

DISS

1. Settlement characteristics

The town is situated on the A1066 and A143 on the northern slopes of the Waveney Valley and located around 'The Mere', a lake of over two hectares set into the valley side. The Mere forms a large attractive central feature that has partly constrained the development of the town centre to around the northern and eastern sides of the lake. St Nicholas Street, Market Hill and Mere Street form most of the Central Business Area, which is centred on The Market Place at the northern end of Mere Street. Development has been constrained to the south of the town centre and the A1066/A143 by the floodplain of the River Waveney. The town has considerable areas of industrial and commercial development such as the Sawmills Farm and Vinces Road employment areas to the east.

Elsewhere there are smaller residential extensions to the town primarily to the north along Shelfanger Road and to the south west beyond Fair Green. An outlier of low density development including several farmsteads is located to the north east at Walcot Green.

The major attraction of Diss arises from the rich heritage of historic buildings which have survived in and near the town centre, complemented by the natural setting of The Mere and the historic nature of the area's streets, yards and open spaces. This has been recognised by the Council's designation of a large part of the central, northern and south western parts of Diss as a Conservation Area, characterised by a large number of attractive views and a number of historic residential streets such as Chapel Street, Church Street, Upper Denmark Street and Mount Street. Large enclosed public and private open spaces are also a characteristic of the Conservation Area and contribute greatly to its attraction. These include a mixture of grazing meadow, playing fields, open greens, park and The Mere.

Overall the town is surrounded by generally open countryside comprising the Waveney Valley floor to the south, the valley of the River Frenze to the east and north, and a small strip of open fields separating the town from the village of Roydon to the west. The valleys provide attractive landscape features of great amenity and ecological value and the open areas of farmland provide distant views while maintaining the separation of the town from the nearby settlements. Each of these elements enhances the rural setting of the town.

The town possesses a wide range of facilities, most of which are located in or near the town centre. Education provision includes a first, junior and a high school. The Corn Hall in St Nicholas Street provides the major venue for public meetings and a youth centre is located in Shelfanger Road. The town possesses its own sewage treatment works.

Policies and proposals (see Inset Maps 19A and 19B)

2. Development Limit

The Development Limit for the town encompasses the existing developed area and allocations (see Inset Maps 19A and 19B). The Development Limit is intended to consolidate the existing form of the settlement, to maintain the separation of the town from Walcot Green and Roydon, and to prevent the further intrusion of new development into the surrounding open countryside. Although existing development already largely borders the River Waveney to the south of the town, the Development Limit precludes development from the backland area to the south of Park Road, and from forming further eastern and western extensions along the Waveney Valley. Similarly to the north and east of the town, the Development Limit precludes further development from encroaching on the valleys of the River Waveney and the River Frenze.

The Roydon Development Limit is drawn to include the site of Sturgeon's Farm on Louies Lane. This is an important site at the edge of the built-up area, and any development that takes place here should respect the form and character of the surrounding area. It would be a positive asset if existing buildings on site could be re-used. This will, however, depend on detail appraisal on site. Policy HOU 4 sets out further detailed considerations.

The following open spaces are considered to make a significant contribution to the town's form and character and have been identified for specific protection under policy IMP 3:

1. The Mere
2. The Park and backland adjacent to The Mere
3. Fair Green
4. The Parish Fields
5. Backland to the east of Mount Street
6. Rectory Meadow and Diss Junior School Playing Field.

Within the Development Limit further residential development will be provided for within the context of policy HOU 4. Outside the Development Limit, proposals for any new development will be assessed against policy ENV 8 and other more specific Local Plan policies where appropriate.

3. Housing

4.8 hectares of land south of Frenze Hall Lane is allocated for residential development. The site is adjacent to the existing built up area and in close proximity to the Vinces Road and Sawmills employment areas. Diss Railway Station is within easy walking distance, providing opportunities for reducing private car use. Developer requirements are set out in the following policy.

