

# Foreword

**New planning legislation now in force will see the replacement of the old system of County Structure Plans, District Local Plans and Supplementary Planning Guidance with a new system of Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) and Local Development Documents (LDD).**

The adopted Forest Heath Local Plan (December 1995) will be replaced by a new style planning policy framework. This will be called the Forest Heath Local Development Framework (LDF).

One objective of the new planning system is to strengthen community involvement in planning by encouraging as many people as possible to participate at the early stages of developing the LDF. The District Council is required to collect the necessary range of background facts and figures as an evidence base and then present these to the community so that we can work together to develop a set of issues and realistic options relevant to Forest Heath. This folder of documents attempts to do that.

**The consultation folder is split into the following documents: -**

1. The Issues and Options (Document 1).
2. Regional Plan Objectives and Key Policy Extracts (policy constraints to the Forest Heath options in Document 1).
3. Key Facts about Forest Heath (background evidence/commentary to inform the options in Document 1).
4. Sustainability Appraisal of the Issues and Options.
5. Options Questionnaire and Response Form.

The policy constraints, key facts about Forest Heath and the sustainability appraisal have been provided, so that you can have a better understanding of the option questions in Document 1 and the response form.



# The background context

## Jargon Busting

**Area Action Plans** – local development documents, which relate to major and complex development or regeneration proposals of regional scale and importance.

**Brownfield Land** – land which has been previously developed.

**Cambridge Horizons** – a partnership of authorities and organisations set up to assist and implement the planned growth in the Cambridgeshire part of the Cambridge Sub-Region.

**Cambridge Sub-Region** - an area defined in the Regional Plan comprising Cambridge and the ring of surrounding market towns of Ely, Chatteris, Huntingdon, St Neots, St Ives, Royston, Saffron Walden, Haverhill and Newmarket.

**DPD** – Development Plan Documents - the statutory planning documents which make up the LDF and which are subject to an independent examination by an inspector. They are the equivalent of the old Local Plan.

**LDF** – Local Development Framework - see "The transition to the new LDF system" on page 3 for a brief summary.

**RSS** – Regional Spatial Strategy, which in this area is the draft 'East of England Plan' RSS 14 which covers Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk.

**SCI** – The Statement of Community Involvement - a statement of how the Council intends to involve the community in the preparation of the LDF and consultation on planning applications. A draft Forest Heath SCI was published in December 2004 and is available in paper form or on the Council's website.

**Sequential Approach** – the sequence of priorities for locating new development:

1. Urban brownfield sites, within the built-up area of towns and larger villages.
2. Urban extensions.
3. Rural brownfield sites.
4. Extensions to smaller villages.

**Spatial Strategy** – where development should go.

**SSSI** - Site of Special Scientific Interest - a site with wildlife interest of regional and national importance.

**Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)** – an assessment of the environmental effects of a draft plan or programme. This is a statutory requirement under the European Directive 2001/42/EC and the SEA Regulations 2004.

**Sustainability Appraisal (SA)** – will identify and evaluate what the effects of a strategy or plan are likely to be on social, environmental and economic conditions of the strategy or plan area. A Sustainability Appraisal is required for each stage in the production and submission of a DPD. The SA must comply with the requirements of the SEA Directive and regulations.

**Sustainable Village** – a village which has a basic range of community facilities, services and employment opportunities plus a reasonable public transport service.

**USAF** – United States Air Force, based at Lakenheath and Mildenhall air bases.

**Watermark** - a proposal for major, mixed-use development of regional importance, between Kentford and Red Lodge, comprising leisure/sports facilities, including a rowing lake, housing, employment and new transport infrastructure.

## The transition to the LDF system

- The existing Forest Heath Local Plan and Suffolk Structure Plan policies are automatically saved for up to three years until September 2007, or until the LDF and Regional Plan policies are submitted / adopted.
- The East of England Plan (RSS14) will replace the Suffolk Structure Plan.
- The Forest Heath LDF must be in general conformity with the Regional Plan.
- The Forest Heath LDF will have a similar role to the existing local plan, but is likely to be split into two main documents:
  - 1 - Core Strategy - general policies.
  - 2 - Site specific allocations.
 If it was decided to promote any development of a regionally significant scale, then it would be necessary to produce a third document called an Area Action Plan. There will also be supplementary planning documents such as site development briefs similar to the old system, but subjected to a more formal process such as a new requirement for a sustainability appraisal.
- Ensure that Western Suffolk has an integrated transport policy.
- Contribute to the vitality of town centres and villages and make them more welcoming to visitors.
- Promote choice and opportunity for all in cultural provision.
- Preserve the area's cultural heritage and establish it as the cultural heart of the region.

