

2. National and Regional Context for the Review



Port of Felixstowe

National Context

- 2.1 Government policy on planning is set out in Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPGs), Regional Planning Guidance, various circulars and statements, and by precedent through decisions issued on individual plans and proposals. In addition to policy, further information about plan content is given in good practice guides and in documents published by professional bodies, pressure groups and academic interests. In order to check that the Structure Plan is generally consistent with Government policy a “scoping” exercise was carried out as part of the review, using the Suffolk Planning Authorities’ report “Guidance on the Environmental Scope of Development Plans” updated and republished in 1998.
- 2.2 The scoping exercise involved a systematic assessment of the 1995 Structure Plan against the advice in the scoping report, highlighting areas where the Plan needed updating. Some important consequences are set out below; others are referred to elsewhere, arising in particular from PPG7: “The Countryside - Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development” (1997); PPG9: “Nature Conservation” (1994); PPG11: “Regional Planning Guidance” (2000); PPG12: “Development Plans” (1999); and PPG22: “Renewable Energy” (1993).
- 2.3 PPG1 “General Principles” (1997) has reaffirmed the role of the planning system and development plans in achieving sustainable development. Particular emphasis is given to urban regeneration and the re-use of land to meet future needs, before previously undeveloped “greenfield” land is taken. The PPG requires development plans to plan for less travel by influencing the location of different types of development relative to transport provision (and vice versa); and fostering forms of development which encourage walking, cycling and public transport use. Locations well served by public transport such as town centres, are favoured for development attracting many journeys. Mixed use developments are seen as creating vitality and diversity and reducing the need to travel.
- 2.4 Although PPG3 “Housing” (2000) was published relatively late in the review process, careful note had been taken of the national policy changes trailed in the consultation draft of the PPG, while the final version formed an important context for discussion of housing issues at the Examination in Public. New advice in particular on the “plan, monitor, manage” approach to meeting housing needs, the emphasis on re-use of urban land and buildings, and the sequential test to be applied to

land releases, is fully reflected in the Plan. Further work on the assessment of urban housing capacity required by the new PPG is in hand.

- 2.5 PPG6 “Town Centres and Retail Development” (1996) seeks to strengthen existing town centres by establishing a sequence of priorities for site selection for retail, employment and leisure uses which favours land in or adjoining such centres. The need to promote mixed developments in town centres, including housing, retain key uses, and pursue coherent parking policies is underlined. Three tests for new retail proposals are established: their effects on existing centres, their accessibility, and their effects on overall travel needs and car use. In addition, there has been further clarification of the Government’s policy on retailing by means of ministerial statements since 1996. Where appropriate, these have been reflected in the policies of this Plan.
- 2.6 PPG13 “Transport” (1994) introduced a change in philosophy for transport planning, arguing that attempts to cater for unrestricted growth in car use were inappropriate. The PPG emphasised the need to integrate land use and transport planning and implement land use policies and transport programmes which reduce growth in the length and number of motorised journeys; encourage alternative means of travel which have less environmental impact; and hence reduce reliance on the private car. Such an approach is seen as a key contributor to the achievement of sustainable development. The Transport White Paper (1998) and a new PPG13 “Transport” (2001) further develop these themes, and are dealt with in more detail in section 8 on Transport.
- 2.7 The Urban and Rural White Papers published in November 2000 came too late to directly influence the new Plan. However they reflect many of the policies in the Plan and the County Council will pay close attention to their contents when seeking to implement the Plan, particularly through its involvement with the forthcoming round of local plan reviews and consultations on planning applications for strategic development.

Regional Context

- 2.8 At the time of preparation of this Plan, the Standing Conference of East Anglian Local Authorities (SCEALA) represented the local authorities in Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire. SCEALA submitted a revised Regional Strategy to the Government in July 1997, subsequently supplemented by additional material on transport, the economy, and environmental appraisal. This Strategy provided advice to the then Secretary of State for the Environment on the content of

revised RPG to 2016, to replace RPG6 issued in 1991, and was prepared after consultation with public and private sector bodies with an interest in the future of East Anglia.

- 2.9 In August 1998 the SCEALA submission was republished by the Government Office for the Eastern Region (GO-East) for consultation as draft RPG. A Public Examination of the proposals took place in February 1999, under new arrangements for RPG preparation proposed by the Government. The Examination report was published in June 1999, and draft modifications followed in March 2000. Final RPG was issued in November 2000.
- 2.10 Although the new RPG was published very late in the Structure Plan review process, as can be seen above, the County Council through SCEALA has been closely involved in its preparation, and the new Plan and RPG are generally consistent. The Plan makes marginally greater provision for new housing than proposed in the RPG, reflecting in part the conclusions of the Panel conducting the Suffolk Examination in Public. Given the extended period of both the Plan and RPG, and the new “plan, monitor manage” approach to housing provision, this variation is not seen as significant. Further information is provided in section 4.
- 2.11 The new RPG should ensure general consistency between the county strategies of Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire. A review of the Norfolk Plan adopted in 1999 against the background of the then evolving RPG promotes a strategic approach similar to and consistent with this Plan. A review of the Cambridgeshire plan is under way. In implementing the new Suffolk Structure Plan, particular attention will be paid to advice in new RPG on links between Great Yarmouth in Norfolk and Lowestoft, and on the way in which the housing and other needs of the Cambridge Sub-Region should be met.

- 2.12 New RPG for the South East Region was issued in March 2001, and a new Joint Structure Plan for Essex and Southend-on-Sea was adopted in April 2001. The overall development strategy being promoted for the county and for those sub-areas adjoining the southern part of Suffolk is compatible with that of the new Suffolk Plan.
- 2.13 On 1 April 2001, a new regional planning body, the East of England Local Government Conference (EELGC), came into existence to represent all authorities in the new six-county Eastern Region of Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Essex. The Secretary of State has requested that the new body provides advice on draft RPG for the Eastern Region by 2004.

Financial considerations

- 2.14 The County Council believes that in Suffolk, over the Structure Plan period, the private sector can and will wish to undertake the level of development specified in the Plan, including the provision or funding of the services required by that development. Nevertheless in some areas, special priority will be necessary in the allocation of public sector resources for example, to help remedy deficiencies in employment, transport or service provision. The Plan sets out criteria to be applied in determining these priorities.