Cabinet

Members of the Cabinet

Mr J Fuller
Chairman
Leader, External Affairs

Mr M Wilby
Vice-Chairman
Deputy Leader, Communities
and Localism

Portfolio Holders

Mrs Y Bendle
Housing and Public Health

Mr D Bills
Innovation and Efficiency

Mr K Kiddie
Environment and Regulation

Mr G Wheatley
Finance and Resources

Agenda

Date
Monday 23 September 2013

Time
9.00 am

Place
Cavell and Colman Rooms
South Norfolk House
Swan Lane
Long Stratton
Norwich
NR15 2XE

Contact
Claire White  tel (01508) 533669
South Norfolk District Council
Swan Lane
Long Stratton Norwich
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If you have any special requirements in order to attend this meeting,
please let us know in advance
Large print version can be made available
1. To report apologies for absence;

2. Any items of business which the Chairman decides should be considered as matters of urgency pursuant to Section 100 B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act, 1972; [Urgent business may only be taken if, "by reason of special circumstances" (which will be recorded in the minutes), the Chairman of the meeting is of the opinion that the item should be considered as a matter of urgency.]

3. To receive Declarations of Interest from Members;
   (Please see guidance form and flow chart attached - page 6)

4. Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 22 July 2013; (attached – page 8)

   (All appendices are available to view electronically on the Council’s website)

   The Site Specific Policies and Allocations Document is an important part of the Council’s emerging Local Plan as it sets out Development Boundaries for settlements across the district and allocations for new sites to meet future development requirements. Four rounds of public consultation on the document have previously taken place between 2010 and 2013. Having assessed all the background information (the evidence base, and representations made) the document is now ready to proceed to the next stage, called the Pre-Submission. The Pre-Submission iteration is effectively the final form of the document, but before it is formally submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination, it is necessary to give all consultees (local residents, town and parish councils, site promoters, and statutory consultees such as the Environment Agency etc) the opportunity to make representations on the ‘soundness’ and legal conformity of the document. This representations period will last for six weeks, running from late October to mid-December 2013.

(All appendices are available to view electronically on the Council’s website)

The Wymondham Area Action Plan (WAAP) is an important part of the Council’s emerging Local Plan. It sets out the areas of land being allocated for development as well as areas for which there are specific policies governing development proposals.

There have been four rounds of public consultation undertaken by South Norfolk Council which have inputted to the WAAP, and having assessed all the background information (the evidence base, and representations made) the document is now ready to proceed to the next stage, called the Pre-Submission.

The Pre-Submission iteration is effectively the final form of the document, but before it is formally submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination, it is necessary to give all consultees (local residents, parish councils, and statutory consultees etc) the opportunity to make representations on the ‘soundness’ and legal conformity of the document. This representations period will last for six weeks, running from late October to mid-December 2013.


(All appendices are available to view electronically on the Council’s website)

The Development Management Policies Document is an important part of the Council’s emerging Local Plan. Alongside the policies of the Joint Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework, the Development Management Policies determine how the Council carries out its development management responsibilities to promote sustainable development.

There have been two rounds of public consultation on the Development Management Policies (in 2012 and then earlier in 2013), and having assessed all the background information (the evidence base, and representations made) the document is now ready to proceed to the next stage, called the Pre-Submission.

The Pre-Submission iteration is effectively the final form of the document, but before it is formally submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination, it is necessary to give all consultees (local residents, parish councils, and statutory consultees etc) the opportunity to make representations on the ‘soundness’ and legal conformity of the document. This representations period will last for six weeks, running from late October to mid-December 2013.
8. **Leisure Enhancement Programme**; (report attached – page 45)

The purpose of this report is to enable Cabinet to determine the future direction of leisure provision in South Norfolk, ensuring our leisure centres and wider leisure provision are fit for the future, meeting our residents needs and maximising our revenue streams, supporting our residents to become fit and healthy. The report outlines the analysis of the current position, as well as the core recommendations for the Leisure Enhancement Programme, making sure the Council minimises the leisure subsidy whilst maximising the levels of physical activity across the district to improve the health of our residents.

9. **Funding Review Update**: (report to follow)

10. **Housing Standards Review – Government Consultation** (report attached – page 55)

This report asks Cabinet to agree on a suggested response to government consultation on the rationalisation of the framework of Building Regulations and local housing standards.

11. **Council Tax Support Scheme** (report attached – page 71)

The purpose of this report is to obtain Cabinet approval to go forward to consultation with a Council Tax Support scheme for 2014/15. The report outlines the legal requirements and features of the scheme and proposes amendments to the original scheme approved in 2012 after reflecting the impact of the first 6 months of the Welfare Reform changes which have taken place this financial year.

12. **Recommendations from the Finance, Resources, Accounts and Governance Committee meetings held 28 June 2013 and 3 September 2013**;

   (members are asked to refer to copies of the relevant reports on the Council’s website)

   Extract of the relevant minutes (attached – page 85)

Cabinet is asked to endorse the following recommendations of the Finance Resources Accounts and Governance Committee:

(a) South Norfolk Council’s Annual Audit Report and Opinion for 2012/13

   **RESOLVED:** To note the Internal Audit Consortium Manager’s Annual Report and Opinion for 2012/13, and recommend that Cabinet give its approval to the document and the use of its contents to inform the Council’s Annual Governance Statement.
(b) Internal Audit Consortium Manager’s Annual Report and Opinion for CNC Building Control for 2012/13

RESOLVED: To recommend the Internal Audit Consortium Manager’s Annual Report and Opinion for CNC Building Control for 2012/13 to Cabinet for review and endorsement.

(c) Finance, Resources, Audit and Governance Committee Self-Assessment Exercise

RESOLVED: 1. to approve the summary report and the detailed checklist.
2. to progress the actions identified.
3. to refer the documents and actions to Cabinet for subsequent endorsement.

(d) Annual Review of the Effectiveness of Internal Audit for 2012/13

RESOLVED: 1. to note the findings of the annual review of the effectiveness of Internal Audit for 2012/13.
2. to approve referral of the report to Cabinet for endorsement.

13. Cabinet Core Agenda; (attached – page 88)

14. Exclusion of the Public and Press;

To exclude the public and the press from the meeting under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act (as amended)

15. CNC Building Control; (report attached – page 89)

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972)
The Site Specific Policies and Allocations Document is an important part of the Council’s emerging Local Plan as it sets out Development Boundaries for settlements across the district and allocations for new sites to meet future development requirements.

Four rounds of public consultation on the document have previously taken place between 2010 and 2013. Having assessed all the background information (the evidence base, and representations made) the document is now ready to proceed to the next stage, called the Pre-Submission.

The Pre-Submission iteration is effectively the final form of the document, but before it is formally submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination, it is necessary to give all consultees (local residents, town and parish councils, site promoters, and statutory consultees such as the Environment Agency etc) the opportunity to make representations on the ‘soundness’ and legal conformity of the document. This representations period will last for six weeks, running from late October to mid-December 2013.

1. **Background**

1.1. The Site Specific Policies and Allocations Document (the Site Allocations Document) is an important part of the Council’s emerging Local Plan. It sets out the Council’s policies for the location of new development, including identifying Development Boundaries and sites for housing, employment, leisure and amenity use with appropriate policy wording. These are considered to be the best locations/sites to meet the objectives and policies of the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the aims and objectives of the Council.
1.2. The JCS was adopted in March 2011; it sets the context for the Site Allocations document, including the minimum number of dwellings to be delivered in South Norfolk from 2008 to 2026. It also includes a settlement hierarchy to distribute this growth, and various other policies covering such topics as: housing delivery (including affordable housing thresholds); promoting good design; setting environmental performance requirements for new developments, and supporting economic growth and commercial development.

1.3. Four Local Plan documents are currently in preparation as part of the emerging South Norfolk Local Plan. These are:

- the Site Specific Policies and Allocations Document (the subject of this report);
- the Development Management Policies Document, which sets out a range of policies against which future planning applications will be tested; and
- the Wymondham and Long Stratton Area Action Plans, which make site specific allocations as well as containing other policies to guide the delivery of infrastructure, facilities and protect the key attributes and characteristics of these settlements.

1.4. In addition, the adopted JCS, the Cringleford Neighbourhood Plan (which is being prepared by Cringleford Parish Council) and forthcoming Gypsy and Traveller Site Document will also form part of the Development Plan for South Norfolk.

1.5. Until each emerging Local Plan document, and the Cringleford Neighbourhood Plan, is adopted by the Council, relevant parts of the 2003 South Norfolk Local Plan will remain extant.

1.6. In accordance with statutory regulations and legislation, extensive public consultation has taken place over the past four years, with four rounds of consultation between 2010 and 2013 (as set out in paragraph 2.8)

1.7. This report seeks Cabinet’s and Council’s agreement on the contents of the Pre-Submission version of the Site Allocations Document. Given the formal stage of the process now reached, this version of the Document needs to be approved by Council.

1.8. The Wymondham Area Action Plan and the Development Management Policies Document are being prepared to the same timetable as the Site Allocations Document, and the Pre-Submission iterations of these documents are also being considered at the same Cabinet and Council meetings.

2. **Current Position and Issues**

**Employment and Housing**

2.1. The JCS sets a target of 27,000 additional jobs across the GNDP area between 2008 and 2026. Whilst jobs will be provided as part of the services and
commercial facilities that support new housing, new allocations of employment land are also necessary. Three employment locations of strategic importance to the Norwich Area are located in South Norfolk, at Norwich Research Park, Hethel Technology Park and Longwater Employment Area. Smaller employment allocations are also required in most of districts Main Towns and Key Service Centres.

2.2. Policy 4 of the JCS ‘Housing Delivery’ sets out the overall housing requirements across the Greater Norwich Development Partnership (GNDP) area. For the period 2008 to 2026 the policy requires that South Norfolk makes provision for 9,000 new dwellings in the Norwich Policy Area (NPA) and between 1,040 and 1,580 dwellings in the Rural Area.

2.3. JCS Policies 9, 10 and 12 to 17 set out the housing (and other) requirements for the settlements in South Norfolk; these policies are based on the ‘settlement hierarchy’ in JCS paragraph 6.2.

2.4. As well as making new allocations the Site Specific document defines new Development Boundaries; all of the settlements identified below will have a defined Development Boundary. Broadly a Development Boundary sets out the area within which development proposals are, subject to normal planning considerations, likely to be considered favourably; whereas more restrictive planning policies will apply outside of the Boundaries.

2.5. The following summarises the JCS housing requirements for South Norfolk:

**Norwich Policy Area settlements**

2.6. *Norwich urban area, including the fringe parishes*
- Colney – no specific housing allocation
- Costessey – Growth Location with Easton, at least 1,000 dwellings
- Cringleford – Growth Location, at least 1,200 dwellings
- Trowse – no specific housing allocation

**Main Towns**
- Wymondham – Growth Location, at least 2,200 dwellings

**Key Service Centres**
- Hethersett – Growth Location, at least 1,000 dwellings
- Long Stratton – Growth Location, at least 1,800 dwellings
- Poringland/Framingham Earl – 100-200 dwellings

**Service Villages**
- 9 settlements – 10-20 dwellings each

**Other Villages**
- 7 settlements – possible small allocations of 5-10 units each.
2.7. For the settlements in the NPA only, Policy 9 of the JCS sets out a “smaller sites in the NPA” allowance of 1800 dwellings. JCS Paragraph 6.6 states that the smaller sites allowance “is intended to provide a balance between site sizes and locations to encourage flexibility and the shorter-term delivery of new housing”. The allowance includes any allocations which are either outside of the Growth Locations or in the Growth Locations, but above the minimum requirements. It is intended that the 1800 dwellings should be shared amongst a range of settlements, taking into account the settlement hierarchy.

Rural Area Settlements

2.8. Main Towns
- Diss – minimum 300 dwellings
- Harleston – 200-300 dwellings

Key Service Centres
- Hingham – approximately 100 dwellings
- Loddon/Chedgrave – 100-200 dwellings

Service Villages
- 34 settlements – 10-20 dwellings each

Other Villages
- 25 settlements – development boundaries only.

Evolution of the Site Allocations DPD and how the sites were chosen

2.9. Around 1,700 sites have been proposed for consideration in the Site Allocations document by landowners and developers; these have now been refined down to the sites the Council proposes to allocate. The selection process has been informed by a combination of Sustainability Appraisal, public and stakeholder consultation responses and assessments of site suitability, availability and deliverability. There have been four formal consultation periods in the evolution of the Site Allocations where the Council has engaged with local communities, service and infrastructure providers, regulatory bodies, site promoters and other interested parties. These were:

- 2010: where all sites that had been put forward up to that point were consulted on, including those in Cringleford, Long Stratton and Wymondham. No view was taken on the appropriateness (or otherwise) of the sites by the Council. This stage also asked for any further sites to be put forward for consideration. The 2010 consultation proposed a site checklist, against which sites would subsequently be assessed;

- 2011: focussed on the additional sites since 2010, but also allowed comments on the original sites. This consultation also asked about the potential Development Boundaries. It included questions about a number of other site based policies, which have subsequently become part of the Development
Management Policies document, and for issues to be addressed in the two AAPs;

- 2012: At this stage the Council presented its Preferred Options for the sites, including the suggested policy considerations for each site, as well as the preferred Development Boundaries. These were accompanied by the assessment of all of the suggested sites, using an iteration of the checklist consulted on in 2010, and an interim Sustainability Appraisal;

- 2013: Following analysis of the Preferred Options representations, and some further discussions with statutory consultees, landowners and developers, a small number of proposed amendments to the Preferred Options were produced, and consulted on. In the main these proposed changes covered the decision to de-allocate a small number of sites, allocate a small number of new sites and make a small number of more significant settlement boundary changes.

2.10. All representations at all stages have been considered carefully in reaching the final recommendation on which sites to allocate, and the policy details that accompany them.

3. **Proposal and Reasons**

**Allocations and Development Boundaries**

3.1. In total, taking into account existing commitments (principally those sites either built since 1 April 2008, or with planning permission) approximately 4630 new dwellings are allocated (3501 in the Norwich Policy Area and 1129 in the Rural Area), exceeding the minimum figure set out in Policy 4 of the JCS. Full details are included in the Pre-Submission document itself (see Appendix 1), with a summary table in paragraph 7.9 of the document. The Pre-Submission Policies Map, which updates the adopted Policies (Proposals) Map, includes information in graphical format (see Appendix 8).

3.2. The minimum 1800 “smaller sites in the NPA” allowance has been divided amongst 17 settlements, with a total of 2050 dwellings distributed (see paragraph 7.14 of the Pre-Submission Document (Appendix 1)). It is important to note that allocating (taking into account existing commitments) above the minimum level is prudent, because although officers are confident that all allocated sites are deliverable and viable, experience shows that some will not be built out to the level anticipated and/or within the timeframe envisaged.

3.3. All of the allocations set out a series of policy requirements that need to be met. Larger allocations are accompanied by requirements for related development; at Easton, for example, the allocation for 900 dwellings also requires a new village centre with a village green, small convenience goods shop and new community centre.
3.4. Whilst most of the allocations in the document relate to additional housing, it also allocates land for a range of other activities, including employment, open space, education and retail. The most significant of these include expansion of Norwich Research Park and Hethel Technology Park; and consolidation of Longwater Employment Area.

3.5. Changes have also been made to some of the settlement boundaries, these include: incorporating allocated sites within the boundary; minor changes to allow for infill on small unallocated sites; removing areas considered to be a risk of flooding or too distant from local services, correcting some anomalies from the 2003 Local Plan; and ensuring a consistent approach to school sites.

Evidence Base

3.6. There is a substantial evidence base underpinning the choice of sites and the wording of policies. Key documents include the Sustainability Appraisal (Appendix 2), Habitats Regulations Assessment (Appendix 3), and the Consultation Statement including the Council’s responses to representations made at the previous consultation stages (see Appendix 4). The Council has also undertaken extensive work on the viability of the proposed allocated sites, in line with the recommendations of the Harman Report (see Appendix 5). All background and evidence base studies and information are available to view at www.south-norfolk.gov.uk/ss.

Planning Applications and Housing Land Supply

3.7. Moving the Site Allocations Document on a stage will enable some increased weight to be given to the allocations and policies in development management terms. Further weight can be applied to an allocation where no objecting representations are received to it during the Pre-Submission stage.

3.8. It will also mean that increased weight can be given to the inclusion of sites in the 5-Year Land Supply calculations. The 5-Year Land Supply figure will be re-calculated for both the South Norfolk part of the Norwich Policy Area (NPA), and the Rural Area. A paper addressing the future housing delivery across the South Norfolk part of the NPA has been prepared, which covers the Site Allocations Document as well as the Wymondham and Long Stratton Area Action Plans and Cringleford Neighbourhood Plan (see Appendix 6). This paper demonstrates that there is a supply of specific deliverable sites to provide for five years’ of housing (judged against housing requirements), including a 5% buffer, as required by paragraph 47 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Current and Next Stages

3.9. Before the draft Site Allocations DPD is formally submitted to the Secretary of State for examination by an independent Inspector, a formal Pre-Submission Representations Period must take place. The purpose of this is to allow any interested person or body the opportunity to lodge representations asserting that the DPD has not been prepared in conformity with the legal requirements, and/or
that one or more of the ‘tests of soundness’ have been, in their view, failed. Full Council is being asked for agreement to approve the Pre-Submission Site Allocations DPD for this formal six-week representations period.

