



# Breckland Local Plan Part 1 – Preferred Directions

December 2015

(Regulation 18 consultation)



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## Glossary

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<b>Affordable Housing</b>	Social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Affordable housing should include provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.
<b>Allocation</b>	An area of land identified for development in a development plan. The allocation will specify the type of development that will be permitted on the land.
<b>Ancient Woodlands</b>	Woodland that is believed to have existed from at least medieval times.
<b>Annual Monitoring Report (AMR)</b>	A report produced each financial year to indicate the progress of production of planning policy documents, and monitor the effectiveness of adopted policies contained within the plan. The report will outline action that may need to be taken to meet targets or if policies need to be replaced. Changes will be implemented through a revised Local Development Scheme.
<b>Area Action Plans (AAP)</b>	Area Action Plans are Development Plan Documents from the previous Local Development Framework system. They were specific plans for areas of change or conservation. Their purpose was to deliver planned growth, stimulate regeneration, and protect areas sensitive to change through conservation policies, make proposals for enhancement and resolve conflicting objectives in areas where there was significant development pressure. The content of former AAPs will now be contained in the Local Plan.
<b>Air Quality Management Area (AQMA)</b>	An AQMA is an area where air quality does not meet air quality objectives. This could be just one or two streets, or it could be a much larger area. A Local Air Quality Action Plan seeks to improve the air quality in areas designated AQMAs.
<b>Biodiversity</b>	The whole variety of life encompassing all genetics, species and ecosystem variation including plants and animals.
<b>Brief / Planning Brief</b>	A planning brief can include site-specific development briefs, design briefs, development frameworks and master plans that seek to positively shape future development.
<b>Brownfield Land or Site</b>	Brownfield land is another term for previously developed land.
<b>Central Norfolk Housing Market Area, CNHMA</b>	Housing market area in and around Greater Norwich, Broadland, Breckland, North Norfolk and South Norfolk. A Housing Market Area is the area within which most people moving, without changing employment, would stay.
<b>Commitments &amp; Completions</b>	The term used to represent the level of development already given planning permission but not yet build out. Completions - the number of dwellings that have been built out following the granting of planning permission.
<b>Community Facilities</b>	Facilities providing for the health, welfare, social, educational, spiritual, leisure and cultural needs of the community.

<b>Community Strategy</b>	A strategy prepared by a community to help deliver local aspirations, under the Local Government Act 2000.
<b>Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO)</b>	An order issued by the Government or a Local Authority to acquire land or buildings for public interest purposes. For example the redevelopment of certain brownfield sites.
<b>Conservation Area</b>	An area of special architectural or historic interest, designated under the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990, whose character and appearance it is desirable to preserve and enhance. There are special rules on some development in conservation areas.
<b>Core Strategy</b>	The Core Strategy is one of the Development Plan Documents which formed part of the Local Development Framework. It set out the vision, spatial strategy and core policies for the spatial development of the area. The Local Plan will supersede the current adopted Core Strategy.
<b>County Wildlife Site (CWS)</b>	A site of important nature conservation value within a County context but which are not protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act
<b>Cultural facilities</b>	Includes theatres, cinema, halls, music venues (usually in pubs), libraries, public art installations and art galleries.
<b>Deliverable</b>	For sites to be considered deliverable the NPPF states that sites should be available now, offer a suitable location for development now, and be achievable with a realistic prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years and in particular that development of the site is viable. Sites with planning permission should be considered deliverable until permission expires, unless there is clear evidence that schemes will not be implemented within five years, for example they will not be viable, there is no longer a demand for the type of units or sites have long term phasing plans.
<b>Density</b>	Measurement of the number of dwellings per hectare (dph).
<b>Developable</b>	For sites to be considered developable, sites should be in a suitable location for housing development and there should be a reasonable prospect that the site is available and could be viably developed at the point envisaged.;
<b>Development</b>	Development is defined under the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act as "the carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operation in, on, over, or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any building or other land." Most forms of development require planning permission.
<b>Development Management</b>	The process whereby a Local Planning Authority manages, shapes, and considers the merits of a planning application and whether it should be given permission with regard to the Development Plan.
<b>Development Plan (DP)</b>	This includes adopted Local Plans, and Neighbourhood Plans, and is defined in section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
<b>Duty to Co-operate</b>	Local Councils now have a duty to co-operate with their neighbouring Councils and a set of prescribed bodies as defined by the Localism Act 2011 on planning issues

	that cross administrative boundaries, particularly those which relate to the strategic priorities.
<b>Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)</b>	EIA is a procedure that must be followed for certain types of development before they are granted permission. The procedure requires the developer to compile an Environmental Statement (ES) describing the likely significant effects of the development on the environment and proposed mitigation measures.
<b>Flood risk</b>	<p>Zone 2 (Medium Probability): Land having between a 1 in 100 and 1 in 1,000 annual probability of river flooding; or Land having between a 1 in 200 and 1 in 1,000 annual probability of sea flooding.</p> <p>Zone 3a (High Probability): Land having a 1 in 100 or greater annual probability of river flooding; or Land having a 1 in 200 or greater annual probability of sea flooding.</p> <p>Zone 3b (The Functional Floodplain): This zone comprises land where water has to flow or be stored in times of flood.</p>
<b>General Conformity</b>	All planning policy documents must align with the expectations of the National Planning Policy Framework. This is known as general conformity.
<b>General Employment Areas</b>	Existing employment sites which have been identified to be protected for employment uses including business, general industrial and storage/distribution uses.
<b>Greenfield Site</b>	Land that has not previously been used for urban development. It is usually land last used for agriculture and located next to or outside existing built-up areas of a settlement.
<b>Habitat</b>	The natural home of an animal or plant, often designated as an area of nature conservation interest.
<b>Historic Parks and Gardens</b>	Parks and Gardens which are of historic value and have been included on the national Register of Parks and Gardens of special historic interest in England based on an assessment by English Heritage.
<b>Infrastructure</b>	Basic services necessary for development to take place, for example, roads, electricity, sewerage, water, education and health facilities.
<b>Landscape Character Assessment</b>	A tool to identify and understand the factors that give character to the landscape and to help inform policy and decisions about how the landscape may change in the future.
<b>Listed Building</b>	A building or other structure of Special Architectural or Historic Interest. The grades of listing are grade I, II* or II.
<b>Local Development Framework (LDF)</b>	The old-style portfolio or folder of Development Plan Documents and Area Action Plans which collectively set out the Spatial Planning Strategy for a Local Planning Authority area. Local Plans have now replaced the Local Development Framework.

<b>Local Development Scheme (LDS)</b>	A public statement setting out a project plan for how all parts of the Local Plan will come together. It lists the documents to be produced and the timetable for producing them.
<b>Local Nature Reserve (LNR)</b>	Area designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (1949) as being of particular importance to nature conservation and where public understanding of nature conservation issues is encouraged.
<b>Local Plan</b>	The plan for the future development of the local area, drawn up by the local planning authority in consultation with the community. In law this is described as the development plan documents adopted under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Current core strategies or other planning policies, which under the regulations would be considered to be development plan documents, form part of the Local Plan. The term includes old policies which have been saved under the 2004 Act.
<b>Local Planning Authority (LPA)</b>	The Local Government body responsible for formulating Planning Policies in an area, controlling development through determining planning applications and taking enforcement action when necessary. This is either a District Council, Unitary Authority, Metropolitan Council or National Park Authority.
<b>Local Transport Plan (LTP)</b>	A five-year integrated transport strategy, prepared by Local Authorities in partnership with the community, seeking funding to help provide local transport projects. The plan sets out the resources predicted for delivery of the targets identified in the strategy.
<b>Main Town Centre Uses</b>	Retail development (including warehouse clubs and factory outlet centres); leisure, entertainment facilities the more intensive sport and recreation uses (including cinemas, restaurants, drive-through restaurants, bars and pubs, night-clubs, casinos, health and fitness centres, indoor bowling centres, and bingo halls); offices; and arts, culture and tourism development (including theatres, museums, galleries and concert halls, hotels and conference facilities).
<b>Material Consideration</b>	A matter that should be taken into account in deciding on a planning application or on an appeal against a planning decision.
<b>Mixed Use (or Mixed Use Development)</b>	Provision of a mix of complementary uses, such as residential, community and leisure uses, on a site or within a particular area.
<b>Nature Conservation</b>	The protection, management and promotion of wildlife habitat for the benefit of wild species, as well as the communities that use and enjoy them.
<b>National Nature Reserve (NNR)</b>	An area designated by Natural England to protect and conserve nationally important areas of wildlife habitat and geological formations and to promote scientific research.
<b>National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)</b>	The NPPF forms the national planning policies that Local Planning Authorities need to take into account when drawing up their Local Plan and other documents and making decisions on planning policies. The NPPF is published by the Department of Communities and Local Government.

<b>National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)</b>	The national PPG is online guidance that should be read in conjunction with the NPPF.
<b>Neighbourhood Plans</b>	A Plan prepared by a Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum for a particular neighbourhood area (made under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).
<b>Northern Distributor Road (NDR)</b>	A 20 km dual carriage way planned to run from A47 Postwick, east of Norwich to the A1067 north of Taverham
<b>Older People</b>	People over retirement age, including the active, newly-retired through to the very frail elderly, whose housing needs can encompass accessible, adaptable general needs housing for those looking to downsize from family housing and the full range of retirement and specialised housing for those with support or care needs.
<b>Open Space</b>	Open space is defined in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as 'land laid out as a public garden, or used for the purposes of public recreation, or land which is a disused burial ground'. Open space should be taken to mean all open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can also act as a visual amenity.
<b>Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004)</b>	The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act amends much of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990). In particular, the 2004 act has made major changes to the system of development plans and introduced sustainable development, as defined by Government policy, as an objective of the planning system.
<b>Planning Condition</b>	A condition imposed on a grant of planning permission (in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) or a condition included in a Local Development Order or Neighbourhood Development Order
<b>Planning Obligation</b>	A legally enforceable obligation entered into under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to mitigate the impacts of a development proposal.
<b>Planning Permission</b>	Formal approval sought from a Council, often granted with conditions, allowing a proposed development to proceed. Permission may be sought in principle through outline plans, or be sought in detail through full plans.
<b>Previously Developed Land</b>	Land which is, or was, occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or has been occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill purposes where provision for restoration has been made through development control procedures; land in built-up areas such as private residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously-developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape in the process of time.

<b>Primary Shopping Area</b>	Defined area where retail development is concentrated (generally comprising the primary frontage and those secondary frontages which are adjoining and closely related to the primary shopping frontage).
<b>Primary and Secondary Frontages</b>	Primary frontages are likely to include a high proportion of retail uses which may include food, drinks, clothing and household goods. Secondary frontages provide greater opportunities for a diversity of uses such as restaurants, cinemas and businesses.
<b>Protected Species</b>	Plants and animal species afforded protection under certain Acts of Law and Regulations.
<b>Ramsar Site</b>	Area identified under the internationally agreed Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (signed at Ramsar in Iran), focusing on the ecological importance of wetlands generally.
<b>Regeneration</b>	The economic, social and environmental renewal and improvement of rural and urban areas.
<b>Section 106 Agreement</b>	A legal agreement under Section 106 of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act. See also: Planning Obligations and Agreements.
<b>Sequential Approach / Sequential Test</b>	A planning principle that seeks to identify, allocate or develop certain types or locations of land before the consideration of others. For example, ensuring land with no flood risk is developed before land with flood risk.
<b>Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)</b>	A SSSI is identified by Natural England as requiring protection from damaging development on account of its flora, fauna, geological and/or physiological features.
<b>Sites of Archaeological &amp; Historic Interest</b>	This designation applies to a site at Mundford Road Thetford, which is widely regarded as being linked to Boudicca, Queen of the Iceni. The site is currently being considered for Scheduled Ancient Monument status by English Heritage.
<b>Spatial Planning</b>	Spatial planning goes beyond traditional land use planning to bring together and integrate policies for the development and use of land with other policies and programmes which influence the nature of places and how they function. That will include policies which can impact on land use, for example by influencing the demands on, or needs for, development, but which are not capable of being delivered solely or mainly through the granting or refusal of planning permission and which may be implemented by other means.
<b>Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)</b>	Protected sites designated under the EC Habitats Directive.
<b>Special Protection Area (SPA)</b>	Areas given special protection under the European Union's Habitats Directive, which is transposed into UK law by the Habitats and Conservation of Species Regulations 2010.
<b>Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)</b>	Every Local Planning Authority has to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement. It sets out the Council's vision and strategy for the standards to be achieved in involving the community and stakeholders in the preparation of planning policy documents and planning applications.

<b>Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)</b>	A procedure (set out in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004) which requires the formal environmental assessment of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.
<b>Sustainable Development</b>	Meeting peoples needs now, socially, environmentally and economically, without jeopardising the needs of future generations. There are three dimensions to sustainable development as seen in paragraph 7 of the NPPF: economic-contributing to a strong, competitive economy; social-supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities and environmental-contributing to protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment.
<b>Sustainability Appraisal (SA)</b>	To identify and evaluate what the effects of the strategy or plan are likely to be on social, environmental and economic conditions of the strategy or plan area.
<b>Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)</b>	An assessment of land availability identifying a future supply of land. Paragraph 159 of the NPPF states that Local Planning Authorities should prepare a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment to establish realistic assumptions about the availability, suitability and the likely economic viability of land to meet the identified need for housing over the plan period.
<b>Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)</b>	An evidence based document providing an analysis of the housing market area to inform policy formation . The purpose of which is to have a clear understanding of housing needs in their area. Paragraph 159 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities should prepare a SHMA to assess their full housing needs, working with neighbouring authorities where housing market areas cross administrative boundaries.
<b>Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA)</b>	An assessment of the effects upon the surrounding area by traffic as a result of a development, such as increased traffic flows that may require highway improvements.
<b>Town Centre</b>	Area defined on the Local Authority's proposal map, including the primary shopping area and areas predominantly occupied by main town centre uses within or adjacent to the primary shopping area. References to town centres or centres apply to city centres, town centres, district centres and local centres but exclude small parades of shops of purely neighbourhood significance. Unless they are identified as centres in Local Plans, existing out-of-centre developments, comprising or including main town centre uses, do not constitute town centres.
<b>Travel Plan</b>	A long-term management strategy for an organisation or site that seeks to deliver sustainable transport objectives through action and is articulated in a document that is regularly reviewed.
<b>Tree Preservation Order (TPO)</b>	A mechanism for securing the preservation of single or groups of trees of acknowledged amenity value. A tree subject to an order may not normally be topped, lopped or felled without the consent of the Local Planning Authority.
<b>Wastewater Treatment Works (WWTW)</b>	Wastewater treatment works

**Windfall Sites**

Sites which have not been specifically identified as available in the Local Plan process. They normally comprise previously-developed sites that have unexpectedly become available

# 1 Introduction

## Introduction

### What is this Document?

**1.1** This document has been prepared as a basis for consultation for the new Breckland Local Plan. It sets out the Council's preferred directions and options on a range of topics and explains the reasons why these options are being suggested. Where alternative options have been considered it also explains why these are not being suggested as preferred options.

**1.2** The Local Plan is a key document that guides development in the District over the next 20 years. It sets out how the Council will deliver its vision through the planning process and the policies against which planning applications will be assessed.

**1.3** Whilst a lot of work has been done to make sure these preferred options can be justified, it is important to underline that they are directions at this stage and are not a final set of proposals for the Local Plan. The Council is therefore keen to hear the views of all interested parties to help us shape a draft Local Plan.

### How to Comment on this Document

**1.4** All comments on this Preferred Direction document should be sent to the Planning Policy Team at Breckland Council. Where possible we would appreciate the comments being submitted online using the Council's specially designed webpage, but comments can also be emailed or posted to us.

**Online:** <http://consult.breckland.gov.uk>

**By post:** Planning Policy Team, Breckland Council, Elizabeth House, Walpole Loke, Dereham, Norfolk, NR19 1EE

**By email:** [planningpolicyteam@breckland.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicyteam@breckland.gov.uk)

**1.5** The consultation will run between **11<sup>th</sup> January and 4pm on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2016.**

**1.6** Please note that all comments will be placed on the Council's webpage and as such will be publicly viewable. If you have any questions regarding the consultation or any of the issues raised in this document, please contact the Planning Policy Team on 01362 656 873.

### Preparation of this Document

**1.7** On 8 January 2013, the Council resolved to prepare a new Local Plan for Breckland. Once adopted, the Local Plan will replace the existing suite of Development Plan Documents developed under the previous Local Development Framework (LDF), including the Core Strategy and Development Control Policies, Site Specific Policies and Proposals and Thetford Area Action Plan.

**1.8** The preparation of the Local Plan is a staged process, informed and influenced by a range of different evidence based documents, and steered by several key consultation periods.

**1.9** Between 17 November 2014 and 9 January 2015 the Council consulted on an Issues and Options document. The Issues and Options document was produced to generate initial discussions on the spatial issues, and set out the challenges facing Breckland. Comments were invited on all areas of the Plan with 70 specific questions asked by the Council. Over 1000 responses were received and considered in the preparation of this document. An Issues and Options Consultation Summary Document has been produced and is available on the Council's website.

**1.10** Since the consultation period ended, the Council has been considering the responses and gathering further evidence to support the preferred directions. The evidence documents contain a substantial amount of information on a range of topics which helps us to understand what is changing locally and what we need to plan for. This information has been important in helping us develop our preferred policy directions.

### **Public Consultation**

**1.11** Having developed the preferred options set out in this document the Council is now seeking views on the preferred policy directions and preferred policies as detailed in this document.

### **Sustainability Appraisal**

**1.12** The Preferred Options document has been subject to Sustainability Appraisal (SA) (incorporating a Strategic Environmental Assessment). The SA is a key component of the development of a Local Plan. The purpose of SA is to ensure that the policies in the Local Plan are in keeping with the principles and aims of sustainable development. The Local Plan will be the subject of ongoing SA during its production. The SA to accompany this document includes assessment of social, economic and environmental impacts of the proposed policies. Comments received on the SA at Issues and Options consultation stage have been used to help inform the SA which accompanies this Preferred Options document. Comments are invited on the SA which accompanies this document as part of the consultation.

### **Habitats Regulation Assessment**

**1.13** Regulation 85B of the Habitats Regulations requires plan-making authorities to determine whether a plan is likely to have a significant effect upon any European site. In considering the implications of the Breckland Local Plan for European sites, a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) will be undertaken in order to comply with the Habitats Regulations. The findings of the Habitats Regulations Assessment might mean it is necessary to include mitigation measures to remove any significant effects or likely significant effects that the plan may have on European sites. Mitigation measures can include amendments made to policies to remove elements that could have an effect, or to require other actions that can eliminate any effects.

**1.14** An HRA has been commissioned to accompany the Preferred Options document.

### **Duty to Co-operate**

**1.15** The Localism Act (2011) sets out a new 'Duty to Co-operate' which applies to all Local Planning Authorities, County Councils, National Park Authorities and a number of public bodies including the Environment Agency, Highways Agency and the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

**1.16** Local Planning Authorities are expected to demonstrate evidence of having effectively co-operated with key partners on cross-boundary impacts when their Local Plans are submitted for examination. It is important that co-operation is a continuous process of engagement. This is all the more important as, in the past, strategic cross-boundary issues were considered through the now revoked Regional Plan process, but this responsibility now rests at the local level.

**1.17** Breckland Council is a member of a Norfolk wide Duty to Co-operate Forum.

**1.18** The Council has worked jointly across Norfolk and with adjacent authorities and has sought to engage with partners and statutory bodies under the Duty to Co-operate. Many have fed into the preferred options set out in this document and assisted in evidence gathering. One key outcome from the Duty to Co-operate Forum has been the Joint Central Strategic Housing Market Assessment. As part of the preferred options consultation the Council will endeavour to engage directly with key partners.

## 2 Vision and Objectives

### A Spatial Portrait for Breckland

**2.1** Spanning over 500 square miles Breckland is a geographically large rural District located in the heart of Norfolk. The District is characterised by a dispersed settlement pattern of market towns, villages and hamlets. There are five market towns, 21 local service centres, and numerous small villages and hamlets. Approximately half the current population live in one of the five market towns of Attleborough, Dereham, Swaffham, Thetford and Watton with the remaining population dispersed across the District. The area is represented through 112 town and parish councils, and the District Council.

**2.2** The population is set to grow from the current 138,233 to 153,313 by 2036 (ONS sub-national population projections 2012-2037). Generally, quality of life is good with official crime rates being low and generally decreasing. However there are pockets of health and disability related deprivation, notably in some of the Thetford wards. Additionally, the average age of Breckland residents is increasing and this raises issues for health and the level and distribution of appropriate service provision, as well as the economy and housing market.

**2.3** Thetford, which is Norfolk's fourth largest settlement, and Attleborough are major towns and key areas for growth. Dereham, Swaffham and Watton are medium sized towns, which serve as administration and service centres, but are also a focus for retail where they provide a good range of services for day-to-day needs of local residents, and the rural hinterlands, as well as employment. There are a number of larger villages in the District which have a range of services, however there are a number of rural parishes with very few or no services, including some wards which are amongst the most deprived in Norfolk in terms of access to services.

**2.4** The regional centre of Norwich exerts a sphere of influence over much of the District.

**2.5** To a lesser extent the sub-regional centres of King's Lynn and Bury St. Edmunds have a relationship with parts of the west and south of the District respectively. Communities in Breckland look primarily towards the Norwich urban area for employment, higher order retail, transport and service provision, such as hospitals. Increasingly, the south of the District, along with settlements along the A11 corridor which traverses the District connecting Thetford to Attleborough and onwards to Norwich, looks for investment emanating from the growth of Norwich and other regional centres, such as Cambridge and the M11 Corridor. Thetford and Attleborough are key areas for future housing and business growth. Agriculture, advanced engineering and manufacturing logistics along with forestry are the dominant business sectors with professional, scientific and technical and food processing not far behind. The proportion of B Class jobs (i.e offices, industrial and warehousing activities) in the District has remained relatively constant over the last 22 years, representing 39% - 46% of all jobs in Breckland. Industrial employment provides the majority of B class jobs in the District, although office jobs represent an increasing contribution (Breckland Employment Growth Study, 2013).

**2.6** Given the rural nature and dispersed pattern of settlement, movement in the District is primarily by private car. Two trunk road routes run across the District and Breckland's strategic position is emphasised by good road communications offered by the A47 and A11. The A47 links Dereham and Swaffham with Norwich in the east and King's Lynn in the west and further afield to Peterborough and the A1(M), while the A11 links Attleborough and Thetford with Norwich and the Norwich Research Park to the north east and Newmarket, Cambridge and the M11 in the south-west. Major infrastructure improvements and improved transport links such as the completion of the A11 duelling are already attracting new businesses as well as enabling existing ones to flourish through increased connectivity. Further improvements are planned for the A47 trunk road. Around Norwich outside the District, major investment programmes are planned such as the Northern Distributor Road (NDR), which is set to improve linkages to Norwich international airport, offering a quicker and more convenient route for a range of shorter journeys and increasing access to existing and planned business and housing areas.

**2.7** The remaining parts of Breckland are served by a network of non-trunk "A" category, secondary and minor roads. Thetford and Attleborough are connected to the national rail network with regular services to Norwich and Cambridge, and beyond to London, the Midlands and north of England. Rail investment is a regional commitment. Public transport services in the District are principally provided by bus and focus on linking the District's market towns with shopping and employment destinations at Norwich, King's Lynn and Bury St. Edmunds. There are more infrequent services in the rural areas linking villages with their local town, principally on market days.

**2.8** Wages are relatively low in comparison with the national and regional averages. This reflects the low level of qualifications of people in the District and the low level of skills required by many of the available jobs. Although there is a high proportion of people living and working in the District, many higher qualified workers are travelling out of the District to access higher paid and higher skilled work. 79% of the working age population in employment, compared to 76% across the East of England and an average of 72% Great Britain. Unemployment in the District is very low and has been consistently below both the national and county figures. Breckland recorded 50,980 workforce jobs in 2013 (Breckland Employment Growth Study, November 2013), representing an increase of 22.8% from its 1991 level, significantly outpacing growth across both the East of England Region (18.7%) and UK (13.9%). Over the period 1991-2011 jobs growth has been very high at 21.8% compared with a Norfolk average of 8.7%. During the recessionary period of 2007 – 2010, Breckland recorded a net loss of 2,470 workplace jobs, but since then employment has grown. Jobs growth is projected to continue to recover and grow during the plan period, with at least 4,000 net new jobs forecast for the District up to 2031 (East of England Forecasting Model (EEFM) 2013 baseline forecast).

**2.9** The functional linkages between where people live and work help to define the housing market for Breckland which cuts across various local planning authority administrative boundaries. The 2015 Strategic Housing Market Assessments, (SHMA, 2015), identified a three stage Central Norfolk Housing Market Area, (CNHMA), concluding that the CNHMA includes significant parts of Breckland, including four out of the five market towns. 91% of workers that live in the CNHMA also worked in the CNHMA and that 93% of movers currently living in the CNHMA moved from another address inside the CNHMA.

**2.10** Typically, local housing market areas are considered to exist in an area with at least 65% self containment. Many of the settlements in the surrounding areas to Norwich and especially those to the west and south west of the District have low levels of self-containment and are not able to define their own housing market. These settlements have wider links throughout the region and are therefore part of the wider CNHMA. The extent of the CNHMA demonstrates that it is the most appropriate functional housing market for the District to align to.

**2.11** Breckland is a diverse District for biodiversity, landscape and heritage. It takes its name from The Brecks, which is a nationally unique landscape and habitat of sandy heath, forest and arable farmland found in the west and south of the District. This habitat contains a number of nationally important bird species such as Stone Curlew, Woodlark and Nightjar and large swathes of The Brecks are protected by National and European designations. Breckland contains 13% of all SSSIs found in the East of England. Elsewhere the character of Breckland is clay farmland, punctuated with woodland, occasional river valleys and dispersed settlement. The historic character of Breckland's settlements is recognised by 50 separate Conservation Areas and over 1,500 Listed Buildings.

**2.12** Breckland also has an interesting geodiversity; it is an area of lowland glacial landscape overlying chalk bedrock. Its special landforms include pingos, patterned ground and fluctuating meres. Many of these features are recognised as being of regional and national importance.

**2.13** The District is one of the driest areas of the country and availability of water resources is an issue with the increasing pressure for development. Climate change remains a significant challenge over the longer term. We can expect warmer wetter winters and drier hotter summers; reduced water resources and more extreme weather events.

**2.14** Breckland's location means that it is not vulnerable to sea level changes. However, many parts of the District have a high clay content and consequently inadequate drainage, which can lead to localised problems of flash flooding.

**2.15** The release of greenhouse gases, particularly carbon dioxide, is the main contributing factor towards climate change and human activity is a direct cause. Road traffic is a significant source of carbon dioxide, and with a high level of interdependency on higher order centres, Breckland, like many other rural authorities, has a high rate of commuting to work.

### **Breckland's Spatial Vision**

**2.16** National guidance promotes a Local Plan which reflects a collective vision incorporating priorities from neighbourhoods, business and local organisations which should reflect the strategic priorities for the area. It is important that the vision for Breckland sets out our aspirations for the future of the District and is one that will guide how the District will look in the future.

**2.17** It is our aim that the vision for Breckland should:

- Reflect local circumstances and that plans be prepared with the objective of achieving sustainable development in the context of Breckland's rural nature reflecting the aspirations of local communities, and
- Align with other key strategies and plans, produced by the Council, key partners and the wider community.

**2.18** To support a vision, it is also important that the Local Plan sets out the strategic objectives for the District. The strategic objectives facilitate delivery of the District's strategic priorities which reflect the requirements of the NPPF as well as local aspirations.

#### **Responses to the Issues and Options Consultation told us that:**

- The Local Plan should recognise and reflect the dispersed and rural nature of the District and its vibrant communities;
- There was need to reflect the wider economic objectives, more balanced economic and residential growth and updated economic aims rather than just continued emphasis on specific settlements on the A11 corridor
- Economic growth should be spread across appropriate rural areas as well as directed to the market towns. A priority should be to support flexibly appropriate growth in rural areas to support services;
- Through Neighbourhood Planning, local distinctiveness can be added to the planning process;
- There should be greater emphasis on the environment and historic protection;
- There was a requirement for appropriate infrastructure provision;
- There should be greater emphasis on enhancing and protecting existing infrastructure rather than a focus just on new infrastructure for new developments;
- The delivery of health care and wellbeing should be reflected.

**2.19** The Local Plan presents an opportunity to develop a high level vision that encompasses all the elements that should now act as key drivers for the growth and continued success of the District. It also offers the opportunity to detail a plan that is specific to Breckland, seeks to address the specific rural nature, but at the same time aligns with the requirements of national policy. It is the long-term spatial vision that will create the framework for the development of policies and proposals to be included in the Local Plan. This vision emphasises local distinctiveness, with a focus upon delivery, in line with the context of positive growth that is put forward in the 2012 National Planning Policy Framework, wherein it is highlighted that sustainable development is about making economic, environmental and social progress for this and future generations. It gives expression to other strategies and programmes, including economic development, education, housing, health, environmental protection and culture.

**2.20** The vision has been derived from the challenges, issues, opportunities and aspirations expressed by neighbourhoods, business and local organisations through stakeholder consultation, reflecting and supporting the priorities established in Breckland Council's 2015 Corporate Plan.

**2.21** The 2015 Corporate Plan sets a number of commitments around the following priorities:

- Supporting Breckland to develop and thrive;
- Providing the right services, at the right time and the right way;
- Developing the local economy to be vibrant with continued growth;
- Enabling stronger, more independent communities.

**2.22** The Strategic Vision for Breckland aims to articulate where the Council wishes to be by the end of the plan period.

### **Breckland's Strategic Vision**

By 2036 Breckland's settlements and its wider rural area will have developed in a sustainable manner appropriate for the rural nature of the District, building on its achievements and strengths to deliver an improved quality of life for its next generation of residents, an improved experience for its visitors and will be better placed to attract investment and jobs into the District. Breckland's communities will be more sustainable, prosperous, safe, healthy and vibrant. The economy will be diversified and well connected, with a growing number of skilled workforce and population.

New development will be directed to locations that are co-ordinated with transport provision, have good access to support existing services, community facilities and open space. Outside the strategic growth locations of Attleborough and Thetford, a more balanced approach to housing development between rural and urban areas will have taken place allowing for improved housing land supply from rural areas to help in facilitating planned growth and the infrastructure required to support development so that communities can grow in a sustainable and cohesive manner.

New employment will not only be located to take advantage of the improved transport links offered by the A11 and A47 corridors and partnership work with adjacent local authorities, but be directed to the most sustainable locations where they assist in providing the right balance between the local rural economy and that of the wider District and that of Greater Norwich. Local distinctness will be reflected through positive approaches towards the rural economy where appropriate development will be helping to sustain local services and identities, allowing them to grow and assist in helping rural communities adapt and thrive.

Services and facilities will be supported and prized in rural villages. A sense of local community and belonging will be maintained and reinforced, with decisions made at community level reflected in development proposals through the consideration of Neighbourhood Planning.

Breckland will continue to prize the natural and built assets which make the District unique, and will protect them not only for their own sake, but also as a means of attracting investment and visitors to the area. Breckland's towns and villages will have retained the characteristics that provide their character.

Through working with stakeholders and partners, strong working relationships will be delivering improved health care and wellbeing to meet the needs of the communities.

## Strategic Objectives

**2.23** In order to implement and deliver the Local Plan's vision, the following set of strategic objectives has been identified. These provide more specific direction to the spatial strategy and core policies that are developed in the following sections.

**2.24** The 18 strategic objectives for the implementation of this Local Plan require all new development to:

### Development in the Right Place

1. Contribute to sustainable development through the reflection of the vision and aspirations of the local communities for Breckland;
2. Assist in the creation and maintenance of inclusive, environmentally sustainable communities making the best and most efficient use of already developed land, buildings and natural resources;
3. Make sure the majority of development is focused into areas where services are available, and where facilities can be supported;

### Meeting the Housing Need

4. Deliver housing that meets the needs of the community and local economy through the concentration of development in the Strategic Urban Extensions of Attleborough and Thetford and where services and facilities can be supported within or adjacent to the market towns of Dereham, Swaffham and Watton and the local service centres, whilst giving recognition to the need for small scale and appropriate development in rural areas to support rural communities and services;
5. Support the development and maintenance of a balanced housing market and a variety of decent, affordable housing which meets the needs of all local people and supports economic and community development;
6. To encourage high quality, sustainable and safe design for places and spaces, in both the private and public realm, and which respects the character and local distinctiveness of Breckland's communities;

### A Strong Economy

7. Promote and support economic growth in sustainable and accessible locations in a flexible manner, diversifying the urban and rural economic base of the District to enable a prosperous mix where investment is encouraged, skills are developed and retained and new and existing businesses are supported;
8. Enable the full potential of the A11 gateway and A47 corridor to contribute to economic growth of the District through investment, partnership work with neighbouring authorities and inward investment;
9. Develop the local economy and meet local employment needs by providing a sufficient number and variety of employment locations and opportunities, at the same time ensuring the specific qualities of the local environment are not damaged;
10. Promote the vitality and viability of town centres, including the night time economy and support the retention of existing rural services;
11. Provide for improved broadband connections, especially in rural areas;

### A Rich Environment

12. Contribute to the positive management of change in the historic environment, protecting, enhancing and maintaining the unique qualities and character of Breckland, the wider landscape and setting, and its designated and un-designated heritage assets for the future;
13. Promote a safe and healthy environment, and high quality design minimising the impacts of development and ensuring quality of life and sense of place;
14. Protect, conserve and enhance the natural environment, valuing green infrastructure for the many functions it performs;
15. Ensure the ongoing protection of key habitats for protected species;

## **Thriving Communities**

16. To improve the health and well-being of our communities by reducing health inequalities, promoting healthy living and supporting locally accessible, high quality health care;

17. To protect and enhance community facilities and services and maximise accessibility to them;

18. To encourage and facilitate a sense of community and belonging, and make sure decisions are made at community level as far as possible (through implementation of this plan and through Neighbourhood Planning).

## 3 Spatial Development Strategy

### Spatial Strategy

**3.1** The Preferred Policy Directions are based on the sustainable needs of Breckland and an understanding of the diverse nature and its wider context of Central Norfolk and beyond. The Strategic Framework that operates across the region is acknowledged, and consideration of the District's inter-relationships with adjoining areas has fed into the development of the Preferred Policy Directions and options which provide for the objectively assessed needs of the area.

**3.2** The Spatial Strategy provides for:

- Sustainable development, through the development of the preferred direction PD 01 Sustainable Development;
- The delivery of no less than **14,925** new dwellings, through plan led growth directed to the five market towns of the District and designated Local Service Centres combined with managed small scale growth in the rural area across the plan period 2011- 2036;
- The delivery of the necessary infrastructure requirements to facilitate the necessary access to homes, jobs, education, health and leisure facilities through the development of the Preferred Policy options as listed in this document.

### Sustainable Development

**3.3** At the heart of the NPPF for both plan-making and decision-taking there is a "presumption in favour of sustainable development". This means that the Local Authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of the District. National Policy dictates that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to sustainable development, (NPPF, 2012 Paragraph 6) and that through the planning system gains should be sought jointly through the three dimensions: economic, social and environmental. Sustainable development is about facilitating the creation of jobs and homes, improving the conditions in which people live, work, travel and take leisure, creating the conditions for better design and achieving gains in nature.

**3.4** This involves seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural & historic environment as well as in people's quality of life. In developing the Local Plan it is important not only to reflect on national policy but also to reflect and interpret policy with regard to the rural nature of the District and the aspirations of the local community. Local Plans should meet objective needs based on robust evidence, and they should be able to be applied in a flexible manner to adapt to rapid change, unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly outweigh the benefits, or specific policies indicate development should be restricted. They should also reflect local distinctiveness.

**3.5** The presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the NPPF means approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay. Where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts would significantly outweigh the benefits.

**3.6** Plans must be prepared with the objective of achieving sustainable development that reflects the vision and aspirations of local communities, reflecting local circumstances. The Issues and Options Consultation document did not contain a set of options directly related to this policy formation, instead it put forward a number of thematic questions around policy formation options as well as asking what was meant by sustainable development in the context of the mainly rural District of Breckland. These responses have all contributed to the formation of this more general locally distinctive policy.

### **Responses to the Issues and Options Consultation told us that:**

The specific question in the Issues and Options consultation on the meaning of sustainable development received 32 responses. Many expressed a desire for a balance of employment and residential growth, with calls for development to be spread down to appropriate rural areas as well as market towns. Appropriate infrastructure and service provision was a consistent theme amongst responses. Other responses called for the definition to reflect more specific “self containment”.

Breckland is a large rural District; a significant proportion of the population live in dispersed villages and hamlets in the 107 parishes. The remaining population live in the five market towns, themselves geographically located across the District. As a predominantly rural, sparsely populated District, the dispersed nature of its population presents many challenges both for residents and for the delivery and provision of services. Difficulty in accessing services, limited communications network, (including broadband), reliance on the private car, the potential of social isolation and increased household costs are issues that whilst not exclusively rural, can be exacerbated by Breckland’s rural characteristics.

Whilst Planning cannot overcome market forces and personal behaviour, it can help to ensure that rural communities and settlements do not stagnate and decline but instead meet the needs of all generations of their communities, particularly the needs of younger households and those on lower wages. It can also assist in improving the appropriate provision of services and facilities, as well as helping to strengthen community cohesion, parish and family ties.

The NPPF advises that to boost the supply of housing, Local Planning Authorities should use their evidence base to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area. With regard specifically to rural areas, the NPPF advises that authorities should be responsive to local circumstances and plan housing development to reflect local needs in a sustainable manner. Paragraph 55 clearly sets out that to promote positive development ‘housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities’ and ‘should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances’. However, it should be recognised that travel by car will still be an essential option for many people in remote rural areas.

### Preferred Policy Direction - PD 01 Sustainable Development in Breckland

The Local Plan will seek and enable development that improves the economic, social and environmental objectives of Breckland through the application of the following national and locally distinctive sustainable development principles:

- Mitigate and adapt to climate change;
- Protect and enhance the natural, built and historic environment;
- Allocate and facilitate developable land that seeks to provide access to homes, employment, retail, leisure and other facilities;
- Assist in the creation and maintenance of inclusive, environmentally sustainable communities making the best and most efficient use of previously developed land, buildings and natural resources;
- Supports Breckland's wider rural economy helping to sustain local services and assist in helping rural communities adapt and grow proportionately to enhance their social and economic sustainability;
- Directing jobs and growth towards the most sustainable locations contributing towards the economy and jobs in rural areas, helping to find the right balance throughout the District.

Developments are co-ordinated with transport provision, with good access to existing community facilities, services and open space, together with new facilities and services where necessary.

Where there are no Local Plan policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision, the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise, taking into account whether any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework, or specific policies in the Framework indicate that development should be refused.

### Alternative Option

The alternative option is not to include a specific policy on sustainable development within the Local Plan and instead rely on the definition set out within the NPPF.

### Question 1

Do you agree with the preferred policy - PD 01? Please explain your answer.

### Development Requirements

**3.7** A key purpose of the Local Plan is to set out the required number of new homes and employment land that will be provided to meet the identified need. Local Authorities are required by the NPPF to objectively assess the development needs for their area and plan to meet these needs in full. This is both a technical and a policy issue. The judgement over what the future requirement is, remains a strategic policy choice over what level of future housing is appropriate, taking account of different demographic, economic and housing need considerations and the assumptions underlying them. Paragraph 159 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities should prepare a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) to assess their full housing needs, working with neighbouring authorities where housing market areas cross administrative boundaries. Paragraph 14 of the NPPF, states that local planning authorities in preparing the Local Plan should meet objectively assessed needs, unless adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the NPPF or be contrary to specific NPPF policies.

**3.8** A number of growth alternatives were presented at the issues and options consultation. These stemmed from previous work undertaken by Nataniel Lichfield and Partners who undertook some preliminary modelling around population forecasts and employment needs along with the option to set a housing target more closely aligned to the emerging Joint Strategic Housing Market Assessment, which at the time of the consultation had not yet reported. This was commissioned jointly by five central Norfolk local authorities (Norwich City, Broadland, Breckland, North Norfolk and South Norfolk, together with the Broads Authority) through the Duty to Co-operate Forum. Its aim was to identify the functional Housing Market Areas (HMAs) covered by the local planning authorities and to prepare a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) to establish the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) for housing across the central Norfolk area.

