

# Breckland District Council Local Plan FAQs

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# Breckland District Council Local Plan FAQs

## 1) General including Local Plan process, procedure and timing

### What is a Local Plan?

A Local Plan is a district-wide plan which identifies the vision and aspirations for the future of an area, planning policies, and allocations identifying the sites or areas which can be developed and those which should be protected. Our Draft Local Plan will help shape future development in Breckland District over the next 20 years up to 2036 and sets out the level and distribution of growth, including new homes and businesses.

The Local Plan also sets out sites and areas of the District that must be protected from development. It also includes the development management policies to be used to assess planning applications as they come forward, to ensure that they deliver a high standard of development.

### Why do we need a Local Plan?

Having a Local Plan is a necessary part of creating a robust planning framework to support the future development of the District. Without it, the Council would lose the ability to secure and co-ordinate the development and infrastructure that are needed. Once adopted the Local Plan will set the strategic vision and framework for planning decisions within Breckland up until 2036. It will also allocate land uses needed to achieve these objectives.

The Government has made it clear that if Councils fail to prepare and keep up to date a Local Plan then they will do it for us, and re-charge the Council the costs. Government has also indicated that it will hold back various grants the Council receives from Government, affecting our ability to cost effectively provide existing Council services.

### Doesn't Breckland already have a Local Plan?

The Council's current Local Plan comprises the following separate documents: Core Strategy and Development Control Policies adopted in 2009; the Site Specific Policies and Proposals 2012 and the Thetford Area Action Plan which was also adopted in 2012. Most of the policies in these documents are still in force but since the National Planning Policy Framework was published in 2012 some are now out of date, and have been superseded by new policies. We now need to develop an up-to-date Local Plan to meet Breckland's future potential, planning for the next 20 years.

### Will I have an opportunity to comment on the Draft Plan?

Yes. Following endorsement at Breckland District's Full Council at its meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2017 the Draft Local Plan has now been published for a 6-week period to enable representations to be made up until 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2017.

The publication of the Local Plan will be carried out in accordance with the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement. This requires the Council to:

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- Notify all general and specific consultees of the publication period (including Town and Parish Councils).
- Notify all people who have requested to be included on the Council's consultation database.
- Place an advert within the Eastern Daily Press advertising the publication.

At this stage representations should be limited to “soundness” issues. The Draft Plan will then be submitted for an examination to be held conducted by an independent planning Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State. Soundness representations will be considered alongside the Draft Plan.

A copy of the Draft Local Plan is *available on the Planning Policy Document Library page* (<https://www.breckland.gov.uk/article/4313/Documents-Library-Publications>), and you will also be able to leave your comments via the consultation portal (<http://consult.breckland.gov.uk/portal>) or via the representation forms (<https://www.breckland.gov.uk/pre-submission-publication>).

### **What are the next steps in the Local Plan process?**

The publication of the Local Plan enables representations to be made during a six-week period enabling stakeholders and members of the public the opportunity to comment on the soundness of the plan. The ‘soundness’ comments received will then be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for the Inspector appointed to consider the Local Plan to take into account.

The draft Local Plan, supporting documentation and all comments received during this consultation will then be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for independent examination later in the year. It is likely that a Public Examination will then take place late 2017 or early 2018, subject to the Planning Inspectorate’s timetable. If the draft Local Plan is considered to be ‘sound’ by the Planning Inspectorate it will then be formally adopted by the Council.

### **Especially it is the summer holiday time will the Council extend the period allowed for comments?**

No. The six-week period allowed is a statutory one that the Council is obliged to keep to. Only representations received during this period will be considered by the Inspector appointed to examine the plan. It is important to remember that this stage is not a general consultation on the draft Local Plan but allows respondents to give their views on how ‘sound’ the plan is.

### **What does ‘soundness’ actually mean?**

Publication of the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan seeks views on whether the plan is sound. This essentially means that the plan must be shown to have been positively prepared, justified as being the most appropriate strategy, effective in

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terms of being deliverable over the plan period and consistent with national policy in enabling delivery of sustainable development.

### Where is the requirement and meaning of the soundness tests set out?

Paragraph 182 of the NPPF sets out the tests of soundness, which are that the plan is:

*Positively prepared* – the plan should be prepared based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements, including unmet requirements from neighbouring authorities where it is reasonable to do so and consistent with achieving sustainable development.