3.10. Following the representations period officers will assess the representations made, in consultation with the Leader and the Environment, Regulation and Planning Policy Committee. A number of minor (“additional”) modifications may need to be made to reflect factual updates (e.g. if an allocated site has recently received planning permission, and/or to reflect changes in national planning guidance or policy) and correct minor errors. There are also likely be representations seeking major (“main”) modifications to the Document. Unless it is concluded that a representation(s) has uncovered a significant flaw in the process, requiring remedial work to repair the document (potentially involving further consultation), the Pre-Submission version (with a schedule of modifications and other updated evidence base documents), will be brought back to Cabinet and Full Council in February 2014 for approval to formally submit to the Government for independent examination.

4. Other Options

4.1. Council could choose to select more, fewer or different sites to those being proposed by officers, and/or to alter policy wording. However, sites have been assessed using a consistent framework throughout this process. This assessment was endorsed by Cabinet when the Preferred Options and Amendments to Preferred Options were agreed for consultation in 2012 and 2013. Officers believe that the proposed sites, policies and development boundaries, required to accord with the Joint Core Strategy and National Planning Policy Framework, are the best options supported by the evidence. Any changes made that cannot be shown to have followed this objective methodology, with reference to the evidence base documents (in particular the Sustainability Appraisal), could run the risk of the Inspector later finding the Site Allocations DPD “unsound”.

4.2. The Council could decide not to progress the Site Allocations DPD to adoption. However, this would lead to future development being unplanned and uncoordinated, particularly where significant growth is required in the Norwich Policy Area. This could worsen the Council’s position in terms of housing land supply and would lessen the Council’s ability to promote development that is located, planned and delivered in the most sustainable manner. It would also mean that the extensive consultation that has taken place over the last four years would be rendered largely irrelevant, something that would doubtless be a source of considerable frustration for South Norfolk residents and others.

5. Relevant Corporate Priorities

5.1. *Enhancing our quality of life and the environment we live in.* One of the guiding principles of the JCS is to accommodate future development needs in a way that protects and retains the distinctive character of settlements in South Norfolk. This
has been an important consideration in assessing and choosing the sites and policies and is reflected in the Pre-Submission Site Allocations DPD.

5.2. *Promoting a thriving local economy.* Providing suitable and available land for economic development is one of the requirements of the JCS. The Site Allocations DPD recognises this by allowing for future expansion of strategic employment locations and facilitating appropriate growth in other locations.

5.3. *Supporting communities to realise their potential.* The plan preparation process allows for residents to participate and influence the content of the Site Allocations DPD. The Pre-Submission stage will be the last opportunity for representations to be made prior to the independent examination.

6. **Implications and Risks**

6.1. **Financial.** The work associated with the production of the council’s planning policy documents is included within the current budget.

6.2. **Legal.** Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended), the Council is required to produce a Local Plan, setting out policies to guide “how, where, and when” development will be acceptable, and the allocation of land to implement the policies. This Document will form an important part of the Local Plan and must be prepared in accordance with development plan regulations and the above Act. Once published, the Pre-Submission DPD will be a material consideration in determining planning applications but will carry limited weight, particularly where sites and/or policies are under challenge from an objector.

6.3. The Site Specific document is being prepared in accordance with the JCS. There was a successful legal challenge to the JCS, and part of it was ‘remitted’ back to the Pre-Submission stage. The examination of the part-JCS is in progress, and the Inspector’s Report is expected to be received in November 2013. However, the remitted JCS text only relates to growth in the Broadland part of the NPA; the policies relating to growth, housing numbers and allocations in South Norfolk remain adopted and carry the full weight of a statutory planning policy document.

6.4. **Environmental.** The Sustainability Appraisal process has ensured that environmental impacts have been taken into account.

6.5. **Equalities.** The Site Specific Allocations and Policies Document has been prepared with equalities considerations in mind, as required by legislation.

6.6. **Risks.** Not having an adopted Site Allocations Document will leave the Council vulnerable to speculative and predatory planning applications for development. It will also severely limit the Council’s ability to co-ordinate development to ensure the necessary infrastructure can be provided.
7. **Conclusion**

7.1. The choice of allocated sites, the accompanying polices and the development boundary changes have been made following extensive public consultation over four years and taking into account the considerable evidence base (including Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment). It is concluded that these choices are those which most appropriately address the requirements of the Joint Core Strategy, taking into account the National Planning Policy Framework. The reasons why other sites have not been allocated are set out in Council’s responses to previous consultation exercises (included as appendices to the Consultation Statement (which is Appendix 4 to this report)) and in the Sustainability Appraisal Report (Appendix 2).

8. **Recommendations**

To Recommend that Council:

8.1. Authorises the Director of Growth and Localism to make any further necessary minor corrections, factual updates, formatting changes and other non-material changes that are identified prior to the publication of the Site Specific Allocations and Policies Document;

8.2. Agrees the publication of the Site Specific Allocations and Policies Document (incorporating any modifications approved under recommendation 8.1), for representations during a 6-week period, in accordance with Regulation 20 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2012; and

8.3. Authorises the Director of Growth and Localism, in consultation with the Leader and the Environment, Regulation and Planning Policy Committee, to review the Pre-Submission representations made following the close of the representations period, prior to the presentation of the final Submission version to Council in February 2014.

**Appendices** *(Online appendices are split into five parts and contain extra maps)*

- Appendix 1: Pre-Submission Site Specific Allocations and Policies Document
- Appendix 2: Sustainability Appraisal of Pre-Submission Site Specific Allocations and Policies Document
- Appendix 3: Habitats Regulations Assessment of Pre-Submission Site Specific Allocations and Policies Document
- Appendix 4: Consultation Statement (Regulation 22(c))
- Appendix 5: Plan-Wide Viability Appraisal
- Appendix 6: Supporting Paper on Housing Land Supply
- Appendix 7: Duty to Co-operate Paper
Appendix 8: Pre-Submission Policies Map
South Norfolk Council Local Plan: Wymondham Area Action Plan: Pre-Submission version

Planning Policy Manager

The Wymondham Area Action Plan (WAAP) is an important part of the Council’s emerging Local Plan. It sets out the areas of land being allocated for development as well as areas for which there are specific policies governing development proposals.

There have been four rounds of public consultation undertaken by South Norfolk Council which have inputted to the WAAP, and having assessed all the background information (the evidence base, and representations made) the document is now ready to proceed to the next stage, called the Pre-Submission.

The Pre-Submission iteration is effectively the final form of the document, but before it is formally submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination, it is necessary to give all consultees (local residents, parish councils, and statutory consultees etc) the opportunity to make representations on the ‘soundness’ and legal conformity of the document. This representations period will last for six weeks, running from late October to mid-December 2013.

Cabinet member(s): John Fuller

Ward(s) affected: All

Contact Officer, telephone number, and e-mail: Adam Nicholls 01508 533809 anicholls@s-norfolk.gov.uk

1. Background

1.1. The Council is preparing an Area Action Plan (AAP) for Wymondham to identify sites for future development and co-ordinate infrastructure provision in line with strategic policies in the Council’s Joint Core Strategy (JCS), which was formally adopted in March 2011. Wymondham is identified in the JCS as a sustainable location for major growth and it has the highest level of development proposed in any of the named growth locations in South Norfolk.

1.2. An AAP provides the planning framework for an area where significant change or conservation is needed. The Council has highlighted the need for AAP for Wymondham where the scale and/or nature of proposed development requires
more detailed guidance than can be achieved through a site allocation. Once adopted the AAP will form part of the Council’s emerging Local Plan and will be used by members when making planning decisions.

1.3. The emerging Local Plan will contain other documents, including the Site Specific Policies and Allocations document, the Long Stratton Area Action Plan, the Development Management Policies document and the Cringleford Neighbourhood Plan (which is being prepared by Cringleford Parish Council) and the forthcoming Gypsy and Traveller Sites document. The Site Allocations and Policies Document and the Development Management Policies Document are being prepared to the same timetable as the WAAP, and the Pre-Submission iterations of these documents are therefore also being considered at the same Cabinet and Council meetings.

1.4. Until such time as each emerging Local Plan document, and the Cringleford Neighbourhood Plan, is adopted by the Council, relevant parts of the current 2003 South Norfolk Local Plan will remain extant.

1.5. The WAAP has been prepared in accordance with statutory regulations and legislation. Extensive public consultation on the future of Wymondham has taken place, with four separate rounds of consultation undertaken by the Council (see Appendix 4), culminating with the Preferred Options consultation stage in early 2013.

1.6. This report seeks Cabinet’s and Council’s agreement on the contents of the final version of the WAAP. Given the formal stage of the process now reached, this version of the Document needs to be approved by Full Council before formal submission can take place.

2. Current Position and Issues

2.1. The Wymondham Area Action Plan (WAAP) identifies the sites for housing, employment, leisure and amenity use that are considered to best meet the objectives and policies of the JCS, taking into account the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It allows for, amongst other elements, the provision of at least 2,200 new dwellings, the expansion of the town centre, and the creation of a ‘Kett’s Country’ pastoral landscape of grassland, wood, hedgerow and wetland habitat, strengthening the importance of the Tiffey valley, protection of the landscape setting of the town and strategic gaps, especially towards Hethersett. Policy 9 of the JCS requires the provision of around 20 hectares of employment land in Wymondham, including a new allocation of around 15 hectares, and this is also provided for.
Evolution of the WAAP and how the sites were chosen

2.2. Around 80 sites were proposed for consideration in the WAAP by landowners and developers; these have now been refined down to the sites the Council proposes to allocate/allow for. The selection process has been informed by a combination of Sustainability Appraisal, public and stakeholder consultation responses and assessments of site suitability, availability and deliverability. There have been four formal consultation periods in the evolution of the WAAP. These have all included engaging with local communities, service and infrastructure providers, regulatory bodies, site promoters and other interested parties.

2.3. To begin with the Wymondham sites were included as part of the district wide Site Specific Allocations and Policies Document rather than as the WAAP, which had not been produced as a standalone document at this point. In 2010, all potential sites across the district were issued for consultation. Following the 2010 consultation period a number of new sites were suggested and the Council consulted on these additional sites in 2011, along with the original sites from the 2010 consultation. The 2011 consultation specifically asked about issues to be covered in the WAAP. The first consultation on the WAAP itself ran from 23 January to 16 March 2012, building on the work in the 2007 ‘Wymondham’s Future’ survey undertaken by the Town Council; the 2012 consultation included sending out a leaflet and survey to all households in Wymondham Parish. Building on the representations received, and the evidence base information, the Preferred Options iteration of the WAAP was prepared and consulted on between 28 January and 23 March 2013.

2.4. All the representations received at all stages have been considered carefully in reaching the final recommendation on which sites to allocate, and the policy details that accompany them.

3. Proposal and Reasons

Vision and Objectives

3.1. The WAAP is based around a vision for the town and a set of objectives to deliver this vision. The vision has been developed through extensive public consultation and reflects the requirements of the JCS and the wishes of local people living in Wymondham. The vision has guided that policies and proposals in the WAAP and the document is structured around the objectives, which form a heading to each chapter in the document. The key elements of the vision are that Wymondham should be ‘a forward looking market town which embraces sustainable growth to enhance its unique identity and sense of community, whilst ensuring that its historic character and natural environment are preserved and enhanced for future generations to enjoy’.
Housing

3.2. Careful consideration has been given to the appropriate number of dwellings to allocate in the WAAP as the JCS refers to the provision of ‘at least 2,200’ new homes. Wymondham is a growing town, with excellent road and rail access to Norwich and (further away) Cambridge and there has been strong developer interest in building new houses in the town over recent months. However, there are a number of constraints to growth, with three of particular significance:

3.3. The Strategic Gap to the north and north-east of the town (as set out in the current adopted Local Plan) helps to safeguard the separate identities of Wymondham and Hethersett by restricting development to that which is appropriate and does not impact on the openness and separation of the Gap. The Council’s Landscape consultant, Chris Blandford Associates, produced (in September 2012) a review of the Strategic Gaps/Important Breaks in South Norfolk, which took into account two larger-scale residential permissions granted in the Gap in recent years (323 and 350 dwellings respectively, the first won on appeal). A number of modifications to the Gap are recommended, including removing the two permitted sites from the Gap, although it is concluded that the proposed Gap/Break boundaries are generally appropriate. Future growth to the north and north-east of Wymondham is therefore constrained.

3.4. Wymondham Abbey is a Grade I-listed building (i.e. of national significance), and its ruins and surrounding meadows are designated as a Scheduled Monument (also a national designation). The Abbey is arguably the single most historic and important building in the whole of South Norfolk, and safeguarding the setting of the Abbey is a critical consideration for the WAAP. Views of the Abbey tower can be seen from a considerable distance, particularly the west and north-west, but there are glimpsed views from many other parts of the town. Future growth to the west of Wymondham is therefore constrained, and any development elsewhere (particularly in the south-western part of the town) would need to be considered particularly carefully in order to ensure that the historic character of the town is preserved and enhanced as directed by the vision.

3.5. The capacity of Wymondham High School (Academy) is a further major constraint to growth. The school itself, and Norfolk County Council (as Education Authority), are in agreement that the school could accommodate additional pupil numbers from up to 2200 net new dwellings (from the JCS base date of 2008), but no more. The school’s site is constrained, and whilst investment plans to accommodate the additional numbers are in place, the school wishes strongly to retain both its playing fields and its Sixth Form on the one site. (As an Academy, the scope for Norfolk County Council to ‘dictate’ admission policy and future expansion proposals is much more limited than for a grant-maintained school.)

3.6. Taking into account existing commitments since the 2008 JCS base date (which total 1061 units), a minimum of 1154 new dwellings need to be allocated in the WAAP. The Preferred Options consultation asked a question about whether there were any infrastructure constraints that would limit growth in Wymondham and due to capacity constraints at Wymondham High School (Academy) it has
been concluded that Wymondham cannot accommodate any more than 2,200 dwellings. This also means that Wymondham is not considered a suitable or appropriate settlement to accommodate any of the ‘floating 1,800 smaller sites’ allocation set out for South Norfolk in JCS Policy 9.

3.7. The WAAP identifies the sites that have received planning permission for housing since the 2008 JCS base date. In addition one site is being allocated in the WAAP for 1,230 dwellings at South Wymondham; two linked sites which cover this allocation received a resolution to grant permission on 18 June 2013, subject to the execution of the Section 106 Agreement being completed by 4 October 2013. A key element of this Section 106 Agreement is the provision of a subway under the railway bridge for pedestrians and cyclists (see Linking South Wymondham to the Town Centre, below). The area to the south of town has been chosen by the Council due to the fact that it is relatively self-contained and development here would be less visually intrusive on the historic landscape setting of the town than other areas and it will not have an adverse impact on the strategic gap between Wymondham and Hethersett, thus fulfilling the requirements of the vision.

3.8. In total, therefore, 2276 dwellings are being allowed for/allocated in the WAAP, an apparent over-allocation of 76 units. A level of allocation above the minimum is prudent and necessary, because although officers are confident that all identified sites are deliverable and viable, experience shows that a certain proportion of sites will not be built out to the level envisaged in the WAAP.

3.9. Because of the permissions granted since the Preferred Options consultation, the Council proposes to de-allocate sites proposed for housing in the Preferred Options version of the WAAP which do not currently have planning permission. These sites are the Nursery on Tuttles Lane and Land to the West of Cavick Road to the west of the town. The current Wymondham Rugby Club site will be allocated for its existing permission for a care home community, not for general housing (as it was in the Preferred Options iteration), which will still allow for the Club’s relocation to a new site on the north-eastern edge of the town, which is allocated for that purpose in the WAAP.

Employment land

3.10. A total of 29 hectares of employment land is allocated in the WAAP, 22 hectares at land north and south of Browick Road (which is particularly well-related to the A11), a 5-hectare extension to Chestnut Drive Business Park, and a 1.8-hectare expansion of Elm Farm Business Farm. This total is greater than the 20 hectares referred to in the JCS; however, it is envisaged that the land north and south of Browick Road will need extensive levels of landscaping to provide a buffer to residential areas, nearby environmentally sensitive areas, the railway line and the A11, so consequently the actual developable area is likely to be nearer to 15 hectares.
Environment

3.11. Officers have worked closely with Norfolk County Council, local nature groups and the main statutory bodies (such as Natural England and the Environment Agency) to improve the Environment chapter from the Preferred Options iteration. Developing, protecting and enhancing a ‘Kett’s Country’ pastoral landscape, strengthening the role of the Tiffey valley, maintaining the open land between Wymondham and Hethersett, conserving the historic landscape setting of the town and Wymondham Abbey and creating connections and linkages between green infrastructure are all identified in the JCS (Policy 10) as important elements to be addressed in the WAAP to ensure that the vision to preserve and enhance the natural environment for future generations to enjoy is fulfilled.

