

3. Aims and Objectives



Planning for Real, Lowestoft

Introduction

- 3.1 The World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) defined sustainable development as “Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. It is concerned with:
- (a) development that respects the obligation to conserve and enhance the natural resource base;
 - (b) an administrative system that secures effective citizen participation in decision making;
 - (c) merging environment and economics in decision making;
 - (d) the fair access to quality of life and environment for all social groups.
- 3.2 The Earth Summit in Rio in 1992 endorsed “Agenda 21” setting out how countries can work together towards sustainable development. Local Authorities are called upon to initiate “Local Agenda 21” (LA21) processes to deliver sustainable development at the local level.
- 3.3 In January 1994 the Government published “Sustainable Development: the UK Strategy” which saw an important role for development plans in contributing to sustainable development. The strategy identified four components of a sustainable planning framework, since reiterated in PPG1 (1997):
- (a) provision for development needs and food production while respecting environmental objectives;
 - (b) use of already developed areas in the most efficient way while making them more attractive for living and working;
 - (c) conservation of the cultural heritage and natural resources;
 - (d) shaping new development patterns to minimise the need to travel.
- 3.4 The current Government has undertaken a number of consultations on aspects of sustainable development, including a paper on the review of the UK Strategy (1998). A revised UK Sustainable Development Strategy has now been published. ‘Biodiversity: the UK Action Plan’ has also been updated.

Strategic Aims

- 3.5 The previous Plan broadly promoted development and environmental aims in parallel, seeking to achieve the best possible balance between them.

However there can be circumstances where these interests conflict and this new Plan clarifies how priorities should be determined in such circumstances by setting down two new strategic aims. These reflect the County Council’s primary concern that Structure Plan policies and proposals should be environmentally sustainable. The Council acknowledges that development should also be socially and economically sustainable. While the Structure Plan will have an important part to play in achieving this outcome, other mechanisms (for example Government policy, or business practices) will be at least as significant, if not more so.

- 3.6 The County Council believes that the aims and objectives pursued through previous Structure Plans and the continuous updating and refinement of policies over the years have already established a strategic framework generally in accordance with LA21 principles. The County Council published its LA21 Strategy “A better life... a better future” in December 2000. The Council will continue to consider how the Structure Plan might need to be further amended for consistency with LA21 principles as the process develops.

Strategic Aim 1

The overall aim of the Structure Plan for Suffolk will be to sustain and enhance the health, quality and integrity of the built and natural environment, and to ensure that development does not result in material damage to critical environmental resources.

- 3.7 In this context, “health” refers to the good condition of particular categories of environmental assets; “quality” refers to the distinguishing characteristics, properties or attributes of those assets; “integrity” refers to the unimpaired state of the built and natural environment as a whole.
- 3.8 To achieve this aim, the control and promotion of development will need to:
- (a) protect and enhance natural assets, including the countryside, coast, wildlife, air and water, and the best features of the built environment;
 - (b) increase the attraction of the towns as places to live and work;
 - (c) reduce the necessity to travel, and favour journeys by public transport, cycling and walking in preference to use of private motor vehicles to meet travel needs, particularly in towns and for journeys to work;
 - (d) encourage renewal in built-up areas; and the use of derelict or spoiled land to meet development needs;

- (e) reduce consumption of non-renewable raw materials, energy and land;
- (f) promote renewable energy sources and reduce waste.

Strategic Aim 2

To an extent and in a manner consistent with Strategic Aim 1 the Structure Plan will:

- (a) promote a healthy economy;***
- (b) meet identified housing requirements;***
- (c) integrate provision for development and transport;***
- (d) provide for leisure and social needs.***

- 3.9 The unqualified use of the term “to an extent” in seeking to meet needs (a) to (d) indicates that there may be thresholds beyond which conformity with Strategic Aim 1 may be compromised. These thresholds are reflected in the detailed objectives and policies which follow. They provide more precise guidance on the way in which the general prioritisation of the strategic aims will be applied in framing Plan proposals or making decisions on development. Only in cases of material impact on a critical environmental resource is development likely to be totally ruled out by the provisions of this Plan. The prioritisation of these two aims is not intended to suggest that the achievement of Aim 2 would be subordinated to environmental interests without regard to the significance of the latter.
- 3.10 “Critical environmental resources” would include in particular those designated as of national or international importance for their landscape or ecological value, their contribution to the quality of the historic or built environment, or their significance as a natural resource. They could also include other landscape features and wildlife habitats which are important and irreplaceable within practical timescales. They would therefore include among others the designated sites and areas referred to in policies ENV7 and ENV18 of this Plan, National Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats, Grade 1 listed buildings, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Grade 1 Registered Parks and Gardens and Ancient Woodland. They would also include ground and surface water critical to the county’s public water supply.
- 3.11 Evidence of potential material impact from development would need to be considered on a case-by-case basis. However this would be likely to include development potentially leading to the loss of most or all of the defining characteristics, properties or attributes of the resource, either locally or more widely, or, in the case of an

