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Contents

Introduction A

A Introduction

Foreword

by Councillor Vivienne Spikings, Cabinet Member for Development.



It is vital that we plan how best to manage future growth so that we protect the area's character, provide suitable housing for future generations and support economic growth.

This Plan puts the flesh on the bones of the already adopted Core Strategy, and shows in detail how the Council sees development proceeding over the next 12 years, and how decisions on planning applications should be judged.

The Plan is the result of years of work, including considering over 1300 housing sites and thousands of comments from individuals and organisations in several rounds of consultation. The Council has had to make some very difficult decisions, and inevitably not everyone will agree with all the choices made. However, the Council considers this Plan to represent the best way forward in the long term interests of West Norfolk and its residents and businesses as a whole.

People now have the opportunity to submit representations on the Council's Plan, to indicate which elements of the plan they support or disagree. These will be passed to an independent planning inspector who will judge whether the Council can adopt the plan, and whether any further changes must first be made to it.

Part 1 Introduction

What is the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan?

A.0.1 The Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan gives effect to and complements the adopted Core Strategy. It allocates land to deliver the development requirements of the Core Strategy, such as housing, employment, recreation, green spaces, community and leisure uses. Additionally, it includes development management policies which apply across the Borough and these will be used when determining planning applications.

A.0.2 Once adopted the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan will sit alongside the already adopted Core Strategy to form the Local Plan for the Borough. Its policies will guide development in the Borough for the period up to 2026. Formally the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan will be a 'development plan document' under the Planning Acts and is in conformity with the strategic policies in the Core Strategy and consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework.

A.0.3 The Core Strategy sets out the scale of growth and broad distribution for the Borough. The Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan will help achieve this through the following main measures:

- Determining the most appropriate detailed distribution of housing between individual settlements and locations (within the overall structure specified in the Core Strategy);
- Allocation of specific sites for housing and other uses;
- Defining development boundaries for settlements where general development is likely to be acceptable;
- Development management policies for particular topics or locations to guide and set standards for planning applications and appeals;
- Minor adjustments and corrections to the Core Strategy.

Documents and Information

A.0.4 Documents are available to view on the Council's website at <http://www.west-norfolk.gov.uk/>. Paper copies of this plan are also available for inspection at the Borough Council's offices and at libraries across the Borough. Compact discs with all the documents are available. Please telephone 01553 616420 or 01553 616573 or email ldf@west-norfolk.gov.uk.

A Introduction

The Role of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan

A.0.5 The Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan will, once adopted, form part of the Borough's Local Plan (formerly known as Local Development Framework), the major part of the development plan for the area. The development plan (which also includes any adopted neighbourhood plans) has a special status, in that it is the starting point for the determination of all planning applications and appeals. These must be decided in accordance with the development plan unless there are good planning reasons not to do so (e.g. other planning considerations, or changed circumstances including newer national policies).

A.0.6 The Local Plan for King's Lynn and West Norfolk currently consists of just the 2011 Core Strategy (plus a small number of policies left over from the 1998 Local Plan), but it was always intended that this would be elaborated by another plan providing site allocations and more detailed policies. (At the time preparation of the Core Strategy was undertaken, Government encouraged local planning authorities to produce these as separate, successive documents, but this is no longer the case.)

A.0.7 Core Strategy – The Core Strategy sets out the spatial planning framework for the development of the Borough up to 2026, and provides guidance on the scale and location of future development in the Borough. It contains strategic policies on a range of topics that include the environment, employment, infrastructure, and housing. The Core Strategy, which was adopted by the Council in 2011, can be viewed on the Borough Council's website.

A.0.8 Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan – The purpose of this plan is to complement and facilitate the implementation of the Core Strategy by providing detailed policies and guidance including

- Development Management Policies - detailed policies for particular issues and types of development to guide planning applications;
- Site Specific Policies and Allocations – identifying sites and areas where certain types of development are promoted or particular considerations will be applied;
- Development Boundaries – indicating the areas of settlements where the types of development appropriate to it may be located. Areas outside these boundaries will be treated as 'countryside' and protected from general development.

A.0.9 Remaining 1998 Local Plan Policies – There are a few policies retained from the 1998 Local Plan (see Appendix 2 for details). These will be superseded, and cease to have effect on adoption of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan.

National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance

A.0.10 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is the national tier of planning policy. The recently published National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) sits alongside the NPPF. The Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan must be consistent with the NPPF and be prepared with regard to the NPPG.

Introduction A

A.0.11 At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This presumption guides local planning authorities when they are writing Local Plans and making decisions on planning applications. The Borough Council has reflected the presumption in favour of sustainable development in the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan by ensuring that the objectively assessed needs of the Borough are met through the appropriate allocations and policies.

Preparation of the Pre-Submission Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan

A.0.12 In preparing the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan a wide range of considerations and complex procedures have been integrated. Some of the key ones are set out below, followed by an account of the process by which such integration has been approached. Before the Plan can be adopted the Council must satisfy an independent planning inspector that the Plan and its policies are

- a. **Legally compliant** (i.e. all legal requirements have been met);
- b. **'Sound'**, i.e.
 1. **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”.
 2. **Justified** – “the plan should be the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate evidence”.
 3. **Effective** – “the plan should be deliverable over its period and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic priorities”.
 4. **Consistent with national policy** – “the plan should enable the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework”.