3.12. The Pre-Submission WAAP contains a policy on general Green Infrastructure requirements for new developments and a further three more detailed policies that focus on specific areas around the town. These policies emphasis the need to link new development to existing and proposed Green Infrastructure (where practicable) and also propose some projects outside the scope of new development which could potentially be delivered by community groups. Links to Green Infrastructure have been made throughout the document such as in individual policy wordings and in the recreation chapter.

Town Centre and Retail

3.13. The appropriate Town Centre boundary has been investigated by retail consultants GVA, and will remain the same as the “Central Business Area” in the current adopted (2003) Local Plan. In addition, a Primary Shopping Area is defined on the Proposals Map; again, as recommended by GVA, no Secondary Shopping Area is thought necessary to be identified.

3.14. The WAAP also contains a policy encouraging new ‘town centre’ uses (such as retail and offices) to be located in the defined Town Centre area, with a sequential test required to justify any larger new proposals (500 m² or more in size) outside the Town Centre.

3.15. A supermarket allocation is made at Postmill Close. This site was granted planning permission (application reference 2012/0154/F) in November 2012.

Linking South Wymondham to the Town Centre

3.16. South Wymondham currently has relatively poor links to the town centre and railway station, particularly for cyclists and pedestrians. Whilst a number of improvements will be necessary to successfully deliver the South Wymondham allocation, the evidence base document ‘Connecting South Wymondham: Urban Design Strategy’ sets out in detail what some of these measures could be, and how they could be delivered. Key amongst them is the need to deliver a subway underneath the railway bridge for cyclists and pedestrians (which will free up some highway capacity underneath the bridge), with improved access to the railway station, although a range of other measures are also included.
Development Boundary

3.17. Changes have been made to the development boundary for Wymondham to reflect sites with planning permission and land allocated in the WAAP. These development boundary changes have allowed for small infill opportunities in some cases.

Planning Applications and Housing Land Supply

3.18. Moving the WAAP on a stage in the production process will enable some increased weight to be given to the allocations and policies in the document in Development Management terms. Further weight will be able to be applied to an allocation where no objecting representations are received to it during the Pre-Submission stage.

3.19. It will also mean that increased weight can be given to the inclusion of sites in the 5 Year Land Supply calculation. The 5 Year Land Supply figure will be recalculated for both the South Norfolk part of the Norwich Policy Area (NPA), which includes Wymondham, and the Rural Area. A paper addressing the future housing trajectory across the South Norfolk part of the NPA has been prepared, which covers the WAAP as well as the Site Allocations document, the Long Stratton Area Action plan and the Cringleford Neighbourhood Plan (see Appendix 6). This paper demonstrates that there is a supply of specific deliverable sites to provide for five years of housing (judged against housing requirements), including a 5% buffer as required by paragraph 47 of the NPPF.

3.20. The Pre-Submission Policies Map, which updates the adopted Policies (Proposals) Map, includes information in graphical format (see Appendix 7).

Evidence Base

3.21. There is a substantial evidence base underpinning the choice of sites and the wording of policies. Key documents include the Sustainability Appraisal (Appendix 2), Habitats Regulations Assessment (Appendix 3), and the Consultation Statement including the Council’s responses to representations made at the previous consultation stages (see Appendices 4). The Council has also undertaken extensive work on the viability of the proposed allocated sites, in line with the recommendations of the Harman Report. All background and evidence base studies and information are available to view at www.south-norfolk.gov.uk/wymondham.

Current and Next Steps

3.22. Before the WAAP is formally submitted to the Secretary of State for examination by an independent Inspector, a formal Pre-Submission Representations Period must take place. The purpose of this is to allow any interested person or body the opportunity to lodge representations asserting that the WAAP has not been prepared in conformity with the legal requirements, and/or that one or more of the ‘tests of soundness’ have been, in their view failed. Full Council is being asked
for agreement to approve the Pre-Submission WAAP for this formal six-week
representations period.

3.23. Following the representations period officers will assess the representations
made, in consultation with the Leader and the Environment, Regulation and
Planning Policy Committee. A number of minor (“additional”) modification may
need to be made to reflect factual updates (e.g. if an allocated site has recently
received planning permission, and/or to reflect changes in national guidance or
policy) and correct minor errors. There are also likely to be representations
seeking major (“main”) modifications to the WAAP. Unless it is concluded that a
representation(s) has uncovered a significant flaw in the process, requiring
remedial work to repair the document (potentially involving further consultation),
the Pre-Submission version (with a schedule of modifications and other updated
evidence base documents), will be bought back to Cabinet and Full Council in
February 2014 for approval to formally submit to the Government for independent
examination.

4. Other Options

4.1. Council could choose to select more, fewer or different sites to those being
proposed by officers, and/or to alter policy wording. However, sites have been
assessed using a consistent framework throughout this process. This
assessment was endorsed by Cabinet when the Preferred Options were agreed
for consultation in 2012. Officers believe that the final list of allocated sites and
policies necessary to adhere to the policies of the Joint Core Strategy and
National Planning Policy Framework is that best supported by the evidence. Any
changes made that cannot be shown to have followed this objective
methodology, with reference to the evidence base documents (in particular the
Sustainability Appraisal), could run the risk of the Inspector later finding the
WAAP “unsound”.

4.2. The Council could decide not to progress the WAAP to adoption. However, this
would lead to future development being unplanned and uncoordinated, and this
would lessen the Council’s ability to try to ensure that development is located,
planned and delivered in the most sustainable manner, with particular reference
to schooling and infrastructure. It would also mean that the extensive consultation
that has taken place over the last four years or so with all consultees, including
local residents, would be rendered largely irrelevant, something that would
doubtless be a source of considerable frustration for Wymondham residents and
businesses.

5. Relevant Corporate Priorities

5.1. Enhancing our quality of life and the environment we live in. One of the guiding
principles of the Council’s planning policy, as contained in the JCS, is to
accommodate future development needs in a way that protects and retains the
distinctive character of settlements in South Norfolk. This has been an important
consideration in assessing and choosing the sites and policies and is reflected in the WAAP.

5.2. **Promoting a thriving local economy.** Providing suitable and available land for economic development is one of the future needs identified in the JCS, and the WAAP recognises this by allowing for future expansion of two current employment estates, and the creation of a new 22-hectare employment site at Browick Road.

5.3. **Supporting communities to realise their potential.** The plan preparation process allows for residents to participate and influence the content of the WAAP. The Pre-Submission stage will be the last opportunity for representations to be made prior to the independent examination of the document.

6. **Implications and Risks**

6.1. **Financial.** The work associated with the production of the council’s planning policy documents is included within the current budget.

6.2. **Legal.** Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) the Council is required to produce a Local Plan, setting out policies to guide ‘how, where and when’ development will be acceptable, and the allocation of land to implement the policies. The WAAP will form an important part of the Local Plan and must be prepared in accordance with the development plan regulations and the above Act. Once published the Pre-Submission version of the WAAP will be a material consideration in determining planning applications in Wymondham but will carry limited weight, particularly where sites and/or policies are under challenge from an objector.

6.3. The WAAP is being prepared in accordance with the JCS. There was a successful legal challenge to the JCS, and part of it was ‘remitted’ back to the Pre-Submission stage. The examination of the part JCS is in progress, and the Inspectors Report is expected to be received in November 2013. However, the remitted JCS text only relates to growth in the Broadland part of the NPA; the policies relating to growth, housing numbers and allocations in South Norfolk, including Wymondham, remain adopted and carry the full weight of a statutory planning policy document.

6.4. **Environmental.** The Sustainability Appraisal process has ensured that environmental impacts have been taken into account.

6.5. **Equalities** The Wymondham Area Action Plan has been prepared with equalities considerations in mind, as required by legislation.

6.6. **Risks.** Not adopting the WAAP will leave the Council vulnerable to speculative and predatory planning applications for development. It will also severely limit the Council’s ability to co-ordinate development to ensure the necessary infrastructure can be provided.
7. Conclusion

7.1. The choice of allocated sites, the accompanying policies and the development boundary changes have been made following extensive public consultation over the last four years with the aim of delivering the Council’s vision for Wymondham as outlined in the WAAP. The WAAP has been developed taking into account a considerable evidence base (including Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulation Assessment). It is concluded that the choices made in the WAAP are those which most appropriately address the requirements of the JCS, taking into account the NPPF. The reasons why other sites, policy wordings or development boundary changes have not been considered are set out in the Council’s responses to previous consultation exercises (see Appendix 4) and the Sustainability Appraisal (see Appendix 1).

8. Recommendations

To Recommend that Council:

8.1. Authorises the Director of Growth and Localism to make any further necessary minor corrections, factual updates, formatting changes and other non-material changes that are identified prior to the publication of the Wymondham Area Action Plan;

8.2. Agrees the publication of the WAAP (incorporating any later suggested modifications approved under recommendation 8.1), for representations to be made by statutory bodies and members of the public, over an 6-week period, in accordance with Regulation 20 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2012; and

8.3. Authorises the Director of Growth and Localism, in consultation with the Leader and the Environment, Regulation and Planning Policy Committee, to review the Pre-Submission representations made following the close of the representations period, prior to the presentation of the final Submission version of the Wymondham Area Action Plan to Council in February 2014.

Appendices (Online appendices are split into three parts and contain extra

Appendix 1: Pre-Submission Wymondham Area Action Plan
Appendix 2: Sustainability Appraisal of Wymondham Area Action Plan
Appendix 3: Habitats Regulations Assessment
Appendix 4: Consultation Statement
Appendix 5: Plan-Wide Viability Appraisal
Appendix 6: Supporting Paper on Housing Land Supply
Appendix 7: Pre-Submission Policies Map
South Norfolk Council Local Plan: Development Management Policies Document:
Pre-Submission version

Planning Policy Manager

The Development Management Policies Document is an important part of the Council’s emerging Local Plan. Alongside the policies of the Joint Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework, the Development Management Policies determine how the Council carries out its development management responsibilities to promote sustainable development.

There have been two rounds of public consultation on the Development Management Policies (in 2012 and then earlier in 2013), and having assessed all the background information (the evidence base, and representations made) the document is now ready to proceed to the next stage, called the Pre-Submission.

The Pre-Submission iteration is effectively the final form of the document, but before it is formally submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination, it is necessary to give all consultees (local residents, parish councils, and statutory consultees etc) the opportunity to make representations on the ‘soundness’ and legal conformity of the document. This representations period will last for six weeks, running from late October to mid-December 2013.

Cabinet member(s):
John Fuller

Ward(s) affected:
All

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1. Background

1.1. The Development Management Policies are an important part of the Council’s Local Plan as they will be used in all decisions on planning applications. They present the Council with the opportunity to frame policies that will deliver the Council’s aims and objectives for the district’s future. It will therefore influence the type and quality of future homes and other new development in South Norfolk, conserving heritage assets and the countryside whilst helping to deliver the strategy and objectives for growth set out in the Joint Core Strategy (JCS).
1.2. The JCS was adopted in March 2011; it sets the context for the Development Management Policies. The JCS includes policies covering such topics as: housing delivery (including affordable housing thresholds); promoting good design; setting environmental performance requirements for new developments, supporting economic growth and commercial development, and settlement and retail centre hierarchies to distribute growth.

1.3. Four Local Plan documents are currently in preparation as part of the emerging South Norfolk Local Plan. These are:

- the Development Management Policies Document (the subject of this report);
- the Site Specific Allocations and Policies Document which sets out the allocations which will meet the JCS housing and employment requirements and Development Boundaries to guide the location of new development; and
- the Wymondham and Long Stratton Area Action Plans, which make site specific allocations as well as containing other policies to guide the delivery of infrastructure, facilities and protect the key attributes and characteristics of these settlements.

1.4. In addition, the adopted JCS, Cringleford Neighbourhood Plan (which is being prepared by Cringleford Parish Council) and forthcoming Gypsy and Traveller Site Document will also form part of the Development Plan for South Norfolk.

1.5. Until each emerging Local Plan document, and the Cringleford Neighbourhood Plan, is adopted by the Council, relevant parts of the 2003 South Norfolk Local Plan will remain extant.

1.6. In accordance with statutory regulations and legislation, extensive public consultation has taken place over the past few years, with the Issues & Options consultation taking place in 2012, and the Preferred Options consultation running from March-May 2013.

1.7. This report seeks Cabinet’s and Council’s agreement on the contents of the Pre-Submission version of the Site Allocations Document. Given the formal stage of the process now reached, this version of the Document needs to be approved by Council.

1.8. The Wymondham Area Action Plan and the Site Specific Allocations and Policies Document are being prepared to the same timetable as the Site Allocations Document, and the Pre-Submission iterations of these documents are also being considered at the same Cabinet and Council meetings.

2. Current Position and Issues

Introduction

2.1. The Joint Core Strategy (JCS) was adopted in March 2011 and covers strategic planning policies for South Norfolk. None of the 20 JCS policies needs repeating
in the emerging South Norfolk Local Plan, as they already form part of the
development plan for South Norfolk. In addition, the National Planning Policy
Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government’s national planning policies and
how these are expected to be applied. These policies are not repeated in the DM
Policies Document either, as they are automatically material planning
considerations.

2.2. The adopted South Norfolk Local Plan (SNLP) originally contained 157 area-wide
policies, and 97 individual settlement proposals. However, a completely fresh
look has been taken as to the form, type and number of Development
Management policies that are judged necessary for inclusion in the DM Policies
Document, and so no SNLP policies have been automatically ‘rolled forward’.


2.3. The initial Issues & Options consultation on DM Policies Document took place in
the spring of 2012. 904 representations were received during the consultation
period, and all representations were considered carefully.

2.4. Appropriate modifications were made to the document and a Preferred Options
version issued, containing 46 policies, split between Strategic Policies, Economic
on the Preferred Options iteration from 27 March – 22 May 2013, including a
workshop with representatives on the development industry. A total of 230
representations were received on the Preferred Options document. It was
pleasing that there were very few serious objections made to the document,
although naturally a number of the representations sought various policy wording
changes.

2.5. All representations at all stages have been considered carefully in reaching the
final recommendation on the type and content of the Development Management
policies.

3. Proposal and Reasons

3.1. The Pre-Submission DM Policies DPD contains a suite of 46 policies, all of which
are locally distinctive to South Norfolk, with the exception of Policy DM 1.1 (which
adapts the standard policy on ensuring that development management
contributes to achieving sustainable development that is required to be included
by the Planning Inspectorate).

3.2. After introductory text, the DM Policies Document contains four Strategic
Policies, which cover ensuring sustainable development is delivered; requiring
infrastructure through planning obligations; the sustainable location of
development; and environmental quality and local distinctiveness. These policies
will apply to most planning applications. Chapter 2 contains 12 economy-focused
policies; Chapter 3 contains 17 social-based policies; and 13 environment-
focused policies are covered in Chapter 4.
3.3. In addition to the policies, the DM Policies Document contains a number of maps and plans, with town centre and primary shopping areas, areas of Important Local Open Space, the Strategic Gaps between Cringleford and Hethersett, and between Hethersett and Wymondham, as well as the Norwich Southern Bypass Landscape Protection Zone. The Pre-Submission Policies Map, which updates the adopted Policies (Proposals) Map, includes this updated information (see Appendix 6).

3.4. There is a substantial evidence base underpinning the Development Management Policies Document (Appendix 1). Key documents include the Sustainability Appraisal (Appendix 2), Habitats Regulations Assessment (Appendix 3), Plan-Wide Viability Assessment (Appendix 7) and the Consultation Statement including Council’s responses to representations made at the previous consultation stages (see Appendix 4). All background and evidence base studies and information are available to view at www.south-norfolk.gov.uk/dmpolicies.

3.5. It is considered that, alongside the policies of the JCS and the NPPF, the DM Policies Document contains the most appropriate suite of locally-specific development management policies for South Norfolk.

Current and Next Stages

3.6. Before the draft Development Management Policies DPD is formally submitted to the Secretary of State for examination by an independent Inspector, a formal Pre-Submission Representations Period must take place. The purpose of this is to allow any interested person or body the opportunity to lodge representations asserting that the DPD has not been prepared in conformity with the legal requirements, and/or that one or more of the ‘tests of soundness’ have been, in their view, failed. Full Council is being asked for agreement to approve the Pre-Submission Site Allocations DPD for this formal six-week representations period.

3.7. Following the representations period officers will assess the representations made, in consultation with the Leader and the Environment, Regulation and Planning Policy Committee. A number of minor (“additional”) modifications may need to be made to reflect factual updates and correct minor errors. There may also be representations seeking major (“main”) modifications to the Document. Unless it is concluded that a representation(s) has uncovered a significant flaw in the process, requiring remedial work to repair the document (potentially involving further consultation), the Pre-Submission version (with a schedule of modifications and other updated evidence base documents), will be brought back to Cabinet and Full Council in February 2014 for approval to formally submit to the Government for independent examination.