**Table 3.1 Different growth targets**

Scenario	Dwellings per annum	Requirement 2011-2036	Commentary
Economic – Base line	634	15,850	The housing target presented the scenario utilising 2013 EEFM Baseline trend, which sets job growth at the number of jobs within the 2013 East of England Forecasting Model Baseline projection. It is based on long term migration trends, and utilises mid year estimates 2001-2011
Demographic led – 2011 sub national projections	699	17,457	The housing target uses projected assumptions based on a continuation of current population changes. They are based on the 2011based interim sub-national population projections published on 25 September 2012 which were the most recent set of Government population projections at the time, (forward looking for 10 years only)
Economic Growth - maximised	770	19,250	The housing target is based on higher levels of economic growth through positive and proactive intervention.
Central Norfolk Strategic Housing Market Assessment, 2015	597	14,335*	Following the updated national Planning Practice Guidance, (PPG), issued on 27 <sup>th</sup> February 2015, the 2012 - 2037 Household Projections, published by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG), February 2015, has been used as the most up to date estimate of future household growth as the starting point. Updated outputs of the East of England Forecasting Model (EEFM) and the January 2015 baseline forecasts for total employment for the five Central Norfolk Districts have been used along with a ten year migration trend.

\*2012-2036

**Responses to the Issues and Options Consultation told us that:**

The Council should seek to align the Districts housing target with that in the emerging Central Norfolk Strategic Housing Market Assessment. Overall this option received support from a number of key stakeholders including, adjoining authorities, parish councils and Norfolk County Council and received one of the highest number of responses in the consultation (50).

## Preferred Direction

**3.9** The NPPF states that Local Planning authorities should “*prepare a Strategic Housing Market Assessment to assess their full housing needs, working with neighbouring authorities where housing market areas cross administrative boundaries...*” paragraph 159.

**3.10** National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), on the assessment of housing and economic development needs was published in March 2014 and updated in March 2015. In the updated March 2015 guidance the Government confirmed that wherever possible, local needs assessments should be informed by the latest available information and it went on to state that the 2012-2037 Household Projections which were published on 27 February 2015, were considered the most up-to-date estimate of future household growth and hence should be used as the starting point for any assessment.

**3.11** The Central Norfolk Strategic Housing Market Assessment, 2015 was jointly commissioned by five central Norfolk local authorities (Norwich City, Broadland, Breckland, North Norfolk and South Norfolk, together with the Broads Authority) through the Duty to Co-operate Forum. It has identified the Central Norfolk Housing Market Area as the functional Housing Market area that Breckland best aligns to and established the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) for housing across the central Norfolk area. The aim was to ensure that the study was fully compliant with the requirements of the NPPF, national PPG, the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) Technical Advice note (June 2014) and be mindful of emerging good practice and the outcomes from Planning Inspectorate examinations into Local Plans. To that aim it utilises the most up to date and available evidence in line with the March 2015 updated national Planning Practice Guidance. Following the updated national Planning Practice Guidance, (ID:2a-016-20150227), the 2012 - 2037 Household Projections, published by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG), February 2015, have been used as the most up to date estimate of future household growth as the starting point. These were then sensitivity tested against previous projections and more local assumptions in order to best reflect a wide range of underlying data and trend based assumptions so as to consider the appropriateness of projected growth rather than simplistically defer to the most recent data.

**3.12** The resultant demographic projections were then adjusted to reflect the appropriate market signals and employment trends in order to identify the objectively assessed needs (OAN) of the Central Norfolk Housing Market Area and its component Districts.

**3.13** It is considered that the OAN identified through the Central Norfolk Strategic Housing Market Assessment represents the most up to date and robust evidence base on which to plan for residential growth in the District. The approach of considering existing unmet market and affordable housing needs as part of the calculation ensures that any potential accumulated backlog from under delivery in the previous Plan period will have been accounted for as part of the assessment of need.

### Preferred Policy Direction - PD 02 Development Requirements (Minimum)

To enable the District to meet future housing needs the Local Plan will provide for no less than 14,925 new homes between 2011 and 2036.

In addition to meeting the housing needs the Local Plan will create opportunities for economic growth through:

- The provision of 67ha of land to support employment growth to meet economic need and demand;
- Support for vibrant town and district centres through the provision of retail and leisure floorspace.

## Alternative Option

**3.14** The alternative approach is to use one of the other growth targets set out within the housing topic paper. These were the economic baseline scenario, the demographic led scenario and the economic growth scenario.

### Question 2

Do you agree with the preferred policy - PD 02? Please explain your answer.

## Locational Strategy

**3.15** A key purpose of the Local Plan is to set out the strategic distribution of development. Determining how much, and where, development is allocated is essential in delivering sustainable development and essential community infrastructure. The locational strategy sets out the broad approach to development within the District.

**3.16** Potential options for the distribution of growth outside the strategic urban extensions were presented in the Issues and Options Consultation document, looking at whether the spatial distribution of growth should be focused around major towns, dispersed across the District or balanced growth between urban and rural areas. The detailed analysis on advantages and disadvantages can be found in the Issue and Options document and is summarised below:

**3.17 Focused development pattern** – this would see development in this plan period concentrating primarily on Thetford and Attleborough and to a lesser extent on Dereham, Swaffham and Watton, with very limited growth in other areas which is similar to the current adopted strategy.

**3.18** Key features:

- Urban-focused growth strategy centred around major urban extensions to Thetford and Attleborough;
- Small proportions of growth in and around other towns and local service centres;
- Limited growth in rural areas.

Potential Positive Effects	Potential Negative Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reduce the need of travel and enable sustainable modes of travel, e.g. walking, cycling and public transport;</li><li>• Support existing local services and facilitate regeneration of existing centres;</li><li>• Focused effort on infrastructure provision and economy of scale;</li><li>• Reduce the pressure on rural environment;</li><li>• Reinforce existing development hierarchy.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increased congestion in urban areas;</li><li>• May affect the viability and vitality of service centres at lower levels;</li><li>• Does not address local need and accessibility of rural locations;</li><li>• Slower delivery time scales to allow for necessary infrastructure provision;</li><li>• Reinforce existing development hierarchy.</li></ul>

**3.19 Dispersed/scattered development pattern** – this would see growth occurring in a greater number of settlements. This would allow for growth within all of the Local Service Centres (LSCs).

**3.20** Key features

- Directing additional growth outside the urban extensions of Thetford and Attleborough;

- Relatively more dispersed growth strategy across the District;
- Allocations within all Local Service Centre and some other rural settlements.

Potential Positive Effects	Potential Negative Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps to sustain rural services;</li> <li>• Less pressure on existing towns in terms of infrastructure, e.g. road, school, health care, open space etc;</li> <li>• Help target growth to meet local need, such as local affordable need;</li> <li>• Provide more choice for developers and residents;</li> <li>• Help address infrastructure needs in rural locations;</li> <li>• Potential quicker delivery, spread over a greater number of sites.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater reliance on cars, although improved rural network might help improve rural public transport;</li> <li>• Possible threat on quality of rural environment in high value areas if not managed well;</li> <li>• Risk of non-delivery of infrastructure in some areas.</li> <li>• Economies of scale not achievable in smaller scale developments;</li> <li>• Potential for less developer contributions and affordable housing from small scale sites.</li> </ul>

**3.21 Balanced development pattern** - which would aim to strike a balance between the two options set out above.

### 3.22 Key Features

- Directing additional growth outside the urban extensions of Thetford and Attleborough
- Balanced development between urban and rural areas;
- Greater level of development in the three Market Towns of Dereham, Swaffham and Watton;
- Proportionate development across Local Service Centre Villages;
- Limited growth in rural areas.

Potential Positive Effects	Potential Negative Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect existing centres and help address the regeneration needs of urban areas whilst catering for local service needs;</li> <li>• Helps balance environmental impacts with community needs by offering greater range of choices;</li> <li>• Continue to utilise focused effort on infrastructure provision in urban areas and economy of scale;</li> <li>• Support existing local services and facilitate regeneration of existing centres.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential unmet need in some local service centres and rural settlements;</li> <li>• Lower levels of development;</li> <li>• Potential constraints to delivery of additional development in market towns (education / utility capacity in Dereham).</li> </ul>

**3.23** The final option put forward was for the development of a **new settlement** or upgrading of an existing settlement -

### 3.24 Key Features

- Possibly create a new settlement to deliver additional growth;
- Significant expansion of a service centre to accommodate greater growth and function at a higher level in the settlement hierarchy.

Potential Positive Effects	Potential Negative Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being able to ease the pressure of existing facilities and focus more on creating new capacity;</li> <li>• Focused effort on infrastructure delivery;</li> <li>• Opportunity to create a garden village;</li> <li>• Large economies of scale.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dependent on market interest and availability of suitable development options;</li> <li>• Slow delivery - wouldn't help to address short-term requirements;</li> <li>• Need for significant strategic infrastructure;</li> <li>• Potential viability impacts;</li> <li>• Uncertain willingness and capacity of Development Industry to deliver this along with existing committed schemes.</li> </ul>

**Responses to the Issues and Options Consultation told us that:**

The Council should plan for a balanced development pattern which sees a more balanced development between urban and rural areas. This option received support from a number of key stakeholders, including adjoining authorities and parish councils. Focused development was also supported by a good portion of consultees, including Norfolk County Council and a number of parish councils. The dispersed development pattern was also supported by a number of parish councils. Development of a new settlement or upgrading of an existing settlement was supported on a number of occasions when considered with either focused or balanced development patterns.

In general, there were concerns over the feasibility of developing a new settlement as the overall growth quantum may not be sufficiently viable at this stage. The balanced development pattern is also supported by the argument that large urban extensions alone would not be able to address the shortfall of the immediate housing land supply. It was therefore considered important that the Local Plan should seek a wider spatial strategy that reflects the communities' aspirations and seeks to address the rural areas and rural activities. Therefore the most appropriate spatial strategy should consider both the market towns and local key service centres as well as reflecting the rural areas and rural activities.

**Preferred Direction**

**3.25** The core principle of the NPPF, as set out in paragraph 17, requires that *“Every effort should be made objectively to identify and then meet the housing, business and other development needs of an area, and respond positively to wider opportunities for growth.”* Also paragraph 55 advocates that, *“to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities.”*

**3.26** It is likely that a focused development pattern which concentrates new housing development around the major urban extensions and allows for very limited growth in the wider area, is less flexible, and carries a higher degree of risk. This is because the large urban extensions often take longer to deliver and do not necessarily address the immediate shortfall of housing land supply. It is considered that because of the potential need for more housing land to be identified to meet objectively assessed needs in the housing market areas (NPPF paragraph 47) and the NPPF's requirement to facilitate positive growth, the ability to deliver this option could be constrained by the lack of available land over and above that which has already been identified in Attleborough and Thetford. This option would represent a strategic issue that would carry significant risks and challenges around infrastructure delivery and viability. It could however accommodate growth from outside the District and would require consideration

with other authorities under the Duty to Co-operate. However no request to accommodate growth from neighbouring authorities has been received. Conversely, a dispersed development pattern, even though it would bring proportionate growth across the District is less sustainable in transport grounds alone due to the rural nature of Breckland, and its reliance on cars to access services and employment from the smaller settlements. In addition it may prove difficult to generate a sufficient level of community benefits from smaller dispersed developments.

**3.27** It is worth noting that the distribution of future development is influenced by the principle and commitments established under the current adopted Core Strategy which details sustainable urban extensions for Attleborough and Thetford and which will continue to form a significant portion of growth.

**3.28** In light of the guiding principles of the NPPF and the consultation responses received, it is considered that a more proportionate and balanced approach to development outside Thetford and Attleborough is a preferred option that provides flexibility to deliver the Objectively Assessed Needs and seek to address the specific requirements of Breckland. This growth option will cater for additional growth outside the urban extensions of Thetford and Attleborough with a balancing the available growth between urban and rural areas. It would allow for proportionate development in more, but not necessarily all Local Service Centre villages, plus a greater level of development in the three higher order and sustainable Market Towns of Dereham, Swaffham and Watton.

**3.29** This approach should allow improved housing land supply from rural areas to meet the immediate shortfalls whilst retaining strategic housing sites around larger towns to meet the long term housing needs during the remainder of the plan period.

**3.30** Based on the comparative analysis of the relative benefits of each option the Council is recommending a locational strategy that continues with the focus of development in the emerging strategic sustainable urban extensions in Attleborough and Thetford, but which seeks a more balanced and proportionate growth across the District for the remaining growth.

## Identification of Local Service Centres

**3.31** In order to implement the preferred direction for development in the most sustainable locations that are applicable to Breckland, it is necessary to review the current settlement hierarchy and the methodology used to define it. Development itself should only be directed to those locations that can provide for, or help support, an acceptable level of service provision. The Issues and Options consultation included questions around the role of Local Service Centres and how the Local Plan should define them. Local Service Centres through the adopted Core Strategy and Development Control Policies DPD were defined following guidance broadly based from the now revoked Regional Spatial Strategy. This methodology sought to identify villages with a population of greater than 1,000 based around the level of service provision in villages such as having a primary school within the settlement, community facilities, a range of retail and service provision capable of meeting day to day needs (in particular convenience shopping), local employment opportunities and frequent public transport to higher order settlements. Using this definition, the Core Strategy designated 14 Local Service Centre villages which were: Banham, Great Ellingham, Harling, Litcham, Mattishall, Mundford, Narborough, Necton, North Elmham, Old Buckenham, Saham Toney, Shipdham, Swanton Morley and Weeting.

**3.32** The NPPF allows Local Authorities a greater degree of flexibility to define Local Service Centre villages; however any new allocation will need to be in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the NPPF and accord with the principles being developed through this local plan, including alignment to the proposed locational strategy. Having a range of key facilities close at hand is seen as a more sustainable way of living by promoting good health and social, economic and environment wellbeing amongst other things, minimising the need to travel by car and increasing opportunities to exercise and contribute to community life and social cohesion. It is also recognised that there are many other factors that are important in creating a sustainable rural community such as the availability of community activities and groups and access to the countryside and access to, and support of, rural services and facilities.

**3.33** The Issues and Options consultation included three options for the definition of local service centres. These were:

- Retain the definition from the Core Strategy, based on service provision and a population of over 1000
- Define Local Service Centres around facilities regardless of population;
- Define Local Service Centres based around schooling and health provision.

**3.34** This section of the Local Plan received a good level of response, particularly from town and parish councils, many of which provided updates to the services and facilities within their own villages and have been taken into account in this review.

**Responses to the Issues and Options Consultation told us that:**

The most supported option was the second option to define Local Service Centres based around services and facilities regardless of the population of the village. Support for this option came from parish councils, Norfolk County Council, residents and developers, with comments including:

- The Local Plan should support thriving villages which support the wider area;
- Norfolk County Council supported the option however they state that only services (*public transport*) that are available at peak times should be considered.

Other comments received in response to this question include a number of representations from parish councils which highlight the need for appropriate infrastructure to be delivered to support any new development and consideration to be given to the wider area that a Local Service Centre may support. The issue of village identity was also highlighted through the representations, particularly in regard to the expansion of villages.

**3.35** In taking these comments into consideration along with those thematic comments and those in the context of a local definition of sustainable development further analysis has been carried out to identify settlements that could accommodate growth based on the level of services below the previous population threshold of 1,000. The detailed consideration is available in the 2015 Local Service Centre topic paper and a summary of the analysis is presented below.

**3.36** A summary of services and facilities in existing local service centres (as designated through the Core Strategy and Development Control Policies) is detailed below:

**Table 3.2 Services and facilities within existing designated Local Service Centre villages**

Village	School	Shop/Post Office	Community Facility	Employment	Public Transport	Recommendation
Banham	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Great Ellingham	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Harling	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Litcham	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Mattishall	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Mundford	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y

Village	School	Shop/Post Office	Community Facility	Employment	Public Transport	Recommendation
Narborough	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Necton	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
North Elmham	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Old Buckenham	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Saham Toney	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y
Shipdham	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Swanton Morley	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Weeting	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

A summary of the analysis on potential new Local Service Centres can be seen in the following table:

**Table 3.3 Services and facilities within villages with a primary school in Breckland**

Village	School	Shop/Post Office	Community Facility	Employment	Public transport	Recommendation
Ashill	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N
Bawdeswell	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Beeston	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N
Beetley	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Brisley	Y	N	Y	N	N	N
Carbrooke	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N
Caston	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
Colkirk	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N
Garboldisham	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Garvestone	Y	N	Y	N	N	N
Gooderstone	Y	N	Y	N	N	N
Great Dunham	Y	N	Y	N	N	N
Hockering	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Hockham*	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y*

Village	School	Shop/Post Office	Communtiy Facility	Employment	Public transport	Recommendation
Kenninghall	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Lyng	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N
North Lopham	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N
North Pickenham	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N
Rocklands	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Scarning	Y	N	y	Y	Y	N
Sporle	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Thompson	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N
Weasenham	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N
Yaxham	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

\* Parish Council request

The topic paper also reviewed access to GP surgeries and the access to services and facilities available within adjoining villages which are located outside Breckland's boundary. In terms of health provision there are 10 village settlements that support a surgery within an individual village. NHS England generally adopts an optimum size of 1,800 patients per whole time equivalent GP. Surgeries outside the market towns therefore provide a service for a wide rural catchment and it is not considered appropriate for Breckland to consider the non provision of a GP surgery within a village as a realistic measure for excluding settlements from the LSC classification.

The analysis indicates that the 14 services centres which were previously identified in the Core Strategy should retain their designation. These were: Banham, Great Ellingham, Harling, Litcham, Mattishall, Mundford, Narborough, Necton, North Elmham, Old Buckenham, Saham Toney, Shipdham, Swanton Morley and Weeting.

Furthermore, it is considered that the following 8 villages should be newly designated: Bawdeswell, Beetley, Garboldisham, Hockering, Hockham, Kenninghall, Sporle and Yaxham. The majority of these villages all contain the majority of services and facilities used to identify Local Service Centres or are in close proximity to higher order centres. Two villages do not meet the criteria fully; Beetley, and Great Hockham. Beetley meets 4 of the criteria but does not have a shop or post office. These facilities are available within the adjacent village of Gressenhall. Furthermore, Beetley is located in close proximity to the market town of Dereham.

Great Hockham village also does not have the full services and facilities. The village does have a primary school, community facilities and access to public transport. Through the Issues and Options consultation the parish council requested that Great Hockham received a positive housing allocation through the extension of its settlement boundary. They stated *"In order to maintain the viability of our rural community and to ensure that we keep the existing services Hockham Parish Council would like to see some residential growth"*. Great Hockham does have public transport accessibility to the higher order settlements of Thetford and Watton which provide the additional services. In addition the village is well related to the employment areas at Snetterton and Roudham. Taking this into regard, it is considered that Great Hockham should be classified as a Local Service Centre village.

**Preferred Policy Direction - PD 03 Locational Strategy**

Most new development needs will be met through the proposed sustainable settlement hierarchy.

**Key Settlements:** Attleborough and Thetford

**Market Towns:** Dereham, Swaffham and Watton

**Local Services Centres:** Banham, Bawdeswell, Beetley, Garboldisham, Great Ellingham, Harling, Hockering, Hockham, Kenninghall, Litcham, Mattishall, Mundford, Narborough, North Elmham, Necton, Old Buckenham, Saham Toney, Shipdham, Sporle, Swanton Morley, Weeting and Yaxham

The hierarchy is based upon the utilisation of existing infrastructure and resources, the prioritisation of new infrastructure and allowing jobs, homes and other facilities to provide for choice.

The strategy in relation to the rural areas outside the development hierarchy of Key Settlements, Market Towns and Local Service Centres is set out in the approach to Rural areas and other emerging policies contained throughout this document.

**Alternative Option**

The alternative approaches which have been subject to sustainability appraisal are:

- Focused development pattern;
- Dispersed/Scattered development pattern; and
- A new settlement.

**Question 3**

Do you agree with the preferred policy - PD 03? Please explain your answer.

## Level and Location of Growth

**3.37** The distribution of growth is one of the most significant issues that the Local Plan must address. Through the allocation of land, and the setting of policies to guide development, the Local Plan has a significant role along with national policy. The future direction of growth is required to follow the preferred locational strategy outlined in PD 03.

**3.38** A key message of the National Planning Policy Framework, (NPPF) is that planning should “boost significantly the supply of housing” and should meet the full, objectively assessed needs unless there would be significant adverse impacts or where the NPPF indicates development should be restricted. The NPPF seeks to achieve a step change in housing delivery through a more responsive and flexible supply of housing land. Local Plans should set out policies and strategies that will allow for the continuous delivery of housing, at the appropriate level for at least 15 years. Local Planning Authorities should identify sufficient specific **deliverable** sites to deliver housing in years 0-5, and **developable** sites in years 6-10 and where possible years 11-15. Where it is not possible to identify specific **developable** sites for years 11-15, then broad locations for future growth should be indicated.

**3.39** The Local Plan Issues and Options consultation document included a review of the available land supply utilising the 2014 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) based on the initial call for sites undertaken in 2013 which has assessed 290 sites (sites fall in SHLAA scope). The Issues and Options consultation took place over the winter of 2014/2015. It included a further call for sites which resulted in a further 170 sites being put forward for the Council to assess as potential development sites and include in the Local Plan. A SHLAA addendum 2015 has been produced which details the theoretical suitability of those sites put forward to contribute to growth. Those sites considered in line with the emerging locational strategy, and considered as deliverable and developable in the SHLAA assessments along with reasonable alternatives, have been further reviewed through an iterative process of site assessment and sustainability appraisal to help inform the distribution of growth options.

**3.40** The Council continues to update its evidence base. Specific studies have been commissioned by the Council to provide further evidence and help inform future decisions on these site options and assessments. Continuing studies include:

**Table 3.4 Emerging evidence**

Water Cycle Study - update	This amongst others will provide an overview of strategic water infrastructure within Breckland and provide information on the scope of the proposed levels of growth and investment requirements. - this is an update to the 2010 study.
Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)	This is an update to the current SFRA to cover all areas of the potential growth locations. It will bring together all sources of flooding data.
Dereham Transport Assessment	The purpose of this study is to identify the potential impacts of development on the road infrastructure in Dereham in light of potential growth options in Dereham and the surrounding villages. This will help inform the Local Plan process and appropriate site selection.

**3.41** These studies, along with consultation responses from the preferred directions and the continued evaluation of site options and alternatives, will inform the final distribution of growth proposed in the Local Plan. It is important to note that at this stage the indicative split between settlements is informed by the current site availability, environmental and heritage considerations. This may change if new alternative sites come forward and through further evidence as detailed above.

**3.42** In setting the distribution of growth, it is important to recognise that the distribution of future development is influenced by the principle and commitments established under the current strategy for the urban extensions to Attleborough (4,000 net new dwellings) and Thetford (5,000) which will continue to form a significant portion of growth. It is also considered that these levels at this stage offer an indicative minimum split.

**3.43** Completions and commitments also inform the residual amount of growth required and the actual requirement for new allocations. Completions is the term used to describe the number of dwellings that have been built out following the granting of planning permission, while commitments generally describe the levels of development which have already been given planning permission, but not yet been built out.

**Table 3.5 Completions and Commitments April 2011 - March 2015**

<b>Tier of Hierarchy</b>	<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Completions &amp; Commitments</b>
Key Settlement	Attleborough	788
	Thetford	5,317
Market Towns	Dereham	752
	Swaffham	787
	Watton	605
Local Service Centres	Bawdeswell	5
	Great Ellingham	17
	Hockering	15
	Mattishall	26
	Banham	11
	Beetley	11
	Garboldisham	5
	Harling	120
	Hockham	13
	Kenninghall	26
	Litcham	3
	Necton	219
	North Elmham	26
	Old Buckenham	17
	Saham Toney	41

Tier of Hierarchy	Settlement	Completions & Commitments
	Shipdham	177
	Sporle	24
	Swanton Morley	79
	Yaxham	23
	Mundford	23
	Narborough	58
	Weeting	84
	All other parishes	777
Total		10,049

**3.44** There are three potential alternatives for defining the indicative distribution of growth in line with the locational strategy detailed in PD 03.

**3.45** All 3 alternatives are structured around the sustainable settlement hierarchy and informed by the available land supply. The settlement hierarchy is set by the size and sustainability of settlements. The Key Settlements are the two main towns in the District; they are key locations for growth and are the most sustainable settlements in Breckland. The Market Towns are sizeable settlements with good service provision. The Local Service Centres were identified based on the section criteria set out in the Local Service Centre selection paper. The settlements are grouped according to their status in the hierarchy as shown in PD 03 in the following tables in this section. Outside the settlement hierarchy of Key Settlements, Market Towns and Local Service Centres the approach to development in rural areas is set out in the emerging Rural Area Policy PD 05 and other emerging policies contained throughout this document

#### **Alternative 1 - Split by hierarchy with collective targets. i.e broad area targets**

**3.46** In this approach the Local Service Centres (LSC) are all viewed as equal, no distribution is shown between these settlements. The actual split of growth between the LSCs would be determined by the market. It may be that settlement boundaries are not set for the Local Service Centre settlements to accommodate the growth in these areas, meaning that allocations and boundaries will only be set for the top 5 settlements in the hierarchy (Attleborough, Thetford, Dereham, Swaffham and Watton).

#### **Option 1**

##### **(No specific targets for individual Local Service Centres)**

Key Settlements 68%

Market Towns 18%

Local Service Centres 14%

This approach targets 68% of the housing growth to the two key towns of Attleborough and Thetford through the urban extensions. The percentage proportioned to Thetford is seen as the largest proportion of growth that could be attributed to Thetford and collectively, will see the majority of growth in the urban extensions of Attleborough and Thetford followed by a collective target for the three market towns, whilst leaving sufficient scope for development across the remaining local service settlements.

Potential Positive Effects	Potential Negative Effects
<p>In relation to the urban extensions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>concentrates development in the two key growth locations;</li> <li>increases accessibility to services, proportioning growth to the two main settlements of Breckland that offer the best opportunities for sustainable transport methods;</li> <li>aligns with the economic strategy and the A11 corridor;</li> <li>provides for greater economies of scale, through the concentration of facilities and services helping to sustain the vitality and viability of the two key towns.</li> </ul> <p>In relation to key and local service centres</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increases accessibility to economic opportunities and local employment;</li> <li>Provides for choice and flexibility over the market towns and LSCs in line with the requirements of the NPPF.</li> </ul>	<p>In relation to the urban extensions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>delivery is over an elongated period;</li> <li>Reduces supply and choice of sites available to commercial developers;</li> <li>Reduces choice in location for supply and could affect affordability in other areas.</li> </ul> <p>In relation to key and local service centres</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No individual target at this stage provides uncertainty for local communities;</li> <li>Potential for unbalanced growth across the service centres with scope for speculative development.</li> </ul>
<p>This approach reaffirms the commitment to the key service centres while directing the remaining growth over the market towns and local service centres through collective targets. It allows for flexibility in the market for supply and delivery. Outside of the strategic urban extensions it introduces a level of uncertainty by providing no settlement with an individual housing target.</p>	

**3.47** Within the key settlements, outline permission is resolved to be granted subject to s106 agreement for 5,000 new dwellings at Thetford. An allocation target of minimum 4,000 net new homes will be set for Attleborough. A minimum dwelling requirement of approximately 2,687 would be required across the three market towns. Taking into consideration the commitments and completions (2,144) a minimum residual target of approximately **543** new dwellings would be required across the site options in the market towns. A group target of 2,090 dwellings would be required across the combined local service centres. Taking into consideration the commitments and completions across the local service centres (1,023) a minimum residual target of approximately **1,067** new dwellings would be required across the local service centre site options

### Alternative 2 – Split by settlement (including Local Service Centres)

**3.48** In this approach the market towns and local service centres are apportioned growth, and individual settlement targets are set. The broad area targets detailed in alternative option 1 above would be further split by settlement and individual settlement targets established. The actual distribution & requirement at this stage is influenced by existing land supply, existing completions and commitments as well as environmental and heritage considerations. This may change if new alternative sites come forward and through further evidence as detailed above.

## Option 2

### Specific targets for individual Local Service Centres

Key Settlements 68%

Market Towns 18%

Local Service Centres 14%

This approach targets 68% of the housing growth to the two key settlements of Attleborough and Thetford through the urban extensions. The percentage proportioned to Thetford is seen as the largest proportion of growth that could be attributed to Thetford and collectively will see the majority of growth in the urban extensions of Attleborough and Thetford. The total splits are the same as in option 1, however the group targets are split into individual settlement targets by proportioning equal percentages (6%) for each market town. In terms of the local service centres individual settlement targets are apportioned in line with the available land supply as currently identified through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments 2014 and the 2015 addendum.

Potential Positive Effects	Potential Negative Effects
<p>In relation to the urban extensions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>concentrates development in the two key growth locations;</li> <li>increases accessibility to services, proportioning growth to the two main settlements of Breckland that offer the best opportunities for sustainable transport methods;</li> <li>aligns with the economic strategy and the A11 corridor;</li> <li>provides for greater economies of scale, through the concentration of facilities and services helping to sustain the vitality and viability of the two key towns.</li> </ul> <p>In relation to key and local service centres:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increases accessibility to economic opportunities and local employment;</li> <li>Provides for choice and flexibility over the market towns and LSCs in line with the requirements of the NPPF;</li> <li>Individual target provides certainty for local communities;</li> <li>Provides greater scope for investment into services and utilities</li> <li>Helps to provide for local need;</li> <li>Aims to align more with preferred locational strategy.</li> </ul>	<p>In relation to the urban extensions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>delivery is over an elongated period;</li> <li>Reduces supply and choice of sites available to commercial developers;</li> <li>Reduces choice in location for supply and could affect affordability in other areas.</li> </ul> <p>In relation to service centres:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Could add to more widespread traffic and or greater off site infrastructure requirements;</li> <li>Does not plan for all settlements local needs.</li> </ul>
<p>This approach reaffirms the commitment to the key settlements while directing the remaining growth over the market towns and local service centres through individual settlement targets. Outside of the strategic urban extensions, it introduces a level of certainty by providing individual settlement targets and allows utility providers and other providers more certainty in the areas of investment.</p>	

**Alternative 3 – Split by settlement, increasing the growth levels at the higher tier settlements and reducing levels over the local service centres.**

**3.49** In this option a higher (indicative) proportion of growth is directed at the top two tiers of the hierarchy. Consequently the amount of residual growth proportioned to the local service centres is much lower than the alternative options. In terms of land supply this aligns best to the currently identified land supply in the market towns but moves away from the preferred direction for the locational strategy, and the aim of a more balanced distribution across Breckland outside the urban extensions.

**Option 3**

**Higher levels of growth to Market Towns**

Key Settlements 68%

Market Towns 30%

Local Service Centres 3%

This approach seeks to proportion greater housing growth targets to the market towns. The percentage proportioned to Thetford is seen as the largest proportion of growth that could be attributed to Thetford so in reality this could result in further growth directed to Attleborough and the remaining market towns of Dereham, Watton and Swaffham. In terms of the local service centres this would see much smaller housing targets.

Potential Positive Effects	Potential Negative Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concentrates development in the more sustainable centres offering the best opportunities for sustainable transport methods;</li> <li>• Provides for greater economies of scale, through the concentration of facilities and services helping to sustain the vitality and viability of the two key towns;</li> <li>• Aligns more closely with the available land supply with particular regard to Attleborough;</li> <li>• Increases accessibility to economic opportunities and local employment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased growth around Attleborough could impact on the delivery options of the urban extension;</li> <li>• Potential for increased congestion;</li> <li>• Could add to more widespread traffic and/or greater off site infrastructure requirements;</li> <li>• May not reflect market pressures or local need;</li> <li>• May not address local needs;</li> <li>• May not deliver aspirations of balanced growth;</li> <li>• Does not reflect the preferred direction;</li> <li>• Increased reliance on high order settlements and larger sites.</li> </ul>
<p>This approach directs a higher proportion of growth to the more sustainable higher order centres (Market Towns) while directing the remaining growth over local service centres through individual settlement targets. Outside of the key settlements it introduces a level of certainty by providing individual settlement targets but does not allow for a reasonable level of growth across the local service centres which may impact on infrastructure investment. Once commitments and completions are factored in, many of the local services centres would not require a positive allocation to meet the target.</p>	

**3.50** Within the key settlements, outline permission is resolved to be granted subject to s106 agreement for 5,000 new dwellings in Thetford and an allocation target of a minimum of 4,000 net new homes is proposed for Attleborough. A minimum residual target of target of approximately 4479 new dwellings would be required across

the site options in the market towns. Proportioned approximately (10% growth at each) 741 for Dereham, 706 for Swaffham, and 888 for Watton. Taking into consideration the commitments and completions (2,144) a minimum residual target of approximately **2,335** new dwellings would be required across the site options in the market towns. The remaining 3% growth group target across the local service centres would result in a requirement for approximately 485 dwellings across the combined local service centres. The existing level of commitments and completions across the local service centres of 1,023 already exceeds this number and there would not be a requirement to seek a positive allocation in most of the service centres. This is not seen as a reasonable alternative.

## Preferred Approach

**3.51** The preferred approach is based on Option 2. This approach offers the best option outside the strategic urban extensions of Attleborough and Thetford for distributing growth across the sustainable settlements in the District and achieving a more balanced approach in housing development between rural and urban areas in line with the Strategic Vision, local and market demands. Choice and flexibility is introduced across the District by allocating minimum housing requirements. Outside the key settlements, It introduces a level of certainty by providing individual settlement targets and allows utility providers and other infrastructure providers more certainty in the areas of investment. For those communities that are developing a neighbourhood plan or are considering developing a neighbourhood plan setting settlement targets in each of the settlements in the settlement hierarchy also gives certainty on their minimum housing requirements.

### Preferred Policy Direction - PD 04 Level and Location of Growth

Provision is made for the development of at least 14,925 dwellings and associated Infrastructure in the District over the plan period 2011- 2036

Tier of Hierarchy	Percentage of Growth	Settlement	Completions & Commitments( April 11- March 15)*	New Allocations	Total Allocations + Completions & Commitments
<b>Key Settlements</b>	68%	Attleborough	788	<b>4000</b>	<b>4,788</b>
		Thetford	5,317	<b>0</b>	<b>5,317</b>
<b>Market Towns</b>	18%	Dereham	752	<b>158</b>	<b>910</b>
		Swaffham	787	<b>123</b>	<b>910</b>
		Watton	605	<b>305</b>	<b>910</b>
<b>Local service centres</b>	14%	Bawdeswell	5	<b>32</b>	<b>37</b>
		Great Ellingham	17	<b>170</b>	<b>187</b>
		Hockering	15	<b>60</b>	<b>75</b>
		Mattishall	26	<b>161</b>	<b>187</b>
		Banham	11	<b>26</b>	<b>37</b>
		Beetley	11	<b>64</b>	<b>75</b>

Tier of Hierarchy	Percentage of Growth	Settlement	Completions & Commitments (April 11- March 15)*	New Allocations	Total Allocations + Completions & Commitments
		Garboldisham	5	0	5
		Harling	120	104	224
		Hockham	13	136	149
		Kenninghall	26	11	37
		Litcham	3	0	3
		Necton	219	5	224
		North Elmham	26	11	37
		Old Buckenham	17	0	17
		Saham Toney	41	108	149
		Shipdham	177	47	224
		Sporle	24	0	24
		Swanton Morley	79	145	224
		Yaxham	23	52	75
		Mundford	23	0	23
		Narborough	58	17	75
		Weeting	84	0	84
<b>All Other Parishes</b>			777		777
	100%		10,049	5,735	15,784**

**3.52** \*Completions is the term used to describe the number of dwellings that have been built out following the granting of planning permission, while commitments generally describe the levels of development which have already been given planning permission, but not yet been built out.

**3.53** \*\*The total allocations and commitments & completions add to greater than the housing target based upon the NPPF requirement to seek to deliver the housing target as a minimum. The total housing number reflects commitments and completions from past planning permissions 2011- 2015 which have come forward in areas outside of the locational strategy and are known as windfall (777). In some LSCs the Council is not seeking a positive allocation based on the current available land supply, environmental and heritage constraints. However there are existing permissions in these parishes and these are included in the proportioned growth.(81).

## Alternative Options

**3.54** The alternative options are detailed above as options 1 and 3 along with a detailed assessment of the advantages and disadvantages. Both these alternatives are not considered suitable. Setting combined targets across each tier of the settlement hierarchy allows the market greater flexibility but it does not provide plan led growth or necessarily allows for investment priorities to be established. Not setting individual or localised targets introduces a level of uncertainty around future development patterns and investment priorities. In relation to neighbourhood planning it may also mean that communities will need to commission additional evidence to justify any approach. In relation to option 3, this approach directs a higher proportion of growth to the market towns (30%) while directing the smaller residual growth (3%) to the local service centres through individual settlement targets. Outside the key settlements, this approach in theory may introduce a level of certainty by providing individual settlement targets. However this approach would not deliver any meaningful positive growth to the local service centres once commitments and completions are taken into consideration, nor does it utilise the identified land supply in an efficient manner.

### Question 4

Do you agree with the proposed preferred policy direction - PD 04? Please explain your answer

### **Approach to Rural Areas (outside the three tiers of the Sustainable Settlement Hierarchy)**

**3.55** The Locational Strategy seeks to direct growth to the most sustainable locations identified as the sustainable hierarchy in PD 03. These are the identified settlements that can best provide access to services, employment, and community facilities. It is these settlements that through PD 03 the Local Plan seeks to allocate specific, and appropriate quantum of development in line with the vision and aspirations for Breckland. Outside the settlement hierarchy, established national, and local planning policies seek to protect the open countryside against inappropriate development. National policies seek to direct development within existing service centres for sustainability reasons, where “sustainability” considers access to a range of facilities and services by sustainable transport means. The preferred direction in this emerging Local Plan, and in line with national policy, follows this approach, but also seeks to implement the specific local distinctiveness reflected in the Vision & Objectives and sustainability policy PD 01 in order to reflect the specific rural nature of the District.

**3.56** Scattered across the District, and outside the settlements in the sustainable settlement hierarchy, there are numerous smaller villages, hamlets and farmsteads. Individually they may have limited facilities but collectively they may share facilities such as a church, a school and through their proximity to each other support services that help provide for a level of local need. There is a requirement to consider the social and economic sustainability of these rural communities whilst accepting that they greatly depend on the use of the car to access larger service centres for many of their needs.

**3.57** Although national policy and sustainable development principles seek to restrict development in the open countryside, it is important to seek to identify and implement an appropriate balance and approach that is reflective of local distinctiveness for Breckland. The three mutually dependent strands of sustainable development allow for a degree of flexibility in order to respond to the positive challenges of growth in the NPPF, reflect technological advances in communications and low emission vehicles and to plan for the specific local requirements of a rural District such as Breckland. It is important that the Local Plan recognises the development needs of these rural communities and whilst seeking to protect the countryside from inappropriate development, promotes and plans for appropriate sustainable development for Breckland that will help in enhancing and maintaining the vitality of our rural communities.

**3.58** The existing approach to the rural areas outside the settlement hierarchy identifies a dual approach of some consolidated settlements which have development boundaries and other more dispersed settlements which do not. For those small scale settlements that have settlement boundaries, development is only permitted within the boundaries as long as the overall housing policies contained in the Core Strategy remain in conformity with national policy and the Council can demonstrate a five year housing land supply. Development in both these settlements and those rural settlements without boundaries is determined in accordance with the appropriate development management policies in the Core Strategy and in line with national requirements of sustainable development.

**3.59** Most development in this area is collectively called "windfall" development. i.e sites that have not been specifically identified as available in the Local Plan process. The NPPF clarifies that windfall sites should normally comprise of brownfield sites that have unexpectedly become available. Given the rural nature of the District, Breckland has a history of delivering housing through windfall and an allowance is calculated annually and included in the five year housing land supply calculation. In practice, sites are often conversions or infill sites which are located within the settlement boundaries, and or ones that are close to/adjacent to the settlements.

**3.60** The Local Plan allows for the Council to reconsider how the Council can seek to develop policies in order to ensure development remains in the most appropriate rural locations and is in line with community expectations. The purpose of this section is to consider the approach to development in areas outside the sustainable settlement hierarchy.

**3.61** The Issues and Options consultation document sought views on the approach to be taken in the more rural areas of the District. Potential options for the rural area were put forward looking at ways in which the Local Plan could help to facilitate appropriate growth for the remaining rural settlements and hamlets located outside the settlement hierarchy.

- Continue to define settlement boundaries for those consolidated rural settlements;
- Take a flexible approach to accommodate growth that would allow development proposals to be assessed against criteria based policies, with no development boundaries;
- Review and designate clusters of settlements which act as wider functional zones;
- Seek a more flexible approach to rural housing and rural workers.