*Justified* – the plan should be the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate evidence

*Effective* – the plan should be deliverable over its period and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic priorities

*Consistent with national policy* – the plan should enable the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the Framework

### What is the public examination process?

The Local Plan will be submitted to the Secretary of State for consideration. This is the formal process as part of adopting a Local Plan for any authority. An independent Planning Inspector will consider the Plan against a set of pre-determined criteria to see if it is viewed as ‘sound’. If it is, it will be sent back to Full Council to be formally adopted. If it isn’t, it will go back to the Council to consider the need for changes to be made.

### Where can I find out more about the Local Plan?

We will be making information about the proposed Draft Local Plan available through a number of sources over the six-week representations period. The quickest and easiest way to read the Draft Local Plan will be via the Our Local Plan page from 21<sup>st</sup> August. Comments and feedback can be submitted during the 6 week period (21<sup>st</sup> August to 2<sup>nd</sup> October).

There will also be a number of unmanned information points across the District. These will be available between 21<sup>st</sup> August and 2<sup>nd</sup> October.

### Attleborough:

- Attleborough Library, 31 Connaught Road, Attleborough, Norfolk, NR17 2BW: <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/libraries-local-history-and-archives/libraries/your-local-library/locations-and-opening-times/attleborough-library>
- Community and Enterprise Centre, Church Street, Attleborough, Norfolk, NR17 2AH: <https://www.breckland.gov.uk/visitus>

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### Dereham:

- Breckland Council, Elizabeth House, Walpole Loke, Dereham, Norfolk, NR19 1EE:  
<https://www.breckland.gov.uk/>
- Dereham Library, 59 High Street, Dereham, Norfolk, NR19 1DZ:  
<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/libraries-local-history-and-archives/libraries/your-local-library/locations-and-opening-times/dereham-library>

### Swaffham:

- Swaffham Library, The Pightle, Swaffham, Norfolk, PE37 7DF:  
<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/libraries-local-history-and-archives/libraries/your-local-library/locations-and-opening-times/swaffham-library>
- Town Hall, London Street, Swaffham, Norfolk, PE37 7DQ:  
<http://www.swaffhamtowncouncil.gov.uk/community/swaffham-town-council-12923/town-hall-facilities/>

### Thetford:

- Thetford Library, Raymond Street, Thetford, Norfolk, IP24 2EA:  
<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/libraries-local-history-and-archives/libraries/your-local-library/locations-and-opening-times/thetford-library>
- Breckland House, St Nicholas Street, Thetford, Norfolk, IP24 1BT:  
<https://www.breckland.gov.uk/visitus>

### Watton:

- Watton Library, George Trollope Road, Watton, Norfolk, IP25 6AS:  
<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/libraries-local-history-and-archives/libraries/your-local-library/locations-and-opening-times/watton-library>
- Wayland House, High Street, Watton, IP25 6AR:  
<https://www.breckland.gov.uk/visitus>

For further information please contact the Planning Policy Team on 01362 656870 or e-mail [planningpolicyteam@breckland.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicyteam@breckland.gov.uk)

**[What stage are we at now and what's next?](#)**

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- Issues and Options (Reg 18) 28<sup>th</sup> November 2014 to 9<sup>th</sup> January 2015
- Preferred Directions (Reg 18): 11<sup>th</sup> January to 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2016
- Preferred Sites and Settlement Boundaries (Reg 18): 19<sup>th</sup> September to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2016
- Pre-Submission Publication (Reg 19): August 21<sup>st</sup> to October 2<sup>nd</sup>
- Submission: October 2017 (Dependent upon Planning Inspectorate)
- Examination: January 2018 (Dependent upon Planning Inspectorate)
- Adoption: April 2018 (Dependent upon Planning Inspectorate)

Significant work has gone into the preparation of the new Local Plan for Breckland, which has led to the production of the document. The preparation of this document has included 29 meetings of the Council's Local Plan Working Group (LPWG), which has included meetings held at venues across the District. During the consultation stage we sought views on what we considered to be the most appropriate approach to deal with the issues we have identified throughout the Local Plan process, as well as draft policies intended to deal with future applications for development). The three Regulation 18 consultations during the preparation of the document generated over 5,000 comments on the plan from both members of the public and statutory consultees.

