

# *1. Introduction*

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*Westgate Street, Ipswich*

- 1.1 The Structure Plan is a statement of strategic policies for the protection of the environment and the control of development over the next 15 years. It provides a basis for investment decisions by local authorities, businesses and individuals, and for the plans and programmes of other organisations.
- 1.2 This new Plan is the outcome of the fourth review undertaken since the Structure Plan was first prepared in the mid 1970s, and covers the period up to 2016. The Plan has a key role in delivering sustainable development, setting out an environmentally sustainable strategy secured through systematic appraisal.
- 1.3 Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) issued by the Secretary of State for the Environment sets the framework for the Plan. The Plan in turn provides a strategic context for Local Plans, mostly prepared by District Councils, setting out detailed policies and site-specific proposals on an Ordnance Survey Map base. Local Plans are required to conform generally to the Structure Plan. The Structure Plan and Local Plans together comprise the "County Development Plan".
- 1.4 In its vision for the future of Suffolk, set out in its Policy and Performance Plan 2001, the County Council has identified the objectives it wishes to achieve under four themes:

#### **A Sustainable Suffolk**

- Working to maintain and improve the environment.
- Seeking to make economic growth sustainable in order to preserve and enhance quality of life.
- Using the County Council's influence to ensure Suffolk can benefit from closer links with the rest of Europe.

#### **Access and Community Involvement**

- Strengthening local democracy by making local government more accessible, accountable, responsive and interesting to local people.
- Promoting social inclusion and tackling poverty.
- Combating unequal opportunities, both in the County Council's role as Suffolk's largest employer and in providing services.

#### **Learning for Life**

- Ensuring a high quality education for all children and raising standards of educational attainment.
- Promoting access to training and quality employment opportunities and supporting both formal and informal learning.

- Promoting the richness, diversity and accessibility of Suffolk's culture and heritage.

#### **Caring and Protecting**

- Working with others to provide high quality services which protect and care for those who need them.
- Working with others to protect and improve the health of the people of Suffolk.
- Working with others to make Suffolk a safe place in which to live and work.

1.5 In providing a context for county-wide environmental protection and sustainable development, the Structure Plan is primarily contributing to achievement of the objective of maintaining and improving the environment. However, integrated policies seeking to promote economic and community regeneration, address spatial and financial inequalities and meet transport needs, mean the plan's relationship with the County Council's overall objectives is much broader than this.

1.6 Many of the principles of the previous Structure Plan remain valid and are carried forward into this new Plan. The changes which have been made are intended to:-

- (a) establish a long term sustainable development framework for land use and transport up to 2016 which interprets RPG;
- (b) ensure other policies address the need to secure sustainable development;
- (c) ensure that the plan reflects Government policy guidance.

1.7 The new Structure Plan is a self-contained document which supersedes all previous versions. To meet legal requirements, the Plan is in two parts. The second part is the Written Statement, setting out the Structure Plan policies in a schedule, accompanied by a Key Diagram, illustrating the main policies and proposals in diagrammatic form. The first part is the Explanatory Memorandum, which as its name suggests, explains and justifies the policies and proposals in the Written Statement. For ease of reference, these are reproduced within the Explanatory Memorandum in **lower case bold text** on a tinted background.