planning Authorities' Local Development Framework (LDF). Furthermore planning law requires that LDF's must have due "regard" to the contents of the SCS.

3.1.4 To improve collaboration between planning and LSP's, guidance was published in January 2007 by the Government's Communities and Local Government department in the form of a practice guide called "Planning Together: Local Strategic Partnerships and Spatial Planning". To date the Breckland LDF and SCS have been prepared in line with this guidance note.

3.1.5 Breckland is well underway with the preparation of its Local Development Framework. Work has focussed on developing the overall strategy and the policies which will shape development in the District to 2026. This has culminated in the publication of the Core Strategy and Policies document at the start of the year. Representations received during the publication period will be considered by an independent Government Inspector who will consider the arguments at an Examination in Public on the LDF to be held in July.

3.1.6 A key area which will be tested on the LDF is whether the strategy is deliverable and whether there is a sound understanding of what infrastructure is needed, the estimated costs and when it is likely to be implemented. As the LSP Board may be aware, Breckland is in line to accommodate significant growth over the next 15-20 years, including 12,000 net new homes and up to 12,700 net new jobs. The majority of growth is being directed to locations along the A11 corridor including Thetford and Attleborough and strategic employment growth at Snetterton. Elsewhere the market towns of Dereham, Swaffham and Watton will see modest growth (100s homes rather than 1000s) and 14 larger villages have been identified as Local Service Centre villages including 4 which will see some growth (Harling, Narborough, Shipdham & Swanton Morley). The primary purpose of Local Service Centre villages is to maintain and improve service provision in the rural communities.

3.1.7 The growth agenda in the LDF is directly related to a number of National Indicators (see below) and the policies in the LDF indirectly cut across a wide range of Indicators (i.e. employment, environmental sustainability, access to services etc).

NI 154 – Net additional homes provided (annual)

NI 155 - Number of affordable homes delivered (gross)

NI 159 - Supply of ready to develop housing sites

NI 170 - Previously developed land that has been vacant or derelict for more than 5 years

3.1.8 The emerging LDF Core Strategy and the SCS have been prepared to reflect one another, not least through the development of a shared evidence base during 2007. In essence, the LDF is the spatial expression of the SCS in terms of articulating the land requirements arising from those areas where focus for action identified (i.e. homes, thriving economy, access to services and environmental sustainability).

3.2 Issues

3.2.1 Ensuring the growth agenda delivers sustainable communities in Breckland is a key issue facing everyone responsible for delivering services in Breckland. From the community consultation and stakeholder engagement undertaken on the LDF it is clear that the growth agenda in Breckland (and across the East of England) is raising concerns about the timely delivery of infrastructure. The overall infrastructure bill linked with growth in Breckland is currently estimated at £326million and this includes education, health, transport and utilities. Increasingly the planning system is looking for development to “consume its own smoke” and pay for the direct impacts on infrastructure and services arising from the development. Tariffs and the proposed ‘Community Infrastructure Levy’ on new development are one mechanism which authorities can explore to augment the mainstream public funding being lined up to support growth.

3.2.2 One approach that is being adopted in some growth areas is to use the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) to coordinate and manage the growth agenda. LSP’s can be well placed to take on this role as they have a broad membership including the key infrastructure providers and service delivery agencies. Importantly they are serviced by a team of Local Authority Officers who have an understanding of the growth and development functions of the Council and are subject to scrutiny from local elected members. Finally, given LSP’s wider remit to develop and deliver A Sustainable Community Strategy they can ensure that the growth agenda contributes to the wider regeneration objectives of the district.

3.2.3 This is an approach that has been developed by Huntingdonshire District Council where the current governance and support arrangements in HDC are focussed on the Growth and Infrastructure Group of the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership. The growth and Infrastructure Group is the Project Board for the Huntingdonshire Local Investment Framework (LIF) and, as such, are charged with co-ordinating the delivery of the infrastructure necessary to support the growth framework.

3.2.4 The Growth and Infrastructure Group includes representatives from the HDC’s service departments, CCC Education and Transport departments and NHS Cambridge and is supported by staff from HDC’s Democratic Services, Planning and Regeneration departments. As required the Group will bring in representatives from the Environment

Agency, Utility companies and Emergency Services.

3.2.5 The terms of reference for the Growth and Infrastructure Group could include:

- To support and co-ordinate, as appropriate, the strategic growth and infrastructure development for Breckland, through the delivery of actions relating to key plans including the Local Investment Framework;
- To act as Project Board for the delivery of the Investment Framework for the District;
- To ensure the co-ordination and delivery of the growth and infrastructure elements of the Breckland Sustainable Community Strategy; and
- To ensure stakeholders have engaged in the process of strategy development and implementation on growth and infrastructure related issues.

3.2.6 As the growth agenda moves forward, structures and responsibilities for delivering the growth in a sustainable way will need to be defined. The co-ordination of the overall infrastructure provision will require appropriate delivery mechanisms to be put in place. Experiences from other growth areas have identified the importance of the 'ringmaster' and 'banker' roles. The Ringmaster role requires a body to act as the fulcrum between the plethora of public agencies involved and the private developers (in terms of the contributions from new developments). The ringmaster role will essentially co-ordinate and commission infrastructure, facilities and services.

3.2.7 On this basis the role of the Partnership will need to evolve as the area faces new opportunities and challenges to increasingly deliver services that meet established and emerging community priorities. The management and coordination of growth outside of Thetford, in the other growth locations such as Attleborough and Dereham, is much less well developed and primarily undertaken by Breckland District Council. An important immediate challenge for Breckland District Council is to develop a co-ordinated approach to deliver growth across the whole district which attracts the same level of stakeholder and political involvement as in Thetford.

3.2.8 The new, updated Sustainable Community Strategy reflects this progress and in the last two years, the Partnership has developed three new strategies on Economic Prosperity, Culture and Social Inclusion. Together, with the Local Development Framework and the Norfolk Local Area Agreement, the three documents underpin the Sustainable Community Strategy and structure the work of the Partnership. Delivering and co-ordinating the growth will provide a high profile role for the Partnership should it chose to adopt the ringmaster function as outlined above.

Key Dates:

End of March 2009 Breckland submits (hands in) its LDF Core Strategy and Policies to Government

July 2009 – A Government Inspector will test whether the document is deliverable, justified and effective at an Examination in Public to be held in Dereham

November 2009 – Breckland will be consulting on specific sites which it considers are best placed to deliver the LDF Strategy

3.3 Options

3.3.1 To note [for information and planning purposes] the contents of this report.

3.4 Reasons for Recommendation(s)

3.4.1 It is important that the LSP starts to consider and discuss its potential role in delivering the objectives of the SCS and their spatial expression in the LDF. Examples are starting to emerge (eg Huntingdonshire) which this LSP Board may wish to explore further.