In addition, 680 sites have been submitted to the Council for consideration for inclusion within the Local Plan for residential, employment and retail uses. These suggested sites and comments alongside a further 32 public events and numerous parish council meetings have all informed the preparation of the current Draft Plan.

We are now at the Regulation 19 publication stage with the version of the Local Plan that the Council would like to submit for external examination. It has to be published for a statutory six-week period. This is an opportunity to make representations on the, 'soundness' of the Local Plan, i.e. whether the Council has followed the correct procedures and stages as set out by Planning legislation. Following the six-week publication period, the authority is required to produce a summary of the main issues raised by the representations.

The Council will then submit the Draft Local Plan to the Planning Inspector for Independent Examination over the autumn / winter, and subject to any alterations required by the Inspector, we then aim to adopt the new Local Plan by Spring (in April) 2018.

### **Can I get a copy of the Draft Local Plan document in an alternative format?**

Yes. If you need copies of any of the documents in large print, Braille or in another language, please contact us on 01362 656878 (between 10am and 4pm on weekdays, or leave a message outside these hours).

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The Draft Local Plan can be downloaded and printed from the consultation website.

### What consultation has there been on the Draft Local Plan so far?

The emerging Local Plan has been subject to significant consultation during its preparation. Following an evidence gathering process, we held the Issues and Options consultation between 17<sup>th</sup> November 2014 and 9<sup>th</sup> January 2015. This consultation sought to discuss the viable options available for the Local Plan and seek views on each of the options. During this period the Council also carried out several 'call for sites' exercises which allowed developers, landowners and other interested parties the opportunity to submit site suggestions for site options, (such as for housing, employment and other uses), which they wished the Council to consider for future development within the District as part of the Local plan process. You can view the full consultation documents here:

<https://www.breckland.gov.uk/article/4313/Documents-Library-Publications>

Building on the responses received to the Issues and Options consultation we then held three further consultations. Between 11th January and 22nd February 2016 the Council carried out its Preferred Directions (Regulation 18) consultation on the Local Plan. This set out the Council's preferred directions and options on a range of strategic topics explaining the reasons why these options are being suggested. Where alternative options were considered it also explained why these were not being put

Between 19th September and 31st October 2016 the Council carried out its Preferred Site Options and Settlement Boundaries (Regulation 18) consultation on the development hierarchy, preferred sites, Snetterton employment area and the approach to rural areas including alterations to settlement boundaries. Informed by a series of Local Plan Working Group meetings around the District, this document provided details on the emerging preferred and alternative sites.

## 2) Housing

### What is the District's Objectively Assessed Housing Need?

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires the Council to plan to meet the full objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the District as far as is consistent with other policies in the NPPF. The Central Norfolk Strategic Housing Market Assessment (CNSHMA) (2017) forms the key evidence base for the housing target within the Local Plan. It has recently been updated by the five Central Norfolk authorities (Breckland, Broadland, North Norfolk, Norwich and South Norfolk) to reflect the updated population projections released by Government.

The updated CNSHMA has revised the objectively assessed need (OAN) for Breckland over the plan period 2011-2036. The revised housing target reflects household formation rates in Breckland which have been high over the period 2011-2016. It is intended that the Local Plan meets the whole OAN for the District through

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commitments, completions, new housing allocations and sites which have the decision to grant subject to completion of section 106 agreements.

### **What is the District's Housing Target?**

Between 2011 and 2036, the Council has been set a housing target to provide a minimum of 612 homes per year - or 15,298 new homes over the plan period. The Local Plan sets out ways of achieving this by identifying possible sites for new homes and other development. The majority of these will be delivered on brownfield land (previously developed) sites.

The total provision is 648 units above OAN so as to provide a small buffer against which the Local Plan Inspector will be able to assess delivery.

### **Where has the housing target in the Draft Local Plan come from?**

The Council has worked closely over a number of years with four of our neighbouring authorities (Broadland, North Norfolk, Norwich and South Norfolk District Councils) to produce a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). The assessment identifies the objectively assessed housing need taking into account population projections, affordable housing needs and jobs growth. The current figure for additional new homes within the SHMA area up until 2036 is approximately 60,350 homes, of which approximately 15,300 are proposed within Breckland District.