**3.62** In relation to how the Local Plan could support Breckland’s rural economy, a number of supporting questions were put forward around:

- Encouraging new places for work through the re-use of rural buildings;
- Supporting the diversification of business in rural areas, including agriculture;
- Promoting improvements to communications infrastructure, such as better broadband;
- Include planning policies for the support and development of key sectors such as tourism.

**Options put forward at the Issues and Options Consultation**

**3.63** Potential options for the approach to rural areas were put forward at the Issues and Options Stage. Any review must be mindful of the emerging approach detailed in the Locational strategy PD - 03 that seeks to elevate 8 settlements which provide an appropriate level of services to that of local service centre status. These settlements were previously classed as rural locations outside the settlement hierarchy, but with settlement boundaries. Historically these 8 settlements received no growth allocation, but may have since seen growth through market forces in the settlements and or outside the boundaries due to windfall and/or speculative applications.

**3.64** The first option put forward was to continue to identify boundaries for rural settlements with a consolidated nature (existing approach). The existing Core Strategy, Sites Specific Policies & Proposals and Policy & Proposals maps contained in the Local Development Framework detail those rural settlements which have a settlement boundary and those rural settlements that do not. A consolidated list is contained in the Issues and Options Consultation document in table 8.11 and table 8.12 and for completeness detailed in appendix 1 of this document.

Potential Positive Effects	Potential Negative Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focuses development within existing, consolidated rural settlements;</li> <li>• Provides a degree of certainty.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May not address the development needs of rural communities, especially affordable housing;</li> <li>• Are an inflexible tool;</li> <li>• Restrict the natural growth to meet local needs.</li> </ul>
<p>In principle, development within the development boundary is acceptable. For those settlements that do not have an existing boundary a more restrictive approach is applied. This would reflect the current approach.</p>	

**3.65** Option 1b- The opposite to this is not to delineate development boundaries around any rural settlement

Potential Positive Effects	Potential Negative Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensures a consistent approach across all rural settlements outside local service centre designation, including those of a more dispersed nature;</li> <li>• Could assist in the provision of housing for local needs and support for the rural economy;</li> <li>• Encourages more rural enterprises.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not provide certainty in relation to where development could be located;</li> <li>• Could lead to some incremental development on the edge of settlements.</li> </ul>
<p>Development proposals in all rural areas would need to be assessed against criteria based policies. This constitutes a change from the current policy in the Core Strategy where certain larger villages have boundaries.</p>	

**3.66** Option 2 - Take a flexible approach to accommodate growth that would allow development proposals to be assessed against criteria based policies, with no development boundaries

Potential Positive Effects	Potential Negative Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers a sustainable solution to local needs;</li> <li>• Responsive to local circumstances and enables small – scale development to meet an identified local need for both market and affordable housing needs;</li> <li>• Provides choice and flexibility in line with national policy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could lead to incremental pressures upon the open countryside.</li> </ul>
<p>This option would allow small scale infill and rounding off in smaller hamlets where certain criteria are met, to ensure that the scheme satisfies local need. This also seeks to address affordable housing provision where 100% affordable housing schemes have shown little scope in coming forward.</p>	

**3.67** Option 3- Review and designate clusters of settlements which act as wider functional zones

Potential Positive Effects	Potential Negative Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows for a flexible approach around settlements with strong local connections across a wider number of parishes;</li> <li>• Builds on social and economic links and potentially helps to support linked services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More dispersed growth with potential greater impact on the open countryside in these grouped locations;</li> <li>• Increased reliance on car travel.</li> </ul>
<p>Provided settlements could be identified which function in this way, this option could allow for development to support and sustain local services in a way that the equivalent levels at an individual settlement could not.</p>	

### **Responses to the Issues and Options Consultation told us that:**

Settlement boundaries can be restrictive, preclude development from coming forward and lead to small scale development in inappropriate locations. A number of parish councils especially higher order service centres, supported the retention of settlement boundaries predominantly based around protection from over development, while others called for a more flexible approach to growth and suggested potential sites and a review of boundaries. Other comments received in relation to a more flexible approach around how rural settlements could potentially contribute to growth showed a division of opinion. Some responses indicated that they could see the potential benefit in relation to growth while others did not support growth for reasons of village identity and potential impacts on the landscape. There was some limited support for the ability of workers and technicians to live in the community in which they work.

In relation to the options put forward around the rural economy and rural workers there was strong support for all the options, particularly from parish councils, to encourage the rural economy. There was also strong support for policies to promote and retain Breckland's strong rural economy.

### **Preferred Direction**

**3.68** Breckland is a diverse District, up to 20% of the population live outside the emerging settlement hierarchy (top three tiers:- Key Service Centres, the Market Towns and the identified Local Service Centres), in the rural areas characterised by dispersed villages and hamlets. With regards specifically to rural areas the NPPF advises that authorities should be responsive to local circumstances and plan housing developments to reflect local needs in a sustainable manner.

**3.69** The overall approach taken in the emerging Local Plan seeks to capture the need to direct growth to the most sustainable locations, support local services, balance residential needs and employment opportunities, and seeks to enhance the rural economy thus helping to maintain the vitality of rural communities. In line with the ethos of the locally distinctive approach to sustainable development, rather than seeking to restrict all development outside the sustainable settlement hierarchy and inside of the settlement boundaries of the existing rural settlements where there are limited opportunities, the emerging approach seeks to present a sensitive approach to rural housing that is more responsive to local circumstances than the present policy allows, but also to strike a balance with employment needs and the countryside.

**3.70** The preferred approach detailed in the locational strategy identifies an increase in the number of Local Service Centres than presently identified in the adopted Core Strategy, which identified 14 Local Service Centres. The additional eight settlements elevated to Local Service Centre status which provide an appropriate level of services to the rural hinterland will continue to have settlement boundaries, and through the emerging policy PD 04 which details the level and location of growth, are apportioned an appropriate positive allocation in line with the NPPF. This approach seeks to enact the local distinctiveness identified in Breckland's sustainable development policy and brings a more balanced approach to development across the District outside the strategic urban extensions. Outside the top three tiers of the settlement hierarchy, the preferred direction seeks to review those settlements with settlement boundaries in line with new criteria. The remaining rural villages and hamlets will not have an identified settlement boundary and will not have an amount of growth apportioned to them. Windfall development will be in line with a criteria based policy.

**3.71** In line with local distinctiveness it must be recognised that in areas outside of the settlement hierarchy, i.e. the areas regarded as open countryside, there are living and working communities whose social and economic viability must be addressed. The preferred direction seeks to address the development needs of these communities whilst minimising the impact on the countryside by allowing small scale and appropriate development to meet local needs through criteria based policy.

**3.72** The preferred direction also addresses issues facing the rural economy and seeks to support rural living and social cohesion at the same time as supporting the maintenance and enhancement of the countryside and local communities. Traditional farming is essential in helping to retain the rural character of the District but increasingly farmers have to diversify to remain a viable business. Many farms work land that is scattered throughout a parish and adjacent parishes while many contractors work across the District. Others work in a more consolidate way and work on large estates. This is leading to farming families having to adapt to change and turn their skills to new businesses secondary to their main income and seek local opportunities for rural enterprise. These enterprises may be an extension to the existing farm business but equally new activity which can be unrelated to agriculture. As technology improves and communications allow more productive work from home, and transport moves to a lower carbon footprint the rural economy is capable of expansion to continue to support farming activity whilst providing for jobs and incomes for others in the community.

**3.73** It is not possible or desirable to draw development boundaries for all rural settlements in Breckland. Development in the smaller villages and hamlets is often more sporadic in nature and is of a small scale. No development boundaries will be identified for the smaller more sporadic villages and hamlets. A new criteria based policy to guide small-scale infilling and rounding off will be used to permit development outside the sustainable settlement hierarchy, in order to satisfy local need across the numerous smaller villages and hamlets scattered across the District.

**3.74** Rural housing in the form of exception sites have historically proved difficult and problematic to deliver. Whilst the need has been relatively easy to identify, the identification of suitable sites has been more problematic. In practice, sites that come forward are often ill suited to 100% affordable development. Ruling out whole categories of villages as unsustainable on transport grounds alone ignores the potential for enhancing the social and economic sustainability of many of Breckland's smaller communities.

**3.75** Development will therefore be controlled through criteria based policies and the preferred direction is based on options 1b and 3 above.

#### **Preferred Policy Direction - PD 05 Rural Areas**

The Local Plan will direct development within the sustainable settlement hierarchy set out in policy PD 03. Outside these settlements policies will seek to protect the open countryside from wider development, with the exception of appropriate small-scale residential and economic development in rural settlements that satisfy the following criteria:

#### **New Residential and Employment Opportunities in Villages with Settlement Boundaries**

Appropriate development will follow a plan led approach. The preferred direction will see development concentrated on suitable sites available within the defined settlement boundary on the policies map. Those settlement boundaries in rural settlements will be reviewed through the application of the criteria approach including, and in broad conformity, in order to reflect:

- Recent planning approvals;
- Infilling and rounding off opportunities;
- Adjoining small scale brownfield sites;
- The appropriate re-use of appropriate small scale rural buildings;
- Environmental constraints.

The following are identified as rural settlements with settlement boundaries outside service centres:

Ashill, Beeston, Besthorpe, Bintree, Bradenham, Brisley, Carbrooke, Caston, Cockley Cley, Colkirk, Croxton, East Tuddenham, Foulden, Foxley, Garvestone, Gooderstone, Great Dunham, Gressenhall, Griston, Guist, Ickburgh, Little Cressingham, Longham, Lyng, Mileham, New Buckenham, North Lopham, North Pickenham, Rocklands, Quidenham, Scarning, Shropham, Snetterton, Sparham, Stanfield, Stow Bedon, Thompson, Weasenham, Whissonsett

### **New Residential and Employment Opportunities in Smaller Villages and Hamlets without Settlement Boundaries**

Appropriate development will be allowed where:

- There is an identified economic and / or social local need;
- It can be demonstrated that there is appropriate support by local communities;
- It comprises of infill and rounding off development of a village or hamlet at the appropriate scale;
- It is of an appropriate scale and design to the settlement/hamlet and does not increase the size of a settlement by more than 10% of its existing size;
- The design contributes to enhancing the historic nature and connectivity of communities.

Supporting information must be included with all applications on how the proposal as set out would justify the departure from the settlement hierarchy and support sustainable development in Breckland. Regard should be had to the additional guidance provided below which will be updated periodically.

Infill is defined as: building taking place on a vacant plot in an otherwise built-up street frontage.

Rounding off is defined as: the completion of an incomplete group of buildings on land which is already partially developed and in such a way which will either complete the local road pattern or finally define and complete the boundaries of the group. Such rounding off should not change or distort the character or tradition of the group or the settlement in any undesirable way.

The following are identified as rural settlements and hamlets without settlement boundaries outside service centres:

Beachamwell, Billingford, Blo' Norton, Brettenham, Bridgham, Bylaugh, Cranwich, Cranworth, Didlington, Elsing, Gateley, Great Cressingham, Hardingham, Hilborough, Hoe, Holme Hale, Horningtoft, Kempstone, Kilverstone, Lexham, Lt Dunham, Little Ellingham, Lynford, Merton, Narford, Newton by Castle Acre, North Tuddenham, Ovington, Oxborough, Quidenham, Riddlesworth, Roudham, Rougham, Scoulton, South Acre, South Lopham, South Pickenham, Stanford, Sturston, Tottington, Twyford, Wellingham, Wendling, Whinburgh, Wretham

The exact scale and level of development supported will be dependent on individual character, the impact on environmental capacity and infrastructure provision, and the desire to meet the need for affordable housing as locally as possible.

Farmsteads and sporadic small scale groups of dwellings are considered as lying in the open countryside and are not classed as small villages and hamlets. These and isolated locations in the countryside, are unlikely to be acceptable.

## **Rural Settlement Boundary Review**

**3.76** Those settlement boundaries in rural settlements outside the settlement hierarchy where no allocation will take place will be reviewed. The preferred approach will be through the application of the criteria approach as detailed in the preferred policy PD 05. This work will be brought forward through a specific settlement boundary

review topic paper where the methodology and approach will be detailed. The existing settlement boundaries as defined in the adopted Core Strategy for the rural settlements can be seen on the rural settlement maps in part 2 of this document; however, these are shown as a dotted red line to indicate the Council's intent to review the boundaries.

**3.77** The settlement boundary is used as a policy tool reflecting the area where a set of plan policies are to be applied. The settlement boundary does not necessarily have to cover the full extent of the village nor be limited to its built form. In general, there is a presumption in favour of development within the settlement boundary. Any land and buildings outside of the boundary line are usually considered to be countryside where development would be regulated in line with the policies contained in the emerging Local Plan. However, it should be noted that any land which has been included within the boundary line does not have a guarantee of approval of planning permission, as there will be other planning policies which will need to be adhered to also, for example; the design policies, protection of amenity policy and other detailed matters such as siting and highways access.

### Supporting Information

**3.78** The preferred direction seeks to meet the identified need for appropriate development in these smaller settlements allowing them to adapt and change to meet needs and to help deliver the National Planning agenda of boosting the supply of housing.

**3.79** The criteria based policy of rounding off and infill, helps establish whether a proposal has a clear link to the settlement and services within. In order to assist in the justification of a departure from the locational strategy applicants must provide a supporting assessment of suitability with regard to the above policy. This includes a supporting statement detailing how the proposal would justify the departure from the settlement hierarchy and support sustainable development. The Statement must have regard to the requirements of the "Local List" as agreed and updated periodically by the Breckland Planning Committee and include information as detailed below.

**3.80** Currently this includes the submission of supporting information such as:

- A plan/written description detailing the nature and full extent of the proposal
- A statement detailing the:
  - Distance to local services;
  - Nature and extent of local footpaths;
  - Availability of street lighting;
  - Connectivity: location of bus stops in the vicinity and the nature/route and frequency of services;
  - Location of neighbouring built form.

**3.81** This list is not exhaustive and will be updated in line with Planning Committee requirements. The statement should also provide reasoned argument of how the proposal as set out would justify the departure from the settlement hierarchy and supports sustainable development.

**3.82** Statements seeking to adhere to preferred policy direction for the rural areas, PD 05 will seek to address the following key areas:

1. Justification that the proposal as seen represents either infill or rounding off in the listed settlements.
  - To be considered infill, a development will generally have built development along the road on either side of the site and be similar to adjacent properties in terms of its visual impact, plot size, dwelling size, floor levels and scale;
  - To be considered as rounding off the statement must address:
    - Whether the perimeter of the site is already built up;

- Whether development would represent an outward expansion of the settlement;
- the strength and durability of boundary features to the open countryside and;
- the relationship with the existing settlement in terms of size, scale and density and its impact on important views.

It is important to note that not all sites which satisfy the above definitions of infill and rounding off will be suitable for development. Other factors which may affect the impacts of new dwellings include highways and access, landscape, flood risk, biodiversity, impacts on the SPA and impact on built heritage such as listed buildings and these, and other material considerations remain as part of the assessment process.

1. Justification that the applicant can demonstrate to the Council that the proposal has the appropriate support of the community likely to be affected by the proposal in relation the proposal.
  - Applicants should demonstrate in their statement that there is clear evidence of local support. This can be done in many ways and the scale of evidence necessary will generally depend on the size and scale of the proposal and its potential impacts. This can be demonstrated through the views of the parish council, any neighbourhood planning policies and/local residents group, or through robust surveys of local opinion prepared independently.
2. Justification that the applicant can demonstrate to the Council that the proposal is of appropriate scale and design.
  - Proposals must be of a size, design and scale that seek to meet the need and the setting. Careful siting, massing, use of surrounding landscape features and screening are important as is the enhancement of existing local characteristics. The statement should show how the site is connected to the surrounding settlement. In areas of greater landscape visibility sensitive design and landscaping is particularly important. The Council's development management service will be able to provide further guidance and comment on emerging schemes.

**3.83** The supporting statement will be treated as any another planning application document and subject to publication. Misleading or unsubstantiated statements will be given no weight.

**3.84** In some cases it may be that a neighbourhood planning body, normally the parish council is bringing forward a neighbourhood plan. This may include the allocation of sites. In such cases it will be the responsibility of the neighbourhood planning group to document community engagement. Ultimately proposals brought forward through neighbourhood planning will be subject to referendum.

### **Alternative options**

**3.85** The Council could seek to retain the current dual approach of identifying settlement boundaries for those rural settlements with a consolidated nature and continue with the approach of not identifying boundaries for the remaining rural settlements of a more dispersed nature as detailed in the Core Strategy and adopted suite of Development Plan documents. This would maintain the settlement boundaries to those remaining consolidated settlements which remain outside the emerging settlement hierarchy. (detailed in appendix 1). The Council should consider the potential for development in a positive light, but balance the appropriate sustainability criteria flexibly in accordance with national policy. The opportunity for development within these settlements with settlement boundaries is severely restricted. Development is therefore likely to remain speculative outside the boundaries.

**Question 5**

Do you agree with the preferred policy and approach to rural settlement boundaries - PD 05? Please explain your answer.

## 4 Economic

### Economy

**4.1** The size and dispersed nature of the area's population presents significant challenges for the Council in delivering balanced economic growth. Breckland's strategic position is emphasised by the good road communications offered by the A47 and A11, the latter of which has recently benefited from major improvements providing a complete dualled road linking Norfolk to the rest of the country for the first time. The five market towns, Attleborough, Dereham, Swaffham, Thetford and Watton, are an essential component of the economic and social structure, acting as service centres to their rural hinterlands. The area has seen a rapid population growth, increasing pay levels and low rates of unemployment and there is a trend for the overall number of jobs to increase. However, average wages remain relatively low in comparison with regional and national levels due to a lower level of qualifications of people in the District and a low level of skills required by many of the available jobs.

**4.2** The Employment Growth Study and Employment Land Review 2013 for Breckland, identifies that Breckland has a relatively successful economy recording significant job growth over the last two decades. The business base is dominated by small and medium-sized businesses but with below average levels of business start-ups and self-employment. Workforce productivity is relatively low which may in part reflect a slight mismatch in the local economy between lower skilled jobs available, and a more highly qualified resident workforce, many of which commute out of the District to higher paid employment elsewhere.

**4.3** Employment space in the District is dominated by industrial uses and tends to be concentrated around Breckland's larger towns. The rural economy also accommodates important hubs of economic activity, particularly with regards to small scale office and workshop space. The District has seen moderate levels of new development over the past eight years, the majority for B1c/B2 manufacturing uses and B8 warehousing.

**4.4** Demand for employment space remains steady, focused upon small scale industrial accommodation. The majority of commercial property market activity is concentrated within the settlements of Thetford and Dereham and, to a lesser extent, Attleborough, with very limited activity occurring outside of these key areas. Some of the District's stock is dated and/or poorly specified with evidence that this issue has been constraining industrial activity – specifically, in the past the attraction of new industrial occupiers.

**4.5** Within this context, the study identifies a number of policy issues that emerge for consideration:

- Consider rationalising the District's existing and future supply of industrial space by seeking to concentrate this space in the District's key locations and areas of strongest market demand (such as Thetford and Attleborough). This will help support critical mass of development on fewer sites, providing a clearer signal to potential investors and also supporting any necessary upfront infrastructure works. Future development of employment space in the District should also build upon, and take advantage of, significant infrastructure improvements associated with the duelling of the A11 from Fiveways to Thetford as well as the proposed Thetford SUE which will also provide a key driver of economic growth within the District over the plan period.
- In the more peripheral areas of the District where demand levels are weaker, it may be necessary to adopt a flexible approach to bringing forward employment sites by allowing the development of other higher value non-B uses on part of allocated sites, in order to unlock the site's potential and fund any associated infrastructure works.
- At the same time, the Council could consider releasing some of the District's poorer quality and poorer performing sites in more peripheral locations characterised by relatively low market demand and that suffer from constraints to (re)development (such as proximity to residential uses). This would help to ensure the appropriate distribution of employment space across the District in accordance with market demand.

- Over the longer term (i.e. 20 year plan period), it is recommended that any new provision of office space follows an enterprise centre type model, with small units for SMEs and local start-ups and shared workspace and networking opportunities. It is also recommended that any new office space is focused upon Breckland's town centres, benefiting from a more attractive working environment and range of facilities for staff.
- Given the rural nature of much of the District, it is also important that the Local Plan continues to recognise the important role of rural settlements in providing employment space and opportunities for local residents. This is unlikely to justify specific land allocations, however the provision of a positive policy framework (e.g. re-use of buildings) that encourages rural enterprise and diversification schemes represents the most appropriate way of ensuring that rural needs can be met.

#### **Responses to the Issues and Options Consultation told us that:**

A number of representations were received in regards to the vision for economic growth within Breckland. A number of comments highlighted the need to consider the A47 corridor in addition to the A11 corridor as a focus for growth. This would therefore include the towns of Dereham and Swaffham. Representations have also highlighted the role of the rural economy in the District's prosperity.

There is broad support for the key policy issues identified within the Employment Growth Study. Some respondents were in support of the East of England Forecasting Model Baseline Scenario, whilst a further 4 representations were received in regards to the Policy On scenario. No representations were received in regards to the 2011 Sub-National Population Projections option. The Baseline Scenario and the Policy On scenario represent significantly different jobs growth over the plan period. Therefore it is not possible to draw a conclusion from the representations.

A number of comments were received in regards to the need to align the housing growth target with the employment target. The Employment Growth Study has been informed by the Council's localised housing target in order to ensure housing and employment growth are balanced.

Whilst some of the representations agreed with the approach to the supply and demand of employment land within the District, a number of representations raised issues relating to specific towns. This included representations regarding employment sites at Dereham and Swaffham and comments against their loss from employment uses. The Employment Growth Study sets out that, whilst there may be a sufficient supply of employment land, consideration should be given to the type, quality and location for the employment stock.

#### **Preferred Direction**

**4.6** The NPPF requires LPAs to develop a clear understanding of the business needs and markets operating in their areas. It also sets out the need for evidence to be assembled to understand the need for land and floorspace, existing and future supply of land for economic needs as well as understanding the qualitative issues associated with existing employment provision.

**4.7** The Employment Growth Study and Employment Land Review 2013 for Breckland, considered the requirements from the NPPF. The study also utilised a number of demographic and economic models as well as involving local stakeholders to map out possible growth scenarios for the District. Four different scenarios of future employment space requirements were considered for the period up to 2031, based on a number of approaches which reflect economic growth, past development trends and potential labour supply factors. The majority of these scenarios point to a lower level of future economic growth in Breckland than the District has achieved in the recent past, partly reflecting a more pessimistic post-recession economic outlook. The overall space requirements relating

to these scenarios range from 134,235 sq.m to 310,180 sq.m of all types of employment space, implying in broad terms a need for between 31.6 ha and 74.7 ha of employment land. The majority of this spatial requirement relates to industrial (B1c/B2/B8) uses. The preferred policy direction seeks to allocate 67 Ha of employment land.

**4.8** The emerging SHMA has considered an approach to “balance out” the need for new dwellings with the expected level of new jobs forecast for the Central Norfolk Housing Market Area (HMA), utilising the latest information from the East of England Forecasting Model. For Breckland, an uplift is applied to the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) for the District to account for the growth in jobs.

**4.9** When compared with available employment space identified by Council monitoring data and as reviewed through the 2013 Employment Growth Study, Breckland has sufficient employment floorspace in quantitative terms to meet future needs up to 2031 under all scenarios of future growth. Although the District’s stock of industrial and office space suffers from a range of qualitative factors such as ageing accommodation with limited market appeal, local market feedback indicates that the level of demand may not be sufficient to justify any significant additional allocations of land for employment use.

**4.10** The preferred direction seeks to deliver 67 Hectares of employment land over the plan period. This figure sits between the “Policy-On” job growth scenario and past take up rate scenario suggested by the Employment Growth Study. It is considered to provide a suitable flexible portfolio of sites to deliver an improvement in the quality of employment opportunities in the District.

#### **Preferred Policy Direction - PD 06 Economic Development**

For the period 2011 – 2036, 67 Hectares of employment land will be allocated to allow for a range and choice of employment sites to meet economic need and demand.

The distribution of these new employment allocations will reflect sustainability principles, the overall spatial strategy and the development needs of local communities. The spatial distribution will be as follows:

**Attleborough** – at least 10Ha

**Dereham** - at least 6Ha (consisting of the specific allocations identified in the Sites Specific Policies and Proposals DPD - Policies D4 and D5 – which have been identified as saved policies for this Local Plan)

**Swaffham** – at least 9Ha (consisting of the specific allocations identified in the Sites Specific Policies and Proposals DPD– Policies SW2 and SW3 - which have been identified as saved policies for this Local Plan)

**Thetford** – at least 22Ha (consisting of the specific allocation identified in the Thetford Area Action Plan - Policy TH30 - which has been identified as a saved policy for this Local Plan)

**Snetterton** – at least 20Ha

#### **Alternative Options**

**4.11** Three of the modelled scenarios in the Employment Growth Study 2013 suggest a lower level of allocation. It is acknowledged that a degree of caution needs to be exercised in the light of post recession recovery, as expressed in the study. However, the options have been rejected as they are considered to underplay the potential recovery in the District over the plan period. The fourth option in the study – past take up rates - suggests a higher rate of proposed allocation. This is considered to overstate the likely recovery of the employment market in the District.

**Question 6**

Do you agree with the preferred policy - PD 06? Please explain your answer.

## Retail & Town Centres

**4.12** An objective of the Local Plan is to promote the vitality and viability of town centres, including the night time economy and support the retention of existing rural services. Policies in the Local Plan must also accord with the National Planning Policy Framework,(NPPF), which requires Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to use up to date evidence to assess needs for retail floorspace, including both the qualitative and quantitative needs over the plan period. The scale of some retail proposals outside town centres has the potential to affect the vitality and viability of town centres, potentially diverting trade away from these areas affecting customer choice, and potentially committed, existing and planned private investment in centres. In order to understand the potential effects on a town centre from an out of town retail proposal the NPPF allows LPAs to propose locally set floorspace thresholds above which any application must provide an impact assessment. A sequential test should also be applied to applications that are not in the designated town centre.

**4.13** The Issues and Options consultation sought views on retaining the existing retail hierarchy, and lower impact threshold should be sought in relation to the generic threshold of 2,500 sq m contained in the NPPF. Views were also sought on how town centre boundaries and retail frontages should be defined and, if it was appropriate, to continue with policies that restrict the use of retail frontage primarily for A1 retail use in each of the higher order centres.

### **Responses to the Issues and Options Consultation told us that:**

The current retail hierarchy remains appropriate however in relation to Attleborough some considered that the town should be repositioned in the retail hierarchy due to the levels of anticipated growth. The option for setting locally derived thresholds for impact assessment for developments over 1000 sq m in Thetford and Dereham and 500 sq m in Attleborough, Swaffham and Watton was also supported by those who responded. Attleborough Town Council however indicated that further consideration should be given as to whether the higher threshold in the NPPF should apply for Attleborough.

The principle and definitions proposed to define town centres, the primary shopping area, primary frontage and secondary frontage were supported. In terms of the continuation of policies to control the type of retail units permitted within the primary and secondary frontage no solid direction was given. Half of respondents thought that policies should continue to restrict the type of retail in primary and secondary frontages while the remaining half supported more flexibility to ensure vacant units were filled. In terms of potential approaches, support was expressed for a policy that sought to control frontage uses but also allowed greater flexibility in allowing the amalgamation of town centre units to form larger, more appropriate units, suitable for modern retailing purposes and for larger proposals to provide a mix of smaller units.

## Retail Hierarchy

**4.14** National policy requires that development plans establish a hierarchy of centres in the District, and that new development is proportionate with the position of the centre in the retail hierarchy. The preferred direction encourages vibrant town centres in the District, which attract people and investment so as to maintain and develop the town centres for residents, business and visitors. The proposed policy direction seeks to underpin the desire for town centre first and complement the preferred policy direction PD EO1, ensuring that the District's town centres are the main focus for retail and leisure development and are not undermined by inappropriate out of centre ad-hoc development. It also seeks to support longer term regeneration strategies such as the Riverside regeneration scheme at Thetford and provide the foundations for growth and investment and the development of Council action plans such as the emerging "Open for Business" Strategy.

**4.15** The key settlements, market towns and local service centres of the District consist of a range of centres of different sizes and characteristics. The vitality of all these is seen as essential for economic prosperity and through linked trips within town centres reduce carbon emissions as well as providing the potential to support sustainable transport initiatives. The 2014 Retail Study recommended that the Local Plan policies should continue to seek to maintain and enhance the existing shopping hierarchy. The study concluded that Thetford and Dereham Town Centres should be classified as main centres. Thetford as a key centre for development and change and Dereham as the main administrative centre serving a wide hinterland of Mid Norfolk. The remaining centres of Attleborough, Swaffham and Watton were identified as generally being at the same level of provision and therefore should be classed as such.

**4.16** Consideration has been given to the enhancement of Attleborough in the retail hierarchy due to the proposed residential growth. However in considering the available capacity for retail development as identified in the 2014 Retail Study, which included assumptions on the planned growth levels, it is not considered appropriate to elevate the town in the retail hierarchy at this time. The range, scale and nature of retail service facilities as well as the extent of the rural catchments for the three market towns remain very similar.

#### **Additional Retail Floor Space**

**4.17** National guidance tells us that Local Plans should identify the scale of need for main town centre uses.

**4.18** The 2014 Retail Study identified that, in terms of convenience retail floorspace there is some potential capacity over and above planned commitments in the District, (December 2014). However the provision should be carefully directed. Due to recent completions Swaffham has an over provision of convenience floorspace for the foreseeable future. Watton has very limited capacity to support new development, while Attleborough, Dereham and Thetford have some limited capacity once commitments are taken into consideration. There is also limited capacity showing for the remaining District outside of the 5 main centres.

**4.19** In terms of comparison goods Breckland's market share of comparison expenditure is estimated at less than 43% and there are high levels of "leakage" outside of the District to higher order centres. In the face of increasing competition from nearby higher order centres the 2014 Retail Study concluded that it would be appropriate and realistic to plan to maintain market shares across the District whilst maintaining the vitality and viability of the town centres.

**Table 4.1 Summary of Comparison and Convenience Floorspace Projections 2014-2036**

Settlement	Net Convenience Retail Floorspace	Net Comparison Floorspace	Gross Non Food Floorspace
	sq m	sq m	sq m
Thetford	1,179	5,394	1,526
Dereham	1,599	3,275	496
Attleborough	1,180	1,588	106
Swaffham	0	409	89
Watton	221	768	1,050
Other Breckland	88	65	446
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,881</b>	<b>11,504</b>	<b>3,715</b>

**4.20** These projections take into account population growth within the SUE of Thetford and Attleborough, commitments as at December 2014 and include the projections that could be brought forward through the strategic sustainable urban extensions.

### **Impact Assessment Thresholds**

**4.21** In assessing the appropriate thresholds for any locally defined impact assessment it is also considered appropriate to follow the 2014 Retail Study recommendations. Generally relying on the NPPF threshold of 2,500 sq m gross is considered inappropriate for the retail centres of Breckland as development smaller than 2,500 sq m could have significant adverse impacts on the town centres. In some smaller towns projections suggest that less than 500 sq m gross comparison and convenience goods retail floorspace is required. The retail study by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (NLP), recommended that a reduced threshold of 500 sq m gross is appropriate for Attleborough, Swaffham and Watton. In Dereham and Thetford the floorspace projections are generally higher, the centres larger and capable of absorbing more trade diversion and impact. In these centres the 2014 Retail Study recommends that policy should be set requiring an impact threshold of 1,000 sq m gross.

### **Town Centre Boundaries**

**4.22** The NPPF requires Councils to define the extent of the town centres and primary shopping areas based on a clear definition of primary and secondary frontages in designated town centres. There were limited views expressed in the Issues and Options consultation around their definition and it is proposed to continue to define these boundaries using the following definitions, which are based upon those used in the NPPF:

- Town Centre – Defined area, including the primary shopping area and areas of predominantly leisure, business and other main town centre uses within or adjacent to the primary shopping area
- Primary Shopping Area – Defined area where retail development is concentrated, (generally comprising the primary and those secondary frontages which are contiguous and closely related to the primary shopping frontage)
- Primary Frontage – Primary frontages are areas of mainly shops (Use Class A1).
- Secondary Frontage – Secondary frontage provide greater opportunities for a diversity of uses

**4.23** The primary and secondary frontages and town centre boundaries in Swaffham and Watton remain appropriately drawn. In line with the recommendations of the 2014 Retail Study the existing boundaries in Dereham, Attleborough and Thetford are altered to reflect:

- New secondary frontages on the south side of the river in Thetford
- Secondary uses on Norwich Street, east of Commercial Road junction, in Dereham
- Primary and Secondary frontages in Attleborough town centre to include Lloyds pharmacist and M&Co in the primary frontage and the commercial premises at the west end of Connaught Road to be included as secondary frontages

**4.24** Evidence suggests that in some centres policies that seek to maintain a proportion of A1 use – retail within the primary and secondary shopping frontages are no longer relevant. As town centres evolve the role of policy must change to support the vitality and viability of the centre by supporting the delivery of a greater range of services. Recent changes to the General Permitted Development Order, (GDPO) also have the potential to impact on the retail composition on the high street. Current measures allow for greater flexibility for changes of use e.g Class A uses to C3 - residential use and Class A1 - retail shops to A2 use - financial services. It is important to recognise that the town centres in Breckland act as more than just a retail role but also act as wider service centres for their rural hinterlands. Although it is important to seek to maintain and improve the centres retail offer, policies that seek to retain an unreasonable high proportion of shops may prevent other essential services from being introduced and could prevent the expansion / evolution of the centre. The preferred policy direction is therefore to seek to support retail development by directing it to the Primary Shopping areas in a flexible manner.

## Local Centres and Future Provision in the Proposed Urban Extensions

**4.25** Local centres are important in providing for daily needs without having to travel to larger, higher order centres. In Breckland they can serve a wider rural community than the local service centre they are located in. It is important that these centres are supported and provision enhanced. The retention of rural shops and community facilities, and the provision of new facilities at an appropriate scale to the settlement, will be supported.

**4.26** Two large scale urban extensions are envisaged over the life time of the Local Plan and it is important to plan for the local needs of these developments. The 2014 Retail Study advised that provision of local shopping facilities would be appropriate in these developments at the appropriate scale to ensure that residents have access to day to day shops and services within walking distance of their home. It is essential however to ensure that any local centre remains commercially viable and capable of delivery.

### Preferred Approach

**4.27** The preferred approach seeks to maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of the five main town centres in Breckland and maintain the local shopping facilities within smaller villages. The strategy is to focus retail and leisure development within town centres in the primary shopping areas and restrict retail and leisure development outside these defined centres where it fails the sequential and or impact tests, except where it serves a local need in a smaller village.

### Preferred Policy Direction - PD 07 Town Centre and Retail Strategy

Policies in the Local Plan will seek to support and enhance the vitality of the District's hierarchy of centres and seek to direct floorspace requirements in line with the breakdown in the 2014 retail study projections over the plan period.

Town	Hierarchy	Convenience Requirement (net sq m)	Comparison Requirement (net sq m)	Non Food Requirement (gross sq m)
Thetford	Key Centre for development and change	1,179	5,394	1,526
Dereham	Main Town Centre for administration	1,599	3,275	496
Attleborough	Medium Town Centres	1,180	1,588	106
Swaffham		0	409	89
Watton		221	768	1,050

These centres will be the preferred location for retail, food and non food, office, leisure and cultural facilities and other town centre uses as defined by national policy. Retail and other town centre development will be supported, provided that it is of an appropriate scale that reflects the size and role of the centre, respects the character of the centre, including any special architectural and historic interest and contributes to maintaining and enhancing its existing retail function.

An impact assessment for retail, leisure and/or office schemes will be required on schemes of 1,000 sq m gross and over in Thetford and Dereham and 500 sq m gross and over in Attleborough, Swaffham and Watton. Support will also be dependent on how it reflects need as identified in the 2014 retail study and other evidence. Site selection for retail and other town centre functions should follow the sequential test and prevailing national policies and guidance.

The Local Plan will seek to enhance local provision through focusing retail and leisure proposals within town centres, with retail uses focused within the Primary Shopping Areas. The development of additional retail floorspace outside of defined centres will be restricted where it fails the sequential and impact tests (except where it serves local need). Retail frontages and town centre boundaries will be defined on the policies maps.

The retail role of local service centres will be maintained. The importance of rural shops and facilities will be a material consideration in any application that would result in their loss. Proposals that seek to preserve and enhance the settlement's vitality and viability, or implement environmental improvements, will be supported. Extensions of rural shops and facilities as well as proposals for conversion into shops that are designed to enhance viability will also be supported.

Retail proposals for the strategic urban extensions in Thetford and Attleborough will be supported where they seek to deliver up to 2,400 sq m gross floorspace A1-A5 use in Thetford and up to 1,900 sq m gross A1-A5 use in Attleborough in a local parade format. Proposals should be well connected to the local catchment, providing pedestrian and cycling links and seek to cater for local shopping needs through the delivery of small units as defined under the Sunday Trading Act (280 sq m gross) capable of serving top-up convenience needs.

In addition, the Local Plan town centre and retail strategy seeks to:

- Support the diversity of main town centre uses in order to enhance their continued vitality and viability with regard to retail, business, cultural and leisure services;
- Allow the appropriate provision (in line with needs) of larger retail units (over 200 sq m) in town centres through the amalgamation of units in order to attract those retailers requiring larger modern shop units as long as the overall retail mix is enhanced;
- Deliver improvements to the built environment, including public realm, and streetscape. Encourage innovative design and improvements in local design quality. Both of which can contribute to developing a strong local identity and sense of place.
- Work with partners to support the active management of the larger town centres;
- Promote better accessibility through improvements in pedestrian and cycle environment and the designation and management of car parking where it is demonstrated it will bring a positive improvement.

## Alternative Option

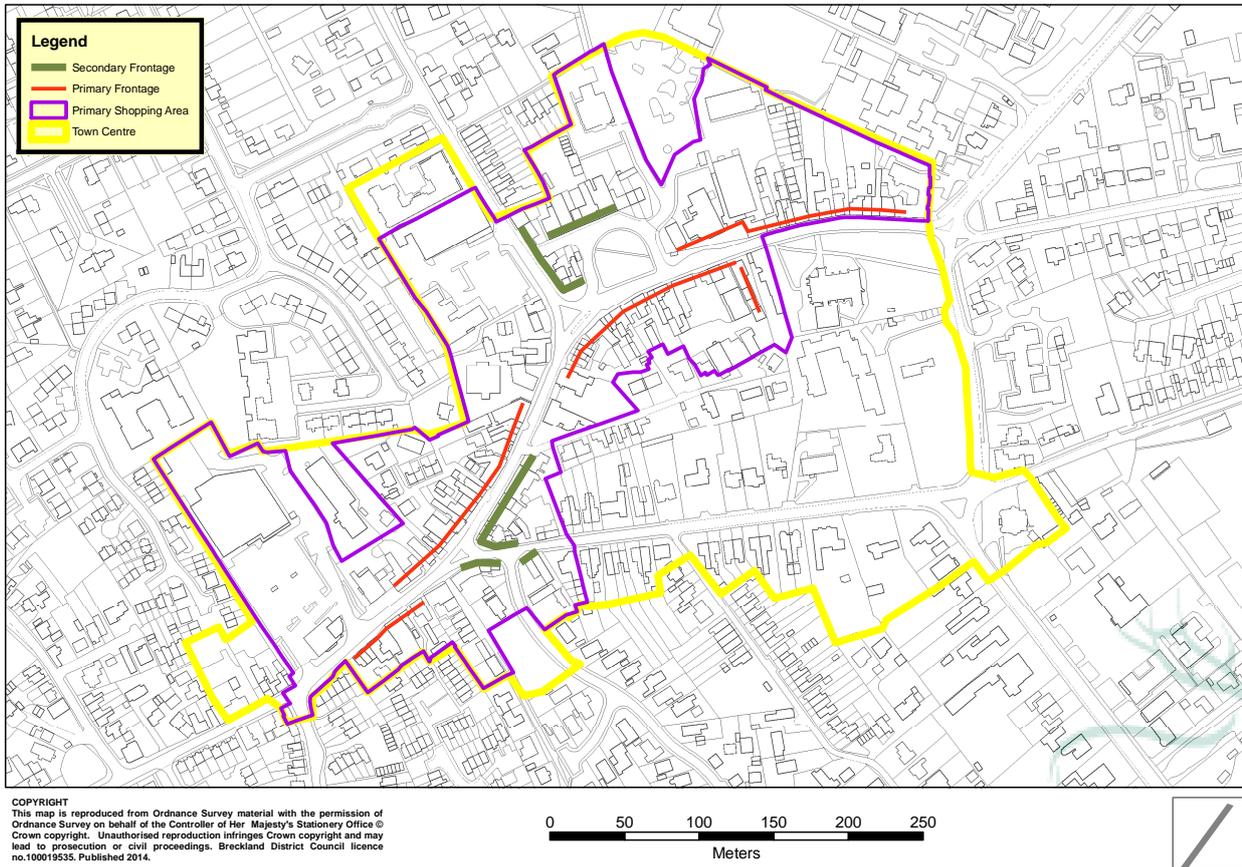
**4.28** The alternative option is to not set a local threshold for retail impact assessments and instead rely on the threshold set out within the NPPF. This has been subject to sustainability appraisal, however the approach does not score as favourably as the preferred direction. The sustainability appraisal shows that a higher impact threshold is likely to impact upon the vitality and viability of the districts town centres.