The Community Strategy is available on the Council's web site: [www.forest-heath.gov.uk](http://www.forest-heath.gov.uk)

## The Forest Heath LDF - key features

- Designed to ensure that there are plenty of opportunities for the community to participate and help to shape the vision and blueprint for the District.
- The LDF will consist of two main documents and there will be two key community engagement stages for the preparation of each document. Therefore, in total there will be four main opportunities for community involvement.
- The first engagement stage will be the issues and options and the second stage will be the preferred options.

## Anticipated dates of the four key consultation stages

- August 2005 - Issues and Options consultation on the Core Strategy and Development Policies.
- March 2006 - Preferred Options consultation on the Core Strategy and Development Policies.
- March 2006 - Issues and Options consultation on the Site Allocations and Policies and any Area Action Plans.
- November 2006 - Preferred Options consultation on the Site Allocations and Policies and any Area Action Plans.

## The LDF must balance the following influences:

- Top down - national planning policy statements and the East of England Plan.
- Bottom up - corporate plan and community plans, the community's response to the LDF.

## Community Strategy

The following priorities identified in the Western Suffolk Community Strategy 2003 - 2007 are of particular relevance to the LDF:

- Maintain and improve the quality of the environment.
- Support sustainable business and encourage and create job opportunities.
- Ensure the provision of good quality affordable housing.

## Other anticipated key dates

- November 2006 - Core Strategy and Development Policies submitted to the Secretary of State.
- June 2007 - Independent Examination of the Core Strategy and Development Policies.
- September 2007 - Site Allocations and Policies/Area Action Plans submitted to the Secretary of State.
- November 2007 - Adoption of the Core Strategy and Development Policies.
- April/May 2008 - Independent Examination of the Site Allocations and Policies/Area Action Plans.
- October 2008 – Adoption of the Site Allocations and Policies/Area Action Plans.

# Options for a vision for Forest Heath to 2021

In order to develop the detailed policies that will govern planning in the future, it is vital to have a clear picture of the kind of District we want to be.

The Regional Plan sets out targets and guidelines for housing and job growth across the Eastern Region. Our Local Development Framework must be in general conformity with, and should not cause significant harm to the implementation of, the Regional Plan.

However, it is important for us to consider where this development will happen and how it will be delivered in our District. In doing so it is also important that we consider the major issues facing us if we are to try and address them.

Five visions have been developed around the themes within the Regional Plan to address these issues: the economy, housing, transportation, the environment and culture.

On the one hand, these paint different pictures of what our future could look like. On the other hand, and there are common elements and issues between them, it is a question of agreeing the priority of these elements.

Therefore, we want to know what you think our priorities should be.

## 1 - Employment led vision

Forest Heath has a low wage economy. It lies between the large retail centres of Bury St Edmunds and Cambridge and commercial land use is mainly agricultural. Job provision is dominated by a few businesses and industries.

**This vision encourages a broader business development as the top priority in the District.**

There are opportunities to capitalise on our proximity to Cambridge (eg, a science/technology park), our strategic position on major transportation routes (eg, storage and/or distribution facilities) or facilitate expansion of the military airbase facilities at Mildenhall and Lakenheath.

Other possibilities might include an equine centre to complement the horse racing industry, stimulating our existing light industrial base or capitalising on the beauty of our rural setting by developing facilities and attractions for tourists. The choice will affect the vibrancy of our towns and influence the location of development and the type of jobs created. The Regional Plan requires that new dwellings are built in response to economic growth, ie, to ensure there are sufficient employees with the right skills available for local businesses. The total amount of housing planned would be the 6,400 specified in the Regional Plan. However, the rate of housing growth would be strictly in step with and determined by employment growth.

The Regional Plan does not set a job growth target for Forest Heath, so it is hard to measure achievement against this. If there were less business growth required, the amount of new housing permitted would probably be less than the 6,400 planned for. Any large land allocation for business purposes would probably include some greenfield development.

## 2 - Housing led vision

House prices have risen steadily in recent years and there is considerable demand for more affordable and intermediate dwellings in towns and villages across the District. There is also a need for a greater diversity of housing types to cater for new families, economic migrants, first time buyers and older residents.

However, the rate of completion of new homes is low, suggesting that the market is meeting the demands of certain sectors of society only.

**This vision is focused on relieving pressure on housing demand by broadening the location, number and type of new dwellings in the District.**

The Regional Plan has set a target for housing growth of 6,400 by 2021 (equivalent to an average of 320 new dwellings per annum). Business development in the District would be encouraged in line with the Regional Plan, but the rate of housing growth would be independent of employment demand.

The Regional Plan indicates that at least 30% of all new dwellings should be affordable although this should be increased if intermediate homes are also considered. There is a current programme in Forest Heath of providing 100% affordable housing on former Council owned sites, which will make a substantial contribution towards achieving the Regional % target.