### **How soon will these homes be built?**

Throughout the Local Plan period from 2011 up until 2036. This means that a number of these new homes have already been completed and others are under construction or have already secured planning permission. The Draft Local Plan includes a Housing Trajectory ([add link](#)) which provides details of when houses are planned to be built.

### **What is the District's Housing Trajectory?**

The housing trajectory includes a stepped approach to the housing requirement, whereby there is a lower housing requirement for the early years of the plan, before increasing at the end of the plan. It takes account of the 2017 updated Central Norfolk SHMA.

A stepped housing trajectory is considered appropriate within Breckland. The locational strategy includes the two Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUE's), one within Thetford which has the benefit of planning permission and the other within Attleborough. Reflecting likely build out rates within the sites, the delivery periods for the two SUE's (as set out within the Infrastructure Delivery Plan) extend beyond the end of the Local Plan period in 2036. There are also significant infrastructure and land assembly requirements associated with the development of the SUE's, which means that their delivery is not anticipated to start until further into the plan period. Therefore, a stepped housing trajectory allows for the slower initial delivery rates of the SUE's to be taken into account at the start of the plan period (post adoption) and then increase as the SUE's begin to deliver units.

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### **What other plans does the Council have to create more housing?**

The Council is working very hard to increase housing and is looking at a number of ways to encourage development across the District. Like many other Councils we suffered the impact on the development of housing due to conditions in the housing market brought about by the recession.

Creating more homes, including affordable homes, is a priority for us and we know that it's important to building a sustainable future for the District. We must find sites for new housing but at the same time make sure development is as balanced as possible.

### **How many new homes will be developed over the plan period?**

The Draft Local Plan states that Breckland District Council's housing requirement is to provide each year a minimum of 612 net additional new homes over the Local Plan period from 2011 until 2036. This figure has been established following work undertaken by external consultants (Opinion Research Services) appointed by the Council, together with four of our neighbouring authorities (Broadland, North Norfolk, Norwich and South Norfolk District Councils).

### **Will all of the new homes be built straight away?**

No. They will need to be phased, together with infrastructure provision to support the development, across the plan period up to 2036. The Local Plan will also set out when individual developments are anticipated to commence and be completed.

### **How did you decide where to locate the new homes?**

The previous consultation feedback told us that we should consider allocating sites in existing settlements, close to services and the transport network. The technical site selection work identified which of the sites put forward in and around each of the settlements were appropriate for inclusion the Draft Local Plan.

The strategic urban extension sites (Thetford and Attleborough SUEs) identified in Chapter 2 of the Local Plan are proposed allocations for residential development and will contribute towards meeting Breckland District Council's housing need.

### **Are 'brownfield' land sites being prioritised for new housing and employment?**

Yes. The Council recognises and supports the importance of pursuing sustainable development for the District. In line with National Planning Policy and good planning practice, the site selection work and other technical assessments looked at brownfield sites first for proposed allocations in the Draft Local Plan.

### **Does the Council have a five-year supply of housing land?**

No. The Council's five year land supply statement shows that the Council is unable to currently demonstrate a five year land supply for the period 2017 - 2022. The annualised housing requirement over this period has been calculated as 776 dwellings and the total 5 year supply (comprising sites with planning permission, allocations and windfalls) shows that 3,605 dwellings are expected to be built. This means that there is 4.6 years worth supply of housing land.

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### **What is the Council doing about not being able to demonstrate a five year supply?**

The Council recognises that steps need to be taken to remedy the situation. The emerging Local Plan is key to resolving the current position; a number of allocations for housing development will be made on land that would not currently be considered suitable. However, on adoption these will form part of the Council's forward looking supply. In addition, the Council will consider favourably development on sustainable sites which fall immediately adjacent to settlement boundaries which meet the relevant requirements of the Development Plan in order to boost the supply of housing in the short term.

### **How will the Council ensure that there is enough affordable housing in the District?**

On sites which provide 11 or more new homes (or exceed 1000sqm) the Council will seek to ensure that a minimum of 25% of these are affordable. Affordable homes will include homes which are provided for affordable rent, starter homes for first time buyers and also intermediate housing which includes an element of rent and purchase.