**Question 7**

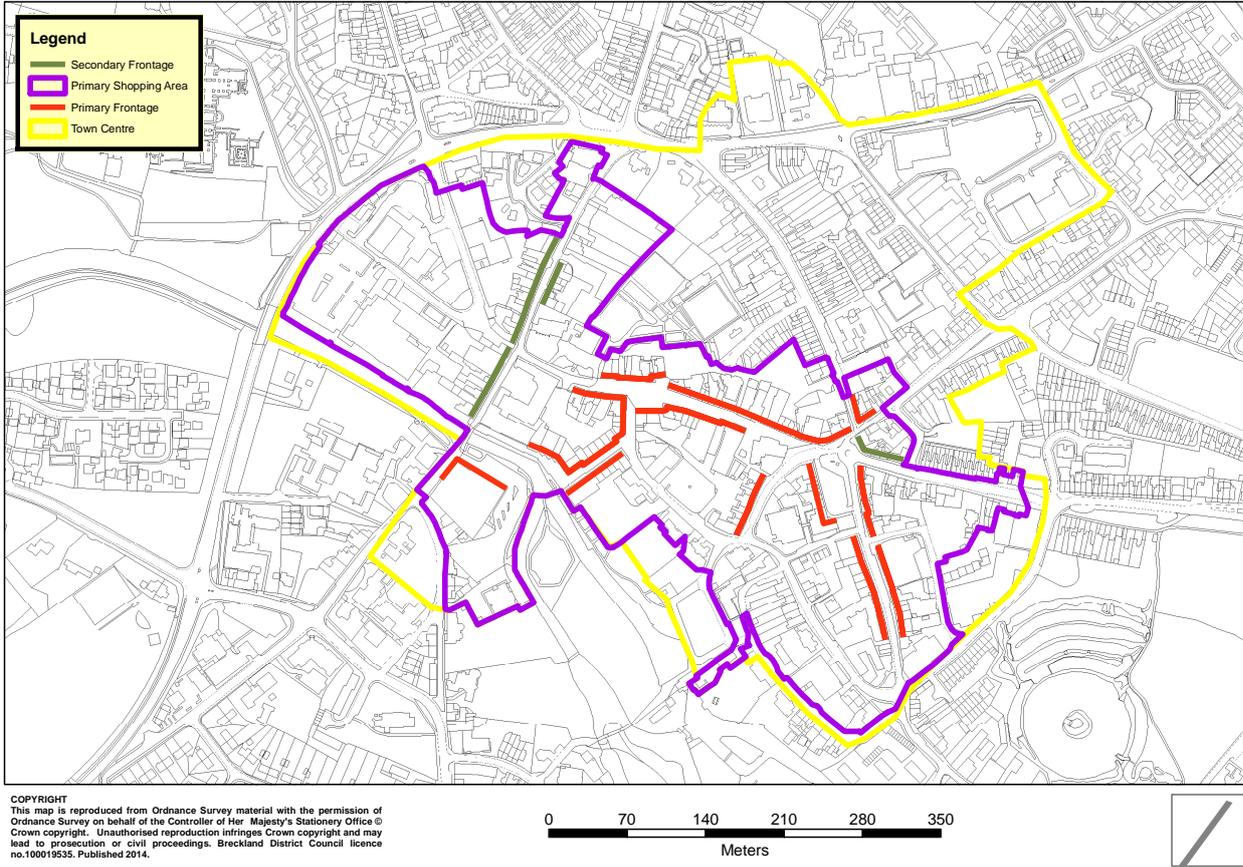
Do you agree with the preferred policy - PD 07? Please explain your answer.

## Proposed Town Centre Boundaries

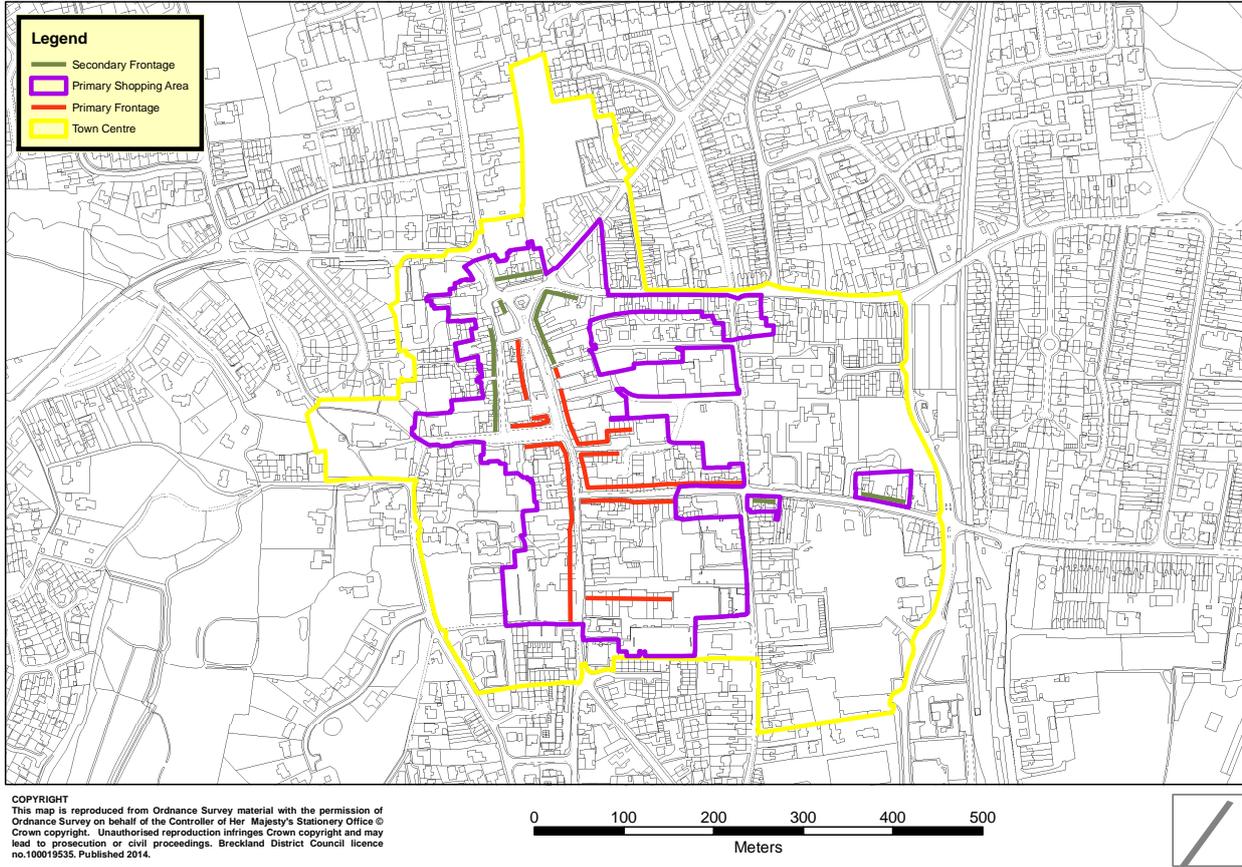
### Attleborough Town Centre Boundary: Local Plan Preferred Options Autumn 2015



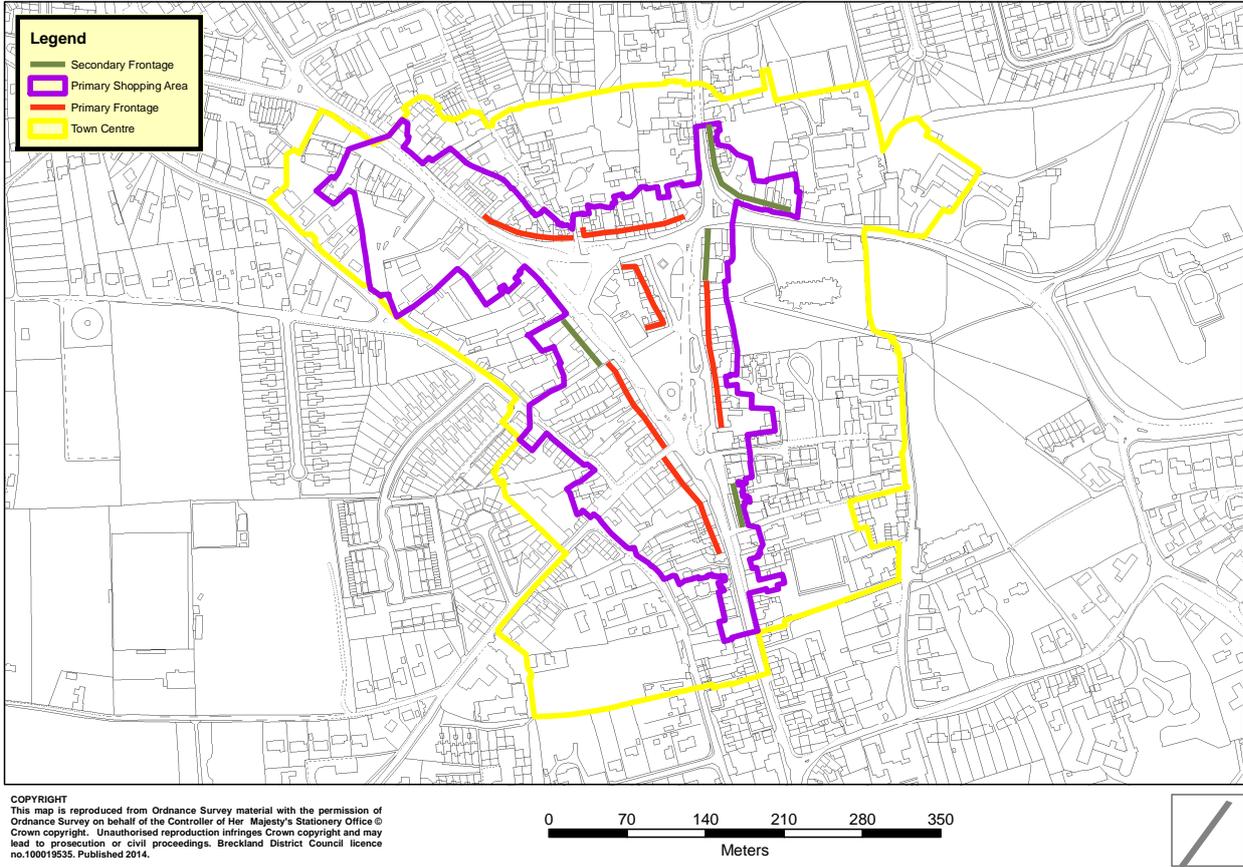
## Thetford Town Centre Boundary: Local Plan Preferred Options Autumn 2015



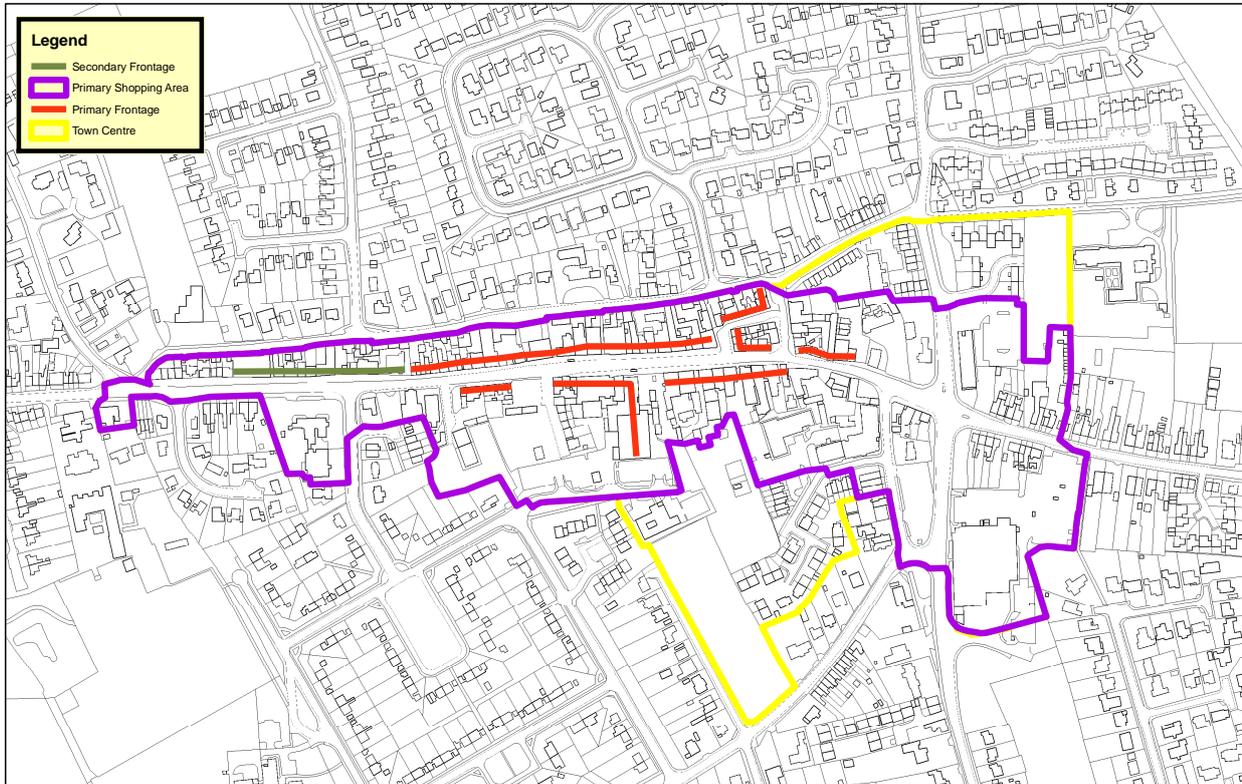
Dereham Town Centre Boundary: Local Plan Preferred Options  
Autumn 2015



## Swaffham Town Centre Boundary: Local Plan Preferred Options Autumn 2015



### Watton Town Centre Boundary: Local Plan Preferred Options Autumn 2015



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## 5 Social

### Affordable Housing

**5.1** A sufficient supply of housing of all tenures, including affordable housing, is essential to meet the objectives of the Local Plan and to meet the wide range of housing needs that will be experienced in the District over the plan period.

**5.2** Affordable housing is housing provided to those that are unable to meet their housing needs in the private sector. Government policy as set out in the NPPF defines affordable housing as 'social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market'. Intermediate housing provides the opportunity for local people, who are unable to afford open market prices, to access the housing market. Eligibility for affordable housing will be in line with the Council's allocation policies and Housing Strategy. Intermediate products such as housing for sale and rent at a cost above social rent, but below market levels, can include shared equity schemes and shared ownership and other low cost homes for sale and intermediate rent. In line with the requirements of the NPPF affordable housing should include provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for any subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision. Affordable rented properties are either Social-Rented or Affordable Rent, which determines the level of rent chargeable. The Council's adopted Tenancy Strategy supports the charging of Affordable Rent levels up to 80% of the local area's market rent for an equivalent property. In Breckland, affordable housing is delivered and managed across the District through partnership work with Registered Providers.

**5.3** The current adopted Core Strategy requires 40% affordable housing provision on all schemes over 5 or more dwellings or of an area of 0.17 ha or larger. Since adoption in 2009, on average a 21% approval rate for affordable housing provision has been achieved, with 549 affordable dwellings being approved between 1 April 2009 - 20 March 2015.

**5.4** This difference can be explained in a number of ways. Not all sites are capable of delivering 40% affordable housing because of physical constraints, and / or exceptional costs or challenging market conditions. This has meant that the viability cushion has been reduced. In determining planning applications a balance has to be made between the viability of a development and the cumulative policy requirements at that point in time.

**5.5** The track record of affordable housing delivery in the District indicates that the current target of 40% housing provision on all schemes over 5 or more dwellings or of an area of 0.17 ha or larger is potentially un-viable. In February 2015 the national Planning Practice Guidance was updated and until recently stated that Local Authorities should not seek affordable housing contributions from developments of 10 units or less, and which have a maximum combined gross floorspace of no more than 1000sqm (gross internal area). However, following the judgement on the application of West Berkshire District Council and Reading Borough Council v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government [2015] these paragraphs have been removed and smaller schemes may again be required to contribute.

**5.6** The joint Central Norfolk Strategic Housing Market Assessment, 2015 (CNSHMA) is a key part of the evidence base that underpins the Local Plan. The CNSHMA provides evidence of local housing needs across the housing market area for the Plan period. The general housing needs information is used to set the housing targets for the District as a whole (as set out in Policy PD 02). The SHMA also collates information on affordable housing need across the Central Norfolk Housing Market Area and the District; it considers both the current unmet affordable housing need and the projected future affordable housing need in the context of the existing affordable housing stock. The approach of considering existing unmet affordable housing needs as part of the calculation ensures that any potential accumulated backlog from under delivery in the previous Plan period will have been accounted for as part of the assessment of need.

**5.7** The proposed affordable housing policy set out below is based on the findings of the 2015 CNSHMA. The viability of the approach has not yet been subject to viability testing, either as a lone policy or as a cumulative impact when considered alongside other policy considerations in the Local Plan. This is an important aspect of policy development and detailed viability testing is currently being undertaken.

**5.8** The CNSHMA (2015) takes existing unmet affordable housing need and projected future affordable housing need together. It concludes that there is a need to provide additional affordable housing across the housing market area over the period 2012-36. The overall need across the Central Norfolk Housing Market Area is found to be 31.7%. Once the impacts of the City Deal are factored in for Norwich, Broadland and South Norfolk and the fact that more market housing is required in those authorities, the overall percentage across the Central Norfolk Housing Market Area falls to 26%. The study goes on to identify an individual District target of 35.7% for Breckland, this is equivalent to 220 dwellings per year. It is proposed at this stage to set the affordable housing requirement in line with the CNSHMA. Given the track record of delivery it is recognised that this could be unrealistic. The final percentage requirement however, along with other policies in this document is subject to viability testing through the Plan Wide Viability study. The CNSHMA already contains uplifts to the overall housing target reflecting markets changes and employment factors and it may be that the Council will have to consider a further positive uplift in order to deliver the required affordable housing numbers and to be able to plan to meet the requirements of the NPPF.

### **Housing and Planning Bill**

**5.9** At the time of drafting the preferred policy directions, the government published the Housing and Planning Bill which details legislative changes to the planning system and highlights changes in the approach to affordable housing. Many of the details are set to come later through statutory instruments, revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework/ national Planning Practice Guidance and or via Ministerial Statements. The Bill is expected to inform policy development and come into effect around April 2016.

**5.10** Measures included in the Bill include a requirement to deliver Starter Homes. These are defined as market housing with a 20% reduction on the normal market price. They would be limited to first time buyers under the age of 40 and capped at £250,000. The draft legislation seeks to ensure that a proportion of affordable housing (yet to be announced) will be starter homes with other more traditional forms of affordable housing coming thereafter.

**5.11** In addition, the draft legislation intends to extend the number of sites (from brownfield) on which starter homes can be built as well as allowing developers the ability to offer the cost payment as an alternative to on site provision. Whatever proportion the Secretary of State decrees that councils must let developers provide as starter homes, it is clear that homes built under the traditional definition of affordable homes could diminish.

**5.12** The proposed policy reflects as far as it can the intentions of the Housing and Planning Bill. It is however expected that the final policy may well have to change to reflect the legislation when published and/or allow a degree of flexibility.

**Responses to the Issues and Options Consultation told us that:**

The questions in the Issues and Options consultation paper regarding affordable housing generated a significant response. Considerable support was received for the option of retaining the current level of affordable housing requirement of 40% but altering the policy to allow for greater flexibility regarding viability. This option received support from most parish councils who responded.

Other respondents commented that in the past the Council had failed to deliver the adopted affordable housing targets through the planning process due to significant pressures in viability, so a lower, rather than a higher percentage affordable housing target ought to be sought to ensure delivery and provide certainty.

Others suggested that mechanisms for safeguarding the continued provision and availability of affordable housing should be robust, together with procedures guaranteeing, wherever possible, priority for local first-time buyers

**5.13** On the basis of the above evidence, and the responses to the Issues and Options consultation exercise the following policy has been developed.

**Preferred Policy Direction - PD 08 Affordable Housing**

Residential development proposals capable of delivering 5 or more units will be expected to deliver a proportion of the development as affordable housing to help meet existing and future affordable housing needs of the District as set out in the current CNSHMA (or relevant successor document).

36% of qualifying developments should be affordable housing.

Starter homes will be required in line with national policy. The affordable rented housing provided on-site should be maintained as affordable housing in perpetuity. Provision will be provided through planning obligations in order to provide the affordable housing and to ensure its availability to initial and successive occupiers.

The policy will be applied to all sites and proposals which, individually or as part of a wider but contiguous site in the same ownership and/or control, could accommodate a level of development that would meet the above thresholds.

On larger sites, (>10), the Council will expect affordable housing to be distributed across a development, rather than in a single area up to a maximum of 15 in any cluster area, their appearance should be indistinguishable from that of open market homes, reflecting local distinctiveness and design policies in the Local Plan and in subsequent neighbourhood plans.

Developers will be required to provide an independent economic viability assessment to verify the level of affordable housing proposed.

In exceptional circumstances, off-site contributions in lieu of built units on site, will be considered where evidence is provided to the Council's satisfaction that wider sustainability advantages would be secured and existing physical constraints would result in extraordinary costs which make the provision of on-site units un-viable. Proposals should include provisions for affordable housing to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for any subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.

## Alternative Options:

**5.14** The Council must consider the need for affordable housing in assessing future housing needs and set out how it intends to meet those needs. Alternative options regarding affordable housing consist of varying the rates of affordable housing required by area in the District, or by size of development and/or across the Housing Market Area. However the over-riding constraint on affordable housing policy selection is the need for the plan to be viable. The policy as set out above would ensure that the affordable housing needs of the area would be met, however it has not yet been subject to viability testing and if this shows that the above policy would not be viable an alternative option involving varying the rates of affordable housing required would have to be explored. **The viability assessment on the Plan will consider and assess the viability of alternative options based on location/size, which may result in an alteration to the preferred option.** The Council will seek to adopt a policy that will provide the greatest amount of affordable housing, whilst remaining viable.

### Question 8

Do you agree with the preferred policy - PD 08? Please explain your answer.

## Gypsies and Travellers

**5.15** In tandem with the publication of the NPPF the Government published a new policy on Gypsy and Travellers and the two documents should be read in conjunction. National policy requires local authorities to make their own assessment of need for gypsy and traveller accommodation, and seek to meet that need in full. The need for gypsy and traveller accommodation is considered as part of the wider housing need in the District. Any provision of gypsy and traveller pitches and plots will be counted towards the general 5 year land supply as the needs they are addressing are included within the housing Objectively Assessed Needs (OAN).

**5.16** A Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Needs Assessment (GTAA) was produced for Breckland Council in 2013. This document undertook a thorough assessment of the need arising from all sites (permanent, temporary and unauthorised) present at the time of the survey. It supersedes previous needs assessments and presents the projections of need for the period 2013 – 2028.

**5.17** The table below shows the current provision, and identified future need for pitches and plots.

**Table 5.1 Current provision, and identified future need for pitches and plots**

	Gypsy and Traveller Residential Need (Pitches)	Gypsy and Traveller Transit Need (Pitches)	Travelling Showpeople Need (Plots)
Current Authorised Residential Permission	51	8	5
Need 2013/14 – 2017/18	22	3-5	0
Need 2018/19 – 2023/24	8	0	0
Need 2023/24 – 2027/28	9	8	0
Need 2013 – 2028	33	11-13	0

**5.18** The analysis in the GTAA shows that there is an accommodation need for **33 pitches** over the 2013/14 - 2027/28 period. These figures incorporate a household growth rate of 3% per year compound, as applied to all current households in the area and all future households, that should be accommodated on pitches by 2018 to estimate need in the period 2018/19 - 2027/28.

**5.19** Local Planning Authorities are required under national guidance to identify a sufficient supply of sites to meet the full objectively assessed needs, set criteria based policies to guide land supply allocations and to provide the basis for decisions in the case of applications. Where possible, the Council proposes to identify and allocate specific sites to accommodate gypsies and travellers in the District.

### Preferred Direction

**5.20** It is possible that a significant proportion of the accommodation need within the District can be met in the first five years by regularising the existing sites without permanent planning permissions where these sites are considered to be acceptable. There should be a preference of granting permanent permission in order to reduce uncertainty and costs associated with precarious planning situations.

**5.21** The NPPF stipulates that gypsy and traveller sites should be sustainable, economically, socially and environmentally located. Selecting the right location for a site is a key element in supporting good community relations and maximising its success. As with any form of housing, poorly located sites will have a detrimental effect on the inhabitants' ability to access services such as education, health and shopping, and consideration needs to be given to ensuring that proposals to develop sites link in with other broader strategies.

**5.22** The following criteria will form the background methodology for selecting the most appropriate sites and assist in the determination of any applications:

- **Location in or near to settlements/proximity to local services.** Sites in or near to existing settlements are prioritised. Such sites are generally more sustainable than those in remote areas, with better access to services and in particular education and health. Given high land values and competition it is unlikely that many sites will be made available within settlement boundaries. The reality then would be for sites to be adjacent to settlements with access to local health and educational facilities. The Council's preference would be for well related sites located in and near to settlements classed as local service centres and above in the settlement hierarchy. The priority will be that access to services can be reasonably obtained so as to meet the day to day needs of the occupiers, recognising the differences in lifestyles and working patterns and transport preferences.
- **Access to vehicular considerations.** Sites are required to have safe and convenient vehicular access and provide adequate car parking space. The development should avoid significant impacts on local roads and be well located to major routes.
- **Previously used land.** National planning policy encourages planning policies and decisions to encourage the effective use of land by re-using land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value. There is recognition that there is a lack of brownfield sites in the District and they will not necessarily be available for Gypsy and Traveller sites. Therefore, although important, realistically there may be limited alternatives to greenfield land.
- **Visual impact.** The local topography and form of the landscape will affect the visibility of a Gypsy and Traveller site and will affect its ability to integrate into its surroundings. Some sites will be highly visible, and others more visually contained. Sites should respect the scale of the environment, including the historic environment, be of a scale proportionate to the local community and be capable of visual and acoustic privacy. Sites which allow appropriate natural screening will be considered more favourably.
- **Infrastructure.** Sites will not be chosen if they place undue pressure on local infrastructure and services including local health capacity. Sites should be capable of being served by appropriate service infrastructure, including public and/or private water supplies and treatment works as appropriate.
- **International, national and local land designations.** The District has a wealth of environmental assets. Site locations must not compromise the objectives of any designated areas.
- **Flood Risk.** Caravans and mobile homes are highly vulnerable to flooding. National and local policies dictate that sites should not be allocated in areas of high risk of flooding, including that of functional flood plains. It is not proposed to deviate from this requirement in the selection of sites.
- **Health and safety and hazards.** In order to ensure sites provide a healthy and safe environment for residents' sites should not be located on contaminated land and avoid areas of unsuitable noise, air quality and major hazards such as pipelines.

### Responses to the Issues and Options Consultation told us that:

In general sites should accommodate no more than 15 pitches. No real preference was expressed around the type and tenure of sites with those responding indicating that the supply should seek to match the identified need. The eight criteria put forward around site selection were generally supported with three additional suggestions. The Environment Agency suggested looking at the ability to connect to the public foul sewer to prevent the proliferation of individual / private forms of water treatment. NHS England commented that local health capacity should also be included as a consideration. Historic England requested stronger consideration of visual impacts on the Historic Environment.

**5.23** On the basis of the above evidence and the responses to the Issues and Options consultation exercise the following policy has been developed.

### Preferred Policy Direction - PD 09 Provision for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

Gypsy and Traveller provision will be located on well related sites within or near to the settlement hierarchy i.e those key settlements, market towns and local service centres with access to services including health and education facilities and transport links in line with other policies in this document and with regard to the criteria above.

Appropriate development and site applications will be allowed where:

- There is an identified need;
- It is supported by local communities;
- The site is within reasonable distances to facilities and supporting services;
- There are no significant adverse impacts on the safe and efficient operation of the highway network;
- Sites will be appropriately screened, be of a scale proportionate to the local community and be capable of visual and acoustic privacy;
- The site will not have any adverse effects on the setting of any heritage asset or any adverse impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding landscape.
- The design and layout of the site is based on Government guidance in 'Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites' or successor documents

Preference will be given to brownfield locations and those that can readily be serviced. Transit sites should be in close proximity to the main established travelling routes in the area.

The regularisation of existing temporary planning permissions to permanent for gypsy and traveller sites, will be assessed against the following criteria:

- Vehicular and pedestrian access to the site is safe and reasonably convenient;
- The site will be able to be landscaped and screened to provide privacy for occupiers and to maintain visual amenity within the landscape/townscape;
- Development of the site should protect the local amenity and environment and will have no significant detrimental impact to adjoining properties or neighbouring land by virtue of noise and other disturbance caused by movement of vehicles to and from the site;

**5.24** Other proposals for development to meet the needs of Gypsies and Travellers will be permitted where they comply with national policy in the Planning for Traveller Sites document or successor publications and the above criteria.

## Alternative Options

**5.25** The Council must seek to address all identified housing needs and set out how it intends to meet those needs. The preferred approach is through a mixture of a review of existing temporary sites and potential allocation, currently not enough sites have been brought forward and identified specifically for Gypsies and Travellers. An alternative option to allocation is to write a policy that seeks to meet the needs of Gypsies and Travellers solely through the application process.

## National Policy Changes

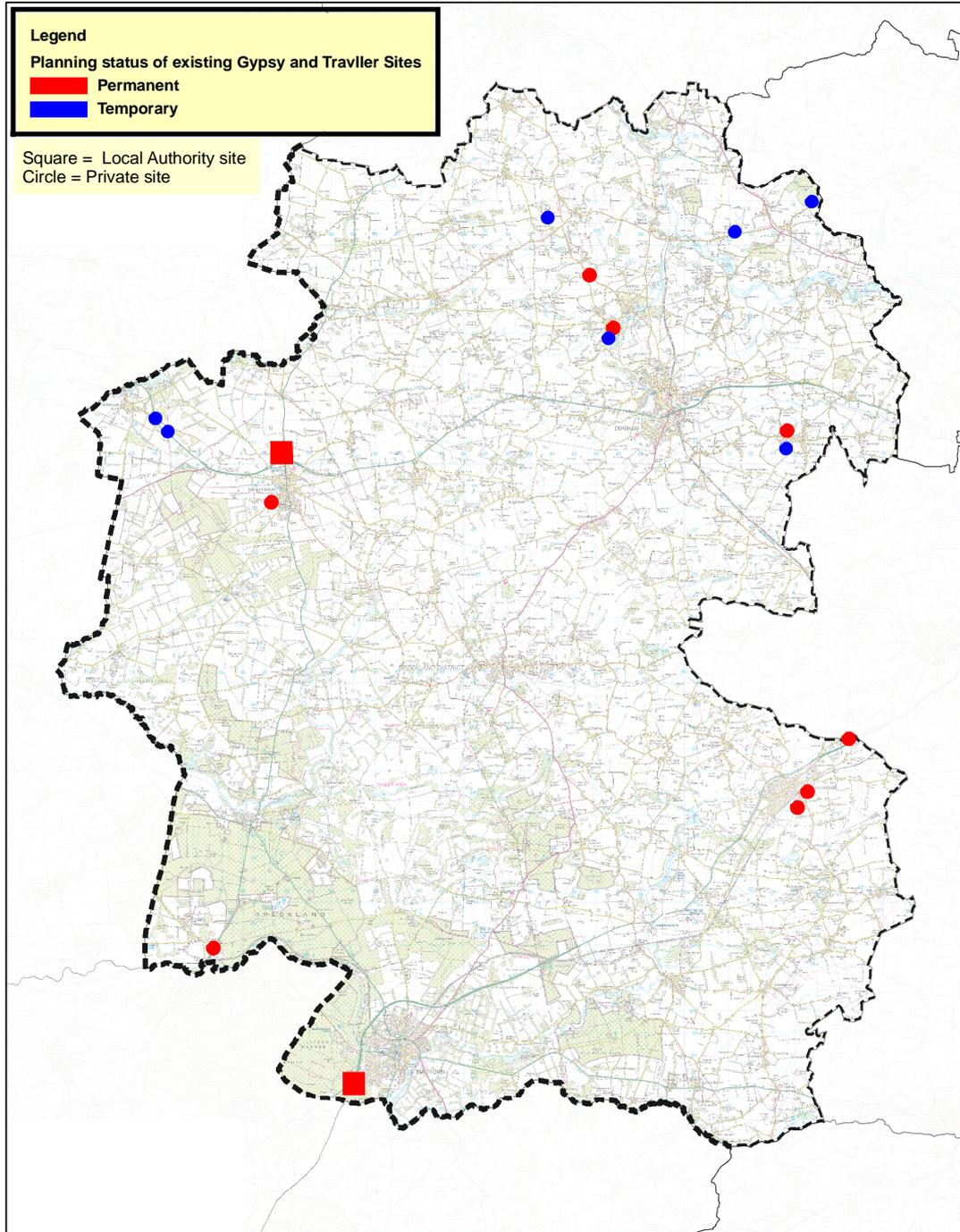
**5.26** At the time of writing the Government published an updated planning policy document for Gypsies and Travellers. Changes that came into affect immediately amended the planning definition of travellers to limit it to those who have a nomadic habit of life, meaning that where someone has given up travelling permanently they should be treated no differently from the settled population. Previously, those who had given up travelling permanently for other reasons such as age, health and/or education were required to be treated like those who continue to travel. The revised policy also says that Councils should "very strictly limit" new sites in the open countryside and that the lack of an up to date five year supply of deliverable sites is not a significant material consideration in planning decisions in involving the granting of temporary planning permission in sensitive areas.

**5.27** This raises the question of how, through the planning process, it is determined whether a family are still travelling or not and are therefore entitled to a pitch. It also raises the question of how the overall level of need is calculated. The change of definition and approach will be assessed for its potential impacts on the approach to be adopted through this plan.

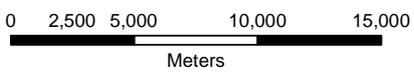
### Question 9

Do you agree with the preferred policy - PD 09? Please explain your answer.

## Existing Gypsy and Traveller Sites in Breckland Autumn 2015



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## Healthy Lifestyles

**5.28** Improving the health and well being of the community is a priority of Breckland Council's Sustainable Community Strategy and a key objective of this Plan. Links between planning and health are found throughout the whole of the National Planning Policy Framework and the national Planning Practice Guidance. These national policies state that Local Planning Authorities should ensure health & wellbeing, and that health infrastructure are considered in local and neighbourhood plans and in decision making.

**5.29** The Local Plan seeks to improve the health and wellbeing for all by:

- Ensuring that all development is sustainable and makes prudent use of resources, so as not to compromise the wellbeing of future generations;
- Providing incentives for young people who have left the area to return – namely facilitating employment provision, training opportunities and a good spread of housing that meets their needs;
- Protecting and enhancing existing social and community infrastructure – such as education, health, cultural and leisure facilities – to improve community wellbeing in line with an understanding of predicted future needs and current gaps in infrastructure;
- Working with partners to deliver sport and recreation schemes, developing and improving community facilities such as recreational areas and multi use games areas for young people and creating opportunities for healthier lifestyles;
- Safeguarding and enhancing green infrastructure and providing a comprehensive network of high quality open spaces such as parks and gardens, and natural green spaces;
- Support independent living for older and disabled people.

**5.30** Health is influenced by social, economic and environmental conditions and planning policies have a significant role to play in creating the conditions for improving health. Accordingly, proposals for development will be screened to ensure, insofar as is possible, they will contribute to improved health outcomes for all and that negative effects are avoided. Development proposals can support strong, vibrant and healthy communities and help create healthy living environments which should, where possible, include making physical activity easy to access and create places and spaces to meet, to support community engagement and social capital.

**5.31** To prevent unacceptable risks from pollution including cumulative effects of pollution on health, the NPPF states in paragraph 120, that the *potential sensitivity of an area or proposed development adverse effects from pollution, should be taken into account.* Paragraph 124 states that *planning polices should sustain compliance with and contribute towards EU limit values or national objections for pollutants, taking into account the presence of Air Quality management Areas and cumulative impacts on air quality from individual sites in local areas. Planning decisions should ensure that any new development in Air Quality Management Areas is consistent with the local air action plan.*

**5.32** Breckland does not currently have any Air Quality Management Areas, though monitoring suggests that some areas particularly in Swaffham may be close to the prescribed limited. Proposals should therefore seek to ensure that any development in Air Quality Management Areas and in or those areas identified by the Council "at risk" should be consistent with the local air quality action plan.

### Responses to the Issues and Options Consultation told us that:

The Issues and Options consultation did not contain a specific policy or question relating to health and wellbeing but many responses suggested that health and wellbeing should have a raised profile within the Plan. NHS England requested a policy relating to Health Impact Assessments.

**5.33** On the basis of the above evidence the strategic objectives and the responses to the Issues and Options consultation exercise the following policy has been developed.

#### **Preferred Policy Direction - PD 10 Healthy Lifestyles**

All net new development (excluding minor household applications) will be expected:

- to demonstrate that appropriate steps have been taken through its design and construction and implementation to avoid or mitigate potential negative effects on the health of the population;
- to facilitate enhanced health and well being through the provision of conditions supportive of good physical and mental health (such as enabling physical activity); and
- to reduce, where possible, disparities in health between different parts of Breckland by addressing detrimental environmental social and economic conditions.

Development in Air Quality Management Areas and in or those areas identified by the Council "at risk" should be consistent with the local air quality action plan.

Developers will be expected to complete and submit the following with planning applications:

- i. Health Impact Assessment for large and complex proposals;
- ii. A Healthy Urban Planning Checklist for development of 5 dwellings/1,000m<sup>2</sup> non residential or more.

**5.34** Major development will be subject to the most comprehensive screening which, in the case of particularly large complex development and those that have clear health implications, may take the form of a formal Health Impact Assessment (whether or not such an application also requires an EIA). In such cases the developer will be required to commission such an assessment from an independent and reputable body.

**5.35** Health Impact Assessment is a well-established and widely used range of techniques. The purpose of HIA is essentially to systematically check that a policy or project will not have unforeseen and negative effects. Approaches to HIA may range from a quantitative emphasis, relying heavily on epidemiological analysis <sup>(1)</sup> to a qualitative analysis, drawing on community or stakeholder perceptions, or a combination. The methodology should be agreed with the NHS Norfolk/NCC Public Health at an early stage.

#### **Alternative options**

**5.36** The Council could opt not to include a policy on healthy lifestyles, however the inclusion of a policy regarding Health Impact Assessments was requested by NHS England, and the link between health and planning is clearly made in the NPPF.

#### **Question 10**

Do you agree with the preferred policy - PD 10? Please explain your answer.

1 epidemiology studies the causes, distribution and control of diseases in populations

## 6 Area Strategies

**6.1** This section of the Plan provides more detail on the preferred strategic policy directions for the two key strategic settlements of Attleborough and Thetford

**6.2** As set out in the spatial strategy, development will be focused around the three tiers of the sustainable settlement hierarchy established in Policy PD 03:

- **Key Settlements:** Attleborough and Thetford
- **Market Towns:** Dereham, Swaffham and Watton
- **Local Services Centres:** Banham, Bawdeswell, Beetley, Garboldisham, Great Ellingham, Harling, Hockering, Hockham, Kenninghall, Litcham, Mattishall, Mundford, Narborough, North Elmham, Necton, Old Buckenham, Saham Toney, Shipham, Sporle, Swanton Morley, Weeting and Yaxham
- Outside the sustainable hierarchy of Key Settlements, Market Towns and Local Service Centres the approach to growth in rural areas is set out in the approach to rural areas and other emerging policies contained throughout this document.

**6.3** These are the key areas of housing and employment growth in the District, potential specific available sites are shown on the accompanying maps for each of these settlements.