The Regional Plan also requires that this development would be spread between the three main towns and some larger villages.

## 3 - Transport infrastructure led vision

Forest Heath sits at the geographical heart of our region and straddles regional, national and international transport corridors including the Ipswich-Cambridge rail link, the A11 and A14.

As the national economy grows, deficiencies within our strategic road and rail network will be exaggerated by increasing freight and passenger movements. Any congestion and accident black spots will result in damage to the environment and quality of life as rat runs develop and travel within the District takes more time.

The major improvements that have been identified in the last few years include: dualling the A11, upgrading the Fiveways roundabout at Barton Mills, providing additional rail track bed between Bury St Edmunds and Kentford and improving the link between the A11 and A14 near Kennett and Kentford. Some of these improvements are unlikely to be funded solely by Central Government.

**This vision seeks to facilitate these improvements through encouraging major residential and employment developments within the District.**

The cost of these improvements is likely to require developments on the scale of a new town (5,000 - 10,000 new dwellings) although market forces may mean this is unsustainable.

This would be greatly in excess of the targets for housing growth in the Regional Plan. Greenfield development would be inevitable and the District would become more densely populated.

## 4 - Environment led vision

The rural character of our District means that any additional major development will increase our dependency on cars (already above average) and exceed the capacity of our own sustainable water resources. Such development would probably require greenfield sites as there is insufficient brownfield land in the District to meet national and regional development targets.

**This vision constrains the scale, type and location of developments (particularly housing) in order to preserve our natural and built environment.**

This vision is the closest to maintaining the existing character of the District, its landscape, towns, neighbourhoods and villages.

Development would be restricted to appropriate sites within the three main towns in accordance with the Regional Plan. The character of towns, neighbourhoods and buildings would be preserved wherever possible. Housing growth would be capped to the requirements of the existing Suffolk Structure Plan (5,200 new dwellings by 2021, equivalent to 260 per annum). This is 1,200 less than the total required by the Regional Plan but is still more than the actual building rate in the District since 2001.

Levels of new housing provision below the targets set in the Regional Plan will require substantial justification. It may also lead to the construction of fewer affordable homes.

### 5 - Culture led vision

What does culture embrace? Aside from its broadest social connotations, culture is made up of a number of sectors, each of which has different attributes. These sectors are the arts, creative industries, the natural environment and the built environment, events and festivals, holidays and trips, libraries, museums, archives and galleries, local cultural traditions and pursuits, sporting and recreational activities, and visitor attractions. The promotion of any one of these should not be at the expense of others.

The Regional Plan facilitates the development of leisure facilities of a regional standard.

#### This vision could seek to facilitate a regional centre for sports and leisure activity within the District.

One such emerging proposal is Watermark, a mixed-use proposal to integrate a collection of sports and leisure facilities with a new settlement between Red Lodge and Kentford. The 215 ha greenfield site would be developed over several years and would include a rowing/water sports lake, a multi-purpose arena, tennis and golf facilities, employment (office) development, retail and community facilities funded by 4,000 - 5,000 new dwellings.

The proposed sport and leisure facilities would attract around 1.2 million visitors per year, with 90% arriving by car. It is estimated that 75% of trips would be via a new junction off the A14 and 25% from the A11 through Red Lodge.

This proposal would limit additional development elsewhere in the District if housing growth were not to exceed the target of 6,400 set in the Regional Plan. It is also in conflict with the requirements in the Regional Plan to restrict housing growth to existing settlements. Its impact on the economy, character and infrastructure of the District would be significant.

## Core Spatial Strategy – where should new development go?

### Issues for Forest Heath

Given the emerging Regional Spatial policies, the core spatial issues which need to be addressed in Forest Heath are:

1	<b>Scale of Development and Level of Growth for the District</b>
Issue	There is development pressure for a large regionally important development (Watermark) near the A14/A11 junction. Should Forest Heath seek to accommodate a higher level and scale of development than that envisaged in the emerging RSS?
2	<b>The Sequential Approach to Allocating Development</b>
Issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The draft RSS is trying to make sure that at least 60% of all new development is on previously developed brownfield sites. Is this a realistic target for a predominantly rural authority like Forest Heath?</li> <li>It is not compatible for the core strategy to adopt both the brownfield target and the Watermark approach. Which of the two should be adopted?</li> </ul>
3	<b>The Forest Heath Settlement Policy</b>
Issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should most new development go to Newmarket, or should it be spread more evenly between Brandon and Mildenhall? Should new development be allocated for the larger, more self sufficient sustainable villages such as Beck Row, Exning, Kentford, Lakenheath, Red Lodge or West Row? Or should other villages be allocated certain development to cater for particular local needs?</li> <li>If it is decided to support the Watermark proposals, what level of growth should go to the existing towns and sustainable villages?</li> <li>Those villages defined as sustainable are those which are considered to comply with the criteria in Policy CS3 (e) of the Suffolk Structure Plan. See the sustainability assessment of the towns and sustainable villages in Document 3 for more information.</li> <li>Should a small remote village have a defined development boundary, or should it be designated as part of the surrounding countryside in order to provide a stricter control on new development?</li> </ul>
4	<b>Newmarket's Role in the Cambridge Sub-Region</b>
Issue	What role should Newmarket have in accommodating the demand for new development in the Cambridge Sub-Region? Could Newmarket become a dormitory/commuting town for Cambridge?
5	<b>Applying the Sequential Test to Planning Applications</b>
Issue	How realistic is it to insist that brownfield sites be developed before greenfield ones?