### **Have all sites put forward through the call for sites exercise been included in the Draft Local Plan?**

No. All sites put forward following the 'call for sites' have been subject to assessment in to look at their suitability, deliverability and availability for potential development.

### **What is the Council doing about self-build / custom build housing?**

The Council is supportive of self-build housing. Local authorities are required to keep a register of individuals and associations who are interested in acquiring serviced plots for self and custom build housing. Breckland District Council's register is on the Council's website (<http://apps.west-norfolk.gov.uk/custombuildregister/?s=3>). Draft Policy HOU 06 in the Draft Local Plan setting out principles for new housing includes the Council's proposed policy for future housing locations, mix and accommodation types, including for self-build and custom build housing.

### **What about Gypsies and Travellers? Has the Council completed an up to date assessment of needs and are additional sites being identified in the Local Plan?**

The Council has produced a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment (GTANA) in 2016. This indicates that over the Local Plan period (from 2011-2036) the Council needs to provide an additional 10 pitches and 2 plots for travelling showpeople. Work is being undertaken exploring the potential to extend existing sites and regularise any unauthorised sites that are considered suitable.

### **Why do we need housing and employment growth in Breckland District?**

The population of the District is increasing and changing. People are living longer, and the number of single occupancy households continues to increase, whilst the cost of housing continues to rise making it unaffordable for a significant number of people.

Like all local authorities, Breckland District Council is required to consider up to date population and household projections, which have identified the need for more housing, including affordable and assisted living facilities. There is also an identified need for the local economy to provide jobs and services for local residents and for these to be provided close to where people live.

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### **What is the Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (HELAA)?**

The Council's Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) ([add link](#)) provides an assessment of the potential for sites across the District to be developed. Importantly the HELAA is not policy, and does not determine whether or not planning permission will be granted on individual sites. The primary role of the HELAA is to provide evidence to help inform plan making. It assesses a wide range of sites which have been put forward to the Council by landowners since 2008 for potential inclusion within the Local Plan following 'call for sites' requests. The HELAA looks not only at potential land for housing but also at potential land for employment (including retail) and leisure.

### **Will employment sites also be considered for residential development?**

Further work will be undertaken on site selection for employment sites. Where a site is being promoted for either employment or residential use, it will be assessed for both uses.

## **3) Infrastructure**

### **My area is already overdeveloped and the infrastructure cannot cope with more new homes. Why can't the new development go somewhere else?**

The Council is required to plan for enough new homes and jobs in the District to meet future needs as part of the new Local Plan. The proposed level of housing and employment development in the new Draft Local Plan must be supported by the appropriate level of infrastructure, such as new schools, GP surgeries and road improvements. A separate Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) has been prepared to make sure that the infrastructure will be in place to support growth in all areas of the District.

During the plan period up until to 2036 it is proposed that the majority of new residential development will be focused around the Attleborough (2,650 new dwellings) and Thetford (3,250) SUEs and that in accordance with the proposed sustainable settlement hierarchy (outlined in Draft Local Plan Policy GEN 03) the remainder will be accommodated in other settlements across the District. Feedback from the earlier Local Plan consultations clearly showed that people supported the SUEs and more generally wanted an even distribution of the remainder of new development across the District and close to services.

With regards to the SUEs, post 2036, beyond the plan period, a further 3,100 net new dwellings are anticipated – 1,350 at Attleborough and 1,750 at Thetford.

### **What about the infrastructure implications of new development?**

The Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) (2016) considers existing infrastructure deficiencies and the additional infrastructure required to support the growing population. The IDP informs the Local Plan process and is intended to be a live document that is regularly updated as new information becomes available.

### **Will you be providing additional school and doctor places to accommodate new residents to the district?**

Yes, the Council recognises that it is essential to ensure that new development is served by the necessary infrastructure to an appropriate level and at an appropriate

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time. As part of the Council's evidence base a Draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) has been produced in consultation with key infrastructure providers and delivery partners setting out the range, scale, location, funding arrangements and timing of the additional infrastructure needs to support the anticipated growth across the district over the plan period. This will be refined further after the Local Plan has been examined and then periodically thereafter to ensure that the information within it remains correct and up to date.

