

SECTION 0 OBJECTIVES AND OVERALL STRATEGY

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The purpose of this section is to outline a number of underlying themes which emerge in subsequent sections and which have played an important part in influencing the policies and proposals in the Plan.

1. National policy context

The Rio Summit of 1992 brought the issue of 'sustainable development' to the attention of Governments throughout the world. It has been defined as 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (World Commission on Environment and Development). The UK Government also sees it as 'living within our environmental means'. Sustainable development seeks to improve the quality of human life without undermining the quality of our natural environment. It therefore embraces all aspects of this Local Plan, the social, economic and environmental issues, and recognises that conflict between them should ideally be eliminated or reconciled in an acceptable way. Allied to the aim of achieving sustainable development is the concept of Local Agenda 21 (LA 21). LA 21 is basically a plan, system or strategy by which we can achieve sustainable development. One key element is the involvement of the local community in that process. Another key element is the integration of policies and the use of partnerships to promote sustainable development. This Local Plan together with the Norfolk Structure Plan and other documents that make up the 'development plan' is a key unifying document. The multi-stakeholder involvement in moulding the Local Plan provides a valuable role in the LA 21 process.

An Environmental Appraisal was prepared in conjunction with this Local Plan and details are given in the previous section. At a detailed level Government guidance in the form of Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPG's), notably PPG's 3 "Housing" (March 2000) and 13 "Transport" (March 2001), contain important advice on achieving more sustainable development. Individual subject chapters will give more detail on particular requirements, but this first section is intended to give broad principles that guide the policies and allocations made in the Plan.

The Government's Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) for East Anglia also provides strategic background for this Plan, principally by way of its direct influence on the Norfolk Structure Plan.

2. Local policy context

The approved Norfolk Structure Plan (1999) envisages a more restrictive approach to development and the location of new growth is based in major towns and villages including Diss, Harleston, Loddon and Wymondham. The Structure Plan envisages a sharing of the development pressures in the Norwich Policy Area (NPA) between the City, Broadland and South Norfolk. The District Council has accepted these principles. The South Norfolk Local Plan was commenced under the previous version of the Structure Plan but has been found to be in general conformity with the now adopted (1999) Structure Plan.

3. Growth of residential and employment development and the consequences

In preparing this Local Plan the District Council has paid regard to the likely impact of development on the largely unspoilt rural environment, overwhelmingly in agricultural use, which characterises much of the Plan Area. Strict policies are advocated to restrict development to those locations where the impact on the landscape can be minimised. The Plan would generally seek to site new development so as to avoid designated landscape areas and other environmentally sensitive areas, for example, river valleys, strategic gaps, areas of nature conservation, archaeologically important areas, or the landscape setting of the A47 Norwich Southern Bypass.

Given the environmentally sensitive character of parts of the Plan Area and also the wish to protect the remainder of the countryside, the Council considers that it is important to minimise the 'take' of 'greenfield' land for development.

The Plan Area has a great heritage of small towns, villages and hamlets, many of which are characterised by unique historic centres. It is important that new development does not erode the character of settlements and that where new development is considered appropriate, design is to a high standard and is sympathetic to the surrounding built environment and its landscape setting.

Although a restraining policy is proposed, the District Council is anxious to ensure that development, where it does take place, should be seen as an aid to maintaining and contributing to social and community life in villages.

4. Strategic Principles

The principles set out below guide policy formulation and provide the underlying strategy that will be applied when considering individual proposals against policies within the Plan.

The Strategic Principles are intended to give, at the outset of the document, a clear and concise statement of its main aims, objectives and targets, and the strategy for achieving them (as required by paragraph 14 of Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG) 12 "Development Plans" (December 1999)). They flow in large measure from the Norfolk Structure Plan, but reflect the particular situation pertaining within the District. For example they give a broad outline of the local needs in respect of employment issues, but within the context of the Structure Plan. The wording of the Strategic Principles needs to be read together with the relevant subject based policies in later chapters.

Strategic Principle 1: Sustainable development

In making due provision for development, the principal aim is to protect the essential character of the District, its biodiversity and the wealth of its main environmental assets. These include the historic character and setting of the built and unbuilt environment of towns and villages, environmentally sensitive areas such as historic parkland and river valleys, and areas of nature conservation value. Development should seek to conserve, and use efficiently, natural resources (including the utilisation of renewable energy and the efficient use of water). Wherever possible, the optimum use of existing infrastructure, including redundant and under-utilised sites, will be sought.

The above Strategic Principle is intended to outline the Council's commitment to the principle of sustainable development, and notes that the Plan is explicitly environmentally led. The following Strategic Principles outline in slightly more detail other aspects with which the Plan has to deal - locations for growth; character of development (including impact on environmentally sensitive areas and biodiversity); the need to travel and quality of life for residents. In many ways there are competing demands for the use of land and resources. The Plan attempts to balance these, in the context of the above Strategic Principle - i.e. to achieve sustainable development as noted in paragraph 1 above.

Strategic Principle 2: High standard of design

A high standard of design will be sought in all new development, to maintain the quality of the District's environmental heritage and improve the quality of life of residents, and to maximise energy conservation.

Strategic Principle 3: Location of growth

A major element of growth in the Norwich Policy Area to 2006 is to be accommodated in the Norwich Area of South Norfolk, and elsewhere in the District growth is to be on a moderate scale in line with the policies in the Approved Norfolk Structure Plan. Subject to environmental and infrastructure conditions, development is accordingly to be located:

In the Norwich Area

- **In locations selected because they will minimise the need for travel, and which have good access by public transport, cycling and walking**

In the Rural Area

- **At selected locations along strategic routes (A11, A47, A140)**
- **At selected towns, commensurate with their role as local employment centres**
- **As small scale growth, in selected rural villages chosen on the basis of their existing scale and character, range of facilities, and the ease of exploiting their potential for contributing to the achievement of a sustainable pattern of development.**

Strategic Principle 4: Impact on infrastructure

Development likely to place strains on existing public and social infrastructure or community facilities will be expected to incorporate suitable measures to meet the additional service needs generated.

Strategic Principle 5: Housing land supply

Sufficient housing land will be made available to ensure that the Structure Plan housing requirement is met and that a 5 year supply of housing land is maintained.

Strategic Principle 6: Main objectives for employment

The main objectives of the Local Plan for employment are:

- Provide alternatives to commuting into Norwich and other large towns outside the District in the interests of convenience and sustainability.
- Sustain and promote small businesses and the self-employed, which provide the predominant sources of work opportunities for local people
- Identify sites likely to attract modern growth industries, to redress the high proportion of employment in declining industries
- Address localised unemployment problems in the eastern Waveney Valley, Costessey and Wymondham.

Strategic Principle 7: Main objective for shopping

The main objective of the Local Plan for shopping is to maintain the vitality and viability of town centres and village shops and sustain rural services.

Strategic Principle 8: Main objective for tourism

The main objective of the Local Plan for tourism is to support and promote tourism development in the District in recognition of its contribution to the local economy, diversifying the employment base of the District and off-setting the loss of jobs and income from agriculture, while protecting the qualities of the District which make it an attractive tourist destination.

Strategic Principle 9: Main objective for recreation and leisure

The main objective of the Local Plan for recreation and leisure is to encourage the provision of a range of facilities to meet the needs of existing and future residents.

Strategic Principle 10: Main objective for transport and movement

The main objective of the Local Plan for transport and movement is to ensure the safe and free movement of traffic and promote the principles of sustainable development.