Policy DIS 1: Housing allocation, Frenze Hall Lane, Diss

An area of 4.8ha of land is allocated for residential development, with access from Frenze Hall Lane. The developer of the site will be expected to provide for the following:

Adult /older children open space

- i) Adult/older children open space at a minimum level of 2000 sq.m. plus an extra 42.5 sq.m. for every unit over 50, either adjacent to the development, as an extension to existing facilities, or by way of an agreed equivalent financial contribution.

Affordable housing

- ii) Affordable housing to be phased across the development as a whole, subject to an up-to-date local needs survey.

Children's playspace

- iii) On-site children's playspace of a minimum size of 1000 sq.m. plus 17.5 sq.m. for each additional dwelling over 50, to include a minimum of three items of play equipment.

Education facilities

- iv) Financial contributions towards the alterations or extensions necessary to accommodate pupils from the development at Diss High, Junior and County infants schools to be completed within the Plan period.

Fire hydrants

- v) 1 fire hydrant on site per 50 dwellings, to be provided during the development of the site.

Footpath and cycle links

- vi) Provision of a footway from the railway arch to connect with the existing footway on the south side of Frenze Hall Lane east of the allocation site. Convenient, safe and attractive pedestrian and cycle links within the site and off-site to maximise such users' access to Vincennes Road and the adjacent housing estate, the town centre, railway station and other public transport and community facilities

Leisure facilities

- vii) Funding for the extension or alteration of the Diss Swim & Fitness Centre to meet additional needs arising from the development.

(Continued...)

(Policy DIS 1 continued)***Library facilities***

viii) Contributions towards the improvement of the local library service.

Road access/Transportation

ix) Access from Frenze Hall Lane via Type 3 road with link into housing estate to west.

x) Widen Frenze Hall Lane along site frontage up to the railway bridge

xi) Traffic light control of the railway bridge at the junction of Sandy Lane/Frenze Hall Lane.

Waste facilities

xii) Facilities on or off-site for the storage, collection and recycling of waste likely to be generated by the development.

4. Mixed use development

A major area to the west of Sandy Lane is considered to be suitable for mixed use development (employment and residential). This site is on the eastern edge of the town within a short distance of Diss railway station and bus stop, increasing the opportunity for residents to use non car modes of transport. The redevelopment of the site will also include the construction of a new east-west link road from Sandy Lane to the edge of the allocation. This new link provides the opportunity for Network Rail to re-organise and improve access and parking arrangements to the station and result in a general enhancement of the area, subject to careful design, access, environmental and other considerations.

The precise size of site that may be appropriate for housing use is to be determined by the preparation of a development brief. The housing allocations for the Rural Area part of the District, including Diss, have already been calculated (see Table 2.1 in the Housing chapter). It would not therefore be appropriate to make a specific allocation in this Plan. However in order to provide some degree of certainty for developers the Council would wish to indicate that the housing element of any permission issued should be implemented after 2006 i.e. the housing element will not be in a phase commencing before 2006.

Whilst there is no overriding need for additional housing land, mixed use development would, for example, be consistent with the recent Government advice in Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG) 3 "Housing" (March 2000). It would also provide much needed flexibility in the economic policies for Diss. The District Council wishes the site to be developed in a comprehensive manner. Mixed use development would by its nature, be more sympathetic with its surroundings and would have the complementary benefit of enhancing the viability of the remaining Sawmills allocation. Development should respect and be in keeping with the residential area to the south of the site. The District Council will prepare a development brief in conjunction with the landowner(s) of site in order to consider the economics of infrastructure provision and to ensure that the overall balance between

employment land availability and housing provision is maintained within Diss. Requirements will include the provision of a, developer funded, new east-west link from Sandy Lane to the station (and associated open space and landscaping) which should also provide access to the existing industrial premises at the northern end of Mission Road.

Policy DIS 2: Mixed use development, west of Mission Road/Sandy Lane, Diss

The area of land to the west of Mission Road/Sandy Lane (7.1ha) is intended for mixed use development (housing and employment uses primarily). The specific proportions for the various components will be developed via the preparation of a development brief for the area.

Development of the residential element of the mixed use development will not be permitted to commence before 2006.