4. Other Options

4.1. Council could choose to alter or delete the proposed policies, and/or introduce new policies. However, the decision-making process for preparing the Development Management Policies has been previously agreed by Cabinet, and this methodology has been followed throughout the process, with Cabinet
agreeing consultation material resulting from the application of the methodology prior to the various consultation periods. Officers believe that the final list of policies is that best supported by the evidence. Any changes made that cannot be shown to have followed this objective methodology, with reference to the evidence base documents (in particular the Sustainability Appraisal), could run the risk of the Inspector later finding the DM Policies Document “unsound”.

4.2. The Council could decide not to progress the DM Policies Document to adoption. However, this would lead to control of future development being much less easy to manage, because many of the current South Norfolk Local Plan policies date to 2003, and so are in need of updating. Not progressing the document would also lessen the Council’s ability to try to ensure that development is planned and delivered in the most sustainable manner, with particular reference to infrastructure. It would also mean that the extensive consultation that has taken place over the last three years would be rendered largely irrelevant, something that would doubtless be a source of considerable frustration for residents and others.

5. Relevant Corporate Priorities

5.1. Enhancing our quality of life and the environment we live in. One of the guiding principles of the Council’s planning policy, as contained in the JCS, is to accommodate future development needs in a way that protects and retains the distinctive character of settlements in South Norfolk. This is clearly a key consideration for the Development Management Policies Document.

5.2. Promoting a thriving local economy. Facilitating economic development is one of the future needs identified in the JCS, and the DM Policies Document actively encourages development that will bring economic growth and prosperity through its 12 economic policies.

5.3. Supporting communities to realise their potential. The DM Policies Document contains a whole suite of policies aimed at improving the sustainability, desirability and liveability of South Norfolk.

6. Implications and Risks

6.1. Financial. The work associated with the production of the council’s planning policy documents is included within the current budget.

6.2. Legal. Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended), the Council is required to produce a Local Plan, setting out policies to guide the “how, where, and when” development will be acceptable, and allocations of land to implement the policies. The Development Management Policies Document will form an important part of the Local Plan and must be prepared in accordance with development plan regulations and the Planning and the above Act. Once published, the Development Management Policies Document will be a material consideration in determining planning applications but will carry limited weight, particularly where certain policies are under challenge from an objector.
6.3. The Development Management document is being prepared in accordance with the JCS. There was a successful legal challenge to the JCS, and part of it was ‘remitted’ back to the Pre-Submission stage. The examination of the part-JCS is in progress, and the Inspector’s Report is expected to be received in November 2013. However, the remitted JCS text only relates to growth in the Broadland part of the NPA; the policies relating to growth, housing numbers and allocations in South Norfolk remain adopted and carry the full weight of a statutory planning policy document.

6.4. Environmental. The Sustainability Appraisal process has ensured that environmental impacts have been taken into account.

6.5. Equalities. The Development Management Policies Document has been prepared with equalities considerations in mind, as required by legislation.

6.6. Risks. Not adopting the Development Management Policies Document will leave the Council vulnerable to speculative, predatory and inappropriate planning applications for development. It will also severely limit the Council’s ability to co-ordinate development to ensure the necessary infrastructure is provided.

7. Conclusion

7.1. The Development Management Policies chosen have been selected following extensive public consultation over three years, taking into account the considerable evidence base (including Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment). It is concluded that these final suite of policies are those which most appropriately meet the needs for new Development Management policies for South Norfolk, to be applied alongside Joint Core Strategy policies, taking into account the policies contained in the National Planning Policy Framework.

8. Recommendations

To Recommend that Council:

8.1. Authorises the Director of Growth and Localism to make any further necessary minor corrections, factual updates, formatting changes and other non-material changes that are identified prior to the publication of Development Management Policies Document;

8.2. Agrees the publication of the Development Management Policies Document (incorporating any later suggested modifications approved under recommendation 8.1), for representations to be made by statutory bodies and members of the public, over an 6-week period, in accordance with Regulation 20 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2012; and

8.3. Authorises the Director of Growth and Localism, in consultation with the Leader and the Environment, Regulation and Planning Policy Committee, to review the
Pre-Submission representations made following the close of the representations period, prior to the presentation of the final Submission version to Council in February 2014.

Appendices (Online appendices are split into two parts and contain extra maps)

Appendix 1: Pre-Submission Development Management Policies Document
Appendix 2: Sustainability Appraisal Report
Appendix 3: Habitats Regulations Assessment
Appendix 4: Consultation Statement
Appendix 5: Duty to Co-operate Paper
Appendix 6: Pre-Submission Policies Map
Appendix 7: Plan-Wide Viability Assessment
Leisure Enhancement Programme

The purpose of this report is to enable Cabinet to determine the future direction of leisure provision in South Norfolk, ensuring our leisure centres and wider leisure provision are fit for the future, meeting our residents needs and maximising our revenue streams, supporting our residents to become fit and healthy. The report outlines the analysis of the current position, as well as the core recommendations for the Leisure Enhancement Programme, making sure the Council minimises the leisure subsidy whilst maximising the levels of physical activity across the district to improve the health of our residents.

Cabinet member(s): David Bills
Ward(s) affected: All wards affected
Contact Officer, telephone number, and e-mail: Rob Adams, 3926, radams@s-norfolk.gov.uk

1. **Background**

1.1. South Norfolk Council operates three leisure centres within the district at Diss, Wymondham and Long Stratton. The standard of facility is diverse with different provision available and varying levels of capacity.

1.2. The leisure service was last fully reviewed in 2009 in order to maximise the efficiency of the centres as well as ensuring a more consistent approach to service delivery. Since then, the leisure service has increased its annual income from £1,222,669 in 2008/2009 to £1,702,036 in 2012/13, an increase of £479,367. This is reflected in the increase in corporate memberships, direct debit memberships and swim school participation which have grown by 27%, 20% and 18% respectively between 2011-12 and 2012-13. At the time of the Leisure Review in 2009 it was agreed that a further assessment of South Norfolk’s leisure provision would be conducted within a three to four year period.

1.3. SNC’s Investment Strategy serves to reduce costs and increase income and the Leisure Enhancement Programme forms part of this programme of work, ensuring investments in the centres maximise their potential returns and meet the needs of the community.
1.4. Public Health’s move to local authorities in April this year provides a fantastic opportunity for SNC to re-evaluate its leisure offer and the way it supports and encourages physical activity across the district; with a £2.7 billion ring-fenced national public health budget to support this and physical activity as one of the 66 indicators of the public health outcomes framework, the public health agenda for local government serves as a brilliant driver to reassess the Council’s leisure offering. This is reflected in the Corporate Resources Directorate Plan for 2013/14 which outlines the drive to support health initiatives for the ageing population, activities engaging young people in positive activity and pro-active early intervention initiatives to minimise childhood obesity and its consequent effects.

1.5. This report will outline the assessment of the current position and issues facing the leisure centres as well as officers’ core recommendations for the leisure service and the proposed benefits of this.

2. Current Position and Issues

2.1. The leisure centres currently have around 479,000 visits per year. The centres offer a wide variety of activities, from swim school for school aged children to over 50s swim sessions. The core products which have experienced significant growth over the past 4 years have been Direct Debit memberships, corporate memberships and swim school. All this has contributed to a significant reduction in subsidy across all three centres through both efficiencies in operating costs and an increase in income which has amounted to a saving of £236,612 from 2011/12 to 2012/13.

2.2. There is diversity in the income generation of the three centres. Whilst dry-side facilities (like Long Stratton) can produce a surplus, this is often more challenging for wet-side provision (Wymondham and Diss), although the subsidy can still be removed. If we can improve our product offering, removing the barriers to increased customer footfall and enhance both our dry and wet-side facilities, we can ensure our leisure provision breaks even.

2.3. Despite the growth over past 5 years, a large proportion of the investment has been earmarked for non-customer facing enhancements such as plant rooms (for swimming pool filtration). Although small investment has been made to maintain a reasonable standard of presentation and facility improvement, the leisure centres are in need of modernisation. In order to ensure the rate of growth of our leisure centres is maintained, ensuring existing customers remain with us as well as attracting new customers to get fit and healthy, we need to make the most of our investment to the centres, ensuring they are modern, with diverse provision, supporting our residents to improve their health and well-being whilst also ensuring the financial viability of the leisure service is maintained.
2.4. There are a number of core areas which, with investment, could significantly enhance the service that our customers receive, improving the customer experience for both our existing members and attracting other residents to the centres. Online booking, self-service entry systems and 24-hour telephone lines would all make the customer experience a more enjoyable one. Equally, a refurbishment of the centres, creating an enhanced and broader set of products with a modern feel would increase the appeal of the centres. Moreover, the creation of social seating areas and refreshment provision would encourage our residents to use the leisure centres as community facilities, rather than just a place to exercise.

2.5. There are a number of development opportunities proposed at each of the centres:

2.5.1. Diss Swim and Fitness Centre (DSFC)

The Centre has experienced significant growth over the past 5 years and is highly valued by the local residents. In order to continue the growth it is important that the infrastructure matches demand. As such, the car park, changing facilities, plant room and fitness provision all need to be enhanced to ensure this facility can continue to meet Diss residents’ needs in the future. It is possible that an extension of the fitness provision would require the acquisition of a separate building. Adding to this, an enhancement of the centre needs to ensure that the general public have the maximum opportunity to utilise this facility and as such a review of timetables will be conducted to support our ambition to improve the health and wellbeing of our residents.

2.5.2 Long Stratton Leisure Centre (LSLC)

A land and property transfer has been agreed in principle, subject to Cabinet approval, which would see the freehold of Long Stratton Leisure Centre transferred from Norfolk County Council to South Norfolk DC. This transfer would mean that the Council could significantly develop the current facilities available, adapting the current space to support improved service provision including changing rooms and fitness provision, ensuring the space is maximised to its full potential whilst still meeting the needs of the local high school. Furthermore, early discussions with the high school have identified potential for the public use of the pool on the same site.

2.5.3 Wymondham Leisure Centre (WLC)
WLC is a dual use facility with the neighbouring school and has a significant lease remaining. The centre is by far the biggest of the three and has the widest provision and highest level of usage. Core areas to develop at WLC are the wet side shower and changing, dry-side changing, fitness provision and enhanced social and play facilities.

2.6 Our offering is priced at a level below most competitors. However, it is important that our offering is on par with other facilities and meets our residents’ expectations. Our unique selling points are as a result our price and the broad range of activities available.

2.7 It is also important to recognise the additional benefits of SNC leisure beyond the council managed leisure centres. Analysis of the district shows that whilst there is comprehensive provision in the West, access to facilities is more limited in the East. The rural nature of the district also means that some of our residents are unable to access our static provision. According to Sports England’s Active People survey, 22% (27,389) of adults in South Norfolk take part in sport and active recreation. However, 47% do no sport or active recreation at all, whilst 55% of adult residents want to start playing sport or do a bit more. This is a significant proportion of our residents which we can support to become more physically active, improving their health and wellbeing.

3. Proposal and Reasons

3.1. The leisure centre enhancement programme aims to make our leisure offering more community centred. The programme has therefore been divided into four core streams of work, namely:

- Corporate Development
- Facilities Fit for the Future
- New Revenue Streams and Maximising Facility Usage
- Working with community partners; taking provision to our residents

3.2 The streams and their corresponding projects are outlined in Appendix A.

3.3 Corporate Development

3.3.1 The Council wants to make accessing products and services as simple as possible, supporting customers to self-serve at a time and place that is convenient to them. Officers therefore recommend the introduction of an enhanced website (with clear and accessible session times), an
online booking/joining facility and an automated telephone system for simple enquiries (e.g. opening times and general swim times) which will support savings for the Council as well as an improved customer experience. In addition to this, officers propose introducing automated entry systems; these will support good data collection to make reliable and sound business decisions as well making the entry into our centres more quick and easy for our customers. In order to implement these systems, a review of our current management software system is required. Enhanced management software and an improved website are central directives to deliver efficiency savings to the Council and service enhancements to our customers. This enhanced software would serve to increase the income of the centre by preventing unauthorised entry, supporting customers to self-serve, fast tracking them through the centre as well as freeing up staff time to promote the product and provide excellent customer service.

3.3.2 It is important to create a strong corporate identity for the centres. It is proposed that the refurbishments of all the leisure centres be coordinated to ensure we are consistent in the image and service we wish to promote. In addition to this, it is felt necessary to create core general swim times at both centres to give greater clarity to our customers on available sessions. This review would increase available general swim times supporting our residents to be more active by making our facility more accessible.

3.4 Facilities Fit for the Future

3.4.1 Customer surveys have indicated that our customer base would like to see enhancements in our changing and shower facilities at all three sites. It is therefore recommended that all changing rooms, both wet and dry at all three centres be refurbished and a new shower configuration be installed.

3.4.2 Whilst the cardiovascular fitness equipment has recently been upgraded, customers have raised the desire to replace the remaining resistance equipment within the leisure centres to modernise the full fitness facility. It is therefore proposed that this investment is made, as well as extending and enhancing our gym provision at all three sites. At Diss it is proposed that the current site is extended to increase the size and offering of the fitness provision, or to consider moving the fitness element to a stand-alone fitness centre at a suitable premises within the town.

3.5 New Revenue Streams and Maximising Facility Usage
As the biggest centre, Wymondham has the most capacity to expand its leisure offering. Analysis of predicted future trends anticipates that leisure centres will increasingly become more social spaces. It is therefore proposed that WLC becomes 'Wymondham Leisure and Community Hub', expanding our provision and services creating a family friendly environment, transforming the centre into a community-focused facility. The installation of a soft play area for children and a cafe facility would support this notion. Whilst creating additional revenue streams, these services would also support initiatives such as encouraging active play at a young age as well as introducing new families to the centre. Moreover, the installation of a cafe could support a local franchise and local suppliers. Furthermore, it is proposed that more flexible space be created within the current footprint to enable additional classes and activities to be scheduled, extending our offering and in turn our appeal. Additional offerings could include room rental for community film screenings, older people social clubs/activities, corporate away days, parties and community groups.

3.6 Working with Community Partners; taking provision to our residents

3.6.1 Our research shows that nearly 50% of South Norfolk residents do not undertake structured exercise. Whilst we want our leisure centres to have the best quality provision possible, we recognise that not all of our residents are able to access this provision. As a rural authority it is important that we support more isolated communities to access provision. It is therefore proposed that the Council act as a both a provider and facilitator for leisure provision across the district, supporting communities to realise their potential, maximising the use of existing community facilities, joining together those who want to start getting active with the facilities that already exist but may not be being utilised to their full potential. It is therefore proposed that the second phase of our online booking functionality be extended to community sports facilities e.g. schools and clubs enabling them to rent their spaces/provision for the use of members of the community, creating an additional income stream for the schools and groups whilst also encouraging more people across the district to be active.

3.6.2 In the Council's provider role we have hosted a series of instructed outdoor gym sessions at sites across the district taking our leisure provision to the residents. In addition to this, the Council proposes introducing mobile gym sessions to other local areas of need. A survey has been carried out with Parish Councils to identify areas with particularly low provision which would benefit from such an initiative.

4. Other Options
4.1 Option 1: Do Nothing
If no investment were to be made to the Leisure Centres growth would eventually plateau, inevitably increasing the subsidy.

4.2 Option 2: Minimal redecoration
This would be a short-term solution with minimal impact and return on investment. This redecoration would be required annually, increasing on-going maintenance costs.

5. Relevant Corporate Priorities
5.1. Enhancing our quality of life and the environment we live in.
5.2. Promoting a thriving local economy.
5.3. Supporting communities to realise their potential.
5.4. Driving services through being business-like, efficient and customer aware.

6. Implications and Risks
6.1. Financial
6.1.1 The costs of the work could be higher than budgeted. Stringent procurement procedures would be utilised to ensure best value for money.

6.1.2 It is likely that spending this amount of capital will mean that the Council will exceed its partial exemption limit for VAT. This means that the Council would not be able to recover the exemptions on commercial activities that it currently receives, but would also be at risk of losing currently recoverable VAT of around £100,000 as part of a £3 million project. A further risk is that if spending for this project was not completed in a financial year period, the Council’s exemption limit would be exceeded for a further year.

6.2. Legal
6.2.1 The transfer of the free-hold of LSLC to SNC would mean the transfer of all liability of the centre.

6.3. Risks
6.3.1 There will be inevitable service disruption and temporary closure that will result in customer inconvenience and a reduction in income, albeit temporarily, however, careful planning would minimise this disruption.

7. Conclusion

7.1 This report highlights that the Council’s leisure service would benefit significantly from substantial investment in order to ensure our leisure centres and wider leisure provision are fit for the future, meeting our residents needs and maximising our revenue streams, supporting our residents to become fit and healthy. The move of public health to local authorities presents an ideal opportunity for the Council to ensure its leisure service is fit for the future and supporting health initiatives for our residents.