### Attleborough

**6.4** The Preferred Locational Strategy set out in Policy PD 03 of this plan identified Attleborough as one of the key settlements within Breckland. Attleborough and Thetford are the two most sustainable locations in the District and as such they are at the head of the sustainable settlement hierarchy. Policy PD 04 sets out the proportion of growth intended to be delivered in the Key Settlements of Attleborough and Thetford. The majority of this growth for Attleborough is to be delivered through the provision of a Strategic Urban Extension and provide for the net addition of 4000 new dwellings.

#### Responses to the Issues and Options Consultation told us that:

Attleborough Town Council along with a number of other parish councils and Norfolk County Council support the preferred approach location of the SUE. The land to the south-west of Attleborough was supported by other respondents though some raised the issue of deliverability and suitability of the location of the link road. Some respondents commented on the requirement of a combined solution to the transport matters of the town. The Town Council, along with the emerging neighbourhood plan support the wider economic strategies of the region that seek to establish economic growth along the A11 corridor, however there is a desire to see more employment land within the town itself.

A number of representatives also promoted individual sites.

Historic England had particular concerns with development to the south and east of Attleborough in terms of impact on historic landscape character and specific heritage assets (including listed buildings and the scheduled monument at Bunns Bank), as well as impact on Attleborough Conservation Area.

## Strategic Urban Extension – South West of Attleborough

**6.5** The allocation of a strategic site at Attleborough is required to help meet the District's need for future housing and employment land. Evidence demonstrates that the land to the south west is the most suitable and supported location for this development

### Site Context and Constraints

**6.6** The land is adjacent to the existing town to the north which forms a defined boundary while the eastern edge of the site is partly formed by the B1077 which connects to the town and wider afield. The eastern boundary also abuts the employment area at Bunns Bank.

**6.7** The strategic site comprises 296 hectares of predominantly agricultural land, divided into small to medium sized arable fields and is of sufficient size to accommodate all the proposed dwellings. The site does not lie within a designated landscape and it is assessed as having a moderate sensitivity to change. Overall land to the south west of the town has a lower elevation than land to the south east and as such development would be less prominent in the landscape and less sensitive to change than land on the east of the B1077.

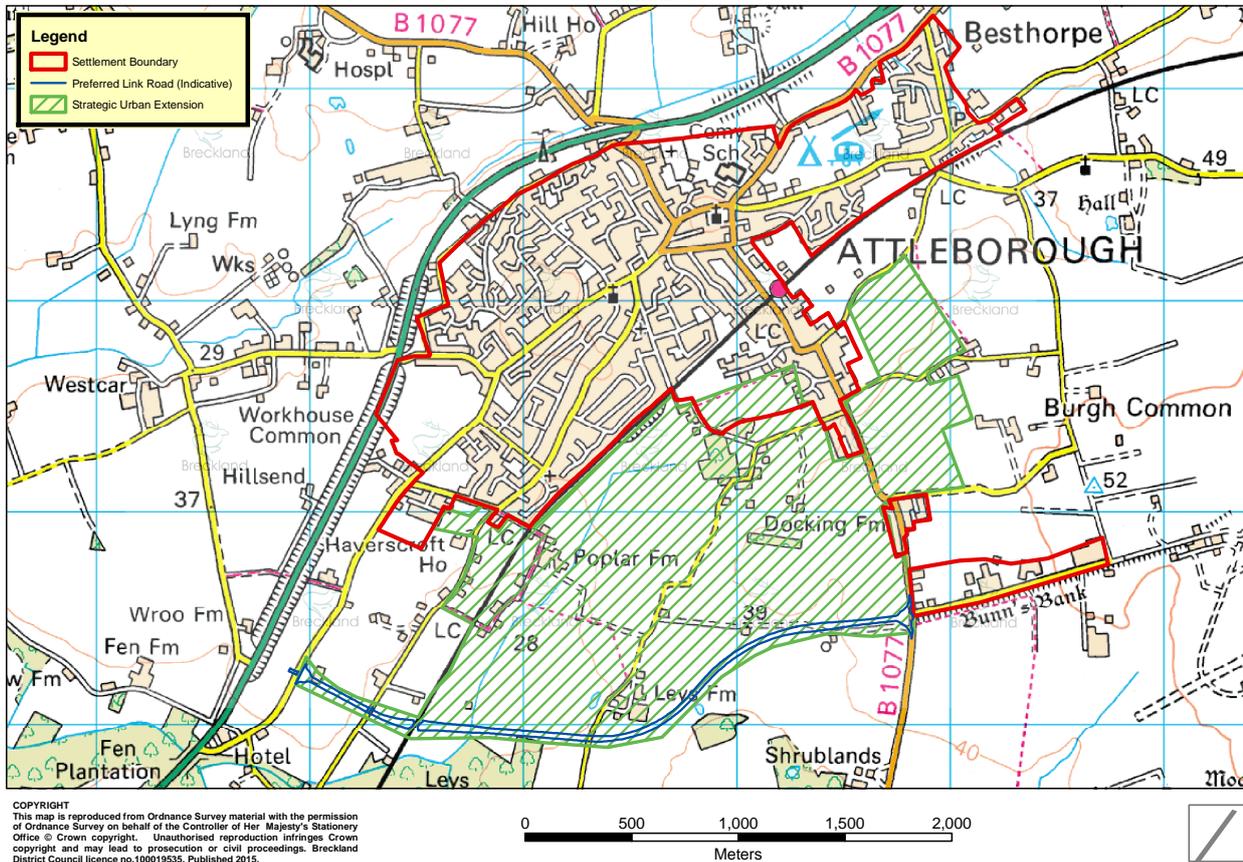
**6.8** There is a requirement to understand the potential impacts of the preferred growth location on the historic landscape character and development would require to be informed by an historic landscape character assessment.

**6.9** The extent of the development proposed would require a new link road as well as other transport works around the town centre to improve the flow of traffic. The location for the link road was consulted on in the Issues and Options consultation. Three options were appraised with the preferred indicative route being put forward as a diversionary route between London Road and the B1077. Overall this route offers the most diversionary impacts removing traffic from the centre of Attleborough and is shown on the map below.

**6.10** The site does not lie within any areas designated by the Environment Agency to be at risk from flooding

**6.11** The proposed settlement boundary as detailed below for Attleborough reflects the changes identified in the Issues and Options consultation. The final settlement boundary will reflect any further allocations.

**Attleborough: Settlement Boundary and Strategic Urban Extension  
Autumn 2015**



**6.12** An urban extension of this scale will need to be phased over the plan period in line with known infrastructure delivery and the market capacity for annual delivery. It is expected that the urban extension will come forward in phases with the initial phases being influenced by existing infrastructure availability and the ability to deliver incremental infrastructure improvements. A number of transport studies have been undertaken for Attleborough and the provision of the necessary infrastructure to support development is critical for the delivery of the Attleborough urban extension. The scale of development proposed necessitates substantial improvements to the transport infrastructure in the town, particularly the highways network and associated infrastructure improvements. This includes addressing the following but not exhaustive list:

- Congestion and delay in relation to the existing gyratory system for traffic around the town centre;
- Level crossing on the B1077 which can cause blocking back on to the gyratory system;
- Transport issues in Attleborough in relation to traffic passing through the town centre, in particular HGVs;
- The barrier of the railway line and how this needs to be overcome to integrate the growth area with the existing town;
- Accommodating the transport impact of additional housing and employment growth in the town;
- The need to deliver a link road and new road bridge over the railway to serve development.

**6.13** In terms of connectivity it is important to ensure balanced provision of transport infrastructure and facilities, for pedestrians and cyclists, public transport and other vehicles to achieve a sustainable future for Attleborough town centre.

**6.14** There is a requirement to work in partnership to enable a detailed infrastructure phasing to support the delivery of the urban extension, with Norfolk County Council, New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership and the emerging Attleborough Neighbourhood Plan in order to develop policies to support the production of the masterplan. This is likely to include reconfiguring the following junctions on the traffic gyratory to provide two-way general traffic flows on both Surrogate Street and Connaught Road. The individual schemes would be:

- Introduce two-way traffic on Connaught Road and Surrogate Street;
- Reconfiguring the Church Street/Surrogate Street junction (with possible closure of Church Street);
- Reconfiguring the Surrogate Street/Connaught Road junction;
- Reconfiguring the High Street/Connaught Road/Exchange Street junction.

**6.15** Phasing of future town centre improvements such as HGV bans on some of these town centre roads will not be possible until the link road is in place. A key requirement is to provide a new road crossing over the railway line and to acquire the required land to the west. Breckland Council have resolved to acquire this land and can use Compulsory Purchase powers if required to facilitate this.

**6.16** The exact phasing requirements will be worked up in detail through continued partnership working and inform the emerging masterplan requirements.

### **Vision for the Strategic Urban Extension**

**6.17** In response to the issues and options consultation and the emerging neighbourhood plan the Council has set out a proposed vision on how development will look and function and will inform the design principles and required Masterplan Framework.

#### Proposed Strategic Site Vision

1. Development of the land south-west of Attleborough presents an opportunity to create a new and attractive strategic urban extension for Attleborough. This vision statement describes the ultimate ambition for the place. The development will sit comfortably within the gently undulating landform, successfully incorporating significant trees and hedgerows within green corridors and improved pedestrian and cycling linkages to the town centre. In its town planning, the development will reflect the built environment of Attleborough and its communities. All buildings will exhibit high architectural quality, making optimum use of modern systems internally. The external appearance will complement the historic town preserving contact with the best local building traditions, not least in the use of high quality materials. The built environment will strike a successful balance between variety and harmony. As in the best historic townscapes the scale, massing and detailing of particular buildings will respond to the character and role of the street they address. Within the layout, focal points and landmarks will be highlighted with distinctive buildings and spaces. A carefully planned network of green infrastructure will serve to connect the neighbourhoods, helping to create defined open spaces and create recognisable neighbourhoods within the development and a strong sense of place. As a consequence, the layout will be easy to understand and navigate. Integration with existing streets and paths in the vicinity, which will be enhanced where necessary, will ensure this new part of Attleborough is well connected to the town and the railway station, the rest of the town, and the countryside beyond.

2. The mix of homes and tenure types will reflect the needs and ambition of the local community. Homes will provide ample space for living and storage. Residents will have convenient access to community facilities such as schools, shops, healthcare and play areas. All properties will have convenient access to public transport and to a network of safe and direct walking and cycling routes, linking people to schools, and services, both within the development and beyond. Ready access to high speed broadband will enable home working and help reduce the number of journeys by private car. Public spaces will be well designed, with suitable management and maintenance arrangements in place to ensure their continued upkeep.

3. This new part of Attleborough will include low carbon energy generation, SuDS, and convenient access to recycling facilities. Allotments and gardens will provide opportunities for residents to grow their own food. The development will promote innovation in residential, commercial and infrastructure design with a view to achieving more sustainable ways of living and a place that is future-proof. Essential infrastructure and services will be integrated in the design of the place from the outset and delivered in phases with the building work.

## Development Requirements of the Strategic Urban Extension

### Preferred Policy Direction - PD 11 Development Requirements of Attleborough Strategic Urban Extension

A total of 4,000 net new dwellings is proposed for the strategic urban extension of Attleborough located to the south west of the town phased over the plan period together with appropriate community infrastructure to support new development (see separate policies in this document), suitable local shopping centre, green infrastructure and any identified local employment land. The delivery will be aided by the provision of a new link road located to the south of the urban extension.

To help ensure that there is a sufficient economically active population to support the local economy, any proposal for housing development (open market and affordable) should include an appropriate mix of housing types.

**The requirement for a masterplan** for the whole SUE will be detailed through a specific policy in the full draft Local Plan to ensure that developers adopt a holistic, long term approach, which is responsive to both the emerging Neighbourhood Plan, and the strategic requirements of the District to ensure the phased delivery of the planned growth for the town and associated balanced provision of transport infrastructure improvements, providing for pedestrian linkages to the town centre, as well as town centre transport improvements and provision of necessary transport improvements.

Retail proposals within the SUE will be supported where they provide for local need across A1-A5 Use classes up to the identified capacity of 1,900 sq m gross as detailed in the separate retail policies in this document.

Provision will be required for sport and recreation facilities in the SUE as part of any development proposals in line with current and emerging evidence and policies in this document. This should be accessible from the existing town by a variety of modes of travel as well as from within the SUE itself.

Any proposal will have to consider the heritage asset and carry out assessment work into the historic landscape to the south of Attleborough to the satisfaction of the Council and Historic England.

Development must make provision for the retention and protection of hedgerows and trees and provide green corridors connecting development sites, adjacent residential and employment areas, the town centre and open countryside as well as appropriate links to the railway station.

The following Neighbourhood Plan aspirations are supported, in principle:

- Provision of additional play space and facilities for children and young people;
- Improvement of the functionality, amenity, safety, biodiversity, environment and attractiveness of the area;
- Provision of new pedestrian and cycle bridge over the railway. Provision of surface links with town centre, recreation and residential areas;
- Preserving/ enhancing Attleborough Spring in order to provide green infrastructure through the site running from Decoy Common to Hargham Woods.

Design and Landscape of a quality that reflects the importance of this key site, the policies in the Local Plan and the aspirations of the Neighbourhood Plan.

### Question 11

Do You agree with the proposed policy direction contained in PD 11? Please explain your answer.

#### Alternative Options

**6.18** The Council could opt not to include a policy detailing the requirements of the SUE allowing proposals to be flexible.

#### Employment

**6.19** Attleborough is positioned on the A11 corridor which in itself is a key focus for the delivery of growth and investment across the region. The vision for Attleborough requires development that will create an attractive south-western edge to the town. This will require careful consideration of, among other things, what forms of employment development might be appropriate in different parts of the urban extension and in those sites closely related. The employment options show potential sites close to the A11 as well as opportunities to provide for the extension of the employment zone at Bunns Bank and some small scale employment within the SUE itself. Closer to the town centre, there remains the opportunity of redevelopment at the existing Banham Poultry site which currently has existing retail permission. Any additional provision within the SUE would only be supported if it would not prejudice residential amenity. For example, the ground floor of buildings adjacent to the main access may be suitable for small-scale retail and commercial use as well as other sociable uses.

**6.20** In line with preferred direction of employment provisions outlined in the strategic employment section of this document and the strategic objectives of the Local Plan the preferred direction is to seek to ensure that concentrations of certain types of employment uses/buildings are directed towards the most appropriate parts of the District. It is considered that the employment site provided at Snetterton Heath offers the opportunity to help deliver the strategic employment needs of the District, while smaller sites towards Attleborough have the potential to provide for small to medium enterprises and to assist in providing more local employment for the town. Given that the potential sites form part of the entry into the historic market town they are key gateway sites and must be sensitively designed.

### Preferred Policy Direction - PD 12 Local Employment

To encourage employment and retail provision in the SUE across the residential areas, in order to create places with variety and choice:

- Does not prejudice residential amenity;
- Is easily and readily accessible by car and foot;
- Is in line with other policies in this document.

To allocate key gateway sites only for small to medium enterprises, B1/B2 use. Proposals will only be supported where they have the backing of the local community through the Neighbourhood Plan and are sensitively designed. Proposals must show how they will incorporate high quality materials and design and how the proposal will enhance the entrance and setting of the historic market town.

**6.21** The map below shows the emerging site options including the proposed strategic urban extension. A number of these sites are currently subject to residential applications as well as being submitted for assessment through the land allocations process in the Local Plan. It is important to note that no decision has been made on additional site allocations and that the overall quantum of development should be in line with the preferred policy direction and distribution requirements of PD 04. Evidence studies, feedback from stakeholders and from this consultation, as well as a detailed sustainability appraisal, will inform the final site selection that will form part of the Draft Local Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan can also seek to allocate sites in addition to the minimum requirements of the Local Plan

### Question 12

Do You agree with the proposed policy direction contained in PD 12? Please explain your answer.

### Alternative Options

**6.22** An alternative is not to specify the type and design criteria for local employment sites

### Thetford

**6.23** Thetford was designated as the Key Centre for Development and Change within the former Core Strategy. The town acts as the principal retail, service and employment centre for the south of the District. The Core Strategy's Spatial Portrait described the town as having a good balance of homes and jobs with a well developed market for industrial and distribution property, it has connections to the national rail network and is located on the A11 between Norwich and Cambridge. The spatial strategy of this Preferred Options document continues Thetford's role as a key area for growth.

**6.24** The Thetford Area Action Plan (TAAP) was adopted in July 2012, it covered the whole of the Parish of Thetford and parts of the Parishes of Croxton, Brettenham and Kilverstone.

**6.25** The TAAP was produced to guide the significant housing and employment growth apportioned to Thetford, primarily delivered through the Thetford Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE). Thetford was appointed growth point status in 2006 and under the TAAP the town will deliver 5000 dwellings, 22ha of employment land and 500 net new jobs. The TAAP was part of the old Local Development Framework (LDF) system; it was intended to be read alongside the adopted Core Strategy. As discussed in the introduction of this document, when the new Local Plan is adopted all of the previous LDF documents will be replaced.

**6.26** However, the growth and development of Thetford as a sustainable location is still a key component of the new Local Plan. The town remains a key area for growth and the SUE is currently progressing through the planning process. Although the site has outline planning consent a number of reserved matters applications will have to come forward over the Plan period to build out the site.

**6.27** The TAAP contains a number of policies specifically related to development within Thetford and importantly to the SUE. These policies have been developed to respond to key pieces of evidence base for the local area, they are relatively recently adopted and in conformity with the NPPF. The policies have been designed to help frame the development of Thetford and the regeneration of existing areas and have been subject to a considerable level of public consultation and relatively recent examination, (2012).

**6.28** The over arching vision for Thetford as put forward in the adopted Area Action Plan still remains:

### **Overarching Vision for Thetford**

To deliver a thriving 21st century market town at the centre of life in the East of England by implementing the sustainable growth and comprehensive social, economic and environmental regeneration of Thetford.

By 2026 Thetford will become a well planned, self-contained sustainable town where people feel part of the community and where they continue to enjoy living and working. It will be a place people will be attracted to for its renowned natural and historic environment qualities.

Thetford will be an important town for jobs, shops, services, schools and tourism, and will continue to be the fourth largest town in Norfolk. Thetford will be known as a town where healthy lifestyles are at the heart of what people, communities and businesses do.

Thetford's reputation will be improved.

### **Responses to the Issues and Options Consultation told us that:**

There was support for the approach of retaining locally specific policies, though some respondents suggested that policies should be reviewed.

**6.29** Following analysis of the relevance of each policy (in the context of the Local Plan) it was considered that the below policies from the TAAP should be rolled forward into the new Plan to ensure that the planning framework for this area is clear and consistent.

- Policy TH 2 Approach to the Town Centre
- Policy TH 4 Transport - Achieving Modal Shift
- Policy TH 5 The Impact of Change on Pedestrians, Cyclists and Buses
- Policy TH 6 Thetford Bus Interchange
- Policy TH 7 Thetford Railway Station
- Policy TH 11 Joe Blunt's Lane
- Policy TH 12 The Thetford Loops
- Policy TH 18 Archaeology
- Policy TH 20 Thetford Urban Extension Strategic Design Principles
- Policy TH 21 Locally Distinctive Features of the Landscape
- Policy TH 22 Gallows Hill Scheduled Monument

- Policy TH 23 Existing Buildings in the Thetford Urban Extension
- Policy TH 25 Walking and Cycling
- Policy TH 26 Buses
- Policy TH 27 A New Railway Station in the Urban Extension
- Policy TH 28 Changes to the A11 Trunk Road
- Policy TH 29 Improvements to the Local Road Network
- Policy TH 30 New Employment Land
- Policy TH 31 New Local Centre(s) in the Urban Extension
- Policy TH 32 Connecting to a Decentralised Energy Supply
- Policy TH 33 Education Provision in the Thetford Urban Extension
- Policy TH 34 New Health Facility in the Urban Extension
- Policy TH 35 Community Buildings
- Policy TH 37 Regeneration Proposals in Existing Residential Areas

**6.30** The following policies will be replaced by District wide policies and will not be rolled forward into the Thetford Area Strategy section of the new Local Plan.

**Table 6.1 Replaced Thetford AAP Policies**

Policy to be lost/superseded	Relevant replacement policy
Policy TH 1 NPPF - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development	PD 01
Policy TH 3 New Retail Development	PD 07
Policy TH 8 Healthy Lifestyles	PD 10
Policy TH 9 Monitoring and Management of Key Biodiversity Sites	ENV 02 and ENV 03
Policy TH 10 Allotments	ENV 04
Policy TH 13 Indoor Sports Facilities	ENV 04, COM 04
Policy TH 14 Energy and Carbon - TAAP Wide	National policy
Policy TH 15 Energy/Multi Service(s) Company Development (ESCo/MuSCo)	National policy
Policy TH 16 Water and Drainage	ENV 09
Policy TH 17 Development in Flood Zones	ENV 09
Policy TH 19 Sustainable Construction Standards for Non-Residential Development	National Policy
Policy TH 24 Surface-Water Management	ENV 09
Policy TH 36 New Bring Recycling Facilities	National policy
Policy TH 38 Existing Employment Areas	E 01
Policy TH 39 Thetford Settlement Boundary	Revised settlement boundaries

**Question 13**

Do you agree with the proposed policy direction for polices contained in the 2012 adopted Thetford Area Action Plan?

## 7 Environment

**7.1** This section deals with the strategic theme of protecting and enhancing the natural and built environment of the District. It covers policy issues such as the protection of specific environmental or conservation assets, and more widely the general landscape of the District.

**7.2** Breckland is a diverse District for biodiversity, geodiversity and landscape quality. The District is characterised by mixed landscape character areas including 'settled' and 'plateau' farmland to the north. The landscape changes to the west and south of the District, where the Brecks contains extensive areas of heathland within a forest and arable context. A significant proportion of the Brecks is designated as a European protected site, forming the largest terrestrial protected area in Norfolk. The heathland serves as an important habitat designated for its suitability to support internationally important bird species, particularly Stone Curlew, Woodlark and Nightjar.

**7.3** Breckland contains a wealth of other protected areas such as Redgrave and South Lopham Fen which is one of only four sites within Norfolk designated under the Ramsar Convention of Wetlands of International Importance. Breckland is also home to a number of international important sites for biodiversity known as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) which are the most important sites for wildlife in the country. These include Norfolk Valley Fens, River Wensum and Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens.

**7.4** Within Breckland, there are four Local Nature Reserves (LNR), at Litcham Common (an area of varied heathland), the Great Eastern Pingo Trail situated between Stow Bedon and Hockham (a mix of wetlands, woodlands and grasslands), land west of Weeting and grass heathland at Barnham Cross Common in Thetford. The latter is also designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and located within the Breckland Special Protection Area (SPA).

**7.5** Aside from the many designated environmental assets Breckland has a vast area of tranquil countryside. The wider rural area shapes the character of the District and is a scenic backdrop to the scattered market towns.

**7.6** The settlements within Breckland are diverse in both size and type and embrace a wide range of building forms, architectural styles and building materials. District wide there are approximately 1,600 Listed Buildings as well as numerous buildings within the 50 Conservation Areas that cover 45 different Parishes. The rich and diverse built heritage of the District contributes to its distinctive and individual characteristics.

**7.7** The growth agenda of the Local Plan could impact on the District's natural and historic environment, the policies in this section aim to ensure that natural and historic environmental quality of Breckland is maintained and, where possible, enhanced.

## Green Infrastructure

**7.8** The NPPF requires Local Authorities to plan positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure. Green infrastructure is the network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities. Green infrastructure is a term to cover all types of green space, large or small, public or private. It recognises the value of all green space, not just protected landscapes.

**7.9** The term green infrastructure provides open space and green features with the same level of importance as other forms of infrastructure, such as transport and education infrastructure. Treating green space and the natural environment in this way helps us to recognise that it performs many functions and plays a significant role in helping to attract people, employment and investment to the District. Green infrastructure performs a number of functions which help to meet social and environmental goals, such as encouraging active, healthy lifestyles and helping the District to be resilient to climate change.

**7.10** As a predominantly rural District, Breckland has a vast green infrastructure network, stretching from the protected European sites, through to hedgerows and trees across the northern farmlands, to back gardens and local parks. Although there is no District wide green infrastructure study the value of the green infrastructure network is still understood and recognised. Rather than identify key green linkages for protection, the Council is seeking in its policy to recognise the value of all green infrastructure and the contribution it makes to the local area in which it is located.

**7.11** In 2008 Dereham Town Council, in partnership with Breckland District Council and Norfolk County Council commissioned consultants to undertake a Green Infrastructure Study and Implementation Strategy for the town. These studies will help ensure that the planned development for Dereham protects and enhances the green infrastructure.

### Responses to the Issues and Options Consultation told us that:

The Issues and Options consultation did not contain a specific section, question or policy on green infrastructure, though it was mentioned as a concept within the environment section. The previous Core Strategy did contain a policy on green infrastructure and several comments were received which noted that the Council's approach to green infrastructure in the Issues and Options document was not explicit enough, and that the importance of general green infrastructure should be highlighted or emphasised more.

### Preferred Direction

**7.12** The Council considers that a green infrastructure policy should be introduced to the Plan. The policy requires developers to recognise the intrinsic value of green infrastructure and ensure that proposed development does not harm the green infrastructure network of the District.

**7.13** The policy assists the plan strategy and the objective of achieving sustainable development through the protection and enhancement of the key environmental assets of the District. Standards for the protection and provision of recreational open space and trees and landscape are dealt with under separate policies within this document.

**7.14** For larger development sites allocated through the Local Plan specific green infrastructure requirements will be set out in relevant site allocation policies.

### **Preferred Policy Direction - ENV 01 Green Infrastructure**

The network of Green Infrastructure in the District should be safeguarded, retained and enhanced. Any new development should recognise the intrinsic value of the green infrastructure network and ensure that the functionality of the network is not undermined as a result of development.

Through the promotion of positive action, and the development management process, the enhancement of the green infrastructure network in the District will be sought. There is an expectation that new development proposals will incorporate green infrastructure and where possible enhance existing connectivity.

Through its layout and design, new development should respond to the location of existing green infrastructure and should support appropriate uses and functions. Where it is considered that the development will have a detrimental effect on the quantity or function of existing green infrastructure then the development will not be permitted unless replacement provision is made that is of equal or greater value than that which will be lost through development.

Development that fails to exploit opportunities to incorporate green infrastructure will not be considered appropriate.

#### **7.15 Alternative options**

**7.16** The alternative to the above green infrastructure policy is to not have a green infrastructure specific policy in the Plan. The Council considers that this alternative option would not provide the natural environment with sufficient weight in the decision making process.

### **Question 14**

Do you agree with the preferred policy - ENV 01? Please explain your answer.

## Sites of European, National & Local Nature Conservation Importance

**7.17** The planning system has an important part to play in meeting the UK's national and international commitments for habitats and species. Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) places a duty on all public authorities in England and Wales to have regard, in the exercise of their functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. A key purpose of this duty is to embed consideration of biodiversity as an integral part of policy making.

**7.18** Breckland has a wide range of sites which are protected for their biodiversity or geological interest. The ecological network in the District is inherently connected to the wider Norfolk area. The ecological network of the District should be viewed as a component part of a much wider network which stretches beyond the District's boundaries.

**7.19** There are a range of protected sites in the District though arguably the most famous is the Brecks, an extensive area of largely conifer plantation and arable farmland but with extensive areas of heathland within the forest and arable landscape. The Brecks also includes fen, grazing marsh and naturally fluctuating water bodies (meres and pingos). A significant proportion of the Brecks, including arable farmland, is designated as European protected sites, forming the largest terrestrial protected area in Norfolk. These are designated for their suitability to support internationally important bird species, particularly Stone Curlews, Woodlark and Nightjar.

**7.20** The District also contains a number of river valleys, including the Wensum, Waveney, Yare/Blackwater, Nar, Whitewater, Tud, Wissey, Little Ouse and Thet. These have extensive areas of wetland habitats, comprised mainly of grazing marsh with areas of fen and reedbed; many of the rivers are recognised as chalk streams. Some of these habitats are European protected sites.

**7.21** Other key ecological features of the District include extensive areas of woodland and shelterbelts, often associated with large estates, and arable landscape features, comprising Scots pine shelterbelts, hedgerows, mature trees, copses, ponds and field margins. Some of these areas are designated as County Wildlife Sites, of which Breckland has more than any other District in Norfolk. Designated or not, these areas are key components of the ecological network at a local scale and collectively, when viewed as part of the green infrastructure network, amount to a significant biodiversity resource.

**7.22** The protected sites in Breckland are shown on the policies map, the various designations are:

- Special Protection Areas;
- Special Areas of Conservation;
- Ramsar sites;
- Local Nature Reserves;
- Ancient Woodlands;
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- Sites of Biological Importance;
- Biodiversity Alert Sites;
- Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites;
- Local Geological Sites;
- Natural watercourses, lakes, reservoirs, rivers, canals or groundwater areas; and
- Local Wildlife Sites (County Wildlife Sites and County Geodiversity Sites).

**7.23** As stated above, from the Brecks to the Norfolk Valley Fens, the range of sites with conservation and environmental interest is broad. The sites designated under the protections listed above are the key biodiversity sites and geological features in the District. The different sites benefit from varying degrees of protection based on the rarity of the habitat and the diversity of species that they support.

**7.24** The range and quality of these sites is crucial not only for the wildlife they support but also as an educational resource, a cultural boon and supporting the overall quality of life in Breckland. As such, these areas are key components of the aspiration of achieving successful and sustainable development in Breckland.

**Responses to the Issues and Options Consultation told us that:**

Many responses supported the inclusion of policies to protect key environmental sites. The Wildlife Trusts highlighted how important it is that Wildlife Sites receive protection through the planning system. Natural England commented mainly on the protection of the European sites, and recommended that the Council explore a more flexible approach to mitigation. They also welcomed the inclusion of policies that would recognise the value of non-designated assets, and wider green infrastructure.

**7.25** On the basis of the above evidence and the responses to the Issues and Options consultation exercise the following policy has been developed.

**Preferred Policy Direction - ENV 02 Sites of European, National & Local Nature Conservation Importance**

The highest level of protection will be given to European Sites, with new development only permitted where:

- a. There will be no adverse effect on the integrity of any European site, or
- b. If adverse effects are identified, it can be demonstrated that the proposed mitigation measures show that there will be no adverse effect on the integrity of any European site; or
- c. If it cannot be ascertained that no adverse effect on integrity will result, the proposed development will only be able to proceed where there is no alternative solution and there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest.

Policy ENV03 outlines specific requirements with regard to The Brecks SPA.

Development likely to have an adverse effect (either directly or indirectly) on a site of national, regional or local biodiversity, or geological interest, as identified on the Policies Map, will not be permitted unless:

- (a) It can be clearly demonstrated that there are reasons for the proposal that outweigh the need to safeguard the special ecological / geological interest of the site, or
- (b) It has been demonstrated, where development would result in significant harm, that it cannot be reasonably located on an alternative site that would result in less or no harm, or
- (c) Harm can be prevented, adequately mitigated or compensated for.

Where the Council considers that a designated site, protected species or any species or habitat of principal importance for conservation may be affected by a development proposal, a suitable environmental assessment will be required to be submitted with the planning application, for applications concerning European sites this will be a Habitats Regulation Assessment.

Where development is permitted, the authority will consider the need for conditions or planning obligations to ensure the protection and enhancement of the site's nature conservation and / or geological interest.

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Where development is likely to have an impact upon a species that is not protected by other legislation, and in particular where that species is identified in the Norfolk and UK Biodiversity Action Plan, there will be an expectation that the development proposal will be accompanied by an impact study commensurate with the scale of the impact and the importance of the species. Wherever a proposed development may have a detrimental impact upon a designated site or protected species, conditions and/or planning obligations will be used to ensure that appropriate mitigation measures are utilised, where appropriate.

### Alternative options

**7.26** The Council is required to afford protection to sites with high value for biodiversity. Alternative options could include affording different levels of protection to different types of site, such as relaxing the approach taken to local sites. The Council has opted not to follow this approach, as protecting environmental assets is one of the key objectives of the Local Plan.

### Question 15

Do you agree with the preferred policy - ENV 02? Please explain your answer.

## The Brecks Protected Habitats and Species

**7.27** Covering 39,141 ha of heathland, forest and arable farmland, the Brecks is of International and European value to birdlife. The Brecks habitat is important for a range of characteristic ground-nesting birds such as stone curlew, woodlark and nightjar. The site was designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the European Council's Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds. The East of England supports 65% of the UK's breeding pairs of stone curlew where most breeding is located within the Brecks. The rich biodiversity of the Brecks is also recognised by many other statutory conservation designations which include four Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), numerous SSSI and National Nature Reserves (NNR), where the latter (NNRs and SSSIs) make up 40% of the total area.

**7.28** Evidence to support the adoption of the Core Strategy in 2009 resulted in research which examined the effects of housing and roads on the distribution of stone curlew in the Brecks. The research was required to inform the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Core Strategy, which, subject to the imposition of suitable policy mitigation, enabled the Core Strategy to be progressed through to adoption.

**7.29** The adopted mitigation policy required that any new development which may impact on the SPA must be subject to Appropriate Assessment. New development was not permitted within 1,500m of the edge of the SPA unless it could be demonstrated by an Appropriate Assessment that the development would not adversely affect the integrity of the SPA. There was also provision for the re-use of existing buildings and development where it was completely masked from the SPA by existing development.

**7.30** Beyond the SPA boundary, stone curlews occur outside the SPA and those birds are clearly part of the SPA population and functionally linked. These areas are identified as areas where there are concentrations of stone curlew, 5 or more nests recorded, over the period 1995 - 2006 and indicated on the current policy maps as a secondary buffer. Within these areas development could be brought forward, providing alternative land outside the SPA can be secured to mitigate the potential effects.

**7.31** In 2013 a "Further Assessments of the Relationship between Buildings and Stone Curlew Distribution" study was carried out to update previous work on the effect of buildings and roads on stone curlews in the Brecks. The report focuses on the effects of buildings on the distribution of breeding stone curlew in the Brecks, and includes new analysis and uses additional survey data compared to previous studies.

**7.32** The report provides strong support for the continuation of a 1500m zone around the areas capable of supporting stone curlews. Within this zone it would seem that additional development would have a likely significant effect on the SPA. The 2013 research also suggests that the planting of woodland/screening as a mitigation measure is unlikely to be effective and that the effect of nest density is strongest as a result of the amount of buildings rather than type. One of the key aims of the research was to differentiate the effects of nest density due to different building classes. Due to the sample size and number of buildings identified there needs to be an element of caution applied to the results, however, the research indicates that there was no evidence of a negative impact of agricultural or commercial buildings. As such, the analysis suggests an element of flexibility could be applied for non-residential development in the SPA buffer zones.

### Responses to the Issues and Options Consultation told us that:

Some representations raised concern with the approach taken towards the protection of Stone Curlews, suggesting that it had hampered development. Whereas other responses were supportive of the precautionary approach and requested that the policy remains.

Responses were received from both Natural England and the RSPB, both of which accepted that a more flexible approach to agricultural and commercial buildings within the 1,500m buffer zone may be appropriate, but cautioned that this must be closely monitored.

**7.33** A draft protocol entitled 'Agricultural Buildings and the Breckland Special Protection Area stone curlew constraint zone' has been produced by Natural England (final draft January 2013) with input from stakeholders. Natural England have suggested that Breckland Council may wish to update and formally adopt this protocol to take account of the most recent Footprint Ecology report and expand it to include commercial buildings. For non-residential developments which meet certain criteria, this should result in a simplified Habitats Regulations Assessment. This has been reflected in the policy outlined below.

### **Preferred Policy Direction - ENV 03 The Brecks Protected Habitats & Species**

The Council requires that an Appropriate Assessment is undertaken on all proposals for development that are likely to have a significant effect on the Breckland Special Protection Area (SPA). Development will only be permitted where it will not adversely affect the integrity of the SPA.

A conclusion of no likely significant effect can be met where:

- The proposed building is located further than 1500m away from the SPA boundary or identified areas that have a functional link, a proposed building is within 1500m of the SPA boundary but more than 1500m away from potential stone curlew nesting sites inside the SPA (these are those parts of the SPA that are also designated as Breckland Farmland SSSI);
- The proposed new building would be completely masked from the SPA by existing built development and / or other suitable screening landscape features;
- A proposed re-development of an existing building that would not alter its footprint;
- New agricultural buildings of less than 120m<sup>2</sup>;
- Extensions to existing agricultural buildings of less than 120m<sup>2</sup> or 100% of the original, whichever is less.

A 1,500m buffer zone from the edge of those parts of the SPA that support, or are capable of supporting, Stone Curlews is currently defined on the policies map. Within this constraint zone:

(a) Permission may be granted for the re-use of existing buildings and for development which will be completely masked from the SPA by existing built development and / or other suitable screening landscape features.

(b) Permission may be granted for agricultural buildings where:

- there is a demonstrable need for the facility (necessary to manage the agricultural land/maintain the economic viability of an agricultural enterprise);
- justification is provided as to why it cannot be located elsewhere (outside the buffer zone); and
- justification that the selected location is the least detrimental.

Applicants must provide evidence to show how their proposal meets the criteria listed in Natural England's "Agricultural Buildings and the Breckland SPA Stone Curlew constraint zone" advice note, or successor document.

Beyond the SPA boundary, on other land suitable for Stone Curlews or where they are present, an additional 1,500m development restriction buffer will also operate as is shown on the Policies Map. Within these areas the same approach will apply.

The Council will consider the need for an appropriate assessment to determine the implications of development on other interest features of the SPA (i.e. Nightjar and Woodlark) on a case by case basis.

## Alternative options

**7.34** Under the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) the Council must ensure that it includes a policy on the protection of the Brecks SPA. There are no reasonable alternative options which meet the requirements of the HRA. The approach set out within the policy is a continuation of that which is set out within the Core Strategy and Development Control Policies DPD, The Site Specifics Policies and Proposals DPD and the Thetford Area Action Plan DPD.

### Question 16

Do you agree with the preferred policy - ENV 03? Please explain your answer.

## Open Space, Sport and Recreation

**7.35** The NPPF at paragraph 73 states “Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. The assessments should identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreational facilities in the local area. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sports and recreational provision is required”.

**7.36** In order for planning policies to be 'sound' local authorities are required to carry out a robust assessment of need for open space, sport and recreation facilities. An audit of all open space provision within Breckland District, excluding Thetford Forest<sup>(2)</sup>, was undertaken in 2015. The Open Space Assessment evaluated the quantity, quality and accessibility of open space and recreational land provision in the District.

**7.37** The assessment sought to evaluate the quantity, quality and accessibility of open space and recreational land provision in Breckland District (excluding Thetford Forest) and to recommend standards and effective mechanisms in order for appropriate provision to be secured to meet future needs. The assessment shows that Breckland District has a deficit both quantitatively and qualitatively in outdoor playing space provision.

**7.38** The study shows that when assessing overall playing space in the district at a Fields in Trust (FIT) standard of 2.56 ha per 1000 population, 70% of the parishes in the District do not meet the FIT standard. The five market towns of Attleborough, Thetford, Dereham, Swaffham and Watton have the largest deficiencies in total playing space provision for their populations compared to the FIT standard, with Thetford having the largest deficiency of any parish in the District.

**7.39** Furthermore, 70% of the parishes in the District do not meet the FIT standard for children’s play area provision. The 5 market towns of Attleborough, Thetford, Dereham, Swaffham and Watton have the highest proportion of children in addition to the highest deficiency of provision in children’s play compared with the FIT standard. Thetford has the highest percentage of children compared to the other four market towns, but also has the highest deficiency of children’s play areas against the FIT standard.

**7.40** Only 30% of the parishes in Breckland meet the FIT outdoor sports standard. The five market towns have an average, or above quality score, despite having a deficiency in the amount of space. Whereas the majority of the rural parishes have an average, or below average sports quality score, despite having lower FIT standards. A similar pattern was found following the 2010 assessment. In this scenario it may be that the focus of future policy is to improve the quality, rather than quantity of rural sports pitches.

**7.41** The Accessible Natural Green Space Standard (ANGST) requires that sites of at least 2ha in size, of accessible green space, are available per 1000 people based on no one living more than 300m from the nearest area of natural green space. It also recommends that no one should live 2km from at least one accessible site of at least 20ha; 5 km from at least one accessible site of at least 200ha; and 10km from at least one accessible site of 500ha.

**7.42** In conclusion the Breckland Open Space, Sport and Recreation study recommended that:

- The local standards of 2.56 ha of open space (0.8 ha for children's play and 1.76 ha for outdoor sport) per 1000 population should be used as a local standard for open space provision;
- There should be a greater focus on provision of new facilities to address quantitative deficits, which will be delivered through new housing development;

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2 Thetford forest was excluded from the audit because not all of Thetford forest is publicly accessible. Large areas remain a working forest managed by the Forestry Commission and an important supplier of timber. Thetford forest also extends in to Suffolk. It was considered that the inclusion of such a large area would compromise the open space figure for Breckland and show a disproportionate surplus and/or deficiency.