important aquifer for example, rendering it unsuitable for continued use. Legislation such as the Environmental Impact Regulations and Habitats Regulations provides additional guidance, to be applied as appropriate alongside the policies of this plan.

Objectives

- 3.12 32 objectives have been defined for the Plan. They have provided a basis for assessing alternative strategies and identifying necessary changes to previous policies. They have also assisted the specification of indicators against which the success of policies can be judged in the future. Many of the objectives are carried forward from the previous Plan with minor amendment. Others have been suggested by the environmental appraisal of that Plan.
- 3.13 The objectives are grouped to illustrate the main relationship to the strategic aims, although some follow from both aims. The objectives are not prioritised. The italic text explains the scope of each objective.

Strategic Aim 1

The overall aim of the Structure Plan for Suffolk will be to sustain and enhance the health, quality and integrity of the built and natural environment, and to ensure that development does not result in material damage to critical environmental resources.

- 1. To protect and enhance areas of recognised landscape quality***
Such areas comprise the Broads, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Heritage Coast and Special Landscape Areas.
- 2. To minimise the impact of development on other landscapes***
This includes the landscape setting of towns and villages. Landscape Character Areas defined by the Countryside Agency should also be assessed. In addition to restriction on the amount of new development taking place, the objective could be achieved by the siting of development, avoiding particularly sensitive areas, protecting existing features of value and incorporating high standards of landscaping.
- 3. To protect and enhance historic landscape features***
These include historic parks and gardens and ancient woodlands, heaths, commons, hedgerows and grasslands.

4. To protect and enhance important wildlife habitats

These include nationally and internationally designated sites, including those covering protected species, together with County Wildlife Sites.

5. To maintain and increase biodiversity throughout the county.

6. To promote an increase in the area and management of wildlife habitats.

"Biodiversity: The UK Action Plan" (1994) sets out the Government's commitment to conserving biodiversity. The UK Plan has recently been updated. The Suffolk Biodiversity Action Plan concentrates on those species and habitats relevant to Suffolk, for example, ancient and/or species-rich hedgerows. Plans dealing with 68 such assets have been prepared in Suffolk at 2001. There may be varied local habitats which are not of sufficient importance to restrict development but where the creation of new and/or replacement habitat would be appropriate. Objectives 5 and 6 are pursued through non-statutory countryside strategies implemented in partnership with conservation agencies. They can be related to development in some circumstances, for example through joint working between local authorities and builders or minerals operators.

7. To protect the county's archaeological inheritance

8. To conserve water resources

This includes maintenance and improvement of river quality and levels, particularly in circumstances of inter-catchment transfer; the avoidance of pollution of ground water; abstraction of groundwater only in quantities capable of being replenished; and the maintenance of the quality of drinking water supply and sea water quality. The Environment Agency and water companies will be encouraged to raise awareness of the need to reduce the demand for and the waste of water and to plan for future needs.

9. To locate new development only in areas not at risk from flooding and where it does not increase the flood risk to existing development

New development, while being safeguarded from flood risk, can increase run-off to rivers and create flood-risks elsewhere. This should be avoided.

10. To promote development and transport

patterns which maintain and where possible improve air quality

Air quality improvements will flow primarily from measures to reduce the need to travel and minimise the use of private cars in meeting residual travel needs.

11. To protect and improve the built environment

This relates to the design of new development, the protection of the environment of existing development from the adverse effects of new development (e.g. through loss of trees or open space) and environmental improvements outside Conservation Areas. In accordance with objectives 4 and 5, important ecological assets in urban areas should also be protected.

12. To protect and enhance the quality of conservation areas and buildings listed as being of special architectural or historic interest

13. To minimise the environmental intrusion of motor vehicles in shopping, residential and conservation areas

This would relate to moving traffic, car parking and servicing vehicles.