7.2 It is with these drivers in mind that the report proposes that four core streams of work and investment be undertaken, namely ‘Corporate Development’ (ensuring our systems are fit for purpose supporting customers to self-serve and efficiencies to be made), ‘Facilities Fit for the Future’ (making our leisure centres community friendly, modern and supporting continuous growth), ‘New Revenue Streams and Maximising Facility Usage’ (ensuring available facilities and space are utilised effectively, creating a community hub atmosphere, inviting new groups into the leisure centres whilst ensuring existing scheduling is optimised), and ‘Working with community partners; taking provision to our residents’ (ensuring there is access to physical activity for all our residents regardless of locality, maximising available resources to improve the health of our residents).

8. Recommendations

8.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:

8.1.1 Approve the strategic direction as shown in this report and summarised in Appendix A;

8.1.2 Request officers to identify a suitable property in Diss and report back to Cabinet for approval to acquire a stand-alone fitness facility;

8.1.3 Approve the freehold acquisition of LSLC; this will involve a nominal payment and all other associated costs (legal, survey etc). Stamp duty may also apply to the transfer of ownership;

8.1.4 Approve the release of the capital budget as outlined in Appendix B;

8.1.5 Agree that any future amendments to the scope of the programme be made in consultation with the Deputy Chief Executive and the relevant portfolio holder subject to costs remaining within budget.

Appendix A: Core Recommendations and Outcomes
### Outcome: Maximising the level of physical activity across the district as part of the wider public health agenda to improve the health and well-being of our residents

- Reviewed swimming timetable
- Maximising space: introducing new classes and activities

### Outcome: Ensuring our leisure facilities are fit for the future with a community focus

- Shower and changing room upgrades
- Facility development and refurbishment
- Remedial pool repairs
- Equipment replacement
- Online booking/telephony replacement/access control/web development/replacement software

### Outcome: Maximising the Council's revenue streams and minimising the leisure service subsidy by introducing new revenue streams

- Soft play area
- Café and seating area

### Outcome: Supporting access to leisure provision across the district by working with our community and partners to deliver high-quality sport and active recreation provision to our residents

- Mobile gyms
- Outdoor gyms
- Schools partnerships/Collaborative partnership working
Appendix B: Profile of Spend

<table>
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Funding review update

Funding Manager

The purpose of this paper is to present additional findings of the Funding Review for Cabinet to consider. This report includes:

- General background
- Capital Grants (large grants) eligibility/appraisal criteria
- Proposed Social Action Project Guidance and Advice Note
- Recommendations

Cabinet member(s): Martin Wilby
Ward(s) affected: All

Contact Officer, telephone number, and e-mail:
Nina Cunningham 01508 533745 ncunningham@s-norfolk.gov.uk

1. Background

1.1 As part of the funding review requested by Cabinet on 29 October 2012, work has been undertaken in a phased approach to cover both grants and service level agreements. While a number of decisions have been made by Cabinet on the 7th May relating to new processes to manage Neighbourhood fund (small grants), Capital Grants and the Affordable Homes Grants, this report provides some additional details requested by Cabinet at its May meeting and subsequently by the Growth and Localism Committee which relate to the assessment processes for commissioning Capital grants and some clarification of Social Action projects.

2. Current Position and Issues

2.1 The Capital Grant fund forms part of South Norfolk Council’s Capital programme. This funding will be used to support 2-3 projects which meet the strategic requirements of the Council which have been identified by local Members and/or Neighbourhood Boards and fall within communities with a demonstrably low level of facilities. Any such schemes should also be well placed to attract match funding. Cabinet is best qualified to make these strategic decisions with a clear overview of the opportunities and challenges identified by its committees. It was agreed that The Growth and Localism Committee will propose a short list of projects to receive a capital grant for
Cabinet’s consideration. Once agreed these will form part of the Council’s capital programme.

2.2 As part of the Grants review work (agreed in November 2012) on the 7th May 2013 Cabinet agreed that some additional work on Social Action Projects was needed for Members and applicants to clarify existing definitions (Cabinet report February 2010 and Neighbourhood Board Ground Rules October 2012) as well as determining how SAPs can be differentiated from other funding SNC awards. Existing definitions of Social action project include:

Neighbourhood Board Ground rules- Oct 2012
7.8 Social action projects should be, by their very nature, projects with a large voluntary contribution and a limited financial cost. As such, the Boards should limit any potential cost exposure to the minimum, and a cap on spending on the three social action projects will be set at 20% of the budget allocated to each Board.

Cabinet Report 6th Feb 2010- Appendix D- Examples of eligible activities
Up to three social action projects identified by the Neighbourhood Board as being of local significance, and fitting with South Norfolk Council priorities can be added to the list. It is envisaged that these would fit within the scope of the service areas above, but may, with Council’s agreement, fall outside the scope to meet a specific, local high priority need.

3. Proposal and Reasons

3.1 Capital Fund (Large Grants): Although Capital grant eligibility criteria were not specifically required by the Cabinet decision taken in May until 2014/15 to ensure that South Norfolk Council’s approach is robust and transparent, a set of eligibility criteria have been developed for use in conjunction with a short application form to be completed by the relevant local Member to assess a capital grant. Once the eligibility criteria are agreed, the Localism and Growth Committee will apply the eligibility criteria to the proposed projects at their meeting on the 3rd Oct so that a short-list of projects can then be presented to Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on the 28th October.

3.2 Social action projects: As part of the Grants review work (agreed in November 2012) on the 7th May 2013 Cabinet agreed that some additional work on Social Action Projects was needed for Members and applicants to clarify the definition within the Neighbourhood Board Rules in order to help understanding. A guidance document was prepared which was subsequently recommended for approval by the Localism Committee at their 16th July meeting. A shortened version of this document was subsequently requested by this Committee to be made available on the SNC website. Both the Guidance note and the Advice Note have been included as Annex 2 and 3 for Cabinet’s consideration.
3.3 If the Guidance and Advice Note are agreed by Cabinet, the Neighbourhood Board Ground Rules will need to be updated to reflect this work. In particular the requirement that SAPs should have ‘limited financial costs’ will require a greater level of flexibility regarding the numbers of SAPs which can be delivered from the 20% Neighbourhood Board budget allocation.

4. Other Options

4.1 An alternative option to the proposed approach is to process the capital grant applications using a Grants Panel. Based on the decision taken by Cabinet on the 7th May to discontinue the Grants Panel – this option is no longer feasible.

5. Relevant Corporate Priorities

5.1 Enhancing our quality of life and the environment we live in.

5.2 Supporting communities to realise their potential.

5.3 Driving services through being businesslike, efficient and customer aware.

6. Implications and Risks

6.1 Financial

6.2 With the demise of the Grants Panel, the suggested proposals for the management of capital grants will demonstrate a saving in administration costs as applications will be able to be assessed and processed in a more efficient way.

6.3 The added clarity to defining SAPs will enable applications to be processed in a more efficient and consistent manner.

6.4 Equality and Diversity

6.5 An Equality and Diversity screening process has been undertaken for this area of work which has identified some issues. These will be addressed and managed in line with SNC’s legal obligations.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Cabinet are advised to endorse the recommendations set out in this paper which are supported by the Localism committee and Officers.
8. **Recommendations**

It is recommended that:

8.1 Cabinet to accept the eligibility criteria to be used when determining the capital grant applications- Annex 1

8.2 Cabinet to accept the Guidance and Advice Note on Social Action Projects as outlined in Annex 2 and 3.

8.3 Cabinet to agree that the Neighbourhood Board Ground Rules are updated to reflect the proposed Guidance to ensure that a consistent approach to managing SAPs is in place.
Annex 1- Capital Grant Eligibility Criteria

South Norfolk Council CAPITAL GRANT SCHEME (for internal use only)
Eligibility Criteria 2013/2014

The South Norfolk Council Capital grants programme is a source of discretionary funding for projects deemed to be of strategic importance to South Norfolk Council and which fulfil an identified need within communities with a demonstrable low level of current facilities.

Strategic importance is defined as:
Making a significant contribution to the achievement of the Council’s overall vision and to one or more of our priorities.

As this fund forms part of South Norfolk Council Capital programme which is made available by the Council as part of the annual budget process. The Capital Grant scheme is a finite sum that needs to be allocated in the most efficient and effective way to benefit as many people within the District as possible.

Ideally capital grants awarded by the Council should be viewed as pump priming “seed-money” allowing the organisation which has been awarded a grant to be able to demonstrate to other external funders that the project has the support of the Council, thereby increasing the organisations chances of obtaining grant aid from other sources. More favourable consideration will therefore be given to projects which can demonstrate that other sources of funding have been secured when the application has been made.

WHO DECIDES?
At its meeting on 7th May, Cabinet agreed the following in relation to capital grants:

‘Cabinet is best qualified to make these strategic decisions with a clear overview of the opportunities and challenges identified by its committees.’

The Growth and Localism Committee will propose a short list of projects to receive a capital grant for Cabinet’s consideration. Once agreed these will form part of the Council’s capital programme.

Recommendations for capital grants can therefore be made by both interested parties via Chairs of the Neighbourhood Boards and all elected members from South Norfolk Council in accordance with the Capital grants eligibility criteria. Capital Grant proposals will be subsequently discussed and prioritised by South Norfolk Council’s Localism Committee. While this Committee can make recommendations to Cabinet, the final decision to commission projects using capital grants will be made at a specified Cabinet meeting by Cabinet members (i.e. there is no application process open to members of the public).

Members of the public may attend and speak at this cabinet meeting.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHO IS ELIGIBLE?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A properly constituted body with adequate security of tenure including:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local Authorities</td>
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<td>Parish/Town Councils;</td>
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<td>Voluntary organisations;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Enterprises or</td>
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<td>Any other not-for-profit organisation provider or service for the local community.</td>
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<tr>
<th>WHAT ARE THE CRITERIA?</th>
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<tr>
<td>To fulfil South Norfolks Council’s description of ‘capital expenditure’ (as outlined CIPFA- Capital finance in local Government 2012) must result in ‘the acquisition of, or the construction of or the addition of subsequent costs to non current assets (tangible or intangible) in accordance with proper practices’.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Projects must contribute to the achievement of one or more of South Norfolk Councils strategic priorities and any specific themes as agreed by Cabinet e.g. the theme of Health and Young people was identified within the 7th May Cabinet report which was subsequently agreed by Cabinet.</td>
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<td>Projects must fall within communities with a demonstrably low level of facilities.</td>
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<td>Projects must be able to demonstrate measurable outputs and be made available for the use of the whole community.</td>
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<td>The project must have credible proposals for resourcing the project and for its future management.</td>
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<td>Favourable recognition will be given to projects where the applicant can provide clear evidence of fundraising within the community.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Favourable recognition will be given to projects where a creditable applicant has been identified which can provide clear evidence that they have an experienced bid writer with a track record for securing funding.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Applicants must demonstrate that if they come into contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults they have safe recruitment procedures in place and that staff get appropriate training in the recognition and response to abuse.</td>
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Applicant organisations will agree to acknowledge the Council’s support on all promotional material associated with the project(s) supported, and to provide a brief evaluation report by the end of the financial year from which the grant is taken.

Retrospective applications for grant aid on projects already started/completed will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.
What is Social Action?
Social action is about ‘people helping people’ to challenge a social problem in an area and breaking down barriers between and within communities. Social action is as much about the community participating in the project as it is about the end product of the project itself. Social Action Projects (SAPs) should result in locally driven positive change which is possible if people are willing to get involved and to become part of the solution. (see Appendix A for examples)

What constitutes a SNC Social Action Project?
Social action projects undertake practical actions in the service of others which leave a positive legacy beyond the funding period. Social Action Projects are:

- carried out by individuals or groups of people working together for the good of others to bring about social change and / or value
- not for profit, activities which includes the giving of time, assets and or money
- introducing new ideas and processes for doing things better in the future
- projects with a large voluntary contribution and a limited financial cost

Eligibility Criteria for a SAP
1. Aims to tackle a significant social challenge that have been identified by communities and aligned with relevant YNYC priorities (seek advice from SNC on the current priorities).
2. Plausible account of how the social action project can make a difference and is under- exploited by the existing approach to public services.
3. Will positively effect people’s lives within South Norfolk leading to improved wellbeing as well as improved employability and skills of those taking part.
4. Limited financial costs when compared with the activity to be delivered
5. Aims of a SAP will include improving social connections and increasing social inclusion for typically marginalised groups
6. Clear and measurable definition of success
7. A clear commitment to sharing good practice with other communities

What differentiates a Social Action Project from Neighborhood Fund or capital grant
1. SAPs can be 100% funded by SNC
2. SAPs can request funding for over a 12 month period.
3. Infrastructure such as time banking, service credits, time networks can be funded to secure greater levels of social action.
4. SAPs can provide funding support for trailblazers and innovators of new approaches to delivery of services which will benefit their communities.

5. In limited circumstance SAPs can be awarded to private sector organizations provided specific criteria are met.

6. SAPs encourage those who do not traditionally become involved as volunteers.

7. SAPs can be large-scale, or include plans to scale-up or replicate elsewhere.

8. SAP’s have the potential to lead to spin-off activity which could receive further financial support by South Norfolk Council once the project has ended.

How to describe and quantify outputs

| No. of volunteer opportunities created | This is the number of opportunities for which people can volunteer, i.e. the number needed in the project plan to support the planned level of activity. For example:
1. If SAP funding will enable you to run 5 events a year, each of which need 10 volunteers, 50 opportunities are created.
2. If SAP funding will enable you to take on 500 more clients needing home visits, 500 opportunities are created.
3. If SAP funding will enable you to take on 200 organisations needing free advice, 200 opportunities are created.
4. If the SAP project requires 3 FTE volunteer office administrators to support the level of activity, 3 opportunities are created. |
| No. of first time volunteers | Depending on the nature of your activity and the type of volunteers the project plans to target, please make an estimate of the number of first time volunteers recruited that are likely to have no previous experience of volunteering. |
| Duration of volunteering | Number of hours volunteered over a 12 month period |
| Number of social action opportunities created | This is the number of opportunities to give money, resources, expertise, that is not volunteering, created by the proposal. As with volunteering, this should be the number needed in your project plan to support your planned level of activity. For example: |
1. If SAP funding will enable you to expand a car share scheme which requires 200 cars enrolled to get the necessary coverage, 200 opportunities are created.
2. If you need sponsors of £100 for each child to put 50 schoolchildren through a 6 week community action course, 50 social action opportunities are created.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Number of people receiving new/enhanced skills.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amount of resources secured e.g. property/ fixed assets equipment secured</td>
<td>Securing resource based social action opportunities.</td>
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</table>

Appendix A: Examples of Social Action Projects

1. South Norfolk Council teamed up with the Ormiston Victory Academy and worked with the Art Teacher to develop a project to paint a mural on the Parkour wall in Costessey that had been blighted by graffiti. Interest from students was so high we had to develop an expression of interest and select the ten most suitable students. A working group attended a Parish Council meeting with their design concepts, lottery funding was secured to purchase the paint and volunteers were co-ordinated to paint the mural which has improved this area of Costessey.

2. The Community at Starston Glebe raised money to buy a piece of land in the centre of their village to provide some much needed communal open space. Through fund raising, successful grant applications to South Norfolk Council and other funders and volunteer support, the community has converted the area from a grazing meadow to a mixed community space including amenity area, a community orchard and a conservation area.

3. The Wymondham Stroke Support Group run by carers and volunteers provides a safe and welcoming meeting place for stroke victims. South Norfolk Council supported this project to enable a varied programme of physical activities to be laid on by a qualified specialist. It is hoped that this will increase membership which through subscriptions will allow this activity to be sustained over time.

4. A SAP could encourage professionals and those who have retired or are about to retire to use their skills and experience, in particular to give technical assistance to local charities and voluntary groups, to train volunteers and to provide support in providing and managing volunteering opportunities.
Annex 2 Social Action projects – Advice Note (For external use)

What is Social Action?
Social action is about ‘people helping people’ to solve a social problem within their area and breaking down barriers between and within communities. Social action is as much about the community taking part in the project as it is about the outcome of the project itself.

South Norfolk Council’s Neighborhood Boards are committed to supporting innovative Social Action Projects within their areas which support and complement both the Council’s and ‘Your Neighborhood Your Choice’ priorities. Funding has been made available to support these types of projects which are available on a rolling basis.