- The Local Plan should allocate additional areas of open space;
- All new children's play and outdoor sports areas should be designed in accordance with FIT and Sport England standards to ensure the highest quality of open space area is provided;
- In terms of outdoor sports, all dwellings in major housing areas must be within 1.2km of outdoor sports areas as recommended by FIT. Outdoor sport areas should be located near to public transport routes, have good provision for car parking and have easy access for pedestrians and cycles. In terms of children's play areas, all dwellings in housing areas should be within 100m of a local area of play (LAP), 400m of a local equipped area for play (LEAP) and 1000m of a neighbourhood equipped area for play (NEAP) as recommended by FIT

#### **Responses to the Issues and Options Consultation told us that:**

There was a strong parish council response rate to this policy area in the Issues and Options consultation. Whilst a number of parishes indicated that there was an acceptable level of open space within their parish, other parish councils highlighted that more needs to be done on preserving and providing new open spaces within their area. The responses also raised the importance of small amenity areas in residential areas, which should be given adequate protection through the Local Plan. Some representations identified shortages of open space within specific towns and suggested that developers should be responsible for addressing this shortage.

**7.43** Any planning obligation needs to be in accordance with regulation 122 of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations (2010). This means that developers can only be expected to provide infrastructure necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms and contributions must directly relate to that development. Developers cannot be expected to meet shortfalls not associated with their developments.

**7.44** The comments made to the Issues and Options consultation were considered as part of the production of the Open Space Assessment Study. On the basis of the evidence and the responses to the Issues and Options consultation exercise the following policy has been developed.

#### **Preferred Policy Direction - ENV 04 Open Space, Sport & Recreation**

##### Existing Provision

Development that would result in the loss of existing sport, recreational or amenity open space will only be permitted if:

(a) it can be demonstrated (through a local assessment) that there is an excess of recreational or amenity open space in the settlement and the proposed loss will not result in a current or likely shortfall during the plan period; and

(b) recreational facilities within the open space will be enhanced by the proposed development on an appropriate portion of the open space; or

(c) the community would gain greater benefit from the developer providing a suitable alternative recreational or amenity open space in an equally accessible and convenient location.

The development of existing open space with an ecological value (a known biodiversity or nature conservation interest) will not be permitted.

### New Provision

All new residential development is expected to provide a contribution towards outdoor playing space equivalent to 2.56 hectares per 1,000 population\*, which equates to 25.6m<sup>2</sup> of outdoor playing space per person. As set out in the Open Space Assessment (2015), this 25.6m<sup>2</sup> is broken down to 17.6m<sup>2</sup> of outdoor sport area and 8m<sup>2</sup> of children's play space.

As a general principle, there will be a presumption that open space, sport and recreation facilities will be provided on the development site.

Where on-site provision is provided, the space should be of the appropriate type to serve the needs of the development, and well related to the proposed residential properties in accordance with relevant standards.

Within a residential development of 25 or more dwellings priority should be given to the provision of children's play areas since the facility is most likely to be required within an easy reach of dwellings and will be required to conform to the 0.8ha per 1000 people standard in provision of children's play area in accordance with the NPFA standard.

- On sites of 25 dwellings and above - Minimum of 1 Local Area for Play (LAP)
- On sites of 50 dwellings and above - Minimum of 2 LAPs
- On sites of 80 dwellings and above - Minimum of 1 Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP)
- On sites of 200 dwellings and above - Minimum of 2 LEAPs and Outdoor Sport Area
- On sites of 400 dwellings and above - Minimum of 1 Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP) and Outdoor Sport Area

It is recognised that there may be scenarios where the direct provision of open space on-site is not the preferred option. It may be that open space does not represent an efficient use of land in the context of the site location or that there is a deliverable opportunity to secure a more meaningful area of open space that better serves the whole community in close proximity to the application site. Contributions in lieu of on-site provision will be the exception and will need to be supported by robust evidence from the applicant that on-site provision is not preferable. Any contribution will need to be towards a specific deliverable scheme in consultation with the relevant parish council and the developer contributions policy in this document. The contribution will be required to name a specific scheme.

In addition to the on-site and off-site contributions, a contribution will be required for 10 years maintenance of the facility. The contribution will be proportional to the type of facility provided and will be calculated in accordance with the criteria set out in the Breckland Open Space Assessment (2015) which will be reviewed periodically.

**7.45** \* The population resulting from a particular development is calculated using the occupancy rates set out below. Using these occupancy rates it is possible to calculate the level of outdoor playing space needs for any given development.

**Table 7.1 Occupancy rates**

1 bedroom	1.5 persons
2 bedrooms	2.0 persons
3 bedrooms	2.5 persons
4 bedrooms	3.0 persons

5 bedrooms or more	3.5 persons
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**7.46** Contributions in line with the 2.4ha standard will be required for all additional new residential units. This includes most specialised types of housing including agricultural dwellings, affordable housing and staff accommodation.

**7.47** Replacement dwellings will not be required to make a provision unless additional units are being created. If additional units are being created then the net gain of units will be subject to providing a contribution.

**7.48** Extensions to dwellings will not be subject to making a provision unless where new units of accommodation are being created. This is applied whether or not the unit is tied by condition to the main house, for example staff accommodation. Provision will not be sought where the unit is for a dependant relative, and a specific planning condition or obligation is attached, limiting the occupation's use to that purpose.

**7.49** Permissions for temporary mobile homes will not be expected to provide open space.

**7.50** It is accepted that certain development will not create demand for all elements of open space requirements. For example the occupants of a sheltered housing scheme, nursing homes, hostel accommodation, where the occupancy is controlled, would not be expected to use all children's play areas. In these cases it would not be appropriate for the Council to apply that element of the standard. However, it is worth noting that although children's play areas may not be appropriate, there is an element of amenity area or communal space that could benefit residents of the new proposal. Such cases will be considered individually on their own merits.

**Table 7.2 Summary of exceptions to open space contributions**

Developments where the Council will seek to apply the play and outdoor sports space standard.	Development that is likely to be considered exceptions to the play and outdoor playing space standards
All new dwellings	Replacement dwellings (on a one for one basis) i.e. no new additional units
Dwelling gains resulting from new development	Extensions and annexes within the curtilage of a main property for dependent relatives
Conversion or part conversions creating additional independent residential units with separate facilities	Sheltered housing schemes, nursing homes, controlled hostel accommodation
Bedsit accommodation with shared facilities	Temporary permission for mobile homes
Permanent permission for mobile homes	

### Alternative options

**7.51** The preference for on-site provision could be altered to prefer off-site contributions but with the strict pooling restrictions introduced by the CIL Regulations this has the potential to deliver insufficient amounts of open space to support new development in the District.

**7.52** Alternative levels of open space could be required, higher or lower than those set out in the policy. However, the figures suggested in the preferred policy option are based on sound evidence from the Open Space Assessment.

**7.53** The Council could also incorporate a policy requiring development to meet the ANGST standards.

**Question 17**

Do you agree with the preferred policy - ENV 04? Please explain your answer.

## Local Green Space

**7.54** In March 2012, the NPPF introduced a new designation of “Local Green Space”. The Local Green Space designation is a way to provide special protection against development for green areas of particular importance to local communities.

**7.55** Paragraph 76 of the NPPF says that ‘By designating land as Local Green Space local communities will be able to rule out new development other than in very special circumstances. Identifying land as Local Green Space should therefore be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. Local Green Spaces should only be designated when a plan is prepared or reviewed, and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period.’

**7.56** National policy also states that designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space. The designation should only be used:

- where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- where the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and
- where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

**7.57** The 2015 Open Space Assessment reviewed sites submitted to the Council by Parish Councils at the time of the study and the recommendations have been carried forward into the Local Plan

### Responses to the Issues and Options Consultation told us that:

The Issues and Options consultation asked whether there were any further sites that the Council should consider for designation as Local Green Space in the Local Plan. Suggestions were made by a number of parish councils.

**7.58** A further 12 sites were put forward for review through the Issues and Options Consultation. All of the suggested sites were assessed in detail against the criteria set out in the Open Space study and in line with the requirements of the NPPF and the national Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) as detailed below.

**Table 7.3 Assessment Criteria**

Criteria	Explanation of criteria / evidence prompts
1. It will rarely be appropriate to designate spaces that are the subject of a planning permission for development.	Local Green Space designation will rarely be appropriate where the land has planning permission for development. Exceptions could be where the development would be compatible with the planning permission or where planning permission is no longer capable of being implemented. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the space the subject of a planning permission for development?</li> </ul>
2. It will not be appropriate to designate spaces that are allocated or proposed for development in the Local or Neighbourhood Plan, unless it can be shown that the Local Green Space could be incorporated within	The national PPG states that: Designating any Local Green Space will need to be consistent with local planning for sustainable development in the area. In particular, plans must identify sufficient land in suitable locations to meet identified development needs and the Local Green Space designation should not be used in a way that undermines this aim of plan making.

Criteria	Explanation of criteria / evidence prompts
the site as part of the allocated development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The space should be capable of enduring beyond the plan period.</li> <li>• Is the space allocated or proposed to be allocated in a Local or Neighbourhood Plan?</li> <li>• The designation of Local Green Spaces should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services.</li> </ul>
3. The space must not be an extensive tract of land and must be local in character	<p>Blanket designation of open countryside adjacent to settlements is not appropriate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the space or combination of adjoining spaces “feel” local in character and scale, in respect of the local community that the space serves?</li> <li>• Is the proposed space larger than other areas of land in the vicinity? Is it contained with clearly defined edges?</li> <li>• How does the space connect physically, visually and socially to the local area?</li> </ul>
4. The space must be within close proximity to the community it serves	<p>The space would normally be within easy walking distance of the community it serves.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How close is the space to the community it serves?</li> </ul>
5. The space must be demonstrably special to the local community	<p>Blanket designation of all/most green areas or open space within an area is not appropriate. The space must be demonstrably special by consideration of the following;</p> <p>The proposed space is of particular local significance and should meet one of the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beauty</li> <li>• historic significance</li> <li>• recreational value</li> <li>• tranquillity</li> <li>• richness of wildlife</li> </ul> <p>Is the proposal to designate supported by any of the following (Local community groups, the Town/Parish Council parish plan, the Ward member(s), MPs).</p>

**Table 7.4 Assessment Summary**

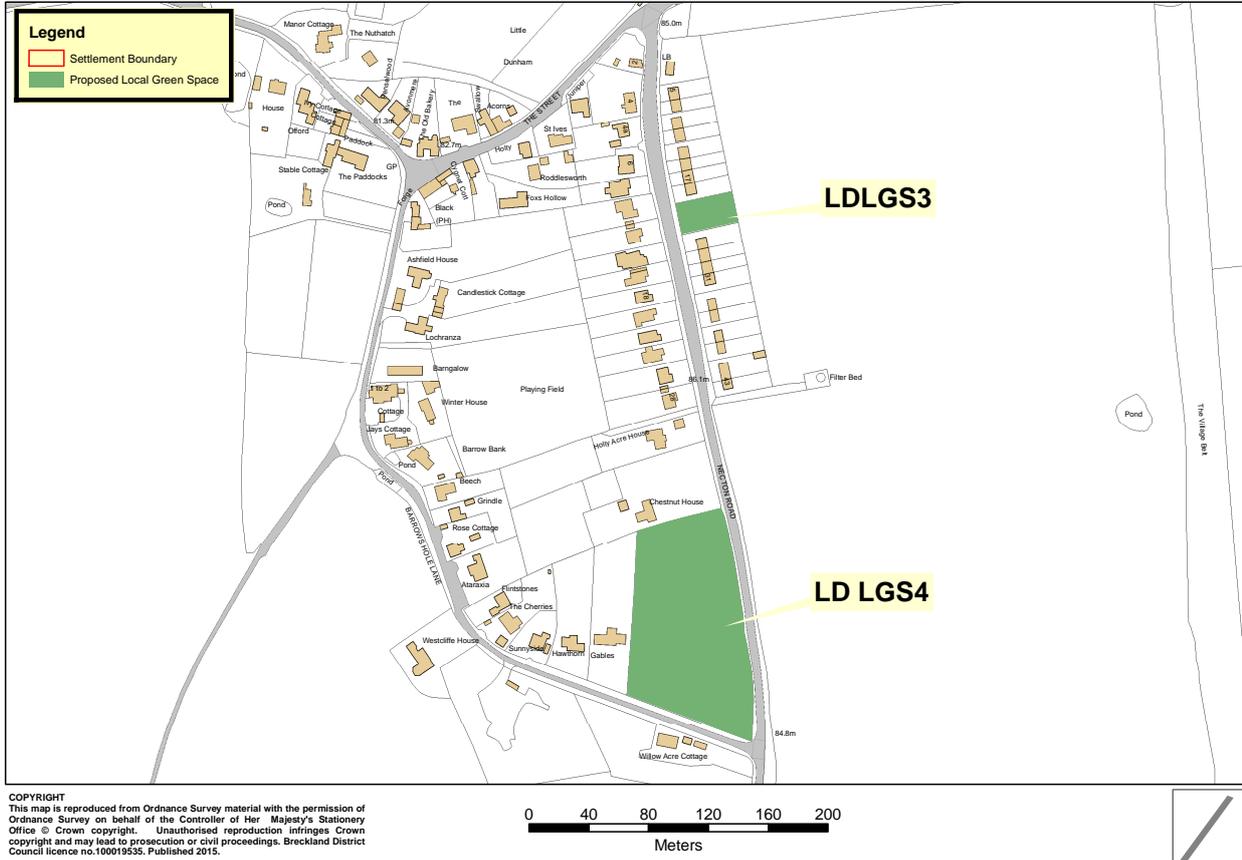
<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Location/ open space study ref</b>	<b>Assessment Summary</b>	<b>Designation</b>
Weeting	Land off Lynn Road	The site has no current application and no designation, however it is outside the settlement boundary and is currently used as an agricultural field. It is not demonstrated that the site meets the criteria as detailed above and the NPPF	No
Dereham	Land at Yaxham Road and Dumpling Green	The site is an emerging option for a residential allocation in the Local Plan and subject to a planning application	No
Dereham	Land off Dumpling Green east	The site already benefits from a County Wildlife Site and therefore designation as a Local Green Space would have no demonstrable benefit	No
Dereham	Land off Dumpling Green	The site already benefits from being a County Wildlife Site and therefore designation as a Local Green Space would have no demonstrable benefit	No
Dereham	Land off Dumpling Green	The site is distant from the community and does not meet criteria 4 and 5	No
Dereham	Land east of Horseshoe Farm	The site already benefits from being a County Wildlife Site and therefore designation as a Local Green Space would have no demonstrable benefit	No
Dereham	Land at Watering Farm Barns	The site already benefits from being a County Wildlife Site and therefore designation as a Local Green Space would have no demonstrable benefit	No
Harling	Land south of Little Rowley	The site is outside the settlement boundary and is currently used as an agricultural field. It is not demonstrated that the site meets the criteria as detailed above and the NPPF	No
Great Ellingham	Town Green, Long Street	Although the Town Green is demonstrably special to the area, the site is already designated Open Space and it is therefore considered designation as a Local Green Space would have no demonstrable benefit.	No
Attleborough	Land west of Crowshall Lane	The site is outside the settlement boundary and access is restricted by the A11. It is not demonstrated that the site meets the criteria as detailed above and the NPPF	No
Watton	Land west of Saham Road	The site is an emerging option for a residential allocation in the Local Plan and has been subject to a planning application	No

Settlement	Location/ open space study ref	Assessment Summary	Designation
Watton	Land surrounding Trenchard Crescent	The site is an emerging option for a residential allocation in the Local Plan	No
Banham	Land off Kenninghall road	The site is an emerging option for a residential allocation in the Local Plan and has been subject to a planning application	No
Banham	Land off Gaymer Close and Wayland Way	The site already benefits from amenity space designation	No
Little Dunham	Land to the east of Necton Road	The site meets the criteria and it is proposed to designate as Local Green Space	Yes
Little Dunham	Land between Necton Road and Barrows Hole Lane	The site meets the criteria and it is proposed to designate as Local Green Space	Yes
Scoulton	Land off Mere Road and Norwich Road	The site already benefits from amenity space designation	No
Shropham	Land off Hargham Road and Rocklands Road	The site already benefits from open space designation as outdoor sports and children's play area	No
Swanton Morley	Three sites: Land off Hoe Road East & Middleton Avenue; Land at Thompson Close; and land off Middleton Avenue	Collectively the sites already benefit from amenity space designation	No
Thetford	Land off Mundford Road and Howlett Way	The site is designated as Gallows Hill Scheduled Monument.	No
Thetford	Between Newtown Road and Dane Close	The site is in close proximity to the community it serves and is surrounded by residential development. It provides green space to the nearby residents. Access is restricted to that of a narrow footpath between residential dwellings	Yes

**7.59** The proposed Local Green Space Designations are illustrated below:

- LDLGS3 Little Dunham
- LDLGS4 Little Dunham
- TLGS9 Thetford

### Little Dunham Proposed Local Green Space Autumn 2015



**Thetford: Proposed Local Green Space  
Autumn 2015**



**Question 18**

Do you agree with the proposed designations Please explain your answer.

## Landscape Character

**7.60** Breckland includes extensive parts of the nationally and regionally significant Brecks heaths and woodland in the south and west of the district. The importance of these areas has been recognised in the Brecks Landscape Character Assessment (LCA, 2013). The LCA identified eight distinct, and sensitive, valued character areas within the Brecks, with the core landscape types being the Brecks Arable Heathland Mosaic, the Brecks Plantation and the River Valleys.

**7.61** The Brecks Landscape Character Assessment (2013) covers only the Brecks area of the District (south and west). A District wide LCA was produced in 2007, which states that the rest of the District is generally characterised by river valleys with their associated tributary farmland rising up to the clay plateau farmland which stretches from the Lophams in the south-east to Colkirk in the north-west.

**7.62** The different sub types of landscape identified by the LCAs have a varying capacity to accommodate new development, depending on their nature and location. Development will not be permitted where it would be significantly detrimental to the landscape's characteristics or defining features.

**7.63** In determining proposals for new development, regard shall be had to the Council's Landscape Character Assessment, ensuring that all proposals respect the key visual sensitivities of the landscape that are a fundamental part of its character. The integration of new development into the existing landscape will be expected to be achieved in all development proposals without causing harm to the features that define them. The Council will give high protection to the River Valleys and Chalk Rivers from development that would harm their defining landscape characteristics, including mineral extraction and other incompatible restoration schemes.

**7.64** The entire landscape is considered through both the Landscape Character Assessment and the Settlement Fringe study, both of which form part of the evidence base for the Local Plan.

**7.65** Breckland's Landscape Character Assessment has previously identified river valleys as areas which should have high protection from development due to their important environmental quality. It is considered that this approach should continue within the Local Plan.

### **Responses to the Issues and Options Consultation told us that:**

The Issues and Options consultation document did not contain a specific landscape character policy. Landscape character was referenced in several of the area specific proposals and there was widespread support for the use of the Landscape Character Assessment documents to direct and inform new development proposals.

**7.66** On the basis of the above evidence and the responses to the Issues and Options consultation exercise the following policy has been developed.

## Preferred Policy Direction - ENV 05 Protection and Enhancement of the Landscape

The landscape of the District will be protected for the sake of its own intrinsic beauty and its benefit to the rural character and in the interests of biodiversity, geodiversity and historic conservation. Development should have particular regard to maintaining the aesthetic and biodiversity qualities of natural and man-made features within the landscape, including a consideration of individual or groups of natural features such as trees, hedges and woodland or rivers, streams or other topographical features.

The release of land in Breckland will have regard to the findings of the Council's Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) and Settlement Fringe Landscape Assessment to ensure land is released, where appropriate, in areas where the impact on the landscape is at a minimum. Development should also be designed to be sympathetic to landscape character, and informed by the LCA.

High protection will be given to the Brecks landscape, reflecting its role as a regionally significant green infrastructure asset. Proposals within the Brecks Landscape Character Areas will not be permitted where these would result in harm to key visual features of the landscape type, other valued components of the landscape, or where proposals would result in a change in the landscape character.

High protection will also be given to the river valleys and chalk rivers in Breckland as identified in the Landscape Character Assessment, recognising their defining natural features, rich biodiversity and the undeveloped character of their shallow valleys.

The Council expects all development within the District to be of the highest design quality in terms of both architecture and landscape. It should have regard to good practice in urban design and fully consider the context within which it sits. It should embrace opportunities to enhance the character and appearance of an area and contribute to creating a sense of local distinctiveness.

### Alternative options

**7.67** An alternative option could be to rely on the NPPF for landscape protection. The Council consider that this approach would not provide sufficient local detail.

### Question 19

Do you agree with the preferred policy - ENV 05? Please explain your answer.

## Trees and Hedgerows

**7.68** Trees, hedgerows and other natural features are an essential part of Breckland's landscape character. Trees and hedgerows enhance the aesthetics of the area, the quality of the environment and provide a habitat for a range of wildlife. They can help to reduce noise and can have benefits in terms of atmospheric pollution and flood mitigation.

**7.69** Where new development is proposed the preference will always be to incorporate existing natural features into the development. There may be instances where the loss of important natural features is unavoidable for design reasons or to bring forward development to fulfil important objectives such as economic development or the provision of housing. Where the loss of such features is unavoidable adequate replacement provision of the same or greater value will be secured.

**7.70** Some trees in the district have protected status, mainly under the designation of Tree Preservation Order (TPO) or those located in a conservation area. A TPO is an order made by a local planning authority in England to protect specific trees, groups of trees or woodlands in the interests of amenity. A TPO prohibits cutting down, topping, and other types of damage to the tree.

### Responses to the Issues and Options Consultation told us that:

There were limited responses to the Issues and Options consultation regarding trees as no specific policies were presented or questions were asked.

**7.71** On the basis of the above evidence and the responses to the Issues and Options consultation exercise the following policy has been developed.

### Preferred Policy Direction - ENV 06 Trees, Hedgerows and Development

Trees and significant hedge and shrub masses should be retained as an integral part of the design of development except where their long-term survival would be compromised by their age or physical condition or there are exceptional and overriding benefits in accepting their loss.

Development requiring the loss of a protected tree or hedgerow (including preserved trees, protected hedgerows, trees in Conservation Areas, ancient trees, aged and veteran trees and trees classified as being of categories A or B in value), will only be permitted where:

- a) The removal of a tree or hedgerow will enhance the survival or growth of other protected trees or hedgerows; or
- b) It would allow for a substantially improved overall approach to the design and landscaping of the development that would outweigh the loss of any tree or hedgerow.

Where the loss of trees is accepted in these circumstances, developers will be required to provide at least equivalent replacement in terms of biomass. This should be provided on-site unless the developer can show exceptional circumstances which would justify replacement provision elsewhere.

## Development Affecting Trees and Hedgerows

Where a proposed development retains existing trees and hedgerows on-site, or where development occurs within a tree root protection area, provision must be made for their care and protection throughout the duration of the development with mitigation measures being put in place to ensure that development works do not have a harmful impact on existing trees. To ensure that tree cover and habitat is retained it is important that both the short term and the long term impacts that a development may have on trees is evaluated at the **earliest** opportunity.

### Alternative options

**7.72** The Council could opt not to include a specific policy on trees and hedgerows and rely solely on national policies.

### Question 20

Do you agree with the preferred policy - ENV 06? Please explain your answer.

## The Historic Environment & Heritage Assets

**7.73** Paragraph 126 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that: “local planning authorities should set out in their Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment”. The NPPF also states that local plans should include strategic policies to deliver the protection and enhancement of the historic environment (paragraph 156) and should identify land where development is inappropriate because of its environmental or historic significance (paragraph 157).

**7.74** The historic environment of Breckland is recognised as a unique and irreplaceable resource. Breckland district is fortunate to possess a rich and diverse architectural heritage, displaying the use of a wide range of materials, dictated prior to industrialism by the immediate geology and landscape of the surrounding area. Typically, one can observe the use of brick, flint, chalk, clay lump and timber framing for walling with thatch; clay tiles and, in later years following industrialism, slates for roofing.

**7.75** The District also contains numerous designated heritage assets: over 1,500 Listed Buildings and a wealth of other important non-designated buildings that contribute to both the urban and rural contexts and the historic environment as a whole. Breckland also has 50 Conservation Areas and 9 Historic Parks and Gardens included on the Historic England Register, designated to assist in the preservation and enhancement of particular features of historic or architectural interest.

**7.76** The character of these areas is defined by the combination of elements such as the mixture and style of buildings, the extent and form of open spaces, the quality and relationship of buildings, prevalent building materials and the amount of trees or other green features. These features contribute to the overall character of the area and need to be recognised and respected in proposals for new development.

### Responses to the Issues and Options Consultation told us that:

Norfolk County Council suggested that the Plan should make greater reference to non-designated assets and have regard to heritage assets that are as yet undefined, or not listed in the Norfolk Historic Environment Record, as the NPPF makes no distinction between known and unknown heritage assets, so these merit the same levels of protection.

Several comments suggested that the heritage section of the Plan needed strengthening.

**7.77** There are many types of heritage asset in the district, some of which are protected through national or local designations, others which have no formal designation or protection. The Council has developed two separate policies to deal with the different types of assets.

### Designated Heritage Assets

**7.78** There are a total of 50 Conservation Areas in the District, most based on historic village centres. It is important that the nature of conservation areas and historic buildings is maintained to ensure their protection for future generations and their continued contribution to the economic prosperity of the District. Social, environmental and cultural benefits are derived from this link to the past and it helps to reinforce a sense of place, quality of life, local identity and character

**7.79** Known individual heritage assets are identified in the Norfolk Historic Environment Record, whilst a number of existing documents analyse particular aspects of the heritage significance of the District.

**7.80** There are 1,536 Listed Buildings in the District, including 113 Grade I and 102 Grade II\*. Whilst the majority of the listed buildings in the District are in good or reasonable repair, a number of buildings are in severe disrepair. There are 25 Grade I or Grade II Listed Buildings at Risk as registered by English Heritage.

**7.81** There are also 9 registered parks and gardens (all Grade II), 130 scheduled monuments, plus three shared with adjoining Local Authorities.

**7.82** Breckland Council understands that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and the policy below aims to conserve these assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.

### **Preferred Policy Direction - ENV 07 Designated Heritage Assets**

Proposals that would affect the significance of a heritage asset will not be accepted for consideration unless they provide sufficient information for that impact to be assessed.

Any development that will affect a designated heritage asset will be subject to comprehensive assessment. New development will be expected to preserve and enhance the character, appearance and setting of Conservation Areas, Scheduled Monuments, Historic Parks and Gardens and other designated areas of historic interest. Where a proposed development will affect the character or setting of a Listed Building, particular regard will need to be given to the protection, preservation and enhancement of any features of historic or architectural interest; this includes internal features, floor plans and spaces or any object or structure within the curtilage of a listed building that predates 1st July 1948.

The conversion of buildings of particular architectural or historic interest for economic or residential purposes in locations that would otherwise be unacceptable will be considered where this would ensure the retention and ongoing preservation of the building. Proposals will be considered against relevant guidance including the NPPF, the national PPG and specialist publications such as 'Enabling Development and the Conservation of Significant Places' produced by Historic England.

Sites of archaeological interest and their settings will be protected, enhanced and preserved; development which has an unacceptable impact on a site of archaeological interest will not be permitted. Where it is considered appropriate in cases where development coincides with the location of a known or suspected archaeological interest, an archaeological field evaluation will be required. Where the benefits of a particular development are considered to outweigh the importance of retaining archaeological remains *in situ* satisfactory excavation and recording of remains will be required before development is begun.

The significance of designated heritage assets, including nationally protected listed buildings and their settings, ancient monuments, archaeological sites, conservation areas and their settings, will be conserved and enhanced and given the highest level of protection.

### **Alternative Options**

**7.83** The Council could seek to only protect non-statutory heritage assets, relying on national policy for designated assets, however, Historic England strongly advised the Council against following this approach. The Local Plan as a whole should be able to demonstrate that it sets out a positive strategy for the historic environment.

### **Question 21**

Do you agree with the preferred policy - ENV 07? Please explain your answer.

## Non-statutory Heritage Assets

**7.84** Alongside the designated heritage assets of the District, Breckland also has a range of non-designated historic assets, which contribute to the character of the countryside, such as traditional isolated dwellings, barns, stores, sheds, pens, yards. Many of the known undesignated heritage assets are listed in the Norfolk Historic Environment Record, and regard should be had to this if proposals may affect an un-listed asset. In addition to this there will be a number of currently unknown heritage assets of as yet undefined significance.

**7.85** These assets play an essential role in reinforcing a sense of local character and distinctiveness in the locality. Regard should be had to all heritage assets when designing development.

Other heritage assets including locally listed buildings, and locally important parks and gardens will also be conserved and enhanced. In conjunction with Policy ENV06, landscapes that form the setting to the built and historic environment will also be conserved and enhanced.

### Preferred Policy Direction - ENV 08 Non-Statutory Heritage Assets

Proposals that could affect previously unknown heritage assets will not be accepted for consideration unless, through agreement with the Council they undergo an appropriate assessment in line with the significance of the asset. The assessment must provide sufficient information for that impact to be assessed. New development will be expected to preserve and enhance the character, appearance and setting of historic assets.

The District Council will protect and improve the built environment and have special regard to the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment through positive action and partnership working. The historic environment makes a significant contribution to sustainable communities through sustaining economic vitality, providing social and cultural links to the past and ensuring a dynamic and varied built environment. New development must make a positive contribution to the historic environment's local distinctiveness.

The conversion of undesignated buildings of particular architectural or historic merit for economic or residential purposes in locations that would otherwise be unacceptable will be considered where this would ensure the retention of the building. Proposals will be considered against relevant guidance including specialist publications such as 'Enabling Development and the Conservation of Significant Places' produced by Historic England and also other policies within the Local Plan including COM05 Conversion of Buildings in the Countryside.

In the case of traditional dwellings which positively contribute to the character of Breckland, replacement will only be acceptable where the application is accompanied by a Design and Access Statement which includes a structural survey that demonstrates that the demolition is necessary and that there is no alternative and viable solution of renovation to provide an acceptable standard of accommodation.

### Alternative Option

The alternative approach is not to include a specific policy on non-designated heritage assets and instead rely on the policies relating to the historic environment within the NPPF.

### Question 22

Do you agree with the preferred policy - ENV 08? Please explain your answer.

## Flood Risk & Surface Water Drainage

**7.86** All new development should be located to minimise flood risks to new development and to protect existing development from increased flood risk resulting from that development. Flood risk across Breckland is not a widespread issue when compared to many areas of Norfolk; flooding usually occurs adjacent to rivers and other watercourses or in low-lying areas, but it can also occur elsewhere, such as groundwater flooding caused by springs, or where buildings or other structures affect the natural drainage of the land.

**7.87** There is a risk that with the significant development that will occur in the District and climate change; there is the potential to increase this flood risk. It is therefore important that the issue of surface water drainage and flood risk is taken into account for all development proposals. Norfolk County Council is the Lead Local Flood Authority in managing local flood risk and surface water flooding and the take up of sustainable drainage systems.

**7.88** The National Planning Policy Framework addresses climate change, flooding and coastal change through paragraphs 94, 99 – 104 inclusive and the Technical Guidance that accompanies the National Planning Policy Framework which specifically addresses flood risk in Pages 2 – 13 inclusive.

**7.89** The aim of the national policy is to steer development towards areas of low flood risk, Flood Zone 1. National policy requires that a Sequential and Exception Test be applied by reference to identified flood zones.

**7.90** As the lead local flood authority Norfolk County Council have set out guidance (April 2015). This guidance, or its successor, should be used by developers in support of all applications in regards to SuDs and flood risk. The guidance sets out what information the authority requires from developers to enable it to provide meaningful responses to local planning authorities.

**7.91** Specific information and guidance for major development sites is contained in sections 15 and 16 of this guidance where for outline planning applications it stipulates that for development on sites of 1 hectares or greater, regardless of flood zone, the potential to increase flood risk elsewhere, through the addition of hard surfaces and the effect of the new development on surface water runoff should be incorporated in a Flood Risk assessment. The guidance also defines Major development as that defined by Article 2(1) in Part 1 (Preliminary) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015

**7.92** Reference will also need to be made to the Norfolk Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment; the findings of Breckland Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and Water Cycle Study; and any Surface Water Management Plan in relation to the suitability of sites for development and appropriateness of specific forms of SuDs.

**7.93** As the lead flood authority Norfolk County Council has the intention to undertake a Surface Water Management Plan. Once this is completed it will form part of the available evidence on flood risk and surface water management. The Council has also commissioned an update to the 2007 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment which will bring together all sources of flooding data.

**7.94** The Water Cycle Study, Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and any subsequent Surface Water Management Plan will inform the level of detail required to accompany planning applications identified in any designated groundwater Protection Zones and/or Critical Drainage Catchments, or other areas where there is evidence that there is likely to be elevated risk of surface water flooding (e.g. as a result of specific topography with catchment areas feeding into identified flood-vulnerable areas).

**7.95** This policy requires surface water drainage issues to be addressed in planning applications, both to ensure that surface water drainage issues and associated flood risk are considered and to ensure that the impact of drainage measures on the form and visual appearance of developments is properly taken into account in the assessment of new development.

**7.96** The use of soft landscaping and permeable surface materials should be maximised. On-site rainwater storage (ponds, basins and swales), living roofs and walls (where appropriate) will be required unless the developer can provide justification to demonstrate that this would not be practicable or feasible within the constraints or configuration of the site, or would compromise wider regeneration objectives.

**Responses to the Issues and Options Consultation told us that:**

Many respondents are concerned with protecting flood plains against development and ensuring that development is directed to areas least at risk of flooding.

**7.97** On the basis of the above evidence and the responses to the Issues and Options consultation exercise the following policy has been developed.

**Preferred Policy Direction - ENV 09 Flood Risk & Surface Water Drainage**

All new development will be located to minimise flood risk, mitigating any such risk through design and implementing sustainable drainage (SuDS) principles.

All new development will incorporate appropriate surface water drainage mitigation measures to minimise its own risk of flooding and should not materially increase the flood risk to other areas. Particular care will be required in relation to habitats designated as being of international importance in the area and beyond which are water sensitive, as well as habitats designated of regional or local importance.

Developers will be required to show that the proposed development would:

- i) Not increase green field run off rates and not increase the vulnerability of the site, or the wider catchment, to flooding from surface water run-off from existing or predicted water flows;
- ii) Wherever practicable, have a positive impact on the risk of surface water flooding in the wider area; and
- iii) Address potential impact of infiltration upon groundwater Source Protection Zones and/or Critical Drainage Catchments.

This will be minimised through the installation of infiltration and attenuation measures to dispose of surface water in accordance with sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) principles and the refinements to, and evolution of, the technical evidence base and guidance (as may be updated and superseded over the life of this plan).

Proposals for vulnerable development in medium and higher flood risk areas must be accompanied by a site-specific flood risk assessment, clearly identifying whether the development will be safe for its lifetime, taking account of the vulnerability of its users, and whether there may be any potential increase or reduction in flood risk elsewhere.

In the case of major development on unallocated sites, wider sustainability benefits should not remove the need to consider flood risk or surface water management, or the need to mitigate accordingly. The development will provide wider sustainability benefits to the community that clearly outweigh the flood risk.

All applications should follow the guidance, and any updated version (currently April 2015) and provide the appropriate information required to assist in the determination of such application as issued by the Lead Local Flood Authority. This includes the requirement to include details of means of adoption and maintenance at pre-application stage.

## Alternative Option

**7.98** The alternative option is to rely on policies contained in the NPPF.

### **Question 23**

Do you agree with the preferred policy - ENV 09? Please explain your answer.

## Renewable Energy

**7.99** The National Planning Policy Framework supports the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate and encourages the use of renewable resources, including the development of renewable energy. This is central to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. In meeting the challenge and to help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy, the Council recognises the requirement to have a positive strategy to promote renewable energy generation whilst at the same time ensuring that the adverse impacts are addressed satisfactorily, including the cumulative landscape and visual impacts.

**7.100** National policy as a whole supports and encourages the development of renewable energy sources. As a result of EU Directive 2009/28/EC, the UK is committed to a legally binding target to achieve 15% of all energy generated from renewable resources, including electricity, heat and transport, by 2020. The 2006 Energy Review has an aspiration that 20% of electricity is to be from renewable resources by 2020. The overarching strategy to reduce carbon emissions to meet the requirements of the Directive and the Climate Change Act is contained in the UK Renewable Energy Strategy and the UK Low Carbon Transition Plan.

**7.101** There are many different types of renewable energy choices, from solar energy, wind and biomass through to energy efficient installations such as combined heat and power and ground source heating. All of these technologies and methods of construction have a role to play in meeting Government targets and are seen as positive outcomes for the District.

**7.102** The Council will support and encourage the generation of energy from renewable sources. These will be permitted unless there are unacceptable site specific or other impacts that could not be outweighed by wider environmental, social, economic and other benefits.

**7.103** In developing a policy it is important to note that this applies to all renewable energy proposals except wind energy development. Proposals for wind energy development will be considered against national policy in the Ministerial Statement of 18 June 2015 and the national Planning Practice Guidance. The Written Ministerial Statement states that Councils should only grant permission for wind turbines if the site is in an area identified as suitable for wind energy in a local or neighbourhood Plan. Given this very recent change in national policy the Council will need to swiftly give detailed consideration to the need for further specialist evidence based analysis to determine what areas of the District are suitable for wind energy development to enable that feed into a this or a separate policy for renewable wind energy development in the Local Plan or through neighbourhood plans.

**7.104** As a rural District, Breckland is particularly suited to solar farms. The Government's solar PV strategy was published in 2014. The aim is to create more financial certainty and investor confidence in order to realise the long term potential for solar PV in the UK at a large and small scale. There is no cap on capacity. It is the Government's ambition to see "*more ambitious deployment, perhaps approaching 20 GW early in the next decade*". The past four years has seen a growth in the delivery of such facilities and their associated energy production capacity, but as at June 2013, the capacity of PV was 2.4 GW, forecast to reach 10 GW by 2020.

**7.105** Whilst large scale facilities provide an opportunity for greater energy production (as well as potential enhancement to biodiversity), it is also of importance that they are carefully planned and screened to ensure any amenity and visual impacts are minimised.

**7.106** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) of 2012 says at paragraph 98 that applicants for energy development should not have to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy. Applications should be approved if their impacts are (or can be made) acceptable.

**7.107** In identifying the particular planning considerations that relate to large scale ground-mounted PV development, national Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) advises that the deployment of large-scale solar farms can have a negative impact on the rural environment, particularly in undulating landscapes. However, the visual impact of a well-planned and well-screened solar farm can be properly addressed within the landscape if planned sensitively.

### **Solar Farm Planning Considerations / Assessment Criteria**

**7.108** Particular factors a local planning authority will need to consider include:

- Encouraging the effective use of land by focussing large scale solar farms on previously developed and non agricultural land, provided that it is not of high environmental value;
- Where a proposal involves greenfield land, whether
  - the proposed use of any agricultural land has been shown to be necessary and poorer quality land has been used in preference to higher quality land; and
  - the proposal allows for continued agricultural use where applicable and/or encourages biodiversity improvements around arrays.

**7.109** The guidance makes specific reference to a speech by the Minister for Energy and Climate Change, the Rt Hon Gregory Barker MP, to the solar PV industry on 25 April 2013, in which the Minister encourages development on brownfield land, low grade agricultural land and on buildings; and to a Written Statement to Parliament in March 2015. The guidance notes:

- That solar farms are normally temporary structures and planning conditions can be used to ensure that the installations are removed when no longer in use and the land is restored to its previous use;
- The proposal's visual impact, the effect on landscape of glint and glare and on neighbouring uses and aircraft safety;
- The need for, and impact of, security measures such as lights and fencing;
- Great care should be taken to ensure heritage assets are conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, including the impact of proposals on views important to their setting. As the significance of a heritage asset derives not only from its physical presence, but also from its setting, careful consideration should be given to the impact of large scale solar farms on such assets. Depending on their scale, design and prominence, a large scale solar farm within the setting of a heritage asset may cause substantial harm to the significance of the asset;
- The potential to mitigate landscape and visual impacts through, for example, screening with native hedges;
- The energy generating potential, which can vary for a number of reasons including latitude and aspect.

**7.110** The guidance also advises that the approach to assessing the cumulative landscape and visual impact of large scale solar farms is likely to be the same as assessing the impact of wind turbines. However, in the case of ground mounted solar panels it should be noted that with effective screening and appropriate land topography the area of a zone of visual influence could be zero.