14. To promote and provide for walking, cycling, park and ride and public transport use as attractive alternative modes of travel and reduce the need to rely on private motor vehicles

Relevant policies could include the incorporation of pedestrian and cycling facilities in new development; the development of cycleways elsewhere, and bus priority measures, park and ride and parking provision.

15. To maximise the development potential of vacant, under-used and derelict land and buildings in towns

Policies and strategies which encourage development or redevelopment within built up areas or the use of derelict urban sites would meet this objective, while also helping to deliver objective 2. However, pursuit of objective 11 should rule out development of existing public open space or 'green corridors' in urban areas and important ecological assets should be protected under objectives 4 and 5.

16. To minimise the impact of development on agriculture and forestry

Currently policy gives particular protection to agricultural land grades 1, 2 and 3A, and priority to the avoidance of severance or disruption to farms and commercial woodland. The countryside is generally protected from new building and land uses unless related to agriculture, forestry or

recreation or having an overriding case for a rural location.

17. **To conserve mineral resources**
Present policy seeks to avoid the sterilisation of mineral reserves by development. Locational strategies that minimise the need for new infrastructure should also contribute to this objective, both by reducing the amount of built development and the demand for raw materials, although this would be difficult to quantify. Re-use of existing materials in development projects would also assist. Minerals reserves are often located in areas of best landscape; consequently these approaches may also assist in delivering objectives 1, 2 and 3.
18. **To ensure that the restoration of mineral sites enables an environmentally beneficial after-use**
An environmentally beneficial after-use could encompass a variety of uses such as agriculture, recreation, and particularly new habitat creation contributing to targets in Suffolk's Biodiversity Action Plan. After-uses would need to conform to the guidance set out in the Plan's environment and other policies.
19. **To ensure that the restoration of land after waste disposal enables an environmentally beneficial after-use**
20. **To promote and enable the use of renewable energy sources, and energy conservation**
21. **To promote and enable best practice in waste management, including the re-use, recycling and disposal of waste**
Waste minimisation policies and initiatives can contribute to this objective by reducing the amount of material for ultimate disposal.

Strategic Aim 2

To an extent and in a manner consistent with Strategic Aim 1 the Structure Plan will:

- (a) promote a healthy economy**
- (b) meet identified housing requirements**
- (c) integrate provision for development and transport**
- (d) provide for leisure and social needs**

The order of the objectives follows the sub-clauses of Strategic Aim 2. Policies and development to meet these objectives will also be guided, where appropriate, by the principles established under objectives 1 to 21.

22. **To enable the establishment, maintenance and**

expansion of employment uses

This includes setting out the strategic framework for the allocation of employment land in Local Plans and policies that encourage activities and businesses which will sustain or increase local employment.

23. **To protect and improve the attraction, efficiency, vitality and functions of town, neighbourhood and village centres offering a range of community, shopping and employment opportunities**
24. **To enable the extraction of sand and gravel, chalk and other minerals to meet the needs of local industry**
25. **To enable the provision of sufficient housing to provide a dwelling for each household during the period up to 2016**
A household is defined as one person living alone; or a group of people who share common housekeeping or a living room. At county level, the number of dwellings to meet these requirements is derived from population and household projections. The proposed scale and location have been determined following consultation on strategy options.
26. **To enable the provision of affordable housing**
This includes both social and general market housing.
27. **To enable the development of a transport strategy that provides for the safe movement of people and goods and meets social and economic needs**
28. **To locate new developments so as to minimise growth in the length and number of motorised journeys and to maximise use of public transport and other alternatives to the use of private motor vehicles**
29. **To locate major new generators of travel demand where they are highly accessible by means other than private motor vehicles**
Major generators of travel demand include office development, retailing, major leisure facilities and community buildings.
30. **To minimise the environmental impact of freight movement, favouring the use of rail and shipping for this purpose**
This includes policies for the location of freight-generating development, and lorry routeing. The Lorry Management Plan also contributes to this objective.

31. To maintain and enhance the range, quality and accessibility of facilities for formal and informal recreation

32. To promote and enable the provision of social and community facilities to meet local needs.

3.14 The way in which the policies are intended to contribute to the achievement of these objectives is explored systematically in the environmental appraisal of the Plan (see section 11).