What constitutes a Social Action Project?
Social action projects undertake practical actions in the service of others which leave a positive legacy beyond the funding period. Social Action Projects¹:

- Are carried out by individuals or groups of people working together for the good of others to bring about social change and / or value
- Are not for profit, activities which includes the giving of time, assets and or money
- Introduce new ideas and processes for doing things better in the future
- Encourage those who do not traditionally become involved as volunteers.
- Are projects which have a large voluntary contribution and a limited financial cost

Funding Eligibility Criteria
Social Action projects:

1. Aim to tackle a significant social challenge that has been identified by communities and relates to our Your Neighborhood Your Choice priorities.
2. Show how the social action project can make a difference and /or enhances the existing approach to the delivery of particular public services.
3. Will have a positive effect on people’s lives within South Norfolk helping to improve wellbeing as well as improve the skills and employment opportunities of those taking part.
4. Are cost effective when compared with the value of activity being delivered.
5. Have a clear and measurable definition of success
6. Have a clear commitment to sharing good practice with other communities
Further information

If you have a Social Action Project you would like to take forward, please contact your relevant Locality Officer who will be able to check whether it meets with our eligibility and provide advice and support to help take your project forward.
Housing Standards Review – Government Consultation

Keith Mitchell

This report asks Cabinet to agree on a suggested response to government consultation on the rationalisation of the framework of Building Regulations and local housing standards.

Cabinet member(s): Keith Kiddie, Yvonne Bendle
Ward(s) affected: All

Contact Officer, telephone number, and e-mail: Keith Mitchell 01508 533756 kmitchell@s-norfolk.gov.uk

1. Background

1.1. The Department for Communities and Local Government has issued a consultation document titled Housing Standards Review. [https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/housing-standards-review-consultation](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/housing-standards-review-consultation) The document proposes a wide range of changes to the standards of new residential development in England and the ways that standards are to be achieved. The closing date for responses is 22 October, and Cabinet is asked to agree to the Council’s response.

1.2. The Government’s preferred approach is ‘a clear differentiation between standards which can be asked for subject to viability – which will be set out in a “nationally described standard set” under the National Planning Policy Framework; and areas where voluntary, market led approaches are to be encouraged, but cannot be mandated through planning policy.’

2. Current Position and Issues

2.1. The consultation paper notes that there is a wide range of standards, imposed or recommended through planning policy (national and local), through Building Regulations, and by other agencies (such as the Homes and Communities Agency for affordable housing). The Government wishes to simplify arrangements, and is ‘minded to group the standards proposed in this consultation into a simple, short, ‘nationally described standards’ document that will reduce cost and complexity for housebuilders’, and will be implemented
through planning policy. Building Regulations will remain as the technical basis for minimum standards.

2.2. Standards will be imposed on dwellings by condition on a planning permission. Each standard will carry a needs test by which each local planning authority will be able to adopt the standard only if it is necessary and justifiable.

2.3. There are 64 consultation questions, and a response to each has been drafted by officers from the Directorates of Environment & Housing and Growth & Localism, and from CNC. The Council’s proposed response is attached as Appendix A, and is based on the following principles:

   2.3.1. The principle of simplification is supported.
   2.3.2. A single national standard is the best way to achieve this.
   2.3.3. High standards should be sought.
   2.3.4. Lower standards should be acceptable only where cost is a significant issue.
   2.3.5. The same standards should apply to all tenures.

2.4. Several of the questions concern the cost implications of proposals. Housebuilders are likely to respond in detail on these points. The Council does not have this information, so a ‘no comment’ response is proposed for these questions.

3. Proposal and Reasons

3.1. The consultation paper covers several aspects of housing standards, and key points are summarised below.

   Accessibility

3.2. Accessibility is important as an increasing number of people have mobility problems. Lifetime Homes standards can ensure that homes can be adapted to changing needs of their occupiers. Wheelchair standard housing is also desirable, but there are significant financial costs arising from the larger internal spaces required. The proposed response accepts that it is reasonable to cap the proportion of homes that must achieve wheelchair standard.

   Space

3.3. There are currently no minimum space standards for private sector housing, and the Government has no preference as to whether there should be. Responses to the consultation will influence further work if a space standard is to be taken forward. However, the Government is of the view that a distinction should not be made between housing tenures in terms of what standards should apply. The proposed response agrees with this. The proposed Development Management Policies document includes minimum space standards for all new housing.
3.4. The paper considers the concept of space labelling (providing floorspace information for the total internal area and by room). This would enable potential purchasers to compare designs, lead to better understanding, and possibly to larger homes because of demand.

Security

3.5. This section focuses on technical standards (doors, locks, windows etc. rather than the wider environment (secured by Design). The proposed response is based on a pragmatic approach.

Water Efficiency

3.6. Water efficiency is important in South Norfolk. The Joint Core Strategy (Policy 3) requires all new housing development to react Code for Sustainable Homes level 4 for water. The proposed response advocates a national standard with the possibility of a higher standard at the local level.

Energy

3.7. The Government is committed to zero carbon homes from 2016. The paper notes that Building Regulations and the Code for Sustainable Homes can be over-prescriptive and sometimes in conflict. The Government believes that carbon and energy targets should be set in Building Regulations with a focus on the building fabric. It will still be possible for planning policy to require energy to be sourced from low carbon and renewable energy infrastructure.

3.8. The questions concern how the changes should be implemented, and the proposed response takes a practical approach.

Indoor Environmental Standards

3.9. The paper identifies overheating, daylighting, sunlighting and air quality as issues, with a particular focus on high density and high-rise development. As these issues are not particularly significant in South Norfolk, the proposed response is based on general principles.

Materials

3.10. The paper notes that construction materials are a complex and evolving field. The Government concludes that there is no compelling case for local authority standard setting, and the proposed response takes the same view.

Process and Compliance

3.11. The Government wishes to ensure that Building Regulations and planning policy work in a complementary way, to help home builders deliver a supply chain cost-effectively. The proposed response supports this approach.
4. **Other Options**

4.1. The Council could choose not to respond to the consultation, but this would mean foregoing an opportunity to influence government policy at a time when there will be significant new housing development in South Norfolk.

5. **Relevant Corporate Priorities**

5.1. Enhancing our quality of life and the environment we live in: the proposed response is based on the Council’s ambition to achieve this.

5.2. Promoting a thriving local economy: the proposed response takes costs into account so that growth should not be affected.

5.3. Driving services through being businesslike, efficient and customer aware: the proposed response reflects the needs of future occupiers as well as builders.

6. **Implications and Risks**

6.1. There are no direct implications or risks in responding to the consultation. However the policies themselves have implications listed below, and may have implications for decisions on new housing.

6.2. Financial: simplifying the regulatory system might reduce costs for the Council and CNC.

6.3. Environmental: the impact of residential development on the environment is a theme running through the consultation paper, and is a key principle behind the proposed response.

6.4. Equalities: the ability of people with mobility problems to obtain a suitable home is central to the sections on accessibility and space. The tenure-neutral approach is non-discriminatory.

6.5. Crime Reduction: the section on security aims to reduce crime.

6.6. Risks: no risks have been identified in implementing the Council’s proposals.

7. **Conclusion**

7.1. The Housing Standards Review will provide the basis for the standards of new homes. With the amount of housing growth anticipated in South Norfolk this is of great significance to the District, and this is a good opportunity to influence the quality of the homes that will be built.

7.2. Appendix A provides officers’ proposals for the Council’s response based on the principles set out in this report.
8. **Recommendations**

8.1. It is recommended that Cabinet considers the proposed response in Appendix A, suggests any amendments, and agrees to the response being submitted to the Department for Communities and Local Government.
### Questions