The developer will also be expected to provide a new east-west link from Sandy Lane to the station (and associated open space and landscaping) which should also provide access to the existing industrial premises at the northern end of Mission Road

The overall balance of uses will be dependent on assessments which will need to include consideration of:

- i) The economics of infrastructure provision**
- ii) The balance of employment land availability and housing provision in the town**
- iii) The effects of the consultation zone for the adjacent notifiable installation**
- iv) Adequate mechanisms to ensure the amenities of new residential properties are maintained**

5. Employment

The Sawmills employment allocation and Sandy Lane west mixed use allocation are either being developed or have permission. The District Council has produced a development brief for the site which provides for a wide range of employment uses to be served by a single main access from Victoria Road, and to be developed in three phases subject to the resolution of the area's current surface water drainage and foul sewerage constraints.

It is essential that an adequate supply of employment land is maintained to provide for a choice of local employment opportunities and the continued economic growth of the area. Diss is identified by the Norfolk Structure Plan as a main location for employment growth. Within this context it is proposed to allocate the employment land shown in policy DIS 3 and on Inset Map 19A which at recent rates of development should provide for employment growth to beyond the Plan period.

Policy DIS 3: Employment development to the east of Sandy Lane/Sawmills Farm, Diss

An area of 15.2ha is allocated for employment related development (classes B1, B2 & B8) to the east of Sandy Lane/Sawmills Farm. The developer will be expected to provide for the following:

Bus facilities

- i) **The funding of the provision of bus services to serve the development and the provision of the necessary bus stops, infrastructure and their maintenance.**

Footpath and cycle links

- ii) **Convenient, safe and attractive pedestrian and cycle links within the site and off-site to maximise such users' access to the town centre, railway station, public transport and community facilities.**

Transportation

- iii) **Widening of Sandy Lane along the site frontage, access points to be kept to a minimum and no direct frontage access for vehicles will be allowed. Traffic calming of Mission Road to create a 20mph zone.**

6. Shopping

Diss plays an important role as a retailing and service centre. Surveys have shown that the town attracts its customers from up to 15 miles away, most of who arrive by car. A significant proportion of daytime shoppers also walk and a few arrive by bus. The town contains over 100 retail premises, mainly in small shops offering a wide range of durable goods located in a well defined town centre. The town centre also includes a large supermarket and is supplemented by larger scale retailing facilities away from the centre on Victoria Road. These include a predominantly food superstore on the fringe of the centre and retailers of furniture, carpets and D.I.Y. goods approximately one kilometre to the east.

The District Council considers that the town's retailing and servicing role should be maintained and enhanced. To maintain the town's vitality, the District Council has provided for a Central Business Area in which a wide range of retailing development will be encouraged in accordance with policy SHO 4. To maintain a desirable balance between the town centre's retailing and non-retailing provision, Primary and Secondary Shopping Areas have been defined within the Central Business Area as shown on Inset Map 19B.

In this way, the loss of retailing uses will generally be resisted within the Primary Shopping Area as provided for by policy SHO 5, and non-retailing uses contributing towards the town centre's vitality may be located more appropriately within the Secondary Shopping Area, in accordance with policy SHO 6. The use of under-used floorspace above business premises throughout the Central Business Area will be encouraged in accordance with policy SHO 7.

Policy DIS 4: Primary Shopping Area, Diss

~~The Primary Shopping Area comprises Mere Street, Market Place, Market Hill and St Nicholas Street as defined on Inset Map 19B. Development will be provided for within this area in accordance with policies SHO4 and SHO 5.~~

Attention: Please note that Local Plan policy **DIS 4** has been **discontinued** since 28th September 2007 as part of the 'saved policy' process. Applicants should now instead refer to Local Plan policies SHO 4 (Town centres) and SHO5 (Mix of uses within central shopping areas).

Policy DIS 5: Secondary Shopping Area, Diss

~~The Secondary Shopping Area comprises the area within the Central Business Area that lies outside the Primary Shopping Area, as defined on the Proposals Map (see Inset Map 19B). Development will be provided for within this area in accordance with policy SHO 6.~~

Attention: Please note that Local Plan policy **DIS 5** has been **discontinued** since 28th September 2007 as part of the 'saved policy' process. Applicants should now instead refer to Local Plan policy SHO6 (Secondary shopping areas).