### **In some cases existing infrastructure can't cope so how are we going to manage with all the additional people?**

The Local Plan is clear that infrastructure requirements needed to support new development must be delivered at a rate and scale to meet the needs of proposed development. New development must be served and supported by appropriate on and off-site infrastructure and services and promoters of schemes will be required to make appropriate contributions. As part of the supporting evidence base the Council has produced a Draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan which sets out the detailed infrastructure requirements.

### **Concerns have been raised about traffic, will this be considered?**

The Council has undertaken additional Transport Assessments for Dereham and the surrounding area to assess traffic impacts. These Assessments demonstrate that the road system will be able to accommodate the proposed levels of development and the additional traffic on the road.

It should also be noted that the Local Plan (see Draft Local Plan Policy TR 01) aims to deliver a safer more sustainable and efficient transport network which seeks to minimise the need to travel; support improvements to road and rail connections; reduce car dependency and encourage more sustainable forms of transport such as walking and cycling.

## **4) Working with other Authorities and the Town & Parish Councils**

### **What is the 'Duty to Cooperate' and why do we have to work with neighbouring authorities?**

The Duty to Co-operate was first set out in the Localism Act 2011 (which amended the Town and Country Planning Act 2004) following the abolition of regional planning. It places a legal duty on local planning authorities to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis with other nearby Councils and relevant organisations to ensure that Local Plans are prepared to take into account cross-boundary matters. Whilst the Duty to Co-operate is not a duty to agree, Councils should try to secure necessary cooperation on strategic cross boundary matters before they submit their Local Plans for examination.

Local Planning Authorities are therefore expected to demonstrate evidence of having effectively cooperated with key partners on cross-boundary strategic policy impacts when their local plans are submitted for examination. It is important that co-operation is a continuous process of engagement. The Council has produced a Duty to Co-operate Statement which has been circulated to all duty to co-operate bodies and will be submitted as part of the Local Plan supporting documentation and considered by the Inspector appointed to undertake the examination.

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### **How have you taken account of emerging neighbourhood plans?**

We are aware that a number of Parish and Town Councils within the District are preparing neighbourhood plans for their areas. Whilst the Council will support the preparation and production of these plans, they must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the Local Plan and also in line with national planning guidance.

Once made, (following successful examination and referendum), Neighbourhood Plans will be used to determine planning applications alongside the Local Plan. Further details on Neighbourhood Planning in the District can be found here: <https://www.breckland.gov.uk/article/4284/Neighbourhood-Plans>.

### **What account has been taken of the Habitats Regulations?**

Regulation 85B of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 requires Plan-making authorities to determine whether a plan is likely to have a significant effect upon any European site as defined by the Regulations. In considering the implications of the Local Plan document for European sites, an Appropriate Assessment has been undertaken in order to comply with the Habitats Regulations 2010.

## **5) Areas and Sites to be Developed**

### **Where is new development being focussed?**

Over the plan period the Council needs to provide for approximately 15,300 new homes in the District. In order to meet this level of growth the Draft Local Plan seeks to allocate a number of sites across the District. The proposed development will be focussed around Thetford and Attleborough strategic urban extensions (SUEs) and also in and adjacent to the other settlements across the District.

### **How did you assess all the potential sites that have been suggested for development?**

All of the sites suggested had to be at least 0.1 hectares and above for sites suggested for residential use, they also had to be able to accommodate 5 or more dwellings in villages and 10 or more dwellings in market towns.

Once this threshold had been applied, the remaining sites were assessed against a wide range of criteria, which included matters such as impact on The Brecks (an Internationally Protected Site), the countryside, access, traffic impact and landscape sensitivity.

The Site Selection Report used a total of 19 different criteria to assess the sites put forward. Not all of the criteria applied to all sites – certain criteria only applied to sites assessed for housing use, and certain criteria only applied to sites assessed for employment use.