### Options for a Core Spatial Strategy

- Should the majority of new development be directed to Newmarket because it is the most sustainable settlement in the District?
- Should there be a more even spread of development between the three market towns of Brandon, Mildenhall and Newmarket?
- Should development be spread between the three market towns and some or all of the sustainable villages?

4. Should development be spread between the three market towns and some or all of the sustainable villages, plus other villages?

5. Should the vast majority of development be concentrated on a single new settlement, eg, the Watermark project or similar, with very limited development in any of the towns or sustainable villages?

**Other Core Spatial Strategy questions**

Should planning permission for residential development on greenfield sites be refused if the national and regional target of 60% brownfield development is not being met in the District?

Should villages such as Cavenham, Dalham and Herringswell continue to have development boundaries or should they be designated as part of the countryside in order to provide a stricter control on new development?

## Economic Development, Retail and Tourism – what amount and type of employment development are needed?

**Issues for Forest Heath**

Given the emerging Regional Spatial policies, the main employment issues which need to be addressed in Forest Heath are:

6	<b>Job Growth – Quantity and Quality</b>
Issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How can job growth targets for the rest of Suffolk in Policy E2 of the Regional Spatial Strategy translate to a district level growth target for Forest Heath?</li> <li>Should planning policies try to promote more office and high tech employment opportunities to redress the current imbalance in job types?</li> <li>The District’s location adjoining the A14 and A11 trunk roads generates development pressures for large-scale regional/national distribution depots/warehouses. Should such proposals continue to be resisted or encouraged?</li> </ul>
7	<b>Location, Scale and Range of Employment Development in the District</b>
Issue	Should most employment growth be concentrated in the three main towns? Should some employment growth be encouraged in rural areas? If so, to what extent and what type of employment? Is there a need to increase the range of employment opportunities in the District, particularly high technology businesses?
8	<b>Redevelopment of Existing Employment Land or Premises</b>
Issue	Should sites on industrial estates be allowed to be redeveloped for retail or residential uses?
9	<b>Catering for Working from Home, Providing Live/Work Units</b>
Issue	Should the Council be encouraging more people to work from home rather than commuting to a work place?
10	<b>Development Relating to the Horse Racing Industry in and around Newmarket</b>
Issue	Are there development issues unique to the horse racing industry which justify having a specific policy?

11	<b>Redevelopment of Existing Sites Relating to the Horse Racing Industry</b>
Issue	Should any redevelopment of training yards be restricted to uses associated with the horse racing industry?
12	<b>Town Centre and Retail Strategy for Brandon, Mildenhall, Newmarket</b>
Issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there a need for new retail or leisure development in Brandon, Mildenhall or Newmarket?</li> <li>What proportion of non-retail uses such as cafés, take-aways or estate agents should be allowed in the main shopping streets of Brandon, Mildenhall and Newmarket?</li> </ul>
13	<b>Diversification of the Rural Economy</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should such uses as farm shops and farmers’ markets, farm-based food processing/packaging, farm-based recreation/sports and bio-fuel/renewable energy crops be actively encouraged in the District?</li> <li>Should redundant rural buildings only be used for employment or community uses rather than for residential conversion?</li> <li>Should those people prepared to live a self-sufficient lifestyle, by building an environmentally friendly dwelling and living off a small-holding or other low impact rural enterprise, be allowed to live in the countryside?</li> </ul>
14	<b>Tourist Accommodation in Forest Heath</b>
Issue	What type of tourist accommodation is most needed in the District and where should it go?
15	<b>Information Communications Technology</b>
Issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The draft Regional Plan focuses on improving the coverage of Broadband. BT is predicting that by the summer of 2005 95% of Forest Heath will be covered.</li> <li>Improved telecommunications assists the economy and has environmental benefits such as reducing the need for car journeys. However, there is a need to balance these benefits with visual and health concerns about the profusion of mobile telephone masts.</li> </ul>