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<th>Questions</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Commentary</th>
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<td><strong>Introductory Questions</strong></td>
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| Q1 Which of the options (A, B, or C) set out above do you prefer? Please provide reasons for your answers. | Option B | The strategic options offered are:  
A. Nationally described standards which would operate in addition to Building Regulations (where rigorous local needs and viability testing indicated it could apply);  
B. Nationally described standards as a stepping stone en route to integrating standards into Building Regulations at a future date;  
C. Integrate standards directly into Building Regulations with no technical standards outside Building Regulations. This will take time and may require legislation.  
Option C would be preferred as everyone would be working from the same document. It is acknowledged however that this would be an enormous step to take and may overwhelm Building Control Bodies in the short term. Option B would therefore be more practical but clear timelines would be needed to ensure the shift to Option C is achieved as soon as possible. |
<p>| Q2 Do you agree that there should be a group to keep the nationally described standards under review? Y/N. | Yes. | This will enable new problems and opportunities to be considered as they arise. |
| Q3 Do you agree that the proposed standards available for housing should not differ between affordable and private sector housing? Y/N. Please provide reasons for your answer. | Yes, but only if the standards for affordable housing are not reduced. | Currently affordable housing must meet the HCA’s standards for space and energy efficiency. Homes built for the private market tend to be of a lower standard. |
| Q4 We would welcome feedback on the estimates we have used in the impact assessment to derive the total number of homes incorporating each standard, for both the “do nothing” and “option 2” alternatives. We would welcome any evidence, or reasons for any suggested changes, so these can be incorporated into the final impact | We have no comment in response to this question. | A response requires knowledge of costs and how they will impact on builders. |</p>
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<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Accessibility (including wheelchair standards and lifetime homes)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Q5</td>
<td>Do you agree that minimum requirements for accessibility should be maintained in Building Regulations? Y/N.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>a) Is up-front investment in accessibility the most appropriate way to address housing needs, Y/N.</td>
<td>a) Yes.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>b) Should requirements for higher levels of accessibility be set in proportion to local need through local planning policy? Y/N.</td>
<td>b) Yes.</td>
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<td>Q7</td>
<td>Do you agree in principle with the working group’s proposal to develop development of a national set of accessibility standard consisting of a national regulatory baseline, and optional higher standards consisting of an intermediate and wheelchair accessible standard? Y/N.</td>
<td>No.</td>
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<td>There are currently several accessibility standards. A single standard might help housebuilders and local authorities. However, this question is linked to space standards (see Q12). The minimum standards in Q5 relate to access and facilities for the disabled. There are so many varying requirements of individual disabled people that it is better served by guides relating to disabled people with different levels of mobility. There will always be specific needs for some disabled people if they work or reside in the building.</td>
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<td>Q8</td>
<td>Do you agree with the costs and assumptions set out in the accompanying impact assessment? Specifically we would like your views on the following: a) Do you agree with the estimated unit costs of Life Time Homes? If not we would appreciate feedback as to what you believe the unit cost of complying with Life Time Homes is. b) Do you consider our estimates for the number of homes which incorporate Life Time Homes to be accurate? If respondents do not consider our estimate is reasonable we would appreciate feedback indicating how</td>
<td>We have no comment in response to this question.</td>
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<td>Questions</td>
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<td>many authorities you believe are requiring Life Time Homes standards.</td>
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<td>Wheelchair Housing Design Guide/standards: c) Do you agree with the</td>
<td></td>
<td>Level 3 (wheelchair–adaptable) - £11,758 - £13,939. This question is technical, and we can expect housebuilders to have their own costs for comparison. The Council does not have such information.</td>
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<td>figures and assumptions made to derive the extra over cost of</td>
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<td>incorporating Wheelchair Housing Design Guide? If not we would welcome</td>
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<td>feedback along with evidence so that we can factor this into our final</td>
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<td>analysis. d) Do you have evidence of requirements for and the costs</td>
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<td>other wheelchair standards which we have not estimated? We would</td>
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<td>appreciate the estimated costs of complying with the standard and how</td>
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<td>it impacts properties. e) Do you consider our estimates for the number</td>
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<td>of homes which incorporate wheelchair standards to be accurate (in the</td>
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<td>“do nothing” and “option 2” alternatives). If you do not consider the</td>
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<td>estimate to be reasonable, please could you indicate how many</td>
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<td>authorities you believe require wheelchair standards.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q9 Do you believe that the estimated extra over costs in the Impact</td>
<td>We have no comment in response to this question.</td>
<td>This question concerns the costs summarised above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment reflect the likely additional cost of each level?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Q10 Do you agree that level 3 properties should be capped in order to</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>A large proportion of Level 3 homes might reduce the number of affordable homes provided through S106 Agreements. But a high cap might lead developers to offer adaptable homes instead of affordable homes.</td>
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<td>ensure local viability calculations remain balanced? Y/N</td>
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<td>If yes, at what level should the cap be set?</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q11 If a cap were to be adopted should it, in principle; a) Vary across</td>
<td>b) Be flat across tenure.</td>
<td>People in all tenures require adaptable homes.</td>
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<td>tenure? b) Be flat across tenure?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q12 To what extent would you support integration of all three levels of</td>
<td>a) Fully support. b) Neither support or oppose. c) Oppose.</td>
<td>If the recommendations are to be adopted, doing so through Building Regulations is the best approach.</td>
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<td>Questions</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Space (interior and exterior, including waste and cycle storage)</strong></td>
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<td><em>Note: ‘If the Government decides to proceed with any of the space standard propositions (or higher access standards), application of higher levels of space standards would be limited to particular circumstances, for instance where the need for higher accessibility standards could be robustly evidenced. They would not be applicable independently.’</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q13 Would you support government working with industry to promote space labelling of new homes?</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>Listing of internal floor area and room sizes can help people to compare, and can educate them in considering the benefits versus costs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14 Do you agree with this suggested simple approach to space labelling? Y/N.</td>
<td>No. The approach should be mandatory, not voluntary. Yes. The simple measures should be adopted.</td>
<td>‘It is proposed that space labelling would be through a voluntary industry led approach’. This risks problems of inconsistency similar to those found in labelling food.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q15 If not, what alternative approach would you propose?</td>
<td>Mandatory labelling in a prescribed format.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q16 Would you support requirements for space labelling as an alternative to imposing space standards on new development? Y/N.</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Labelling only could take a long time to have an impact through the market.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q17 Would you support the introduction of a benchmark against which the space labelling of new properties is rated? Please give reasons for your answer.</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>A benchmark would be based on an ‘average’ household’s need.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q18 Which of the following best represents your view? Please provide reasons for your views. a) Local authorities should not be allowed to impose space standards (linked to access standards) on new development. b) Local authorities should only be allowed to require space standards (linked to access standards) for affordable housing. c) Local authorities should be allowed to require space standards (linked to access standards) across all tenures.</td>
<td>Option C.</td>
<td>The Government’s preferred approach is to rely on voluntary mechanisms such as space labelling. The Council is developing space standards for all tenures in Development Management policies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q19 Do you think a space standard is necessary (when linked to access standards), and would you support in principle the development of a national space standard for use by local authorities across England? Y/N</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Space standards should be tailored to the local area. For example, space standards in South Norfolk will differ from those of London boroughs.</td>
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<td>Questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q20 Do you agree with the proposed limiting of the scope of any potential space standard to internal aspects only? Y/N</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>Existing planning policies cover many of the external points, and should be judged on a case-by-case basis.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Q21 Do you agree that Space Standards should only be applied through tested Local Plans, in conjunction with access standards, and subject to robust viability testing? | Yes.                                                                  | The Government is keen to ensure that space and access standards are not both used where one will suffice.  
This response reflects a balance between need and cost. |
| Q22 Do you agree with the costs and assumptions set out in the impact assessment? We are particularly interested in understanding, a) Do stakeholders agree with our assumption that house builders are able to recover 70% of the additional cost associated with space in higher sales values? b) Do you agree with the extra over unit costs we have used for the current and proposed space standards? If you do not agree, could you provide evidence to support alternative figures for us to include in the final impact assessment? c) Do you agree with the proportion of homes we have estimated to have taken up space standards in the “do nothing” and “option 2” alternatives? If you do not agree, could you provide evidence to support alternative figures for us to include in the final impact assessment? Please provide reasons for your answers. | We have no comment in response to this question.  
To respond to this question, the following information is required:  
- the cost per square metre of increasing the internal area of a home,  
- the sale price per square metre of each property size.  
Presumably these figures vary by location.  
We can expect housebuilders to respond in detail to this question. The Council does not have the information available (and if we did it would relate only to South Norfolk). |
<p>| Q23 If you do not agree with the costs set out in the impact assessment please state why this is the case, and provide evidence that supports any alternative assumptions or costs that should be used? | We have no comment in response to this question.                       |                                                                                                                                               |
| Q24 We also need to verify how many local authorities are currently requiring space standards, and what those space standard requirements might be. Can you identify any requirements for space standards in local planning policies? – please provide evidence or links where possible. | Yes.                                                                  | Space standards for all tenures are being proposed in our emerging Development Management Policies DPD.                                      |
| Q25 Can you provide any of the following, (supporting your submission with evidence wherever possible)? a) Evidence of the distribution of the size of current private and affordable housing development? | We have no comment in response to this question.                       | The work done in connection with Development Management policies is not specific enough to enable the Council to provide an answer to this question. |</p>
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<td>b) Evidence of space standards required by local authorities stating what is required and by whom? c) Evidence of the likely cost impact of space standards?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q26 What issues or material do you consider need be included in H6 of the Building Regulations, in order to address the issues identified above?</td>
<td>Off-highway space for 3 wheeled bins.</td>
<td>Guidance is currently in both the Building Regulations and the Code for Sustainable Homes. The Government proposes to consolidate guidance in the Building Regulations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q27 Do you agree with this approach to managing cycle storage? Y/N.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>The Government proposes that cycle storage should be considered as part of the design process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q28 Do you support the view that domestic security for new homes should be covered by national standards/Building Regulations or should it be left to market forces/other? a) national standards/Building Regulations b) market forces/other Where possible, please provide evidence to support your view?</td>
<td>Option A.</td>
<td>This response supports the Council’s wish to reduce crime.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q29 Part 1: Do you think there is a need for security standards? Y/N Part 2: If yes, which of the approaches set out above do you believe would be most effective to adopt (please select one only)? a): Option 1 – A baseline (level 1) standard and a higher (level 2) standard. b): Option 2– A single enhanced standard (level 2) for use in areas of higher risk only.</td>
<td>Not above the baseline level.</td>
<td>There is no evidence that higher standards are required in South Norfolk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q30 If the level 2 standard is used how do you think it should be applied; a) On a broad local basis set out in local planning policy? Or b) On a development by development basis?</td>
<td>Not applicable.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q31 Do you believe that there would be additional benefits to industry of integrating the proposed security standards into the Building Regulations as ‘regulated options’?</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>The Building Regulations are primarily there for health and safety reasons. There are always clashes between security and means of escape and the clashes are covered in the Building Regulations, ensuring means of escape take priority. Security is more to do with property protection and should be guided more by the insurance industry.</td>
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<td>Q32 Q1: If security standards are integrated in to the Building Regulations, would you prefer that; a) level 1 and level 2 become optional ‘regulated options’ for use by local authorities? Or b) level 1 be required as a mandatory baseline for all properties with level 2 a regulated option for use by local authorities?</td>
<td>Not applicable.</td>
<td>If measures were to be introduced option b would be preferred. Everyone would be required to reach a minimum level with an option for enhanced protection under some circumstances.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q33 Do you agree with the overall costs as set out in the accompanying impact assessment? Y/N. If you do not agree, then do you have evidence to support alternative figures?</td>
<td>We have no comment in response to this question.</td>
<td>Questions 33-39 refer to the current practices of house builders, the costs of improving security and the likelihood of standards improving. The Council does not have the data on which to base a response.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q34 Do you agree that level 1 security reflects current industry practice? Y/N. If you do not agree, then do you have evidence to support an alternative view?</td>
<td>We have no comment in response to this question.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q35 Do you agree with the assumptions used to derive the extra over cost of Secured By Design as set out? Y/N. If you do not agree, then do you have evidence to support alternative figures?</td>
<td>We have no comment in response to this question.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q36 Do you agree with the number of homes which incorporate Secured By Design standards that have been used in the accompanying impact assessment? Y/N. If you do not agree, then do you have evidence to support alternative figures?</td>
<td>We have no comment in response to this question.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q37 Do you agree with the assumptions of the growth in the use of Secured By Design standards over the 10 years of the ‘do nothing option’ in the accompanying impact assessment? Y/N. If you do not agree, then do you have evidence to support alternative figures?</td>
<td>We have no comment in response to this question.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q38 Do you agree with the assumptions for the ‘take up’ of the proposed security standards in the accompanying Impact Assessment? Y/N. If you do not agree, then do you have an alternative estimate that can be supported by robust data?</td>
<td>We have no comment in response to this question.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q39 Do you agree with the unit costs as set out in the accompanying impact assessment for the” do nothing” and “option 2” alternatives? Y/N. If you do not agree, please provide evidence to support alternative figures for us to include in the final impact assessment?</td>
<td>We have no comment in response to this question.</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Water efficiency
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Commentary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q40 Do you agree a national water efficiency standard for all new homes should continue to be set out in the Building Regulations? Y/N.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>This is a minimum standard. Local conditions and water supplies would dictate elevated standards, administered by the water companies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q41 Do you agree that standards should be set in terms of both the whole-house and fittings-based approaches? Y/N.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>Provided people do not cherry pick between the two options it will give designers more flexibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q42 Do you agree that the national minimum standard set in the Building Regulations should remain at the current Part G level? Y/N. (see also Question 43)</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>Local conditions and water supplies would dictate elevated standards, administered by the water companies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q43 Do you agree that there should be an additional local standard set at the proposed level? Y/N.</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Only acceptable if linked to local conditions and water supplies and set by the water companies. (It is unclear how a local standard can be prescribed at national level.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q44 Do you agree that no different or higher water efficiency standards should be able to be required? Y/N.</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>This response reflects the problems of water shortage in areas such as South Norfolk. (Note that the question is negative.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q45 Would you prefer a single, tighter national baseline rather than the proposed national limit plus local variation? Y/N.</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>It is better to concentrate tighter controls where they are needed most.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q46 Do you agree that local water efficiency standards should only be required to meet a clear need, following consultation as set out above and where it is part of a wider approach consistent with the local water undertaking’s water resources management plan? Y/N.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>The Government proposes that a local planning authority must be able to demonstrate at examination of the plan that the standard is required to address a clear need. This was the approach adopted for the Greater Norwich Joint Core Strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q47 Should there be any additional further restrictions/conditions? Y/N.</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q48 Do you agree with the unit costs as set out in the accompanying Impact Assessment for the “do nothing” and “option 2” alternatives? Y/N. If you do not agree, please provide the evidence to support your alternative figures</td>
<td>We have no comment in response to this question.</td>
<td>The Council does not have the information to comment on questions 48 &amp; 49.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q49 Do you agree with the number of homes which we estimate will incorporate the proposed tighter water standard in the accompanying Impact Assessment? Y/N. If you do not agree, please provide the evidence to support your alternative figures</td>
<td>We have no comment in response to this question.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q50 Do you currently require through planning that new homes are built to a higher standard of water efficiency than required by the Building Regulations through:</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Questions</td>
<td>Answer</td>
<td>Commentary</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>a) a more general requirement to build to Code Level 3 or above?</td>
<td>b) We have a water-specific planning requirement to build to Code Level 4.</td>
<td>It was decided in the examination of the JCS that South Norfolk is an area of water stress, and therefore higher standards of water efficiency would be required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Or b) a water-specific planning requirement? And c) are you likely to</td>
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<tr>
<td>introduce or continue with a water-specific water efficiency standard</td>
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<td>(beyond the Building Regulations) in the future?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Energy</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Q51 The government considers that the right approach is that carbon</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>Building regulations should remain the recognised minimum standard with developers and designers having the freedom to improve over the minimum requirement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and energy targets are only set in National Building Regulations and</td>
<td></td>
<td>Housebuilders should be able to prepare for new standards in 20216 without a short-term interim target.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that no interim standard is needed. Do you agree? Y/N. If not, please</td>
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<tr>
<td>provide reasons for your answer.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Q52 Are respondents content with the proposal in relation to each</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>The Government proposes a simplification of standards that will provide flexibility in improving fabric efficiency and reducing carbon dioxide emissions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>energy element of the Code for Sustainable Homes? Y/N. If not, what are</td>
<td></td>
<td>The appropriate energy efficiency elements will be consolidated into the Building Regulations leaving complete freedom for developers and designers to improve and adjust other levels as they see fit instead of using some improvements in easy-to-achieve areas to achieve overall compliance with a particular code level at the expense of enhancing something that would deliver better energy efficiency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the reasons for wanting to retain elements? If you think some of these</td>
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<td>elements should be retained should they be incorporated within Building</td>
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<td>Regulations or set out as a nationally described standard. Please give</td>
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<tr>
<td>your reasons.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q53 Do consultees agree with the number of homes we have estimated which</td>
<td>We have no comment in response to this question.</td>
<td>The Council does not have the information to respond to questions 53-55.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>currently have a renewable target and the costs associated with</td>
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<tr>
<td>incorporating such a target? Y/N.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Q54 Do you agree with the unit costs for the code set out in the</td>
<td>We have no comment in response to this question.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accompanying impact assessment for the “do nothing” and “option 2”</td>
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<tr>
<td>alternatives? Y/N.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>Answer</td>
<td>Commentary</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>If you do not agree, please provide the evidence to support your alternative figures</td>
<td>We have no comment in response to this question.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you agree with the proportion of homes we have estimated will incorporate the Code and the Planning &amp; Energy Act 2008 (aka Merton rule) over the next 10 years? Y/N. If you do not agree, please provide the evidence to support your alternative figures</td>
<td>We have no comment in response to this question.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are your views on the future of the Planning and Energy Act 2008 (“Merton’s Rule” type planning policies) in relation to the preferred Building Regulations only approach to energy standards?</td>
<td>We have no comment in response to this question.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indoor environmental Standards</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Government is interested in understanding the extent to which daylighting in new homes is a problem, and the appetite for a daylighting design standard to be available to designers and local authorities. a) Do you believe that new homes are not achieving a sufficient level of daylighting in habitable rooms? Y/N. If so what evidence do you have that this is the case (please submit evidence as part of your consultation response)? b) Do you think that it is desirable to consider having a national daylighting standard for use in the design of new homes? Y/N.</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>There is no evidence of insufficient daylighting in South Norfolk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you agree that a review of simple percentage based methodologies should be undertaken to help determine if such an approach is fit for purpose? Y/N. If you have any relevant research or evidence please submit this as part of your consultation response.</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>We have no evidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you agree that sunlighting should sit outside the scope of this review? Y/N.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>There is no evidence that sunlighting is a problem in South Norfolk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you agree that essential indoor air quality issues should be addressed through ongoing review of Part F (Ventilation) of the Building Regulations? Y/N.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>More and more properties are being built to very low levels of air infiltration and specialist ventilation systems are often required, designed and set up for the actual building. Building Regulations ensure the systems are appropriate and correctly commissioned at completion. This is the most appropriate place for the control to lay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>Answer</td>
<td>Commentary</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Materials</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Q61 Do you agree that materials standards are best left to the market to lead on? Y/N.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>An approach specifying standards for materials would be too prescriptive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Process and compliance</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Q62 Which of the above options do you prefer (1, 2, or the hybrid approach)? Please provide reasons for your answer.</td>
<td>The hybrid approach.</td>
<td>The intention is to enable planning and building control processes to work better together. Government prefers technical standards to be in the Building Regulations only. Option 1: National standards to apply locally through planning policy only after a rigorous needs assessment. Possible without legislation. Option 2: Integrate standards into Building Regulations. A needs assessment above, but requiring Building Control certification. It takes longer because legislation is required. Hybrid: A 2 stage approach with standards via planning policy pending new Building Regulations. Support for the hybrid approach follows the response to Q1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q63 Do you think that moving to a nationally consistent set of housing standards will deliver supply chain efficiencies to home builders? Y/N. If yes, can you provide estimates and evidence of the level of efficiency that could be achieved?</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>The Council has no specific evidence, but our responses support the principle of national standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q64 Do you think that moving to a nationally consistent set of housing standards could help reduce abortive or repeated costs during the construction stage of home building? Y/N. If yes, can you provide estimates and evidence of the level of efficiency that could be achieved?</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>The Council has no financial evidence to respond further.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cabinet Tax Support Scheme

Revenues & Benefits Manager

The purpose of this report is to obtain Cabinet approval to go forward to consultation with a Council Tax Support scheme for 2014/15. The report outlines the legal requirements and features of the scheme and proposes amendments to the original scheme approved in 2012 after reflecting the impact of the first 6 months of the Welfare Reform changes which have taken place this financial year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cabinet member(s):</th>
<th>Ward(s) affected:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yvonne Bendle</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contact Officer, telephone number, and e-mail:

Amanda Adams 01508 533773
aadams@s-norfolk.gov.uk

1. **Background**

1.1. As part of the Welfare Reform Act 2011, Council Tax Benefit was withdrawn by the Government on 31 March 2013. From 1 April 2013 the Government required each local Council to set up a local Council Tax Support scheme under the following legislation:

1.2. The Local Government Finance Act 2012, which inserted into Section 13A(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the requirement that –

1.3. “Each billing authority in England must make a scheme specifying the reductions which are to apply to amounts of council tax payable, in respect of dwellings situated in its area”.

Schedule 4, Part 1 (5) of the Local Government Finance Act 2012 states that for each financial year, each billing authority must consider whether to revise or replace its scheme with another and that this must take place by the preceding 31 January.

There is also a requirement that each authority must, as it thinks fit, include a transitional provision within its revised scheme if such a scheme has the effect of removing or reducing a person’s entitlement.

Statutory requirements are in place to protect people of pension age at the same levels of support as applied under the Council Tax benefit scheme.
Under the legislation local authorities are required to consult each year on their proposed Council Tax Support Scheme even if they retain the current scheme they have in place.

1.4. Early in 2012 a working group of elected members was set up to work with officers to develop our approach to the design of our local Council Tax Support scheme. The challenge was to design a scheme within a limited budget after funding cuts while protecting pensioners at previous levels of support. This meant that in South Norfolk, working age customers would be adversely affected within the new scheme because of the high percentage of pensioner claims within our caseload (currently at 52%).

1.5. The working group established a number of guiding principles to set our scheme. These were that our local scheme is:

- as fair as possible within the budget constraints
- aligned with rules for other state benefits wherever practical in order for it to be more easily understood (e.g. Universal Credits)
- protects as far as possible those working and with young families
- operationally efficient to manage

1.6. In the summer of 2012 we consulted on a draft scheme which was approved by Cabinet September 2012. In October 2012 the government offered transitional funding to councils if they limited the effect of the cut on the working age so they paid no more than 8.5% of their current net council tax liability under the new scheme. Although there was a cost to the council, South Norfolk Council applied for the funding and minimised the effect on residents.

1.7. Results of our consultation in 2012 showed that more than 50% of those who responded agreed with the characteristics of the scheme design. Where there was not a significant majority in agreement, the scheme design was reviewed. We took notice of the areas where people were unsure of the proposals and responded by amending the scheme. The number of responses gave us the confidence that could continue with implementation.

1.8. In 2013/14 South Norfolk Council ensured that the costs of funding Council Tax Support would not impact on Parish and Town Councils.

2 Current Position and Issues

2.1 We have monitored carefully the effects of all the reforms over the last six months and our response is reflected in our proposals for going forward in 2014/15 of the council tax support scheme.

2.2.1 Since the scheme design last year the Welfare Reform agenda has taken effect and has meant that this year a number of benefit changes have been implemented which have affected our residents; this includes the reduction in
Housing Benefit for under occupation which has affected 716 social housing tenants and the Benefit Cap which has affected 16 families so far.

2.2.2 Our response has been to adopt a framework approach with our partners so that we can work in a 'joined up' way. Working together with an emphasis on early prevention measures we have helped to pre-empt some of the adverse effects of Welfare Reform. For example our staff have shadowed those who work for Job Centre Plus and using that knowledge while jointly visiting residents with Social Landlord staff have provided and end-to-end service for customers affected by the Benefit Cap thus covering benefit, housing and employment issues in one hit. Of those who we have visited jointly, 100% are either paying some or all of their rent whereas previously they had a large shortfall.

2.2.3 It looks unlikely that there will be a further transitional grant for 2014/15a, therefore it is proposed that we adopt a scheme which is financially sustainable within a lower funding level which does not put a financial burden on council tax payers or result in service cutbacks. However, we continue to have the issue of protecting those of pension age which means less will be available for support of working age.

3 Proposal and Reasons

3.1.1 The proposal is that we go out to consultation on the draft scheme outlined in Appendix 1. This draft scheme most closely matches the requirements of the overriding principles initially agreed by our working group in addition to making the necessary savings.

3.1.2 The scheme is the one agreed by Cabinet September 2012 with one new feature to protect newly unemployed people who have not claimed benefit before. The proposal is that we protect this group for 13 weeks by awarding full council tax support while they find alternative employment. This will prevent debt in the early stages of unemployment.

4 Other Options

4.1.1 The modelling over the current caseload gave other options which would realise different levels of savings and have varying effects on different households. These were considered, but the preferred option was proposed as it is the option most closely aligned with following the principles of Universal Credit by supporting those in work in addition to our local preferences and needs.

4.1.2 The option to continue with the current scheme was considered but deemed not viable as that is considered unaffordable within the future budget.

5 Consultation

5.1.1 In accordance with the legislation we will consult the major precepting bodies before publishing the draft scheme and then consult others likely to have an interest in the operation of the scheme. Residents and stakeholders will be invited to take part by completing an online survey or contact us over the phone.
5.1.2 We will take notice of the areas where people are unsure of the proposals and will respond by amending the scheme and referring it back to Cabinet for Council approval in December.

6 Relevant Corporate Priorities

6.1.1 Driving services through being businesslike, efficient and customer aware.

7 Implications and Risks

7.1.1 Financial

7.1.2 The new Council Tax Support Scheme was funded for 2013/14 year to 90% of the previous Council Tax Benefit level by central government. After accounting for the transitional grant, the costs to the major precepting authorities were anticipated to be in the region of:

Cost to SNC £78k (included additional support for the effect of Council Tax Support on parishes for 2013/14 only)

Cost to County Council £342k

Cost to Police £59k

Based on our current caseload profile the cost of the proposed scheme is anticipated to be £6.619m (not including any discretionary hardship fund). The funding for the Council Tax Support Scheme has now been rolled up into the Revenues Support Grant and Baseline Business Rates funding each local authority will receive from the Government, however it is anticipated that after applying the anticipated reduction in funding to the current year’s figures there will be a cost to the major precepting authorities in the region of:

Cost to SNC £47k

Cost to County Council £406k

Cost to Police £71k

7.1.3 The funding of variations to the cost of the scheme in the future will be shared between the County Council, Police Authority, South Norfolk Council and parishes. It is critical that a new scheme is affordable to these authorities and that any volatility in costs can be absorbed by them.