The Central Business Area is not suitable for the development of large scale shopping provision due to site size, access and conservation constraints. However, it is likely that proposals for such development will arise to meet the needs of continuing population growth and modern retailing techniques. Policies SHO 1 and SHO 2 provide for the location of major retailing developments adjacent to existing main shopping centres subject to a range of locational, access and environmental criteria. Within these contexts it is considered that an area of industrial buildings along the south side of Park Road offers scope for the location of specified retailing and leisure development. Analysis has demonstrated that there is capacity for some additional retail floorspace and a need for some leisure use if Diss is to retain its position in the retail hierarchy and its overall vitality is not to be eroded. Development of the site would form a complementary extension to the main shopping area adjacent to the Safeway store and result in environmental improvements as well as contributing towards the District Council's overall vision and strategy for Diss. The developer of the site will be required to provide foot and cycle links on and off the site. This is in order to encourage modes of transport other than the private car. The area to the south of Park Road is adjacent to, and currently detracts from the setting of, the Conservation Area and would benefit from a scheme of positive enhancement to minimise its adverse impact. The area also consists of mainly low lying backland between the buildings and the River Waveney, part of which has the potential for enhancement through the development of

a riverside walk. Whilst part of this has already been provided, the District Council wishes to implement a scheme to ensure the continuation of the riverside walk westwards. This should maximise public access and enhance the Conservation Area. In order to achieve the benefits arising from a continuous walk, financial contributions (for the part of the proposal site where it adjoins the river) will be required from the developer of the Park Road site towards the development of the riverside walk.

Policy DIS 6: Land allocated for retailing/leisure uses south of Park Road, Diss

An area of 4.14ha south of Park Road (as defined on the Inset Map) is allocated for the development of a combination of small-scale food retail/discount retailing (around 743 - 929 sq m gross), non-food bulky goods retailing and leisure uses. The area should be developed in a comprehensive manner. Incremental development of the site will be resisted. The developer of the site will be expected to provide for the following:

Floodplain survey

- i) An undertaking, at their expense, to carry out a full level survey of the area adjacent to the river in order to establish the northern limit of the Waveney floodplain. This area, once confirmed will be subject to level uses only.**

Footpath and cycle links

- ii) Convenient, safe and attractive pedestrian and cycle links that permeate both through the site and off site to maximise such users' access to the town centre and public transport and other community facilities.**
- iii) Appropriate improvements/financial contributions and access to the Waveney riverside walk, where it adjoins the site.**

Road access

- iv) Dependent on the nature of the proposed development, appropriate road improvements and access arrangements in Park Road and Victoria Road to be agreed with the County Council with the aim of minimising the number of access points and the traffic impact on these roads.**

7. Traffic and transportation

Access to the town centre to the north of the A1066 is dependent upon a network of relatively narrow roads, many of which also serve residential areas and are inadequate to serve current traffic flows. The main traffic issues to be resolved relate to internal traffic circulation, car parking, pedestrian and cyclist provision and through traffic.

i) Internal traffic circulation

Substandard elements of the town's road network have previously been identified including the Denmark Road/Croft Road/Park Road junction and narrow parts of Denmark Street, Mere Street, Market Hill, St Nicholas Street, Mission Road and Factory Lane.

Measures have included one-way traffic flows, loading restrictions and on-street parking restrictions. However, while the recent Mere Street measures altered the main access routes into the town centre, they also increased traffic pressures in Denmark Street, forming the main link from the A1066, and in Skelton Road and Frenze Road where vehicles attempted to rat-run to the centre through a residential area. Skelton Road has been subjected to traffic calming measures to help alleviate problems. In addition the Denmark Street access to the town centre from the A1066 has been clarified by improved road signage. The District and County Councils will continue to pursue relevant remedial measures where appropriate.

Policy DIS 7: Access requirements for employment land allocation at Sandy Lane/Sawmills Farm, Diss

Proposals for the development of the employment land allocation at Sandy Lane East/Sawmills Farm will normally be permitted if they accord with the District Council's development brief approved in May 1990 and include an agreement to provide a new access road from a junction with Victoria Road, incorporating a new link from Mission Road to a new access serving the station. The new access road will be built at the developer's expense.