A.0.13 The following aspects of the plan preparation are outlined below:

- Public Involvement
- Sustainability Appraisal (Including Strategic Environmental Assessment)
- Habitats Assessment
- Strategic Cooperation ('Duty to Cooperate')

Public Involvement

A.0.14 The Borough Council has encouraged the involvement of local people and businesses in the development of its planning policies. The Council's adopted 'Statement of Community Involvement' set out how it will involve the public and interested persons in the preparation of its plans.

A.0.15 This Pre-Submission Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan has been developed in the light of consultation. The key public stages of the preparation of the Plan are as follows.

A Introduction

A.0.16 PAST

1. May / June 2009 - **Consultation on the scope of the Plan and a call for suggestions of development sites.** (Note that at that stage the plan was called the '*Site Specific Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document*'.) Comments received helped the Council identify plan content and possible locations.)
2. September to December 2011 - **Consultation on emerging 'Issues and Options'.** The comments received helped refine the approach and identify the provisional choices for sites and policies. (Note that at that stage the plan was called the '*Site Specific Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document*'.)
3. 29th July to 4th October 2013 - **Consultation on 'Preferred Options' for the Detailed Policies and Sites Plan** (the Council's provisional choice of policies and sites). Comments received helped the Council decide whether to confirm or amend its provisional choice of sites and policies. (Note that at that stage the plan was called the '*Detailed Policies and Sites Plan*'.)

A.0.17 CURRENT AND NEXT STAGE

4. (January 2015) **Publication of the Council's Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan for formal representations.** The comments received at this stage will be forwarded to the Inspector conducting the Examination – see next stage.
5. (anticipated Summer 2015) **Examination** of the 'soundness' and legal compliance of the Plan, undertaken by an independent planning inspector. The inspector will consider the comments received at Stage 4, and will usually hold a public hearing to enable detailed discussion of particular issues.

A.0.18 Following the Examination, the inspector will decide whether the Council may adopt the Plan, with or without any further changes, and explain his or her reasoning in an inspector's report which will be publicly available. In the event that significant changes are required there may be a need for a further round of consultation specifically about such proposed changes.

A.0.19 Assuming the inspector's report is favourable, the Council would anticipate adopting the finalised Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan late 2015.

Sustainability Appraisal (Incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment)

A.0.20 Legislation requires plans to go through processes of both strategic environmental assessments (SEA) and sustainability appraisals (SA). These two requirements, although slightly different, overlap considerably and have been carried out together in the preparation of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan. These processes consider the likely social, economic and environmental effects of a plan's proposals, and show how these have informed the plan's contents. In principle these processes simply make explicit the careful consideration of a comprehensive range of factors which inform all good plan making, but in practice the resulting documentation can be rather forbidding. The importance of the processes, in addition to meeting statutory requirements, is in ensuring that the decisions that are made explicitly consider the principles of sustainable development and that any potential adverse impacts are minimised and beneficial impacts maximised.

Introduction A

A.0.21 The SA process (incorporating the SEA) has been fully integrated into the plan making process to date, informing the choices of sites and policies within this document. This is shown in the Sustainability Appraisal Report which is published as a separate document alongside the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan. The Technical Assessment document also assessed available sites and this fed into the Sustainability Appraisal work, and this is also published as a separate supporting document alongside the Plan.

Habitats Regulation Assessment

A.0.22 Legislation requires an assessment to ensure that the potential effects of a proposed plan will not have an adverse effect on certain types of designated sites of exceptional importance to nature conservation (including those outside the plan area). Such sites include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar sites. A Habitats Regulations Assessment is published as a separate document alongside the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan.

Strategic Cooperation ('Duty to Cooperate')

A.0.23 It is essential that the Policies pay appropriate regard to the plans, programmes and issues of the wider area within which the Borough sits – including the plans of neighbouring authorities, the wider programmes for transport infrastructure, health, education provision, etc. covering a wider area and the issues which have effects and crossing planning authority boundaries. This was formerly achieved primarily through the now abolished regional spatial strategy, the East of England Plan (and prior to this the Norfolk Structure Plan). The Government has replaced these formal strategic plans with a looser, but perhaps more challenging, 'duty to cooperate' placed on local planning authorities and a host of other statutory organisations and agencies. The Borough Council has worked closely with the relevant planning authorities in Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire, and undertaken detailed consultation with a relevant range of statutory bodies such as the Environment Agency, water companies, health trusts, etc. Examples of this can be seen in the justification for the inclusion, exclusion or particular details of individual policies, and the Council will publish a statement of its activities under the 'duty to cooperate' when submitting its Plan for Examination.

Consultation

A.0.24 Consultation with the public and relevant organisations is both a statutory requirement in plan-making and something the Borough Council is keen to do. This is carried out in accordance with its adopted Statement of Community Involvement (available on the Council's website). Details of past, current and future consultation on the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan are set out earlier in this section.

A Introduction