7.1.4 There is a financial risk if there is a rise in claimant numbers as any increase in the cost of the scheme would fall on SNC. We will need to review the scheme annually to ensure it continues to meet priorities, is affordable and because the law requires us to do so.

7.1.5 It is intended that we will have a discretionary fund available for help for those individuals and families for who the scheme has unintended consequences. The policy on use will outline how it will be used as short term help for those in financial crisis.
rather than long term support. Funding for this may come from additional revenues from reforms of Council Tax but it is hoped that Norfolk County Council will continue to support this. Adverse effects on residents will be monitored carefully and home visits will continue to give holistic and individual assistance for those requiring advice and support.

7.1.6 Legal - there will be a legal requirement to make a scheme under the Local Government Finance Act (Section 8 and Schedule 4)

7.1.7 Equalities – Prior to consultation we will assess our scheme against an equality impact assessment in consultation with the Equalities Officer at Norfolk County Council. The purpose of the analysis within the assessment is to allow Members to make informed choices during the decision making process. Due to the reduction in funding for the scheme there is likely to be a significant impact on residents, some of whom will be vulnerable and the analysis will clarify where this will fall.

8 Conclusion

8.1 Local Authorities are required to design a Council Tax Support Scheme. Officers and Members have developed a scheme which supports this council’s priorities, supports families, incentivises work and is efficient to manage.

9 Recommendations

9.1 Cabinet is requested to recommend the Council Tax Support Scheme for consultation as shown at Appendix 1

9.2 Any implications arising from legislation to be reviewed and implemented by the DCE in consultation with the Policy Panel.

10 Background Papers

10.1 Appendix 1 – SNC – Council Tax Support document
South Norfolk Council

Council Tax Support Scheme

1. South Norfolk Council’s Draft Scheme for 2014/15

South Norfolk Council will consult residents and other interested parties on the draft scheme, which contains the following features:

Statutory Requirements:

Protection for Pensioners

In order to protect pensioners on low incomes, the scheme at South Norfolk Council is required to replicate as far as possible the provisions which existed prior to April 2013 under the old Council Tax Benefit scheme.

A person becomes eligible for pensioner-related Council Tax Support at the age at which they can qualify for state pension credit (the pensionable age for a woman). This protection does not apply if the pensioner is in receipt of a working age benefit, for example Job Seekers Allowance, Income Support etc.

Initially South Norfolk Council will follow this rule and adapt accordingly where there are further welfare reform changes.

Other Vulnerable People

While making it clear that, in developing Council Tax Support schemes, consideration should be given to protecting vulnerable groups (which is not defined in legislation). In doing so, Councils must have regard to their responsibilities under:

- The Equality Act 2010 which introduced the Equality Duty. Protected characteristics covered by the Equality Duty are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- The Child Poverty Act 2010 – in particular the duty to reduce and mitigate the effect of child poverty in the local area.
- The Housing Act 1996 – in particular the duty to prevent homelessness.
- The Armed Forces Covenant

People from Abroad

The scheme at South Norfolk Council is required by legislation to exclude foreign nationals with limited immigration status from receiving Council Tax Support.

Refugees
The scheme at South Norfolk Council is required by legislation to exclude foreign nationals with limited immigration status from receiving Council Tax Support.

However, South Norfolk Council will allow those who have recognised refugee status, humanitarian protection, discretionary leave or exceptional leave to remain granted outside the immigration rules to be entitled to apply for Council Tax Support as long as their status has not been revoked.

**Locally Determined Features:**

1.1 **Making an Application for Council Tax Support**

An application must be made in respect of a person who is resident in the dwelling concerned, and liable for payment of Council Tax. A valid application may be made by the resident or by their appointed representative.

Residents will be able to express an interest in applying via -

- telephone
- email
- South Norfolk Council website
- in writing
- in person at South Norfolk Council offices
- to the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).

A valid application must then be submitted to South Norfolk Council on an approved form, and be accompanied by the necessary supporting evidence.

If supporting evidence is not available at the time of the application, it must be supplied within 30 days otherwise Council Tax Support cannot be paid.

1.2 **Date of Application**

Council Tax Support will normally be paid in respect of all days from the Monday after the Council or DWP is contacted confirming the intention to apply, or from the start date of liability if the resident contacts us during the week that they become liable and move into the dwelling.

1.3 **Applicant’s Household**

All persons who reside in the dwelling will need to be declared, and information relating to them may be taken into account for the purposes of calculating Council Tax Support.

Council Tax Support entitlement will continue in certain circumstances if:

- The claimant/partner is temporarily absent (but still intends to return), or
- The claimant/partner is fleeing violence.

1.4 **Calculating Council Tax Support**
South Norfolk Council’s 2014/15 Council Tax Support scheme will be a means-tested scheme. The key part of this is an assessment of income and savings compared with the needs of the household.

The following paragraphs set out the locally determined features that will affect the calculation of Council Tax Support for working age applicants in 2014/15.

These will be subject to consultation and further consideration before a decision is made as to whether they will be adopted as the final scheme.

1.4.1 Protect Lone Parents with a Child under 5 Years of Age

Having regard to its duties under the Child Poverty Act 2010, and in order to protect lone parents who have children under the age of 5 years, the Council Tax Support scheme at South Norfolk Council will replicate as far as possible the existing provisions under the Council Tax Benefit scheme, prior to April 2013.

This means that, in calculating Council Tax Support for applicants with children under 5 years old, the scheme will operate to give them greater financial protection. This will ensure that those persons receive the same level of help with their Council Tax bill under the 2014/15 Council Tax Support scheme, as they would have done under 2013/14 scheme.

1.4.2 Treatment of Recipients of Disability Related Benefits

South Norfolk Council has considered its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and intends to retain all those features (that previously existed under Council Tax Benefit and Council Tax Support for 2013/14) which give an enhanced level of support to those receiving disability related benefits.

This recognises the fact that those with disability related benefits have higher living expenses.

1.4.3 Treatment of Recipients of War Pensions

Having regard to the commitment that South Norfolk Council has made under the Armed Forces Covenant, all war pensions will be fully disregarded when calculating the household’s income.

1.4.4 Enhanced Temporary Protection

Where an applicant has not received Council Tax Support in respect of any address within the previous 12 months, South Norfolk Council will base entitlement upon the full Council Tax charge for thirteen weeks (so 1.4.7 and 1.4.7 will not apply. This helps those who have worked for over a year prior to becoming unemployed and have not claimed benefits during this time. By giving maximum help towards the Council Tax charge for the first 13 weeks that the person remains eligible for support, support is given during the critical period of getting back into work or adjusting to being out of work. After this period, the normal rules will apply.
1.4.5 Align ‘Working Hours’ Rules with those for DWP Benefits

In order to align South Norfolk Council rules for Council Tax Support with those of DWP, people will qualify for an ‘extra earnings disregard’ if they work 24 hours or more.

This means that somebody working more than 24 hours will have a higher level of income ignored in the assessment of their Council Tax Support. This follows the welfare reform principle of making work pay so that people retain more income for working extra hours.

1.4.6 Treat all Maintenance Payments as Income

Maintenance payments are subject to certain disregards under the rules that have previously applied. This will not be the case under our local Council Tax Support scheme for 2014/15. It is the intention of South Norfolk Council that as this forms part of the household income, those same maintenance payments should be treated as income in the calculation of the Council Tax Support.

1.4.7 Restrict Eligible Council Tax

For the purposes of the calculation of Council Tax Support, eligible Council Tax will be restricted as follows:

- those in each of the Council Tax property valuation bands E to H will be treated as if they were living in a band D property; and
- in all cases the amount of Council Tax eligible for support will be restricted to a maximum of 85%.

1.4.8 Remove Entitlement to Backdated Support

Currently, the rules allow up to 26 weeks backdating if there is ‘good cause’ why the claim for benefit was not made sooner.

The Council Tax Support scheme for 2014/15 will not include an option to backdate claims beyond the date of first enquiry for Council Tax Support in respect of that address.

1.4.9 Second Adult Rebate

Second Adult Rebate is paid to the liable person where a second adult shares their household and this person is on a low income. This second person must not be a partner, joint tenant or a lodger.

This feature will only be retained for our protected groups - pensioners and lone parents with a child under 5 years of age.

1.4.10 Reduction in Support for those in receipt of ‘Passported’ Benefits

Passported benefits for the purposes of the scheme from April 2014 will be:
• Income Support
• Job Seekers Allowance (Income Based)
• Employment & Support Allowance (Income Related).

We anticipate that some recipients of Universal Credit will fall into this category.

For those on ‘passported’ benefits, the maximum Council Tax Support entitlement will be reduced by a further 20%, after applying the restrictions in paragraph 1.4.7.

In most cases this will mean that working applicants are given greater support. Without this measure the scheme would unfairly disadvantage those who work, thus undermining the principles of Universal Credit by not ensuring that when people return to work on a slightly increased income they are clearly better off.

1.4.11 Adjustment to Council Tax Support levels for Non-Dependants

Adjustments to Council Tax Support are currently made for non-dependants who share the household. The amount varies depending upon the level of income of the non-dependant. These adjustments are to reflect an expectation that those non-dependants should be contributing financially to the household, and recipients have a lower eligible Council Tax used in their assessments as a result.

In this respect the draft Council Tax Support scheme for 2014/15 will be simpler in its operation, applying only one rate of deduction at a level of £7.50 for each and every non-dependant, regardless of the income of the non-dependant. This means that if there are two non-dependants the deduction will be £15 per week, for three non-dependants £22.50 per week etc.

As their income will not be taken into account in the calculation, no income details will be requested for non-dependants. Non-dependants for the local Council Tax Support scheme will be persons over 18 years of age for whom child benefit is not paid.

1.4.12 Assessing Income for Individuals who are Self Employed

We will need self-employed applicants to evidence that they are self-employed, and provide proof of their income in the form of trading accounts, and a balance sheet where possible.

To avoid unnecessary expense to the applicant audited accounts are not mandatory and a profit and loss form can be supplied by SNC.

Failure to provide a complete record of the income and expenditure of their self employment will mean that we will treat the applicant as being in receipt of an assumed high level of income.

Where the self-employed applicant demonstrates or claims that they are earning less than the minimum wage from their self-employment, we will treat
their income as being at the level of the minimum wage for the number of hours worked.

We will use all information available to us to determine the number of hours worked.

2. Locally Retained Features

Many aspects of the draft Council Tax Support scheme for 2014/15, South Norfolk will operate similarly to the 2013/14 scheme, which mirrored those previously in operation under Council Tax Benefit.

2.1 The Assessment of Income

Unless specified as otherwise in the sections above, all current rules will apply to the assessment of income for the 2014/15 Council Tax Support scheme.

Any award of Universal Credit will mean that the income used in the Council Tax Support assessment will be the same as the amount of Universal Credit notified to us by the DWP.

In preparing for the 2013/14 scheme, South Norfolk Council considered treating Child Benefit as income for the purposes of the calculation of Council Tax Support. Modelling showed that a scheme that treated Child Benefit in this way would reduce help for families with children to an extent felt to be unacceptable. It was decided to continue to disregard Child Benefit in the assessment of income.

2.2 Capital and Savings rules for Assessment of Income

Unless specified as otherwise in the sections above, all current rules will apply to the assessment of capital and savings for the 2014/15 Council Tax Support scheme.

Any award of Universal Credit will mean that the capital and savings used in the Council Tax Support assessment will be the same as the amount of Universal Credit notified to us by the DWP.

South Norfolk Council will retain the upper capital limit of £16,000, above which the applicant will not be eligible for support. This ensures that the same capital rules will apply as for Housing Benefit.

2.3 Transitional Provision

The revised Council Tax Support scheme may have the effect of reducing a person’s entitlement to support. South Norfolk Council must therefore include such transitional provision as it thinks fit.

South Norfolk Council used transitional funding for the year 2013/2014 to help limit the reduction in support. South Norfolk Council will continue to take a stepped approach to reducing support. With this stepped approach it is not felt that any further transitional provisions need to be implemented.
2.4 Decisions, Notifying and Payment of Support

South Norfolk Council will make a decision on an application within a reasonable timescale of receiving all required information.

We will send the applicant a decision letter containing a detailed breakdown of the calculation. The decision letter will include further information including appeal rights and details of how to apply for further discretionary help.

The applicant can elect to receive their decision letter (and bill) by post or by email.

All Council Tax Support will be ‘paid’ for the remainder of the financial year by crediting the amount of entitlement against the applicant’s Council Tax liability to reduce the bill. If as a result an applicant’s Council Tax is in credit, a refund will be made or the credit will be used to reduce future bills.

2.5 Discretionary Payments

The Council Tax Support scheme will include the provision for any applicant experiencing significant hardship to apply for a Discretionary Payment. The award of such a payment is purely discretionary; an applicant does not have a statutory right to a payment. Awards of Discretionary Payment will be made from a budget which will be limited. Once this budget has been spent for the financial year no further awards will be available.

Each case will be treated strictly on its merits and all customers will be treated equally and fairly when the scheme is administered. South Norfolk Council considers that a Discretionary Payment should be seen as a short-term emergency payment. It is not and should not be considered as a way around any current or future entitlement restrictions and will not be a long term support mechanism.

South Norfolk Council will treat all applications on their individual merits and will seek through the operation of this policy to:

- alleviate poverty
- support vulnerable young people in the transition to adult life
- encourage South Norfolk residents to obtain and sustain employment
- safeguard South Norfolk residents in their homes
- help those who are trying to help themselves
- keep families together
- support the vulnerable in the local community
- help claimants through personal crises and difficult events

A person will be eligible to apply if they have a Council Tax liability which they are unable to pay.

A claim for a discretionary payment must be made in writing and signed by the applicant. The applicant will be required to return the form to the Council within one month of its issue and will be encouraged to include any relevant
supporting evidence. In all cases South Norfolk Council will decide the length of time for which a discretionary payment will be awarded on the basis of the evidence supplied and the facts known.

In deciding whether to award a Discretionary Payment, South Norfolk Council will take into account:

- the medical circumstances (i.e. ill health or disabilities*) of the applicant, their partner and any dependants and any other occupants of the applicant’s home;
- the income and expenditure of the applicant, their partner and any dependants or other occupants of the applicant’s home;
- any savings or capital that might be held by the applicant or their family;
- the level of indebtedness of the applicant and their family;
- the exceptional nature of the applicant and their family’s circumstances;
- whether a positive outcome for the applicant can be attained by discretionary help
- the amount available in the Discretionary Payment budget at the time of the application;
- the possible impact on the Council of not making such an award, e.g. the pressure on priority homeless accommodation;
- any other special circumstances brought to the attention of the Council.

* the definition of disability is that as defined in the Equality Act 2012 Schedule 1 para 6

An award of a Discretionary Payment does not guarantee that a further award will be made at a later date, even if the applicant’s circumstances have not changed.

Where the evidence provided indicates that the applicant is not claiming another state benefit they may be entitled to, South Norfolk Council will advise them to make such a claim and provide details of other agencies in the District who may be able to help with such a claim.

2.6 Changes to Entitlement

The applicant must notify South Norfolk Council of any change to their household circumstances, income or capital that may affect the amount of Council Tax Support they are entitled to. Any change of circumstances must be reported within one calendar month of the change happening.

Any change may be reported to South Norfolk Council by telephone, email, fax, via website or in writing. Supporting information will be required.

Each change will result in a recalculation of entitlement, an updated decision letter, and a revised bill if appropriate.

If an applicant household moves home, South Norfolk Council will require a new application for Council Tax Support to be completed. We require this as household composition often changes at the point of moving home.
2.7 Overpaid Council Tax Support

Where circumstances change which mean that more Council Tax Support has initially been awarded than should now be the case, the resulting overpayment will result in an adjusted Council Tax charge.

A revised Council Tax bill will be issued, and if any sums payable are not paid the overpayment will in all cases be recoverable simply as unpaid Council Tax.

2.8 Appeals

An applicant will have a right initially to appeal by setting out in writing their detailed reasons for being aggrieved by the decision. The case will be reconsidered by an officer not involved in the original decision.

If the applicant is still aggrieved with the decision of the Council they will have the right to submit an appeal in writing to an independent tribunal.

Any appeal against a decision regarding Council Tax Support will not mean that payments of Council Tax may be withheld – payments must be made as they fall due and if an appeal is successful any overpayment will be refunded as appropriate.

2.9 Fraud

The Council will investigate any case where it has reason to believe that an amount of Council Tax Support has been awarded as a result of an application which is fraudulent in any respect.

This will include any incidence of an applicant not notifying the Council of any change in household circumstances, income or capital that results in an overpayment.