A full list of the criteria, and which land uses they applied to, can be found in the Site Selection Topic Paper, which can be found on our document library page here: <https://www.breckland.gov.uk/article/4313/Documents-Library-Publications>

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### **How did the Council decide how much development should take place in each settlement?**

In order to provide the range and choice of employment sites needed to meet economic need and demand over the plan period the Employment Growth Study and Land Review ([https://www.breckland.gov.uk/media/1960/Employment-Growth-Study-and-Land-Review-2013/pdf/13559\\_Breckland\\_EGS\\_Final\\_Report\\_29\\_11\\_13](https://www.breckland.gov.uk/media/1960/Employment-Growth-Study-and-Land-Review-2013/pdf/13559_Breckland_EGS_Final_Report_29_11_13)) shows which sites have been assessed for each settlement, and the proposed capacity of these sites. Draft Local Plan Policy EC 01 sets out the amount (67 hectares) and proposed locational distribution of additional employment land that will need to be allocated over the plan period. Most of this will need to be accommodated in Thetford (22ha), Snetterton (20ha) and Attleborough (10ha). The final 'totals' for each settlement were arrived at by looking at the number of suitable and deliverable sites in that settlement, and what was considered the best fit for each settlement, taking into account the findings from previous consultation. Other evidence documents, including the Settlement Capacity Study and XX Study informed our decisions on what scale of development was suitable for each settlement.

## **6) Impact on the Communities**

### **Has the Council undertaken a Sustainability Appraisal of the Draft Local Plan?**

Yes. All new development plan documents need to be subject to Sustainability Appraisal (SA). This incorporates a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), which is required under European legislation for all plans which may have a significant effect on the environment/economy/society.

In 2014 the Council undertook an initial interim Sustainability Appraisal which was published alongside the Issues and Options Consultation Draft Local Plan. Work on the Sustainability Appraisal has continued alongside preparation of the Draft Local Plan, and a further Interim Sustainability Appraisal and non-technical summary is published alongside this Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan.

### **What is a Sustainability Appraisal? What does it show and what's its purpose?**

Supporting the Draft Local Plan document, the Council has to prepare a Sustainability Appraisal Report. This Report sets out a thorough baseline of Breckland data and evidence which demonstrates what is important and/or unique in Breckland in terms of the economy, society and the environment. The Report also considers the implications of other plans, policies and programmes and where there are land use dimensions which the Local Plan can help deliver.

The Sustainability Appraisal Report considers the social, economic and environmental impacts of the Local Plan and provides an essential tool in ensuring the policies and allocations represent the most sustainable option. It provides confirmation that the approach taken in the Local Plan is the most sustainable. The baseline has informed 19 sustainability objectives against which all reasonable options have been assessed and from which preferred options have been identified. T

The Sustainability Appraisal Report needs to be presented as part of the proposed Submission publication and will be a key consideration when the document is exam-

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ined. It will provide scope for the Inspector to look at the potential outcomes of alternative site and settlement boundary options where there are representations that the Council should have taken forward another option. Importantly, the Report also incorporates the legal requirement for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), which is an obligatory appraisal of the environmental effects of the plan and the need to justify those policy options that have a negative effect on the environment.

Due to the size of the document (>700 pages) it is only being made available electronically with a master hard copy available at the Council Offices.

### **How is the Council providing for the ageing population?**

The Council has used up to date evidence on housing needs, including careful consideration of future population projections, to inform the production of the Draft Local Plan (see Draft Local Plan Policy HOU 09). The evidence considers the need for housing to support an ageing population, included assisted living, and care homes. The Local Plan will help to ensure that future development includes an appropriate mix of housing to meet the needs of the ageing population in the District, and that development is located in the most sustainable locations, supported by the necessary infrastructure.

### **Has the Council taken into account flood risk in producing the Local Plan?**

Yes - the Council has also carefully considered flood risk through the site selection process. In February 2017 the Council produced a Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) together with a Sequential Test Flood Risk Report which assessed all the sites proposed for allocation in the Local Plan. A Level 2 SFRA only needs to be carried out if it is shown that the Local Plan process needs to consider potential development sites that are outside of Flood Zone 1.

### **Can the existing drainage cope with the proposed new development?**

Parts of the District currently experience flooding from a range of sources – it is clearly critical to manage flood risk in order to minimise harm to people and property. Therefore, the Council has sought to avoid development in areas at risk of flooding and ensure the provision of flood mitigation measures so as to manage water run-off. Prior to permitting any new development the Council will need to be satisfied that the water drainage and sewerage arrangements are satisfactory.