Victoria Road to the east of the railway serves an area of mixed land uses which generate conflicting traffic movements via a series of substandard road junctions. The junction of Victoria Road and the A143 Bury Road has been a source of congestion. The construction of the A143 Scole/Stuston bypass has removed some of the traffic using the A1066/ex A143 Bury Road (Rose Lane) /Victoria Road junction whilst the development of the Sawmills Farm employment area has reduced some of these conflicts by enabling the exclusion of commercial vehicles from Mission Road.

Policy DIS 8: Traffic management measures, Sandy Lane/Sawmills Farm employment area, Diss

The District Council will press the County Council, British Rail, and the Thelveton Estate to implement the traffic management measures proposed for Mission Road, Station Road and Prince Regents Way as proposed in association with the development of the Sandy Lane East/Sawmills Farm employment area.

ii) Pedestrian and cyclist provision

The potential exists to enhance links between the town centre, main housing and employment areas and the railway station. The Diss Walking and Cycling Study seeks to develop a walking and cycling network for the town, with the aim of improving conditions for walking and cycling thereby encouraging more people to choose these modes of travel. The development brief for the Sandy Lane East/Sawmills Farm employment area also provides for a footpath link between Sandy Lane and the station and for the investigation within the area by the District Council of the provision of segregated cycle routes. The provision of cycle routes is a County Council responsibility, however.

Policy DIS 9: Provision for pedestrians/cyclists in Diss

~~The District Council will seek to enhance the provision for pedestrians and cyclists within the town centre and elsewhere as appropriate, as provided for by policies TRA 1, 2, 3 and TRA 16.~~

Attention: Please note that Local Plan policy **DIS 9** has been **discontinued** since 28th September 2007 as part of the 'saved policy' process. Applicants should now instead refer to Local Plan policies TRA 1 (Provision of pedestrian links), TRA 2 (Safeguarding of the cycle network), TRA 3 (Provision of cycling facilities), and TRA 16 (Road improvement, traffic management and pedestrian proposals).

8. Built environment

There is a need to preserve and enhance as much as possible of the valuable historic fabric of the town while providing for sensitively designed new development. The Diss Conservation Area Statement describes in detail the multitude of factors that contribute to the unique character of the area. It also outlines the problems, opportunities and proposals e.g. Diss Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme, for the future enhancement and development of the area.

9. Environmental improvements

The success of the Diss Environmental Enhancement Scheme in the town centre should encourage further measures at the southern end of Mere Street, hopefully with contributions from the private sector.

The District Council has a limited ability to provide the necessary improvements and to an extent will be dependent upon the co-operation of private land owners to provide some of the environmental enhancements to the town.

Policy DIS 10: Enhancement of townscape in Diss

The District Council will encourage the enhancement of townscape features throughout the town and especially within the Conservation Area as identified by the Plan.

10. Enclosed open spaces

The Conservation Area contains a number of large public and private enclosed open spaces, which provide a valuable contribution towards its character. These include a variety of uses in areas such as that around The Mere and The Park, Fair Green, the Parish Fields, backland behind the Manor House on Mount Street, and Rectory Meadow and the adjacent school playing field. The District Council considers that the attractions of these areas should be preserved and will strongly resist proposals for their redevelopment.

~~Policy DIS 11: Open Spaces within the Conservation Area in Diss~~

~~**The District Council will strongly resist proposals for the development of the open spaces within the Conservation Area defined on the Proposals Map and will encourage their enhancement.**~~

Attention: Please note that Local Plan policy **DIS 11** has been **discontinued** since 28th September 2007 as part of the 'saved policy' process. Applicants should now instead refer to Local Plan policy IMP 3 (Protection of important spaces).

The Mere and its banks form an attractive feature, which could be considerably improved. The potential exists to greatly enhance the appearance of the eastern banks and the backland behind the properties facing Mere Street between the Mere's Mouth and the King's Head Yard car park and to improve public access along this side of the Mere. The area is currently in private ownership and comprises a mixture of rear service areas and semi-derelict land, and contains some obtrusive development that is detrimental to the Conservation Area. The area would benefit from a co-ordinated scheme of improvements aimed at tidying backland areas and banks as well as improving public access.