**Options for Economic Development, Retail and Tourism**

- Should development be job led by restricting and phasing major housing development so that it can only be implemented in sequence with employment development? Or should implementation be left to market forces?
- Should the core strategy promote the need for more office-based jobs in the District to make up for the current shortfall in managerial, professional and administrative jobs? Or should job type be left to market forces?
- Should the core strategy restrict the majority of employment development to the three main towns, or give more encouragement to the diversification of the rural economy?
- Should the core strategy continue to resist or encourage development pressure for large national or regional distribution depots along the A14 and A11 road corridors?
- Should the core strategy promote more home working and the creation of live/work buildings?
- Should sites in or last used for industrial or office use be redeveloped for residential, retail or leisure use?
- Should new retail and/or leisure development be allocated in any of the three towns?
- Should the LDF seek to restrict telecommunications equipment in terms of siting and number/concentration within a locality?

# Housing – what amount and type are needed?

## Issues for Forest Heath

Given the emerging Regional Spatial policies, the main housing issues which need to be addressed in Forest Heath are:

16	<b>Scale of Housing Growth</b>
Issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The draft RSS is proposing an increased rate of housing growth in Forest Heath compared to the Suffolk Structure Plan, from 260 new dwellings per annum to 320. Is this appropriate?</li> <li>Should the District Council plan for more than the minimum requirement in the draft RSS? If so by how much? It could be by a few hundred, to give a better range of choice, or a greater allowance through the Watermark new town proposal outlined in the 5th vision option.</li> </ul>
17	<b>Location of Housing Growth</b>
Issue	What number/proportion of new dwellings should go in the three towns and what number/proportion in the villages?
18	<b>Density and Mix of Dwellings</b>
Issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Government wants residential development to be built at a density of between 30 and 50 dwellings per hectare, to minimise the spread of urban areas into the surrounding countryside. Recent planning permissions in Forest Heath have been around 28 dwellings. Are there any specific locations in the District where densities either side of that range would be appropriate?</li> <li>Should there be a greater mixture of housing types to meet the future needs of all residents?</li> <li>Should a proportion of dwellings be designed specifically for the needs of elderly and disabled persons?</li> </ul>
19	<b>Affordable Dwellings</b>
Issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The draft RSS states that at least 30% of all new dwellings should be affordable. Is this an appropriate % to meet the housing needs of Forest Heath?</li> <li>Is there the demand for a self-build housing project in the District?</li> </ul>
20	<b>Key Workers. Dwellings</b>
Issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key workers are normally restricted to public sector workers, such as teachers, nurses and firemen. Should horse racing industry employees be included in Forest Heath?</li> <li>Should the District Council plan specifically for the housing needs of American military personnel and their dependants? If so, where should this development go?</li> </ul>
21	<b>Accommodation for Gypsies and Travelling People</b>
Issue	There is currently one permanent gypsy site and one temporary site in the District. An assessment of gypsy and traveller needs is currently being undertaken. If there is a proven need for a second site then the Council is required to allocate one.
22	<b>Rural Exception Housing – Low Impact Dwellings</b>
Issue	Should those people, prepared to live a self-sufficient lifestyle, by building an environmentally friendly dwelling and living off a small-holding or other low impact rural enterprise, be allowed to live in the countryside?

## Options for Housing Development

Many of the following housing options will be determined by which of the vision and core spatial strategy options are selected.

- Should the scale of housing growth continue in line with the current Suffolk Structure Plan but below the draft RSS, in line with the draft RSS, or above it?
- Should detailed guidance on housing type and mix be given, including housing designed specifically for the disabled and elderly, or should it be left largely to market forces?
- Should all housing development be within the 30-50 dwellings per hectare range, or should some localities/sites in the District be designated either side of that range because of their special character and appearance?
- The draft Regional Plan states that at least 30% of all new dwellings should be affordable. Is this an appropriate % to meet the housing needs of Forest Heath?
- Should horse racing employees be recognised as key workers with affordable housing needs in Forest Heath?
- Should specific sites or towns/villages be allocated for additional USAF housing, or should the LDF contain a criteria based policy to assess any proposals which comes forward?
- Should the principle of allowing low impact dwellings in the countryside be accepted?

# Transport - can the District become less car dependent?

## Issues for Forest Heath

Given the emerging Regional Spatial policies, the main transport issues, which need to be addressed in Forest Heath are:

23	<b>Strategic Highway Network</b>
Issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The A14 around Newmarket is predicted to be at or near capacity by 2021.</li> <li>The proposed dualling of the A11 between Fiveways and Thetford has been delayed. Fiveways roundabout currently suffers from congestion problems at peak times.</li> <li>Provision of bypasses for Brandon and Mildenhall.</li> <li>Provision of an all-movements junction between the A14 and A11 to reduce current rat-running through villages.</li> </ul>
24	<b>Public Transport</b>
Issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2001, the proportion of Forest Heath residents using public transport to get to work was very small (3%) and was below the national average. Can this proportion be improved?</li> <li>There are capacity problems with the rail infrastructure in and around Forest Heath. Can the LDF assist in addressing this shortfall?</li> </ul>
25	<b>Linking the LDF to the Local Transport Plan</b>
Issue	The County Council is the transport authority for Forest Heath rather than the District Council. The Suffolk Local Transport Plan (reviewed every five years) and action plans for individual towns and villages are the main policy and implementation documents for local transportation matters. How is it best to link these documents to the LDF?