### **Government Aims on Solar Energy**

**7.111** The Written Statement to Parliament in March 2015 sets out the Government's most recent aims on solar energy development amongst other streamlining objectives. The Secretary of State said amongst other things:

**7.112** *'We are encouraged by the impact the guidance is having but do appreciate the continuing concerns, not least those raised in this House, about the unjustified use of high quality agricultural land. In light of these concerns we want it to be clear that any proposal for a solar farm involving the best and most versatile agricultural land*

*would need to be justified by the most compelling evidence. Of course, planning is a quasi-judicial process, and every application needs to be considered on its individual merits, with due process, in light of the relevant material considerations.'*

### **Anaerobic Digestion Considerations /Assessment Criteria**

Anaerobic digestion (AD) is a natural process in which micro-organisms break down the organic matter found in wet biomass waste (such as sewage sludge, animal manure and slurry and waste food) in the absence of oxygen, to produce biogas (mainly a mixture of around 60% methane and 40% carbon dioxide) and digestate (a nitrogen rich fertiliser). The National Non-food Crops Centre (NNFCC) runs the government's Anaerobic Digestion Portal (<http://www.biogas-info.co.uk/>) – a gateway to information on anaerobic digestion, biogas and digestate. Reference should also be made to 'The Anaerobic digestion strategy and action plan', published by government on 14 June 2011 and an update on progress on detailed actions published in July 2012. Anaerobic Digestion proposals are regarded as waste treatment facilities, where feedstock is classified as waste under relevant legislation and so relevant related national and county best practice guidance and policies will apply.

Anaerobic Digestion proposals raise a number of planning issues including visual and landscape impacts arising from industrial scale plant/buildings; location concerns (in sustainability terms relative to the source of biomass and where relevant combined heat and power (CHP); electricity and/or gas grid connection), potential odour impacts, air emissions, noise impacts, protection of the water environment and traffic impacts. Government has stressed that failure to supply adequate environmental information to accompany planning applications for anaerobic digestion projects is a key cause of delay in determining planning application. Breckland Council encourages early pre-application engagement with the Council on all renewable energy projects to optimise project assessment and delivery.

### **All Renewable Energy Environmental Concerns**

**7.113** In relation to all renewable or low carbon energy development the planning guidance also states that: the need for renewable or low carbon energy does not automatically override environmental protections; cumulative impacts require particular attention, especially the increasing impact that wind turbines and large scale solar farms can have on landscape and local amenity as the number of turbines and solar arrays in an area increases; local topography is an important factor in assessing whether wind turbines and large scale solar farms could have a damaging effect on landscape and recognise that the impact can be as great in predominately flat landscapes as in hilly or mountainous areas; and great care should be taken to ensure heritage assets are conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, including the impact of proposals on views important to their setting.

### Preferred Policy Direction - ENV 10 Renewable Energy Development

Proposals for renewable energy development including the landward infrastructure for offshore renewable schemes requiring planning permission, other than for wind energy developments, will be assessed to determine whether or not the benefits they bring in terms of the energy generated are outweighed by any adverse impacts. The effects of the proposal will be considered in terms of the following criteria:

- i. any adverse impacts on the local landscape, townscape or designated and undesignated heritage assets, particularly listed buildings, conservation areas, scheduled ancient monuments, historic parks and gardens;
- ii. any adverse effects on residential amenity by virtue of outlook / overbearing impact, traffic generation, noise, vibration, overshadowing, flicker, or any other associated detrimental emissions, during construction, operation and decommissioning;
- iii. adverse impacts upon designated wildlife sites; nature conservation interests, and biodiversity.

Permission will be granted where there are no significant adverse effects or where any adverse effects are outweighed by the benefits. When attributing weight to any harm, including heritage assets, regard will be given to national policy and guidance, statutory duty and legislation, and other policies in the Local Plan including Policies which seek Protection and Enhancement of the Landscape; Designated Heritage Assets and Non-Statutory Heritage Assets.

Where appropriate the authority will consider the need for planning conditions requiring the decommissioning and removal of all plant and ancillary equipment, and if necessary the restoration of land, on the cessation of use.

### Alternative Option

**7.114** The alternative option is to rely on policies contained in the NPPF.

### Question 24

Do you agree with the preferred policy - ENV 10? Please explain your answer.

## 8 Economy

### Economy

**8.1** The NPPF states that the planning system must support sustainable economic growth, through the creation of jobs and prosperity to meet the development needs of business. This section of the Plan contains policies to support economic growth within Breckland. As a predominantly rural area, economic policies should be tailored to ensure they are flexible enough to accommodate needs, to respond rapidly to changes in economic circumstances, whilst facilitating flexible working practices.

**8.2** The NPPF (paragraph 28), requires planning policies to positively support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity. It has put a strong emphasis on promoting the rural economy and to support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas. It also states that the Local Plan should support diversification of agriculture and other land-use based rural businesses, as well as rural tourism and promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.

**8.3** The performance of Breckland's economy is largely dependent on a healthy rural economy. Whilst larger scale employment space is dominated by industrial uses and tends to be concentrated around Breckland's larger towns, the rural economy accommodates important hubs of economic activity, particularly with regards to small scale office and workshop space as well as providing a key employment sector in the District. As might be expected, agricultural businesses are scattered across the rural area of the District which brings challenges for delivering balanced economic growth.

**8.4** Rural business is now increasingly driven by technology. With employment in the more traditional elements of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing predicted to decline, creating jobs and prosperity needs wider recognition of the trend of the agriculture sector. There has been significant growth and development in the agri-science sector which has been continuously driving efficiency and innovation of agriculture businesses. The overspill of high-tech research activities in this region has been enjoyed by a wide range of rural businesses in Breckland. Small and medium scale rural enterprises represent a significant portion of the economic activities in Breckland due to the rural nature of the District. Therefore, diverse and thriving rural enterprises contribute significantly to the prosperity of the District, thus creating more opportunities for jobs.

#### **Responses to the Issues and Options Consultation told us that:**

There was strong support for the four options presented within the Local Plan which were:

- Re-use of rural buildings;
- Diversification of businesses in rural areas;
- Promoting improvements to communications infrastructure; and
- Support and development of key sectors such as tourism

The support for these options particularly came from parish councils, however a number of individuals also supported the approach proposed.

**8.5** The following economic policies seek to address the challenges that Breckland faces, however these should be read in conjunction with other policies in the community section of this document such as that directing the conversion of buildings in the countryside and agriculture workers.

## General Employment Areas

**8.6** The proposed policy is based on the current Core Strategy Policy DC6 with some additional aspects (clauses c to e) in response to feedback included to cover specific design and amenity issues, and an additional section on proposals for mixed use developments.

**8.7** As identified on the Policies Map, there are a significant number of employment areas across the District, each of which makes a contribution towards the local economy and is an important source of local employment.

**8.8** Employment uses are traditionally defined as Use Classes B1, B2 and B8 under the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987. However the diversification of the economy means that employment opportunities now emanate from a wide range of uses. These can be complementary to existing industrial uses and provide valuable services such as cafes and nurseries. However the intensification of individual uses or the cumulative impact of a number of non B1, B2, B8 uses in the same vicinity can reduce the functionality of employment areas for industrial based employers.

**8.9** Proposals will be expected to complement their surroundings and not result in any unacceptable impacts on amenity or a severe impact on the local highways network. Proposals will also be encouraged to contribute towards the identified need to make provision for small and start-up businesses.

**8.10** The policy incorporates proposals for mixed use developments to deal with the issue raised in the Employment Growth Study which suggested the need for a flexible approach to bring forward employment sites by allowing the development of other higher value non-B uses on part of allocated sites, in order to unlock the site's potential and fund any associated infrastructure works. Appropriate proposals to diversify and ensure the long term sustainability of existing employment areas will therefore be supported where they contain a significant employment element, contribute positively to the viability of the employment land and would not undermine, and are compatible with, existing employment uses.

### Preferred Policy Direction - E 01 General Employment Areas

Sites that are identified as General Employment Areas on the policies map will be protected for employment use. Proposals to accommodate new employment development (B1, B2 and B8 uses) will be permitted on General Employment Areas where:

- a. It is not a town centre use, unless the location is sequentially preferable and need has been demonstrated;
- b. It will not undermine the function of the wider employment area;
- c. The scale, bulk and appearance of the development is compatible with the character of its surroundings;
- d. There is no significant detrimental impact on the amenity of neighbouring land uses and the character of the area by virtue of increased levels of noise, odour, emissions, or dust and impacts on light; and
- e. The traffic generated does not have a severe adverse impact on local amenity, highway safety or the operation of the highways network

Proposals for mixed-use development in identified employment areas will be supported provided that they would:

- f. Incorporate a significant employment element;
- g. Be compatible with existing employment uses;
- h. Support the improvement of an employment area that is in need of upgrading;
- i. Not constrain the operations of adjoining businesses; and
- j. Be capable of re-instatement for business and industrial use

## Alternative Options

**8.11** The alternative approach is to not protect employment areas solely for B class uses.

### Question 25

Do you agree with the preferred policy - E 01? Please explain your answer.

## Employment Development Outside of General Employment Areas

**8.12** The proposed policy is rolled forward from the Core Strategy (Policy DC7). The majority of employment development will be provided for in the strategic employment allocations outlined in preferred Policy PD 06 and on established employment areas as outlined in preferred policy PD E01. However, in a rural District such as Breckland there will be a need to provide for those businesses which support the rural economy and improve opportunities for rural communities to live and work in close proximity. It is recognised that the recent changes to the permitted development rights for the change of use of agricultural buildings have some bearing on this policy (see Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015).

**8.13** To support a working countryside, proposals for the expansion of existing rural businesses, or for new businesses which are either related to rural activities (such as agriculture and forestry) or where there are clear sustainability advantages for businesses being located close to the market they serve, will be supported subject to the policies relating to environmental impact, accessibility and amenity. The demonstration of sustainability advantages should include evidence of reduced need to travel, re-use of previously developed land or existing buildings and enhanced opportunities for rural communities to access employment in their locality. Such evidence should be professionally prepared and provided in a Sustainability Statement accompanying the proposal.

**8.14** Additionally, there are a number of businesses which, due to the nature of their activities, cannot reasonably be expected to locate on established employment areas which are often within, or on the edge of, built up areas. Such uses include those activities which would be detrimental to local amenity and therefore need to be located some distance from residential areas. A number of employment sites are provided for in the rural areas away from settlements, including Shipdham Airfield (Cranworth), Snetterton and Roudham and available land within these areas should be investigated in the first instance.

**8.15** In order to ensure that business development in the rural areas is sustainable, proposals will be expected to make best use of previously developed sites or the replacement of existing rural buildings. In the case of replacement buildings, the policy applies to large modern agricultural buildings which can be intrusive in landscape terms because their design and construction has been a specific response to agricultural requirements. The clear and substantial improvement in terms of size and scale requires that replacement buildings will have a significantly reduced volume and a reduced visual impact. To secure this objective, the Design and Access Statement accompanying replacement rural buildings for business use will, in detail, address criteria (d) to (f) inclusive and the requirements of planning policy relating to design, amenity and accessibility.

### Preferred Policy Direction - E 02 Employment Development Outside General Employment Areas

Proposals for employment uses outside of the identified General Employment Areas and allocated sites will only be permitted where:

- a. It is demonstrated that there are no other suitable sites available on identified or allocated employment sites;
- b. There are particular reasons for the development not being located on an established or allocated employment site including:
  1. The expansion of an existing business;
  2. Businesses that are based on agriculture, forestry or other industry where there are sustainability advantages to being located in close proximity to the market they serve; or
  3. Industries and / or businesses which would be detrimental to local amenity if located in settlements, including general employment areas.
- c. The development of the site would not adversely affect the type and volume of traffic generated.

#### Replacement of Rural Buildings

The replacement of rural buildings for B Use Classes as defined in the Use Classes Order may be considered acceptable where the proposal:

- d. Involves the removal of a building that is substantially intact but is not a traditional building of clear architectural or historic interest;
- e. Represents a clear and substantial improvement in terms of size, scale, impact and design from the original; and
- f. The replacement buildings are well located to the existing buildings, unless it can be demonstrated that an alternative location would be visually less prominent.

The authority will consider the need for appropriate measures in order to maintain the visual appearance and architectural character of buildings and prevent the proliferation of buildings in the countryside.

### Alternative Options

**8.16** The alternative approach which has been subject to sustainability appraisal, is to not restrict employment development in rural areas and allow it to locate where it is required. This scored poorly in the sustainability appraisal in relation to loss of undeveloped land and impact upon amenity.

#### **Question 26**

Do you agree with the preferred policy - E 02? Please explain your answer.

## Farm Diversification

**8.17** This policy updates the previous Farm Diversification Policy DC21 in the Core Strategy. It reflects the various changes in national planning policy with respect to agricultural development in the countryside (see Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015).

**8.18** In order to ensure that agricultural businesses are sustainable and competitive, well-conceived proposals relating to the diversification of farm businesses will be supported where they can help ensure the long-term viability of existing farm businesses and provide rural employment opportunities.

**8.19** A wide range of types of development may be appropriate for diversification including farm shops, leisure and recreation uses, tourism related development, sporting activities and equestrian uses. A careful balance is however required to ensure that scale and character of farm diversification proposals do not conflict with wider countryside objectives, introduce new amenity concerns or have a negative impact on the natural environment or the highways network.

**8.20** Existing buildings should be re-used, where possible, to provide any accommodation needed in association with alternative uses.

### Preferred Policy Direction - E03 Farm Diversification

Proposals for farm diversification, which requires planning permission, will be permitted on existing farm-holdings provided that:

- a. They would make a positive contribution to the continued viability of the farm holding;
- b. They would retain or enhance the character of traditional farm buildings;
- c. Where possible, the proposal re-uses existing buildings of substantial and permanent construction which are structurally sound and capable of conversion without major alterations or the development is well-related to existing buildings if no suitable buildings are available for re-use;
- d. The agricultural diversification is subservient to the main agricultural use of the farm;
- e. Wherever possible, they add value to produce emanating from the farm or produced locally or contribute to the tourism economy;
- f. The scale and nature of the diversification proposals are appropriate for its location and would not have an unacceptable impact on residential amenity, landscape character, the enjoyment of the countryside;
- g. They do not require new dwellings within the rural area to support the enterprise;
- h. They do not create extensive areas of hard-standing, and
- i. The volume and type of traffic that would be generated is appropriate to the accessibility of the site and the standard of the local highway network.

### Alternative Options

**8.21** The only reasonable alternative is to revert to the previous policy in the Core Strategy, (Policy DC21).

### Question 27

Do you agree with the preferred policy - E 03? Please explain your answer.

## Visitor Economy - Tourism

**8.22** Breckland's environmental and heritage assets, including the heaths and woodlands of the Brecks, the traditional market towns and the general tranquillity and remoteness of the Breckland countryside are the particular factors which attract tourists to the area. Whilst it is recognised that tourism is an important contributor to the Breckland economy and that some tourist development will seek to locate in the countryside, it is important that tourist related development takes place in a sustainable manner in line with local and national policies in order that it does not adversely affect the Breckland environment which attracts the tourist activity. The Brecks, Wensum Valley and Thetford Forest are key areas that are attractive to many visitors for both day trips and short stays. There are a wide network of footpaths, cycleways, bridleways, and public rights of way that provide excellent leisure and recreational opportunities.

**8.23** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that Local Plans should be positive and promote competitive town centre environments. A range of sites should be allocated to meet the scale and type of retail, leisure, commercial, office, tourism and cultural development needs in town centres.

**8.24** In rural areas, the NPPF states that sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit rural businesses should be supported where these respect the character of the countryside. The provision and expansion of tourist/visitor facilities should be supported in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service centres.

**8.25** Tourism is a growing part of the local economy. However, if not properly managed, it could have adverse impacts on the District's environment and the daily life of local people. The challenge is to enable and manage sustainable tourism, which will safeguard the countryside, heritage and culture for future generations while providing benefits to the local economy.

**8.26** The proposed policy continues to support existing and new tourism facilities where appropriate. It recognises the valuable contribution that these industries make to the local economy. The provision of visitor accommodation though new-build, conversion or expansion will be supported in appropriate locations. Proposals will be supported in line with the development hierarchy and in the rural area should be in accordance with the proposed rural policies in this document including the preferred strategic direction policy contained in PD 05 - Rural Area. Proposals for tourism development that may have an effect on Sites of European, National & Local Nature conservation importance such as the Breckland SPA, the River Wensum and the Norfolk Valley Fens SAC, will have to meet the proposed environmental policies, covering Sites of European, National & Local Nature Conservation, notably ENV 02 and ENV 03. Camping and caravan sites are considered as tourism development not outdoor recreation.

**8.27** In a rural District such as Breckland there are opportunities for hotel accommodation, cultural and leisure development to support the market towns and where applicable contributing to regeneration programmes. National planning policy identifies cultural facilities, leisure and hotels as town centre uses and therefore such uses are subject to the sequential approach and proposals should conform to the preferred policy direction for town centres - PD - 07. Proposals for serviced tourist accommodation in the rural areas should represent the most sustainable option to meet a particular need because it is a road related facility meeting the needs of road users or it involves the re-use of sustainably located traditional rural buildings such as a complex of redundant farm buildings or a large country property. Development should be of an appropriate scale and be located where the environment and infrastructure can accommodate the visitor impact. Where a proposal is not readily accessible by public transport, it will only be supported where it relies on a specific geographical resource or contributions are made to improve accessibility and it complies with the emerging policies as a whole in the Local Plan

### **Preferred Policy Direction - E04 Tourism Related Development**

The creation, enhancement and expansion of tourism attractions, and tourism infrastructure will be supported in accordance with the development strategy where this would enhance the existing tourism offer, benefit the local economy and be of a suitable scale and type for its location.

Development should be of an appropriate scale and be located where the environment and infrastructure can accommodate the visitor impact. Where a proposal is not readily accessible by public transport, then it will be supported where it relies on a specific geographical resource or contributions are made to improve accessibility and it complies with the emerging policies as a whole in the Local Plan.

Significant leisure, tourism and cultural development proposals and visitor accommodation, which will attract a significant number of visitors, should be located within, or be accessible to, the five market towns. Smaller scale development proposals should be of a suitable scale, and type to protect the character of the townscape and landscape.

Development proposals will be assessed against the proposed policies in this document and the following criteria:

- The proposal would support the vitality and enhance the role of the market towns as tourist and leisure destinations through encouraging greater visitor numbers;
- It would bring regeneration benefits particularly through the redevelopment of brownfield land;
- It would be accessible by sustainable modes of transport and / or is in close proximity to existing visitor attractions;
- It has the potential to improve access to rights of way, green infrastructure;
- It would support agricultural diversification that is of an appropriate scale and type in rural areas, and would support the continued viability of rural businesses;
- Camping and caravan sites will be supported where there is an unmet need. Proposals should be small in scale to limit impact on landscape and amenity and utilise, or be well related to, existing rural buildings.

Particular emphasis is placed on improving the quality of existing visitor accommodation/attractions and the need to broaden the range of accommodation/attractions provided.

### **Alternative Options**

**8.28** The alternative is to retain the tourism policy from the adopted Core Strategy and Development Control Policies DPD.

### **Question 28**

Do you agree with the preferred policy - E 04? Please explain your answer.

## Telecommunications

**8.29** Modern and effective telecommunications systems are essential for the continuing development of the economy and the planning system has an important role in facilitating the improvement and expansion of the telecommunications network. However, whilst there are considerable economic and social benefits associated with the development of telecommunication infrastructure, it is important that such development does not have a significant adverse impact on amenity or environmental quality.

**8.30** The Council will seek to ensure that acceptable provision can be made for telecommunications development, whilst ensuring that any adverse impacts associated with development are minimised.

**8.31** The visual impact of telecommunications development is a particularly important consideration and, when seeking approval for the installation of new telecommunications equipment, applicants will be expected to demonstrate that they have taken all reasonable measures to minimise the visual impact of the proposed development on the local environment. In particular, the design and siting of installations should be informed by the context of the wider locality, including the careful consideration of the height, scale, siting, colours and materials to be used. Installations should also be sited where they would not impede roadside visibility splays and sight lines. Any building-mounted installation should also be sensitively designed so that the architectural quality and character of the building is not compromised.

**8.32** The provision of suitable broadband infrastructure can be an important factor which helps attract investment to the District and facilitates home working. Proposals to improve broadband speeds and coverage will therefore be supported.

**8.33** Some telecommunications development benefits from permitted development rights under Part 24 of the General Permitted Development Order 1995, (as amended). Where the development is subject to the prior approval procedure, prior approval will be required by the Council where there is considered to be a significant visual or other impact in terms of the siting and appearance of the development.

### Preferred Policy Direction - E 05 Telecommunications

The Council will support proposals for the provision and improvement of telecommunications infrastructure provided that:

- The installation and any associated apparatus is sited and designed to avoid any unacceptable impact on visual and residential amenity, highway safety and the character and appearance of the area where it would be sited;
- Any building-mounted installations would not have an unduly detrimental impact on the character or appearance of the building;
- The installation is not sited on or within the setting of a listed building or within a Conservation Area unless there are no suitable alternative locations available outside these areas;
- It has been demonstrated that there are no reasonable opportunities for sharing a site, mast or facility with existing telecommunications infrastructure in the area unless this site or mast sharing would result in a greater visual impact.

### Alternative Options

**8.34** An alternative approach would be not to restrict telecommunications development within certain locations.

**Question 29**

Do you agree with the preferred policy - E 05? Please explain your answer.

## Developer Contributions

**8.35** The National Planning Policy Framework sets out in paragraph 203 – 205 inclusive when and how planning obligations (developer contributions) in the form of legal agreements should be used.

**8.36** In order to deliver the Spatial Strategy it will be necessary to direct development to locations where, in order to achieve the wider sustainability advantages of the Strategy, it is known that existing infrastructure will need to be upgraded to meet the needs of all the new development. This is especially important when considering the sustainable urban extensions to Thetford and Attleborough, the growth for Dereham and strategic employment provision for Snetterton and Thetford Enterprise Park etc. In addition to the specific infrastructure set out in the policy, the provision of infrastructure is a prerequisite of all development and the Council will make best use of planning conditions and contributions as a means of providing infrastructure and enhancing facilities and services. Where appropriate this could also include site specific contributions to provide for regular maintenance or monitoring of facilities provided through developer obligations.

**8.37** Where infrastructure deficiencies exist, the Council is committed to achieving a consistent and co-ordinated approach to providing new or improved infrastructure through partnership working. The work with partners will involve other delivery bodies, authorities, developers and other agencies and will positively foster a number of delivery mechanisms. Breckland Council will use its role to support and facilitate infrastructure provision including fully utilising the role of planning contributions and by taking a pro-active perspective in the development and implementation of Multi-Agency Agreements and Local Area Agreements influencing Breckland. This managed approach to infrastructure provision will also enable disruption to the highway network to be managed, thereby reducing waiting times during construction and resultant emission of pollutants.

**8.38** Ensuring infrastructure provision keeps pace with new development is a key component of delivering the Spatial Strategy for Breckland and meeting the various needs of the community. Directing the majority of growth to those areas with available key infrastructure such as healthcare, schools, energy supply, water treatment, transport facilities and other community infrastructure such as sport and recreation, libraries and community buildings will be the basis for sustainable communities in Breckland. This approach will deliver increased local accessibility to key services, ensuring their viability, whilst at the same time making the most of investments in existing infrastructure provision across Breckland.

**8.39** The design of infrastructure through partnership working with developers and infrastructure providers should mitigate any significant adverse impact on the landscape and ecologically sensitive areas within Breckland and ensure, where possible, benefits to the economic and social wellbeing of the local community.

**8.40** On-site infrastructure will be secured based on the needs of each proposal and delivered directly by the developer, or through financial contributions and/or land. Off-site infrastructure will be secured through developer contributions, including the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), as may be introduced, amended or superseded in the lifetime of this plan.

**8.41** In July 2014 Breckland Council resolved to halt the production of a Community Infrastructure Levy and maintain a watching brief on CIL regulations, given the Government's signalled intended further legislative changes to the regime. The Government has appointed a research team to consider the levy's impacts and to provide an evidence base to inform the review. However, to date no time line has been set. The Council continues to keep the matter on hold with the intention of a review of available options following any announcements and significant changes to market conditions. The Council will continue to seek, prior to the implementation of Community Infrastructure Levy, developer contributions which may, as appropriate include the following:

- Utilities;
- Transport infrastructure (including walking, cycling and public transport/ community transport initiatives);
- Affordable Housing;

- Community Infrastructure (including education, libraries, town and village halls, police and fire service provision);
- Open Space;
- Green Infrastructure;
- Biodiversity management mitigation and management;
- Landscaping (including street furniture and lighting;)
- Flood Defences;
- Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS);
- Waste Management / recycling and compositing facilities.

**8.42** Developers should make reference to the Planning Obligations Standards April 2015, prepared by Norfolk County Council. The Council reserves the right to prioritise the most appropriate mitigation and the level of contribution in accordance with viability and the priorities of the Council and local communities.

**8.43** The need for SuperFast broadband is a key issue for Breckland and Norfolk. Where appropriate, proposals for residential and business development should include sufficient on-site SuperFast and UltraFast broadband infrastructure to enable connectivity to wider networks.

**8.44** Since April 2015 planning obligations are now restricted in terms of ‘pooling’ contributions to no more than five obligations for the same infrastructure project, or type of infrastructure. This is likely to have a significant impact on the ability to pool contributions, for example for new formal and informal open space and enhancements to existing open space and play equipment. The Council has consulted all Town and Parish Councils on this matter asking for specific projects to be identified, with a specification detailing costs and deliverability to support this process.

**8.45** The Council, in conjunction with partners will prepare an Infrastructure Development Plan (IDP) to identify infrastructure needs and priorities and address any potential funding shortfalls. The principal focus of the IDP will be growth along the A11 corridor reflecting the spatial strategy and particular circumstances and challenges identified through evidence gathering.

### **Preferred Policy Direction - E 06 Developer Contributions**

The Council will seek to secure site specific developer contributions in order to properly service, manage and mitigate the impact of development which:

1. Directly related to the development; necessary to make the development acceptable and fairly and reasonably relate in scale and kind;
2. Cannot be secured by planning conditions; and
3. Is not identified as infrastructure to be delivered through the Community Infrastructure Levy, as may be introduced amended or superseded in the lifetime of this plan.

Details of significant infrastructure requirements are presently identified as part of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and Norfolk County Council’s Planning Obligations Standards April 2015 (as may be amended and superseded over the lifetime of this plan).

Developer contributions will be required to secure infrastructure which is necessary to ensure:

1. Delivery of sustainable development as defined in the NPPF and Policy 1 (PD 01 Sustainable Development) of the Local Plan;

2. The delivery of affordable housing;
3. The delivery of open space, play space or other facilities (or financial contribution) required directly to serve the development and contribute to local community facilities;
4. Pedestrian and highway safety improvements necessary to secure satisfactory access to the development;
5. Where appropriate a range of sustainable modes of transport;
6. Where appropriate the delivery is integrated with development phasing to ensure timely provision and commuted payments will secure necessary future maintenance; and
7. The delivery of any other infrastructure requirements in a made Neighbourhood Plan.

### Alternative Options

**8.46** There are no reasonable alternatives to consider for this preferred policy option.

### Question 30

Do you agree with the preferred policy - E 06? Please explain your answer.

## Advertising and Signage

**8.47** The design of advertisements and signage can have a great impact on the character or appearance of an individual building or surrounding area. This is particularly the case in the main settlements of the District, where the majority of businesses are located. Sensitive design can ensure that proposed advertising and signage does not harm the character of an area. New or altered signs and advertisements should be designed to respect the building of which they are part as well as any adjoining shopfronts and the general street scene.

**8.48** To prevent inappropriate displays, the Council will seek to ensure that advertisements are of an appropriate scale and size, are well designed and are sympathetic to both the building on which they are to be displayed and the general characteristics of the locality. Standardised or corporate displays that have no regard to the character of the building on which they are to be displayed or the general characteristics of the locality will be unlikely to be acceptable.

### Preferred Policy Direction - E 07 Advertising and Signs

Advertisements and signs should be sensitively designed and located having regard to the character of the building on which they are to be displayed and/or the general characteristics of the locality. The size, scale, materials, colour scheme and any means of illumination selected should be appropriate to the local area and in areas of historic value, such as conservation areas, particular regard should be had to any impact of proposals on the historic character of the frontage. Proposals which obscure features of architectural or historical interest, or are uncharacteristic of a building's design, will not be permitted.

### Alternative Option

**8.49** The alternative approach is to not include a specific policy on advertising and signs and instead rely on national policies within the NPPF.

### Question 31

Do you agree with the preferred policy - E 07? Please explain your answer.

## 9 Transport

### Transport

**9.1** Norfolk's third Local Transport Plan, 'Connecting Norfolk' sets out a vision that by 2026 Norfolk will have a transport system that allows residents and visitors a range of low carbon options to meet their transport needs and attracts and retains business investment in the county.

**9.2** Within Breckland services such as health and education tend to be sited within the key settlements and market towns. This means that significant numbers of people have to travel relatively long distances to access everyday facilities, often with the added challenge of variable quality public transport.

**9.3** Reducing the reliance on the private car and promoting active lifestyles are mutually beneficial aims which can be achieved by supporting sustainable travel options. However, it should be recognised that travel by car will still be an essential option for many people in remote rural areas. To assist in reducing the need for long distance travel in these areas the Council will focus on retaining rural employment and local facilities in smaller settlements.

#### Responses to the Issues and Options Consultation told us that:

Many respondents highlighted the importance of people being able to reach employment and facilities, families and friends, without over reliance on car travel which can create local air quality problems and safety issues and contributes to climate change. This is linked to the potential dispersed development pattern which could increase reliance on private car and may lead to key infrastructure no longer being viable.

There were also calls for sites coming forward to demonstrate that they do not cause a detrimental impact on the function of local highway networks.

**9.4** In line with the principles of housing policy parking standards may be reviewed over time to provide for new initiatives in line with climate change and low carbon objectives, including provision of dedicated spaces: with charging points for electric vehicles; for small and low-carbon vehicles; shared community 'pool' vehicles; and provision for local delivery vehicles

**9.5** On the basis of the above evidence and the responses to the Issues and Options consultation exercise the following policy has been developed.

#### Preferred Policy Direction - TR 01 Sustainable Transport Network

A sustainable transport system will be achieved through:

- a. Reducing the need to travel through appropriate location of new development;
- b. Reducing the need to travel by private car in towns and villages by ensuring that, wherever possible, new development is located close to access points such as bus stops and proposals include provision for improved public transport.
- c. Encouraging walking and cycling, through links to existing routes, and the provision of facilities such as secure, accessible and bicycle parking with changing facilities on site;

d. Thorough assessment of the impacts of new development on the existing transport network. Where potential transport impacts are identified developers will be expected to produce Transport Assessments and Travel Plans, where appropriate.

### **Alternative Option**

**9.6** The alternative approach is to not include a specific policy on sustainable transport within this plan. Instead the aims of this policies could be met through other policies within this Local plan, such as the locational strategy and green infrastructure. The sustainability appraisal of this alternative option suggests that not including a policy could lead to diminish weight be given to these issues through the determination of planning applications.

### **Question 32**

Do you agree with the preferred policy - TR 01? Please explain your answer.

## 10 Communities

### Design

**10.1** Design quality is an important aspect of any new development. The value of good design is recognised by the government at a national level in the NPPF, which states that the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people.

**10.2** Design is important as it can help achieve many wider aims and objectives such as improving health outcomes and quality of life. Better design can ensure that Breckland is an area which contains attractive places where people want to live and work. Well designed places can encourage social integration, equal access to opportunities, services and facilities, whilst reducing opportunities for crime and promoting management and maintenance of open spaces and the public realm through natural surveillance.

**10.3** Good design ensures that new development uses land efficiently, has character (which people enjoy and respect), relates positively to its surroundings and is enduring, and in line with the NPPF. Great weight should be given to outstanding and innovative design.

#### Responses to the Issues and Options Consultation told us that:

Several respondents stated that high quality design should be encouraged in order to protect the natural environment and so that development can be seen as acceptable by the community.

**10.4** Development in rural settlements, particularly extensions to the built form of a settlement, should be of a scale and design that respects the character and rural setting of a settlement. Communities, through neighbourhood plans and Village Design Statements, will be encouraged to identify those features that contribute to character. Proposals should demonstrate good design that is sympathetic to the local area and existing settlements

**10.5** On the basis of the above evidence and the responses to the Issues and Options consultation exercise the following policy has been developed

#### Preferred Policy Direction - COM 01 Design

New development should be designed to the highest possible standards. All proposals will be expected to comply with the following design criteria and any subsequent design guidance produced by the Council and be arrived at via appropriate contextual analysis:

**Local Character:** All design proposals must preserve or enhance the existing character of the area. Particular regard should be given to reinforcing locally distinctive patterns of development, landscape and culture and complementing existing buildings. Additionally, contemporary design, where it enhances sustainability will be encouraged in the District.

**Public Realm:** The continuity of street frontages is particularly important in the market town centres and all new development should provide a natural demarcation of public and private spaces, without the need for excessive or artificial barriers. Public spaces should be designed to ensure that access routes are attractive, maintainable, well lit and well surveyed, easily accessible to all members of the community and free from unnecessary screens, barriers, signage or other street paraphernalia.

**Connectivity:** Interdependent places and locations, such as town centres and transport interchanges or residential development and open space, should be well connected along routes that promote a choice of transport modes. These routes should be clearly legible so that it is easy to navigate from one place to another. Priority should be given to sustainable modes of transport.

**Adaptability:** Development should be designed so that it can be adapted to meet changing social, economic or technological conditions. This adaptability will need to reflect the different pressures that will be placed on a building throughout its lifetime. This might include changing family circumstances or ageing of the occupier in the case of a dwelling house, or changes in industry or economic base for commercial premises.

**Diversity:** Development should provide a range of choice that will promote and instill vitality into an area. This might be interpreted as a mix of uses within a town centre development, or a mixture of tenure and housing types within residential development.

In addition to these design criteria, when considering development proposals, including additions to existing buildings, regard will be given to the following design issues:

**Form and Character:** Development should complement the natural landscape, natural features and built form that surrounds it. In considering development proposals consideration will be given to the shape and configuration of a building or buildings, and its style, design and arrangement. Regard will also be had to the distinctive features or qualities of a proposed building and its surroundings and the contribution new development makes to these features or qualities.

**Density, Height, Massing and Scale:** A new building cannot be divorced from its surroundings, nor can a new group of buildings be divorced from their surroundings or their relationship to each other. In considering new development, consideration will be given to the density of buildings in a particular area and the landscape/townscape effect of any increased density. The real or perceived heights and scales of buildings relative to each other and their surround will be a key consideration as will the relationship of the density, scale and height. Subordination will be a key consideration when considering proposals for extensions. The scale and proportion of an addition should be subservient to the host building.

**Layout, Siting and Grouping:** The way a building, or group of buildings are laid out on a site has a profound effect on their appearance and how they are used. When considering new development regard will be had as to whether the layout makes the best use of features of the site in terms of its appearance, function and making the best use of layout to improve energy efficiency.

**Landscaping, Boundary Treatments and Enclosure:** The space that surrounds, and is in between, buildings is just as important as the buildings themselves. For all new developments consideration will be given to the incorporation, preservation and enhancement of natural features on a site. Boundary treatments should be complementary to the built design and should be incorporated such as to enhance the design of development. Areas of enclosure should be logically set out and should help the practical functionality of an area.

**Building Detailing and Materials:** The way in which a building is detailed, the quality of materials and how they are used can have a significant effect upon the overall appearance of a development. Consideration will be given to how the detailing and materials used in a particular development give expression to an overall design. Detailing and materials should be used to help the cohesiveness of a development, with particular consideration to the junctions of walls, roofs and fenestration. Detailing and materials should be a key part of the building design, stemming directly from functional needs of the building. Detailing and materials should not be used as an afterthought to add decoration to an otherwise bland design.

**Crime Prevention:** Crime prevention should be a fundamental part of the design process, the physical structure of new development will be expected to integrate crime prevention measures with the other principles of good design.

Development that does not fully address the values of the design principles or the design issues will not be acceptable.

Development should respond to current best practice and to urban design principles set out in established urban design guidance and any subsequent design guidance provided by the Council and or through neighbourhood planning.

In certain instances the Council will request the involvement of a Design Review.

### Alternative Option

**10.6** The alternative approach is to not include a specific policy on design requirements within the Local Plan and instead rely on the overarching policies within the NPPF.

### Question 33

Do you agree with the preferred policy - COM 01? Please explain your answer.

### Protection of Amenity

**10.7** A core planning principle acknowledged in the National Planning Policy Framework (at paragraph 17) is to always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings.

**10.8** The following policy seeks to ensure a high quality design and quality of life for all existing and future occupiers of land and buildings. It sets out relevant considerations for assessing the effects of proposals relating to amenity issues. This policy will apply to all forms of development within the District, including changes of use.

**10.9** The development of land and buildings presents the opportunity to provide improvements to the social and economic well-being of everyone living, working or visiting the District. The protection of the amenities of the District is not only fundamental to the social well-being of the District, but also its economic well-being. If Breckland is to thrive in the region then it must be promoted as an attractive place to work as well as live and the District's environmental and cultural assets are key to this promotion.

**10.10** For the sake of clarity, in the context of this policy, 'amenity' is defined as those desirable features of a place that ought to be protected or enhanced in the public interest. For example residential amenity for the purposes of this policy will include the protection of adequate levels of sunlight/daylight, access, privacy, outlook, private open space, as well as safeguarding from unacceptable noise and disturbance (including traffic), smell, dust, insects and light pollution from, for example, commercial or agricultural uses etc.

**10.11** The potential impact of development needs to be considered both on an individual as well as cumulative basis. New development consistent with the Local Plan and the continuance of existing businesses should not have unreasonable restrictions placed on it because of the introduction of new and incompatible land uses. Such matters will be an important planning consideration in relation to amenity expectations.

### **Preferred Policy Direction - COM 02 Protection of Amenity**

For all new development consideration will need to be given to general amenity impact issues and especially residential amenity. Development will not be permitted which cause unacceptable effects on the residential amenity of neighbouring occupants, or does not provide for adequate levels of amenity for future occupants of the development site. When assessing the impact of development on the living conditions of occupants, regard will be had to the following amenity considerations:

1. The provision of adequate areas of usable and secluded private amenity space for the occupiers of existing and proposed dwellings, in keeping with the character of immediate surrounding development;
2. Overlooking of windows of habitable rooms and private amenity space;
3. Overbearing impact/visual dominance;
4. Overshadowing of private amenity space;
5. Loss of daylight and/or sunlight to existing windows of habitable rooms;
6. Odour, noise, vibration or other forms of nuisance such as artificial light pollution, insects and vermin; and
7. Other forms of pollution (including contaminated land, dust, air pollution, for example the emission of particulates etc).

### **Alternative Options**

**10.12** The alternative option to the policy above is to not include a specific policy on amenity and the delivery of sustainable development in the Local Plan. This approach was rejected as the Council considers that promoting the principles of amenity is important in the context Breckland and sustainable development.

### **Question 34**

Do you agree with the preferred Policy - COM 02? Please explain your answer.

### **Principles of New Housing**

**10.13** The Locational Strategy defines the settlement hierarchy, whose purpose is to deliver sustainable development across the District in line with the Vision and Strategic Objectives, In particular:

#### **Development in the Right Place**

1. Contribute to sustainable development through the reflection of the vision and aspirations of the local communities for Breckland;
2. Assist in the creation and maintenance of inclusive, environmentally sustainable communities making the best and most efficient use of already developed land, buildings and natural resources;
3. Make sure the majority of development is focused into areas where services are available, and where facilities can be supported;

#### **Meeting the Housing Need**

4. Deliver housing that meets the needs of the community and local economy through the concentration of development in the Strategic Urban Extensions of Attleborough and Thetford and where services and facilities

can be supported within or adjacent to the market towns of Dereham, Swaffham and Watton and the local service centres, whilst giving recognition to the need for small scale and appropriate development in rural areas to support rural communities and services;

5. Support the development and maintenance of a balanced housing market and a variety of decent, affordable housing which meets the needs of all local people and supports economic and community development;
6. To encourage high quality, sustainable and safe design for places and spaces, in both the private and public realm, and which respects the character and local distinctiveness of Breckland's communities;

**10.14** In line with sustainability principles, housing development should be directed to those settlements that are identified as having good access to services and facilities and consistent with the wider aims of sustainability within the context of the rural requirements of Breckland. The Key Towns, Market Towns and Local Service Centres identified in the Locational Strategy align best with this approach.