### **Will there be more roads built in the District to cope with additional traffic from the development?**

In preparing the Draft Local Plan the Council has worked closely with neighbouring authorities and Norfolk County Council to undertake transport assessments to support emerging Local Plans. Further detailed assessments will provide information on the need for transport improvements to support growth within our District. Proposing homes in sustainable locations and improving public transport and parking standards are also key in reducing additional traffic from new development.

### **What are you doing to encourage the survival of the town and district centres across Breckland District?**

The District has a number of market towns and distinctive smaller local centres that serve their local communities and provide a good range of independent traders as

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well as national multiples. Through the Local Plan policies, the Council seeks to support the future vitality and viability of all the District's centres, including by encouraging a range of town centre uses.

### 7) Employment

#### **How many new jobs will be needed over the plan period?**

Supplementary work on Employment Land is currently being completed. Consultants have identified a need for an additional 67 hectares of employment land over the plan period up until 2036. The Council has undertaken two employment studies in 2013 and 2017 to inform the Draft Local Plan. An updated retail study was then also produced for the District in 2014 with a subsequent addendum added in 2017.

#### **How did the Council select the preferred Employment Sites?**

The strategy for supporting the economic needs of the District will be delivered through retaining, and where necessary enhancing and renewing existing employment sites as well as allocating additional employment sites through the Local Plan. Further work will be undertaken on site selection for employment sites using a robust site assessment methodology

([https://www.breckland.gov.uk/media/3843/Site-Selection-Topic-Paper/pdf/Sites\\_Selection\\_Topic\\_Paper\\_Final](https://www.breckland.gov.uk/media/3843/Site-Selection-Topic-Paper/pdf/Sites_Selection_Topic_Paper_Final)).

#### **What types of employment will be on these sites?**

The Council is seeking to ensure a sustainable local economy providing jobs for residents, encouraging new start-ups as well as the growth of existing local businesses through providing a range of flexible and affordable business facilities. The types of employment we should cater for in our District are outlined in the 2016 employment studies.

### 8) Other

#### **Does the Draft Plan have maps showing where the new developments will go?**

As part of the Local Plan it is necessary to revise the policies maps. Policies maps are an obligatory part of the adopted development plan comprising the area base map depicting allocated sites for a particular land use and development proposals and sets out the area(s) to which specific policies apply.

A full set of policies maps will be published alongside the Local Plan during the pre-submission period and then submitted to the Secretary of State.

#### **Has the Council produced an updated timetable outlining the timings for producing the plan?**

Local Authorities are required to prepare a Local Development Scheme (LDS) that specifies:

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- The documents which are to be local development documents
- The subject matter and geographical area to which each document relates
- The timetable for the preparation and revision of the documents

The future milestones for the Local Plan, as set out within the LDS, are as follows:

- Pre-submission Publication (regulation 19): w/c August 21st – October 2017
- Submission to the Planning Inspectorate: October 2017
- Examination in Public: January 2018
- Adoption: April 2018

However, it is important to note that following submission of the document to the Planning Inspectorate, the timetable for the examination will be dependent on them.

### **What supporting evidence has been produced by the Council and is this available to see and comment on?**

Significant supporting evidence is required to accompany the Local Plan and provide robust justification for policies in order to ensure a successful Examination and the Local Plan being found 'sound'.

In addition to the Local Plan Pre-Submission Document itself the Local Planning regulations require that the following documents are made available during the six week period:

- Sustainability Appraisal Report
- Habitats Regulation Assessment
- Policies Maps
- A statement setting out:
  - i) Who was invited to be involved in the plan preparation
  - ii) How they were invited to be involved in the plan preparation
  - iii) A summary of the main issues and how they have been addressed.
- Any other supporting documents relevant to the preparation of the Development Document

The evidence base around, housing, employment and retail, the environment and infrastructure will all be submitted to the Secretary of State alongside the Local Plan. In addition to this, the Council is preparing a number of topic papers which seek to explain the process behind key local issues.

These will also form part of the evidence base, and include:

- Local Service Centre Topic Paper
- Housing Topic Paper
- Site Selection Topic Paper
- Optional Technical Standards (Housing) Topic Paper