26	<b>New Development and Improvements to the Local Transport Infrastructure</b>
Issue	Should major new development only be allowed if it contributes to improvements to the local transport infrastructure or services?
27	<b>Walking and Cycling</b>
Issue	In 2001, a substantially higher proportion of Forest Heath residents either walked or cycled to work (16%) compared to those using public transport (3%). The proportion walking or cycling to work was also above the national average. How can the LDF ensure that these proportions are maintained and improved?
28	<b>Parking</b>
Issue	The draft Regional Plan links access to public transport with car parking provision. The higher the standards of public transport the lower the car parking provision and vice versa. How is this to be interpreted in Forest Heath? Is the currently adopted Suffolk Advisory Parking Standards 2002 still appropriate or do they need to be reviewed?
29	<b>Lorry Parking</b>
Issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With the A14 and A11 national trunk roads running through the District, Forest Heath is well placed to provide good quality, overnight lorry parking facilities.</li> <li>Lorry parking is currently causing problems in the District, particularly at Red Lodge.</li> <li>Should the provision of new, better located facilities be encouraged in the District?</li> </ul>

### Options for Transport

1. Should strategic improvements to the national/regional transport network within the District be funded by development on the scale of a new town?
2. Should the scale of growth be restricted because the District has above average car dependency. Or can new development be planned to make us less car dependent?
3. Should all major development be required to contribute to improvements to the local transport infrastructure or services?
4. Should the LDF continue to show the preferred routes for the Brandon and Mildenhall bypasses, agreed in the early 1990s and shown in the existing Local Plan? Or should alternative routes be suggested?
5. Should the LDF contain a policy on lorry parking? If so, should it allocate a site(s) or use a criteria based policy for assessing any proposals which may come forward?

## Environmental Resources – how can we safeguard our natural and historic heritage for future generations?

### Issues for Forest Heath

Given the emerging Regional Spatial policies, the main environmental issues which need to be addressed in Forest Heath are:

30	<b>Landscape Character</b>
Issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The District does not have any countryside currently designated as being of national importance. However, there is still the need to protect it from inappropriate development.</li> <li>The District does contain both breckland and fen, which gives the potential to make significant contributions towards achieving regional priority habitat targets for the creation of more lowland grass and heath, and reed beds and fens.</li> <li>Should specific areas for large scale (greater than 200 ha) habitat restoration be identified in Forest Heath in response to RSS Policy ENV3?</li> <li>Are there any regionally important geological/geomorphological sites (RIGS) that should be identified in Forest Heath?</li> </ul>
31	<b>Biodiversity</b>
Issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The District has a significantly higher proportion of its area designated as sites of special scientific interest (SSSI) than any other local authority in Suffolk. This is illustrated in Map 9.2 Environmental Assets in the draft Regional Plan.</li> <li>72% of the rare species identified in the Suffolk Biodiversity Action Plan are found in the District.</li> <li>The District has a vital role to play in safeguarding and enhancing biodiversity.</li> <li>Are there any important wildlife corridors which need to be identified in Forest Heath?</li> </ul>
32	<b>Woodlands</b>
Issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The District has an above average amount of woodland. However, the vast majority is commercial coniferous forest and only a small amount is designated as ancient woodland.</li> <li>Although Thetford Forest is designated as a SSSI, this is primarily because clear felled areas provide a temporary habitat for rare birds. It would be preferable from a biodiversity aspect if the SSSI was permanently restored to heathland.</li> </ul>
33	<b>The Historic Environment</b>
Issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The draft Regional Plan cites the exceptional network of historic market towns as being 'especially significant in the East of England'. Within the District this applies to Brandon, Mildenhall and Newmarket. Newmarket is particularly unique being the only place in the world where there are still horse racing stables operating in and around the town centre.</li> <li>In very exceptional circumstances, should permission be granted for development, which would not usually be acceptable, in order to secure and enable the proper repair of a listed building?</li> </ul>
34	<b>Agriculture, Land and Soils</b>
Issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>30% of all agricultural land in the District is designated as grade 1 or 2 high quality, mainly in the fenland, western part, but only 4% is farmed organically. National policy is to protect high quality agricultural land from irreversible damage such as permanent built development.</li> <li>Agricultural land within the brecks was originally heathland and its restoration back to heathland would be in accordance with the regional priority habitat targets.</li> </ul>
35	<b>Air Quality</b>
Issue	Currently there are no significant areas of air pollution in the District which require the designation of an air quality management area, despite higher than average car dependency.