**10.15** It is recognised that the design and character of housing is important to the community and new housing should reflect the local character. Where high density development is being proposed the accompanying Design and Access Statement should set out why high density is appropriate and its merits in terms of design, character and sustainability for the locality.

**10.16** Typically in smaller rural settlements residential development can be of a lower density, in the interests of efficient use of land, in the interest of character and wider sustainability issues should be justified, through the accompanying Design and Access Statement.

### **Parking Provision**

**10.17** Government policy seeks to restrict levels of parking associated with new development in order to reduce the use of the private car and promote other more sustainable forms of transport. The provision of car parking can also affect the appearance of a development and also result in an inefficient use of land. That said it is considered essential that the appropriate parking is provided given the rural nature of the Breckland and the current provisions for public transport. In particular adequate parking should be provided at the home. The national Planning Policy Framework, NPPF, allows planning authorities to set local parking standards taking into account of local circumstances.

**10.18** In terms of trip destination and commercial development there is more scope to manage travel patterns and reduce parking vehicle provision. Here the accessibility by other modes of transport and potential travel planning measures can support a reduced parking provision and enable a more efficient use of land.

**10.19** However, at both the home and point of destination, insufficient or inappropriately located parking can lead to problems of overspill parking from the development site onto surrounding streets and verges creating highway safety problems and unsightly environments.

**10.20** In considering appropriate levels of parking, reference will be given to the parking provision standards as detailed in appendix 2 of this document which are based on the existing adopted requirements in the Core Strategy. Residential parking standards will be taken into account where necessary to manage the local road network and to avoid inappropriate on street parking. However, they will be applied flexibly having regard to local circumstances and proposals should reflect how they are to provide adequate off road parking.

**10.21** Regard will also be given to the circumstances of the site, relevant advice on the design and integration of parking provision into development and the highways network and place-making. Parking requirements may be adjusted to help achieve good design objectives at locations with very good walking access to public transport and essential services, and to help protect heritage assets in conservation areas and listed buildings.

**10.22** In line with sustainable transport options the parking standards may be reviewed over time to provide for new initiatives in the climate change and low carbon objectives, including provision of dedicated spaces: with charging points for electric vehicles; for small and low-carbon vehicles and shared community 'pool' vehicles.

### **Self Build and Design Quality Exceptions**

**10.23** In March 2015, the Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 placed a duty on local authorities to keep a register of individuals and community groups who have expressed an interest in acquiring land to bring forward self-build and custom-build projects and to take account of, and make provision for, the interests of those on such registers in developing their housing initiatives and their local plans; to allow volume house builders to include self-build and custom-build projects as contributing towards their affordable housing obligations, when in partnership for this purpose with a Registered Social Landlord; and for connected purposes.

**10.24** The Council is supportive of self build housing. The term 'self build' can be used to refer to a wide range of approaches to creating a bespoke home, the level of input from the individual can range from a complete DIY project to employing contractors to build to your specification. The Council would like to see larger development sites incorporating plots / serviced plots for self build housing, but also recognises that self build plots represent a unique approach to supporting rural communities. The Council will support provision of self build in line with national guidance, policies in this plan and through Neighbourhood Planning.

**10.25** Using information from the Self Build Portal's 'Need a Plot' the 2015 Central Norfolk Strategic Housing Market Assessment identified a relatively low number of purchasers looking for a site in Central Norfolk. This is confirmed by the feedback given on the Council's emerging register. There was some support for self build housing in the responses to the Issues and Options consultation.

### Preferred Policy Direction - COM 03 Principle of New Housing

Within the settlement boundaries as defined on the policies map, new housing development will be permitted

The design and layout will optimise the density of the development to a level which is appropriate and justified for the locality. Higher density proposals will be encouraged at appropriate locations, including town centres, areas with good public transport accessibility and sustainable urban extensions.

In rural locations and at the edges of settlements where it can be justified in relation to other policies in this document, proposals for lower density development will be supported where it can be demonstrated it is justified in relation to local character and wider sustainability issues.

All residential proposals will secure an appropriate mix of dwelling type, size and tenure in line with building regulations and national technical standards in order to meet the needs of Breckland and help create balanced communities. The precise mix will be based on the findings of the emerging Strategic Housing Market Assessment, locally based surveys and in accordance with the Council's Housing Strategy and other suitable evidence.

Planning permission will be granted where appropriate parking provision is provided by the developer to serve the needs of the proposed development. Development should provide sufficient parking spaces to avoid inappropriate on street parking highway, safety problems and to protect living and working conditions locally. The appropriate parking provision for a development will be determined using the parking standards in Appendix 3 as a 'starting point' which may be varied to reflect local conditions such as the availability of public parking, sustainable travel modes, Travel Plan provisions, and design and conservation objectives.

### Alternative Options

**10.26** The alternative option to the policy above is to not include a specific policy on the principle of new housing in the Local Plan. This approach was rejected as the Council considers that promoting the principles is important in the context of Breckland and sustainable development.

### Question 35

Do you agree with the preferred policy, (including the approach to parking standards in appendix 3) - COM 03? Please explain your answer.

### Community Facilities

**10.27** The Local Plan aims to support thriving rural communities whilst protecting the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Whilst the delivery of new development in particular housing will be directed to the most sustainable locations in line with the locational strategy. there is a need to support the settlement hierarchy, rural economy and sustainable communities through the retention and development of local services and community facilities, such as village halls, rural shops and public houses.

**10.28** The NPPF supports economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development. Planning policies and decisions should:

- Plan positively and promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings and places of worship;
- Ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise in a way that is sustainable, and retained for the benefit of the community; and
- Support sustainable growth of rural businesses, diversification of agricultural businesses and rural tourism and leisure developments.

**10.29** It is recognised that local shops, and other community facilities such as pubs, post offices, and sports and leisure facilities perform a valuable role in providing for daily needs in local communities across Breckland, not only reducing the need to travel for smaller shopping trips, but helping to maintain a sense of place and uniqueness for Breckland's rural communities. The loss of a valued local community facility and services can significantly reduce a community's ability to meet its day to day needs and can also have an adverse impact on the wellbeing and social interaction of that community.

**10.30** This proposed policy direction seeks to support the proposed strategic economic policies regarding the retail hierarchy by maintaining and supporting the provision in smaller villages serving more localised rural needs. The policy direction seeks to retain essential facilities especially where they are the only such facility within a village. Local retail provision will be supported at a scale proportionate to the existing size and catchment but not to a level which would undermine provision in neighbouring villages.

**10.31** Other community facilities such as pubs, village halls, libraries, places of worship and schools play a vital role in ensuring Breckland is a great place to live, work, learn and visit. Accessibility to facilities and services remains a key Issue in many communities in the District. In order to reduce the need to travel to access everyday facilities, and to maintain sustainable communities, the Council supports the provision and retention of community facilities and this is reflected through the proposed hierarchy of centres.

**10.32** Proposals which would result in the loss of a community facility must demonstrate that efforts have been made to retain the facility and those opportunities for conversions to alternative community uses have been explored. Supporting information should typically include:

- Marketing information such as the length of time and the asking price;
- Details of the level of interest generated and the offers received;
- What consultation and level of interest there has been with the local community / service providers on a possible alternative community use;
- Whether there is scope for the multi-use of buildings or innovative ways of combining a range of services and facilities on one site.

**10.33** For the purposes of this policy community facilities are defined as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, recreation/play areas, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship. These, and the provision of new facilities at an appropriate scale to the settlement, will be supported.

**10.34** In addition local communities through the Localism Bill can propose to add to the local register an asset of community value and through the local focus of Neighbourhood Plans they are well placed to highlight the valuable role of local centres and community facilities and can identify deficiencies in the provision of community facilities and help to safeguard existing ones.

**10.35** In considering proposals that would result in the loss of local community facilities, the Council will take into account what other facilities and services are available locally. Where proposals relate to the conversion of shops and other facilities, the retention of elements which would allow a range of future uses, such as separate upper floor access should be considered where practical.

### Preferred Policy Direction - COM 04 Community Facilities

The creation, enhancement and expansion of community facilities will be supported in accordance with the development strategy where this would enhance the existing offer, benefit the local economy and be of a suitable scale and type for its location: and

- They are in locations that are closely related to the area they will serve;

Proposals for the provision and retention of community facilities will be supported at the appropriate size and scale for the existing catchment :

Proposals, including change of use (outside permitted development rights), which result in the loss of local community buildings (most recently used for this purpose where the use has ceased), will not be permitted unless,

- It can be demonstrated that there is no local need for the facility or that its continuing function is no longer viable; and
- An appropriate alternative community use to meet local needs is not needed or likely to be viable.

Where new development increases the use of existing community facilities, the Council may require a developer contribution to improve the qualitative and quantitative offer of the existing facilities.

### Alternative Options

**10.36** The alternative is to rely on the NPPF

#### Question 36

Do you agree with the preferred policy - COM 04? Please explain your answer.

### Specialist Housing

**10.37** The National Planning Policy Framework states that a mix of housing to meet the needs of different groups in the community should be planned for, including older people and people with disabilities. Specialist housing is intended to enable people to live as independently as possible, but is designed so that support can be provided.

**10.38** Specialist housing for older people covers a broad spectrum of accommodation, from sheltered housing to care homes. Whilst there is a growing need for care, there is also a determination to move away from providing care in an institutional setting because it does not promote independence and dignity and also because of the high cost of providing care in these settings. Personalised care budgets are also giving older people more choice over how their care is provided, with the option that it is delivered to them in their own home. Sheltered housing does not typically offer 24 hour care on site and in many ways is not very different to the mainstream housing stock, whilst residential and nursing care homes are not always associated with older people maintaining their independence. Housing with care – known as extra care when delivered by registered providers and/or the public sector, or assisted living accommodation when provided by commercial developers is increasingly seen as a model which can allow older people to live independently for longer whilst receiving the care and support they need.

**10.39** Accommodation is moving towards more flexible forms of living and support which seek to maintain people's independence and control of their lives. Mainstream housing needs to be suitable to meet the needs of older people, both through adaptation to the existing stock and by ensuring new housing is flexible to meet occupants' changing needs over time. Preferred Policy Com 06 seeks to ensure that a proportion of new dwellings remain as accessible and adaptable dwellings and complies with the national technical design standards.

**10.40** There are several options where residents can enjoy their own self-contained home within a site offering extra facilities. These include retirement homes/villages, and extra care housing, where varying levels of care and support are provided in the home. These models often include a restaurant or dining room, health and fitness facilities and hobby rooms on site. Other forms of accommodation include care or nursing homes, which comprise single rooms within a residential setting where residents receive varying levels of care. Care can range from primarily personal care to nursing care for those who are bedridden, very frail or have a medical condition or illness.

**10.41** Much like the rest of the country, and the region, Breckland has an ageing population.

**10.42** The draft 2015 Central Norfolk Strategic Housing Market Assessment (CNSHMA) identifies an average population projection increase of 16.8% across the Central Norfolk Area. Significantly the over 60s population percentage growth is set to increase significantly. Across the Central Housing Market Area the over 60s population is set to increase from 179,272 to 258,587. This represents an increase of 79,315 or 44% in this age cohort. The over 85s population is set to increase from 19,281 to 49,076 an increase of 29,795. This represents an increase of 155%. It is however important to recognise that national policy is underpinned by the principle of sustaining people at home for as long as possible. From this increase the draft CNSHMA, identifies that there will be a requirement for 4,551 communal places in residential care/communal establishments across the Central Norfolk Housing Market Area.

**10.43** New supply for older people is a complex issue; many older people wish to remain in their own homes, as envisaged by the Government's recent reforms of Health and Adult Social Care. Therefore, despite the ageing population, current government policy means that the number of care homes and nursing homes may actually decline, as people are supported to continue living in their own homes for longer.

**10.44** However, the Council considers that specialist provision for the elderly and people with disabilities forms an important part of the housing mix within the District. As established in the spatial principles section of this document, it is more sustainable for future growth to take place within key settlements to ensure residents have access to a range of facilities and services and can lead more sustainable lives. The same principles apply to specialist housing provision, and are potentially even more important. Specialist housing for the elderly or anyone in need of care or health support must be located close to medical or care services, shops and suitable transport.

**10.45** Specialist housing may be provided as part of a larger residential or mixed use scheme, where this is the case it is important that specialist housing be as integrated as possible into wider development in an area to ensure community cohesion.

**Responses to the Issues and Options Consultation told us that:**

Several responses to the Issues and Options consultation felt that specialist housing development was important. Many of the parish councils acknowledged that there is an increasing need for specialist housing.

Most respondents felt that it should be accessible by good levels of local transport, have convenient access to local shops and provide a safe environment. Consideration should also be given to the provision of health care.

People feel that it is important for specialist housing to be integrated within developments rather than large stand alone developments. Provision should be based on the local need and market demand.

**10.46** It is important to consider how best to facilitate the delivery of such housing and further emerging evidence through the Strategic Model Of Care is required to inform the final approach. On the basis of the above evidence and the responses to the Issues and Options consultation exercise the following preferred direction policy has been developed.

#### **Preferred Policy Direction - COM 05 Specialist Housing**

To meet the anticipated needs of an ageing population, developments that provide housing solutions for the elderly or anyone in need of care or health support will be encouraged by:

- a. Resisting development that would lead to a reduction in the number of extra care or care premises unless it can be demonstrated that a replacement facility was being built or that such a use was un-viable;
- b. Ensuring that new specialist housing is located within a settlement that offers an adequate range of health services, transport and social facilities;
- c. Ensuring the design and scale of schemes is appropriate to the setting and surroundings with no adverse impact on local character and amenity;
- d. Ensuring proposals include a mix of on-site affordable and market dwellings in line with policies in this document.

#### **Alternative options**

**10.47** The alternative option to the policy above is to not include a specific policy on specialist housing in the Local Plan. This approach was rejected as the Council considers that promoting the provision of specialist housing is important in the context of a nationally ageing population.

#### **Question 37**

Do you agree with the preferred policy - COM 05? Please explain your answer.

## Technical Design Standards for New Homes

**10.48** To achieve sustainable development, Para 17 of the NPPF sets out a set of core land-use planning principles that should underpin both plan-making and decision-taking, including: “Planning should always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings”.

**10.49** On 25 March 2015 the Government introduced, in a Written Ministerial Statement New Technical Housing Standards in England and sets out how these would be applied through planning policy. The aim of the national set of standards is to enhance residential quality and reduce the administrative burden on new housing developments by simplifying and rationalising the wide variety of standards that local authorities across England apply to new homes. The Housing Standards Review aims were to cut red tape for developers by removing local standards and prevent Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) imposing local technical requirements on the construction of new dwellings. In doing so the Housing Standards Review prevents LPAs from influencing the design of the building fabric in terms of energy efficiency as the government seek to wind-down the Code for Sustainable Homes, leaving Building Regulations Part L as the sole energy efficiency delivery mechanism. The industry as a whole is challenged to close the performance gap and improve compliance with the 2013 Part L standard. However through the Local Plan the National Standards do provide a set of national standards for some issues that can be applied by planning authorities

**10.50** Local Planning Authorities have the option through the Local Plan to set technical requirements in addition to those required by Building Regulations in respect of access and water efficiency, and a Nationally Described Space Standard (NDSS). In this context access relates to how people access and use a dwelling and its facilities and for space, this relates to the internal space of a dwelling. The intention is that no other standards relating to housing should be set locally.

**10.51** National Planning Practice Guidance sets out information on the application of the Optional Housing Technical Standards, stating that: “Local Planning Authorities will need to gather evidence to determine whether there is a need for additional standards in their area, and justify setting appropriate policies in their Local Plans.” And: “Local Planning Authorities should consider the impact of using these standards as part of their Local Plan viability assessment.”

**10.52** Within this context work is continuing to establish whether there is a need to implement these higher standards in Breckland. This will be set out in the ‘Optional Housing Technical Standards’ document; part of the suite of documents that provide the evidence base supporting the Local Plan.

**10.53** Breckland forms part of the much larger Anglian Water utilities area which as a whole is classified as “moderate” in terms of water stress on supplies. Whilst greater water efficiency has significant benefits and should be encouraged on housing developments there is presently insufficient justification for introducing a higher standard to that required by Building Regulations. Breckland Council will review this element of the optional policy standards in the light of its commissioned Water Cycle Study, Viability Study and continuing dialogue with Anglian Water.

**10.54** However, in terms of the optional standards relating to access and internal space there is evidence to support a policy for these national standards. The evidence relating to access and space is summarised below and also reflected in the supporting text for the Preferred Policy COM04 Specialist Housing which also informs this policy setting out Breckland Council’s requirements.

## Access

**10.55** Breckland's older population is increasing and as people age so does the prevalence of illness and disability. The draft 2015 Central Norfolk Strategic Housing Market Assessment (CNSHMA) states that across the Central Market Area the over 60s population will increase 44% in this age cohort. Whereas the over 85s is set to increase 155%. This also needs to be viewed in the context of national policy underpinned by the principle of sustaining people at home for as long as possible.

**10.56** Approximately 5% of Breckland's population are living with a disability (based on Norfolk County Council's latest statistical profile of the District (proportion of total DLA claimants as at February 2015 to total population of the District).

**10.57** Meeting the needs of our ageing population and those living with a disability presents challenges for housing provision, which is already evidenced by the funding being spent on adapting homes to meet need and the impact on public services of treating people who fall in the home. Providing more accessible homes will ensure that the District's housing stock is more easily adaptable and help people to maintain their independence for longer.

**10.58** The Council will seek to implement the nationally described optional accessibility standards as defined by Building Regulations and which cover accessibility and adaptability of dwellings. Requirements M4(2) and M4(3) are optional and defined by Building Regulations. Both Standards cover accessibility and adaptability of dwellings.

**10.59** It is the Secretary of States view that optional requirement M4(2) will be met where a new dwelling makes reasonable provision for most people to access the dwelling and incorporates features that make it potentially suitable for a whole range of occupants, including older people, those with reduced mobility and some wheelchair users. Reasonable provision is made if the dwelling complies with the key aims:

- Step free access to dwelling, car park space and communal areas;
- Step free access to WC and other accommodation within entrance storey and to private outdoor space connected directly to the entrance storey;
- A wider range of people including the elderly, disabled people and some wheelchair users can use the accommodation and its facilities;
- Able to be adapted in the future.

**10.60** Requirement M4(3) will be met where a new dwelling makes reasonable provision, either at completion or at a point following completion for a wheelchair user to live in the dwelling and use associated private and outdoor space, parking and communal facilities that may be provided for the use of occupants. Reasonable provision is made if the dwelling complies with the keys aims:

- Within the curtilage of the dwelling (or building containing the dwelling) a step free approach to:
  - The dwelling;
  - Every private entrance door, any private outdoor space, car parking space, and any communal facility for occupants use;
  - Internal WC at entrance storey;
  - Other accommodation required on entrance storey;
- The dwelling is to be adaptable for future wheelchair access;
- Services are accessible by people with reduced reach.

**10.61** The specific technical requirements are contained in the Building Regulations.

## Internal Space

**10.62** The amount of space in a home influences how people live, impacting on the occupant's health and wellbeing. Providing homes of sufficient size to allow residents 'room to grow' is a critical part of delivering sustainable communities. A survey of new homes built in Breckland will be undertaken to establish whether they are generally being built to the optional Nationally Described Space Standard (NDSS) set by the Government. The NDSS reflects the need for rooms to be able to accommodate a basic set of furniture, fittings, activity and circulation space appropriate to the function of each room. The overall objective is to ensure that all homes are highly functional in terms of meeting typical day to day needs at a given level of occupation.

**10.63** The standard deals with internal space within new dwellings and is suitable for application across all tenures. It sets out requirements for the Gross Internal (floor) Area of new dwellings at a defined level of occupancy as well as floor areas and dimensions for key parts of the home, notably bedrooms, storage and floor to ceiling height.(2.3m for 75% of the dwelling)

**Table 10.1 Minimum Gross Internal Floor Areas and Storage(sqm) (NDSS)**

Number of Bedrooms (b)	Number of Bed Spaces(Persons)	1 Storey Dwellings	2 Storey Dwellings	3 Storey Dwellings	Built-in Storage
<b>1b</b>	1p	39(37)2			1
	2p	50	58		1.5
<b>2b</b>	3p	61	70		2
	4p	70	79		
<b>3b</b>	4p	74	84	90	2.5
	5p	86	93	99	
	6p	95	102	108	
<b>4b</b>	5p	90	97	103	3
	6p	99	106	112	
	7p	108	115	121	
	8p	117	124	130	
<b>5b</b>	6p	103	110	116	3.5
	7p	112	119	125	
	8p	121	128	134	
<b>6b</b>	7p	116	123	129	4
	8p	125	132	138	

**10.64** The Council will seek to implement the nationally described space standards and successors to new dwellings. The following policy does not apply to an extension to a dwelling or material change of use, It applies only to new dwellings.

#### **Preferred Policy Direction - COM 06 Technical Design Standards for New Homes**

To ensure that new homes provide quality living environments for residents both now and in the future and to help deliver sustainable communities, the following national technical standards will apply, subject to site viability.

**Internal Space in a Home** - All new homes, both market and affordable, will meet the Government's Nationally Described Space Standard (NDSS).

#### **Accessibility of Homes**

**Market Housing** - For all new housing developments, a minimum of 5% of homes are to meet building regulation M4(2) – 'Accessible and adaptable dwellings', unless viability considerations dictate otherwise.

#### **Affordable Homes**

1. For all new housing developments, 5% of homes should meet building regulation M4(2) – 'Accessible and adaptable dwellings'.
2. For all new affordable housing developments, a minimum of 1% of homes should meet building regulation M4(3) – 'Wheelchair user dwellings' standard, unless need and or viability considerations dictate otherwise.
3. When providing for wheelchair user housing, early discussion with the Council is required to obtain the most up-to-date information on specific need in the local area. Where there is no specific need identified, then M4(2) will apply, to allow simple adaptation of the dwelling to meet the future needs of wheelchair users.

For every house that is identified there should be sufficient space in the curtilage of the site to provide parking standards to meet Building Regulations and BS8300.

#### **Alternative Option**

**10.65** The alternative options are to not apply any optional standards of accessibility beyond the normal Building Regulation requirements and/or allow the market freedom to determine the internal space of homes and simply rely on policies contained in the NPPF.

#### **Question 38**

Do you agree with the preferred policy - COM 06? Please explain your answer.

## Residential Replacement, Extensions and Alterations

**10.66** As a predominantly rural District Breckland has a large amount of housing stock located in the rural area. Although these houses are not in the most sustainable locations, they are an important part of the housing stock. Whilst the spatial strategy does not seek significant growth in the rural area it is recognised that replacement, extensions and alterations to existing rural dwellings may be appropriate to ensure the stock remains viable and safe.

**10.67** However, replacing and extending homes in the countryside could create an oversupply of large properties which could ultimately result in a limited choice of house types in the rural area. The policy below aims to allow moderate change to properties in the rural area but also to retain a range of housing types in the countryside to ensure choice and variety.

**10.68** In rural areas it is vital to ensure that any replacements, alterations and extensions to residential properties do not adversely impact the character of the countryside. Any proposals must have particular regard to the Council's design policies, COM 01.

### Preferred Policy Direction - COM 07 Residential Replacement, Extension and Alteration

Proposals for replacement, extension or alteration of rural dwellings must be contained within the existing curtilage. The building must be in residential use and not classed as abandoned.

#### Replacement

Replacement dwellings must be of a scale and design sensitive to the countryside setting, with a height and size similar to that of the original dwelling. If an alternative height or scale is proposed, the applicant will be expected to demonstrate that the scheme exhibits exceptionally high quality of design and enhances the character and appearance of the locality, or it contributes to a significant increase in building standards and sustainable design above the current standards.

#### Extension or alteration

Extensions or alterations to existing residential properties will only be permitted where;

- A. The extension or alteration is not disproportionate in size in relation to the original dwelling/plot and does not alter substantially the character of the dwelling
- B. The extended or altered dwelling respects the character of the area
- C. The design remains in keeping with the existing dwelling and building materials
- D. The extension or alteration will not adversely affect the amenity of neighbouring property

Extensions or alterations that adversely affect the setting of a Listed Building or a group of Listed Buildings will be refused.

**10.69** The original dwelling is taken to be the house as it stood at 1st July 1948 (or as originally built if constructed after this date).

### Question 39

Do you agree with the preferred policy - COM 07? Please explain your answer.

## Barn Conversions

**10.70** This policy relates to the re-use and replacement of non-residential buildings in the countryside, such as barns and other agricultural buildings. The General Permitted Development Order 2015 at class Q allows the conversion of agricultural buildings to dwelling houses subject to a number of criteria, including the number of dwellings to be converted and the size of the building proposed for conversion. Outside of the exemptions set out within class Q, the conversion of non-residential buildings to residential use in the Rural Area will be strictly controlled. Re-use for economic development purposes will usually be preferable, but residential conversions may be more appropriate in some locations, and for some types of building.

**10.71** The Council recognises that to sustain an active rural economy and support rural living, conversion of redundant buildings should be supported where appropriate. Proposals for the conversion of redundant farm buildings to retail, residential, leisure, office, industrial and storage uses will be considered against the policy below.

### Preferred Policy Direction - COM 08 Conversion of Buildings in the Countryside

The sustainable re-use of appropriately located and constructed buildings in the countryside for economic purposes will be supported.

The re-use of existing buildings in the countryside for residential purposes will only be permitted where the commercial use of the building has been shown to be unviable. The building proposed to be converted should be substantially intact and capable of conversion without significant extension or rebuilding and should be of value to the landscape of the District. The residential re-use of modern agricultural or industrial buildings of no aesthetic value, regardless of their location, will not be considered appropriate

For the conversion of buildings in the countryside regard will be had to the following criteria:

- a. The impact of the development on the character and appearance of the landscape and the quality of design. Development will not be permitted where it does not take the opportunity to make a positive contribution to the appearance of the locality;
- b. The sustainability of the location, in terms of its accessibility to employment and residential areas and key service centres (as appropriate);
- c. Access to the highway and the ability of the highway network to accommodate the demands resulting from the proposed development.
- d. The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)

**10.72** For residential conversions, it is often the case that buildings require substantial works to enable them to be re-used, in order to meet Building Regulations and the demands of the new use. Therefore, in order to be acceptable in planning terms a building should be capable of residential conversion without the need for significant rebuilding or extension. This restriction will principally apply to modern buildings which are limited in their suitability for re-use due to their modular and/or temporary construction. With this in mind the policy limits residential re-use to buildings that are predominately constructed using traditional local techniques as these buildings are more suited to residential re-use.

## Alternative Option

**10.73** The alternative option which has been subject to sustainability appraisal is to allow barn conversions to residential, without requiring an economic re-use to be required in the first instance. Within the sustainability appraisal, whilst this scores well against the sustainability objectives relating to provision of new dwellings, it scores negatively in relation to those relating to supporting the local economy. The Employment Growth Study 2013 has shown the importance of the rural economy to Breckland's wider economic strategy.

### Question 40

Do you agree with the preferred policy - COM 08? Please explain your answer.

## Agricultural Workers Exceptions

**10.74** As a rural District, Breckland is home to a significant amount of rural enterprises. The needs of these businesses are different to an urban office based business and may require staff to be located in close proximity to their place of work. The following policy sets out how proposals for dwellings in the countryside to cater for rural workers will be assessed.

### Preferred Policy Direction - COM 09 Agricultural Workers Exceptions

Proposals for permanent dwellings in the countryside for full-time workers in agriculture, horticulture, forestry, and other rural activities will be permitted where:

- It can be demonstrated that the dwelling is essential to the functional needs of the business (i.e. there is a need for one or more full time workers to be readily available onsite at most times. The policy does not apply to part time workers);
- It can be demonstrated that the enterprise has been established for at least three years and is, and should remain, financially viable;
- There is no other accommodation within the site/holding or within the surrounding area which is currently suitable and available, or could be made available;
- A dwelling or building suitable for conversion to a dwelling within the site/holding has not been sold on the open housing market without an agricultural or other occupancy conditions in the last five years;
- The proposed dwelling is no larger than that required to meet the functional needs of the enterprise, nor would it be unusually expensive to construct in relation to the income that the enterprise could sustain;
- The proposed dwelling is sensitively designed and in keeping with its rural surroundings and will not adversely affect the setting of any heritage asset;
- The proposed dwelling will have satisfactory access;
- The proposed dwelling is well landscaped, is sited to minimise visual intrusion and is in close proximity to existing buildings to meet the functional need of the business; and
- Where the proposal involves a new business that cannot yet demonstrate financial soundness, a temporary dwelling (in the form of a caravan, mobile home or wooden structure that can easily be dismantled and removed from the site) may be acceptable provided all the other criteria are met

Where a new dwelling is permitted, the occupancy will be restricted by condition to ensure that it is occupied by a person, or persons currently or last employed in local agriculture, horticulture, forestry, and other rural activities, or their surviving partner or dependant(s). Applications for the removal of an occupancy condition related to rural workers will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that:

- There is no longer a need for accommodation on the holding/business and in the local area
- The property has been marketed for a reasonable period (at least 1 year) and at a price which reflects the existence of the occupancy condition and agreed with the Council as a reasonable price; and
- The dwelling has been made available to a minimum of three Registered Social Landlords operating locally on terms which would prioritise its occupation by a rural worker as an affordable dwelling - and that option has been refused.

### Alternative Option

**10.75** The alternative option is to not include a specific policy on agricultural workers dwellings within the Local Plan and instead rely on national policies within the NPPF.

### Question 41

Do you agree with the preferred policy - COM 09? Please explain your answer.

### Affordable Housing Exceptions

**10.76** The Council's current policy approach also allows development of affordable housing in rural areas where these are 100% affordable developments ("rural exceptions"). In rural areas national planning policy states that local planning authorities should be responsive to local circumstances and plan to reflect local needs, particularly affordable housing, including through rural exception sites where appropriate. The Council proposes to maintain a rural exceptions policy to help address local housing needs and ensure sufficient provision of affordable housing in the District. Changes indicated in the Housing and Planning Bill (October 2015), mean that this approach may be subject to change and review in order to comply with the indicated direction of national policy.

#### Preferred Policy Direction - COM 10 Affordable Housing Exceptions

Housing development proposals outside of the settlement boundaries in the Service Centres, and where it does not constitute infilling or rounding off in the smaller villages and hamlets without boundaries will only be considered on 'rural exception sites' provided that it meets the following criteria:

- a. It delivers 100% affordable housing for local people who are unable to obtain accommodation on the open market (defined as in national policy);
- b. The housing is justified by a Local Housing Needs Assessment or other method acceptable to the Council as agreed through the Strategic Housing Team;
- c. Proposals should be either adjacent to or well related to existing settlements;
- d. The site will remain affordable housing in perpetuity;
- e. The scheme is of a style appropriate to its immediate surroundings and scale not disproportionate to existing development;
- f. There is clear evidence of the viability of the scheme;

- g. The scheme demonstrates good design that is sympathetic to the local area and existing settlement;
- h. It provides an element of specialist housing, subject to local need.

There may be circumstances where an element of market housing could bring forward a site which would otherwise not be possible, for example where there are unusually high development costs. In such cases independent third party valuation expertise will be requested at the developer's expense in order to justify such an exception. In principle all schemes are affordable housing schemes and the Council expects that the market housing needed to deliver the site should be the minimum needed to bring forward the site and that all other funding options have been exhausted. Development of the site must be part of a comprehensive scheme, where development is brought forward as a whole.

**10.77** This Policy will enable affordable housing to come forward where a proven affordable housing need is identified. It is expected that rural exception sites will come forward on agricultural land value and in the most suitable locations identified following a sequential approach.

**10.78** In order to assist in the justification of such development from the locational strategy and assessment of suitability for applications with regard to the above policy, applicants must provide supporting justification. This includes a supporting statement around how the proposal as set out would justify the departure from the settlement hierarchy and supports sustainable development. The Statement must have regard to the requirements of the "Local List" as agreed and updated periodically by the Breckland Planning Committee.

**10.79** This list is not exhaustive and will be updated in line with Planning Committee requirements. The statement should also provide reasoned argument of how the proposal as set out is the most suitable location and how the proposal is well related to the settlement and follows a sequential approach.

**10.80** Proposals must be of a size, design and scale that seek to meet the need and the setting. Careful siting, massing, use of surrounding landscape features and screening are important as are the enhancement of existing local characteristics. The Statement should show how the site is connected to the surrounding settlement. In areas of greater landscape visibility sensitive design and landscaping is particularly important. The Council's development management service will be able to provide further guidance and comment on emerging schemes.

**10.81** Local need is based on the geographical areas and is defined in this case as that in the parish and surrounding parishes.

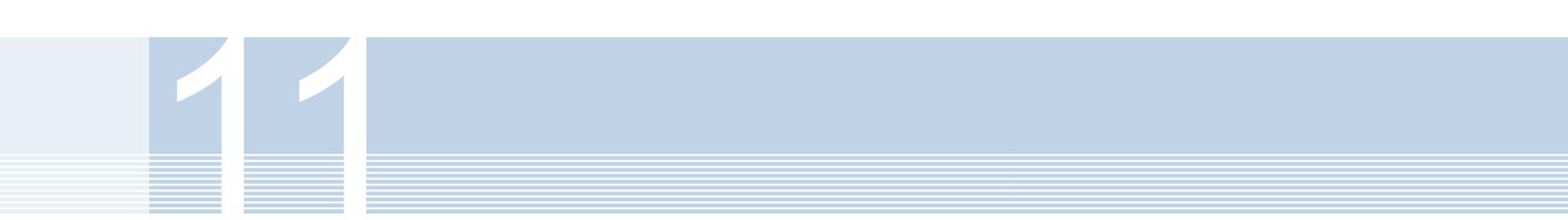
**10.82** The Local Plan also supports the development of Community Land Trusts (CLTs), Neighbourhood Plans and other Community Led Affordable Housing vehicles for the delivery of affordable housing.

### **Alternative Options**

**10.83** The alternative policy is to not include a specific policy on affordable housing exception sites within the Local Plan and instead rely on the NPPF.

### **Question 42**

Do you agree with the preferred policy - COM 10? Please explain your answer.



## 11 Implementation Strategy

**11.1** As the Infrastructure Development Plan (IDP) is emerging the Preferred Policy Direction for infrastructure is likely to develop further at the pre-submission stage. A more detailed summary of evidence base will be provided at that stage. An Interim IDP accompanies this publication.

**11.2** The appropriate infrastructure will be provided in a coordinated manner through the Council's 'Local Transport Plan' and 'Infrastructure Delivery Plan' to support the level of growth and development proposed in the Local Plan

**11.3** The purpose of monitoring and review is to assess the delivery and implementation of the new Local Plan. The Breckland Authority Monitoring Report provides a robust and effective review and monitoring approach. The proposed policies in this Preferred Options document, when fully developed at the Publication Plan stage, will be complemented by a monitoring framework to assess their effectiveness through robust monitoring mechanisms. This will allow the performance of the policies to be assessed, and to inform any changes which may be required to ensure delivery of the Plan.

## Appendix 1 - Existing adopted Core Strategy approach to the Countryside

.1 The current approach for rural settlements as adopted through the Core Strategy is identified in the tables below:

**Table .1**

Category	Settlement
Rural Settlements (with settlement boundaries)	Ashill, Bawdeswell, Beeston, Beetley, Besthorpe, Bintree, Bradenham, Brisley, Carbrooke, Caston, Cockley Cley, Colkirk, Croxton, East Tuddenham, Foulden, Foxley, Garboldisham, Garvestone, Gooderstone, Great Dunham, Gressenhall, Griston, Guist, Hockering, Hockham, Ickburgh, Kenninghall, Little Cressingham, Longham, Lyng, Mileham, New Buckenham, North Lopham, North Pickenham, Rocklands, Quidenham, Scarning, Shropham, Snetterton, Sparham, Sporle, Stanfield, Stow Bedon, Thompson, Weasenham, Whissonsett, Yaxham.

**Table .2**

Category	Settlement
Rural Settlements (with no settlement boundary) Countryside	Beachamwell, Billingford, Blo' Norton, Brettenham, Bridgham, Bylaugh, Cranwich, Cranworth, Didlington, Elsing, Gateley, Great Cressingham, Hardingham, Hilborough, Hoe, Holme Hale, Horningtoft, Kempstone, Kilverstone, Lexham, Lt Dunham, Little Ellingham, Lynford, Merton, Narford, Newton by Castle Acre, North Tuddenham, Ovington, Oxborough, Quidenham, Riddlesworth, Roudham, Rougham, Scoulton, South Acre, South Lopham, South Pickenham, Stanford, Sturston, Tottington, Twyford, Wellingham, Wendling, Whinburgh, Wretham

## Appendix 2 - Parking Standards

Table .1

Use Class of Development Proposal	Minimum Car Parking provision for Disabled Users	Minimum Car Parking provision (number of Spaces)	Minimum Cycle parking Provision (no of Spaces)
A1 , A2 and laundrettes and the retail floorspace of other uses not specifically covered elsewhere	1 per 400m <sup>2</sup>	1 per 20m <sup>2</sup>	1 per 70m <sup>2</sup>
Food Retail within A1	1 per 280m <sup>2</sup>	1 per 14m <sup>2</sup>	1 per 70m <sup>2</sup>
A3 and A4	1 per 100m <sup>2</sup>	1 per 5m <sup>2</sup>	1 per 25m <sup>2</sup> plus 1 per 4 staff
A5	1 per 100m <sup>2</sup>	1 per 3m <sup>2</sup>	1 per 25m <sup>2</sup> plus 1 per 4 staff
B1	1 per 600m <sup>2</sup>	1 per 30m <sup>2</sup>	1 per 36m <sup>2</sup>
B2	1 per 1200m <sup>2</sup>	1 per 60m <sup>2</sup>	1 per 60m <sup>2</sup>
B8 and outside growing and storage areas of garden centres	1 per 2000m <sup>2</sup>	1 per 100m <sup>2</sup>	1 per 80m <sup>2</sup>
C1	1 car space for disabled users per 20 bedrooms	1 per bedroom	1 per 5 bedrooms plus 1 per 4 staff
C2	1 car space for disabled users per 10 other car spaces	1 per 3 beds or 1 per dwelling unit plus 1 per 2 staff	1 per 20 beds plus 1 per 4 staff
C3	In Line with Preferred Direction PD Com 06	Minimum of 2 spaces per dwelling	None for houses with garages or private gardens 1 per dwelling for all other dwellings
D1	1 car space for disabled users per 10 other car spaces plus drop-off/pick-up point plus additional space for ambulance parking/drop-off.	1 per staff plus 2 per consulting room	1 per 4 staff plus 1 per consulting room

<b>Use Class of Development Proposal</b>	<b>Minimum Car Parking provision for Disabled Users</b>	<b>Minimum Car Parking provision (number of Spaces)</b>	<b>Minimum Cycle parking Provision (no of Spaces)</b>
Day Care Centres	1 car space for disabled users per 10 other car spaces plus drop-off/pick-up point	1 per staff plus 1 per 4 persons attending	1 per 100m <sup>2</sup> plus 1 per 4 staff
Creches and Nurseries	1 car space for disabled users per 20 other car spaces plus drop-off/pick-up point	1 per full time equivalent staff plus drop-off/pick-up point	1 per 15 children plus 1 per 4 staff
Primary and Secondary Schools	1 car space for disabled users per 20 other car spaces plus drop-off/pick-up point plus public transport provision	1 per 2 staff	1 per 5 children plus 1 per 4 staff
Higher and Further Education	1 car space for disabled users per 20 other car spaces plus drop-off/pick-up point plus public transport provision	1 per 2 staff plus 1 per 15 students plus drop-off/pick-up point plus public transport provision	1 per 3 students plus 1 per 4 staff
Art galleries, Museums, Public/Exhibition halls and Libraries	1 car space for disabled users per 600m <sup>2</sup> plus drop-off/pick-up point	1 per 30m <sup>2</sup>	1 per 30m <sup>2</sup> plus 1 per 4 staff
Places of Worship	1 car space for disabled users per 200m <sup>2</sup>	1 per 10m <sup>2</sup>	1 per 10m <sup>2</sup>
D2	1 car space for disabled users per 440m <sup>2</sup> plus bus/coach drop-off/pick-up point	1 per 22m <sup>2</sup>	1 per 20 seats or 1 per 75m <sup>2</sup> plus 1 per 4 staff
Motor service centres	1 car space for disabled users per 600m <sup>2</sup>	1 per 30m <sup>2</sup>	1 per 4 staff
Motor vehicle showrooms	1 car space for disabled users per 900m <sup>2</sup>	1 per 45m <sup>2</sup>	1 per 4 staff