Any proposals for this area should be complementary to the existing enhancement of Mere's Mouth. In this way the improvements could be combined to form a very attractive enhancement to the Conservation Area. Scope also exists for a walkway extension around the Mere's western banks. This would require the purchase of land currently in use as private gardens and is not considered to be a viable proposition at present. Any enhancement should consider potentially unstable ground conditions and existing outfalls to the Mere. Those aspects should form part of a mutual survey of the area.

Policy DIS 12: Enhancement of Diss Mere's eastern banks

The District Council will encourage and co-ordinate the implementation of proposals to enhance the eastern bank of the Mere and to provide a suitable public access along the Mere's eastern banks. The District Council will produce a scheme to achieve this aim and where appropriate, will use its legal powers to achieve the public access.

11. Recreation

Diss contains public open spaces available for informal recreation at Fair Green, The Park and for both informal and formal recreation on playing fields at Shelfanger Road and Rectory Meadow. Notwithstanding these areas and the potential for a degree of public use of the playing fields associated with the local schools, there is an estimated shortfall of public open space for formal recreation for adults and older children in accordance with the standards of the National Playing Fields Association (N.P.F.A.). This amounts to some 6.3 hectares.

Although the existing land allocation is slightly larger than the apparent need, the land has been re-allocated as the N.P.F.A. standards relate to a minimum provision. The District Council acknowledges that a more detailed assessment of need, the type and range of provision to be made and means of implementation will be necessary, in partnership with the Town Council, the landowner, other interested parties and the general public in the Town. This separate consultation will enable development of the site to take place in a way that meets identified shortfalls of provision and local needs.

Policy DIS 13: Land allocated for recreational use at Walcott Road, Diss

8.5 hectares of land at Walcot Road is allocated for informal and formal recreational use.

In addition to this provision, the District Council will encourage the dual use of existing school playing field facilities in accordance with policy LEI 9.

The current distribution of informal public open space is biased towards the southern half of the town. The northern half of the town contains two large enclosed open spaces (as defined on Inset Map 19B) which considerably enhance the Conservation Area. Of these areas, the District Council considers that the 'Parish Fields' (also known as 'The Lawn') has the potential to form an area of informal public open space that could complement the preservation of the area's attractive features and ensure its retention as a setting for the buildings nearby within the Conservation Area.

Policy DIS 14: Use of Diss 'Parish Fields' as public open space

The District Council will encourage the use of the 'Parish Fields' as an area of public open space for informal use.

The District Council and the Town Council (in conjunction with the Upper Waveney Valley Project and Mid Suffolk District Council) supports the development of a riverside walk between the 'The Lows' and Denmark Bridge. It is envisaged that development of the walk

will incorporate a picnic area, litter and 'Fido' bins and fishing platforms accessible to all. However, otter and water vole are present on the River Waveney and both species are protected under legislation which includes protection against disturbance or damage to places of shelter. In order to protect the habitat of these, and other riverine species, any development of the walk should leave a buffer strip of natural vegetation to include the bank itself, in addition to a minimum of 3 metres from the bank top. Any works to the banks will be subject to a survey and assessment of the impact of the work (in relation to the protected species) to ensure that they are acceptable under The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981).

Implementation of the project to date has been achieved through the use of Section 106 legal agreements associated with adjoining development proposals and also by the Town Council upgrading the existing walk between 'The Lows' and Safeway. A comprehensive approach for the development of the riverside walk between interested parties e.g. Town Council, District Councils, Upper Waveney Valley Project, Norfolk Wildlife Trust etc. is more desirable than the current piecemeal approach. The District Council will investigate ways of co-ordinating the activities into a deliverable programme.

Policy DIS 15: Riverside Walk and associated informal recreation amenities, 'The Lows'/Denmark Bridge area of Diss

The District Council will seek to achieve a riverside walk and associated informal recreation amenities in an attractive setting on the northern side of the river between 'The Lows' and Denmark Bridge.