36	<b>Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency</b>
Issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The draft Regional Plan sets regional targets for the contribution of renewables to total electricity consumption. Is it appropriate to apply this target at District level? There is no significant renewable energy currently being produced in Forest Heath. However, it is possible that Forest Heath residents/employers are consuming the target levels of renewable energy produced elsewhere in the UK.</li> <li>The draft Regional Plan requires all development greater than 1,000 sq m or 50 dwellings to incorporate equipment for renewable power generation to provide at least 10% of its predicted energy requirement. It will be up to local planning authorities such as FHDC to ensure that predictions are realistic, equipment is installed and working, and targets being achieved.</li> </ul>
37	<b>Water Supply, Management and Drainage</b>
Issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can the Regional Water Resources Strategy be applied at District level to determine the amount of new development to plan for?</li> <li>For what type and scale of development should the introduction of water conservation measures be required?</li> <li>Is it possible to determine if Forest Heath is currently self sufficient in water resources? How pertinent is this issue in determining the amount of development planned for the District?</li> <li>Should a priority order be given to the following competing needs for water resources: residents of new dwellings, industry/business, agriculture, leisure uses, wildlife?</li> <li>21% of the District is currently designated by the Environment Agency as being at potential flood risk. Most of this relates to the fenland countryside and only a small proportion coincides with potential development sites. It is also important that new development does not put existing property at greater flood risk.</li> </ul>
38	<b>Minerals and Waste Management</b>
Issue	Suffolk County Council will remain responsible for producing countywide mineral and waste development plan documents. The LDF proposals map will need to contain any District level allocations/designations from these documents. The District Council has responsibility for the operational aspects of waste management such as domestic and trade waste collection services.

### Options for Environmental Resources

1. What is more important within the brecks landscape character area: retaining agricultural land and commercial woodland or restoring to heathland primarily for wildlife interest?
2. Are there any important wildlife corridors which need to be identified in Forest Heath?
3. Should the established use of horse racing land/buildings in Newmarket be protected in order to preserve the unique heritage, character and economy of the town?
4. Should Forest Heath actively encourage the setting up of a renewable power station or wind farm within the District to contribute more to renewable energy, or just rely on larger scale new development to produce at least 10% of its power requirements by renewable production?
5. Residents, industry/business, agriculture, leisure uses and wildlife are all competing demands for limited water resources. What uses should have priority?

## Culture – what leisure facilities are needed in the District?

### Issues for Forest Heath

Given the emerging Regional Spatial policies, the main cultural issues, which need to be addressed in Forest Heath are:

39	<b>Provision and Location of Strategic Sport and Leisure Facilities</b>
Issue	Should Forest Heath be the location for regionally significant sport and leisure facilities such as the Watermark proposals?
40	<b>The Arts</b>
Issue	Is there a need to provide additional buildings/venues for the arts and cultural use in Forest Heath?
41	<b>Sporting Facilities</b>
Issue	What type of facilities are needed and where? What existing open space and recreational facilities should be protected from development?
42	<b>Recreation and Natural Resources</b>
	How can recreational facilities in the countryside, eg, High Lodge Visitors Centre in Thetford Forest, and the public rights of way network (footpaths, bridleways, cycleways) in the District be improved?

### Options for Culture

1. Should regionally significant sports and leisure facilities be promoted through the LDF, or should we be seeking to provide only for local need?
2. Should additional arts/cultural venues/facilities be sought, or should we just rely on greater use of existing facilities such as bringing professional performers/cinema to town and village halls?
3. Should increased recreational facilities in the countryside, including public rights of way, be encouraged, or should the emphasis be on safeguarding and managing existing facilities?

## Implementation and Delivery – how can we achieve sustainable development?

### Issues for Forest Heath

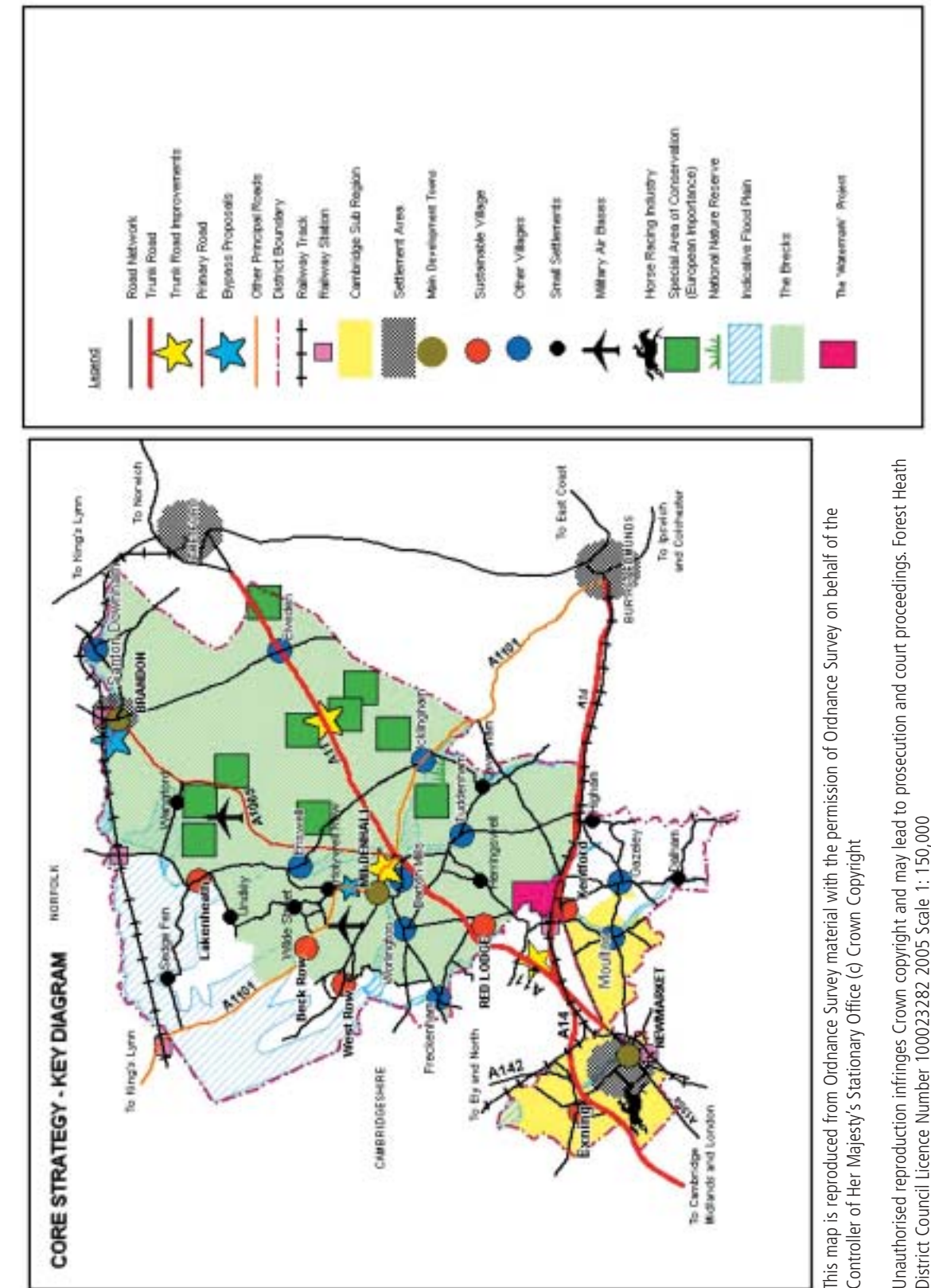
Given the emerging Regional Spatial policies, the main implementation issues which need to be addressed in Forest Heath are:

43	<b>Indicators and Targets</b>
Issue	There are 61 indicators and targets in the draft Regional Plan. Are some more important than others for Forest Heath? This will be addressed by the annual LDF monitoring report.
44	<b>Infrastructure Improvements/Community Facilities</b>
Issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What infrastructure improvements (social, transport, utilities) are needed in the District to accommodate the planned growth sustainably?</li> <li>Should major development go ahead if these infrastructure improvements are not provided?</li> <li>Are some infrastructure improvements/community facilities more important than others are for the District, or are they all equally important?</li> <li>Should major development be required to contribute towards health facilities/service improvements, similar to education contributions?</li> </ul>

45	<b>Cambridge Sub-Region</b>
Issue	Although all of Forest Heath is within the Cambridge Sub-Region for housing purposes, and the Newmarket area for overall planning and growth, FHDC is currently excluded from Cambridge Horizons, the local delivery vehicle set up by Cambridgeshire authorities to implement the planned growth in the Sub-Region.

**Options for Implementation**

- Major housing developers are often required to contribute towards transport/highway and education services. Should housing developers also be required to contribute to the funding of health facilities and services?
- In terms of trying to establish a cross boundary/partnership working to the seeking of funding contributions for infrastructure/community improvements, the main geographic options are:
  - Suffolk-wide
  - Western Suffolk Local Strategic Partnership
  - Cambridge Sub-Region
  - Forest Heath develops its own approach in isolation.



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