

## Introduction

A draft East of England Plan was published for consultation in December 2004, and will be subject to a Public Examination at Ely starting on 1 November 2005 (see [www.goeast.gov.uk](http://www.goeast.gov.uk) for further details). It is expected that the final version of the Plan will be adopted in March 2007.

The following are edited extracts of policies from the draft Plan, which have been selected because they are considered to be those most relevant to the issues and options facing Forest Heath.

At this stage not all of the alternative options for Forest Heath have to be in conformity with the emerging East of England Plan. However, the adopted Forest Heath Core Strategy must be in "general conformity with" and should not "cause significant harm to the implementation of "the adopted Regional Plan.

Therefore, the following policies will be an important factor in deciding which of the alternative options are the most appropriate and acceptable.

### RSS 14 Objectives

1. Increase prosperity and employment growth to meet identified employment needs of the region and achieve a more sustainable balance between workers and jobs.
2. Improve social inclusion and access to employment and services and leisure and tourist facilities among those who are disadvantaged.
3. Maintain and enhance cultural diversity while addressing the distinctive needs of different parts of the region.
4. Increase the regeneration and renewal of disadvantaged areas.
5. Deliver more integrated patterns of land use, movement, activity and development, including employment and housing.
6. Sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of town centres.
7. Make more use of previously developed land and existing buildings, and use land more efficiently, in meeting future development needs.
8. Meet the region's identified housing needs and, in particular, provide sufficient affordable housing.
9. Protect and enhance the built and historic environment and encourage good quality design and use of sustainable construction methods for all new development.
10. Protect and enhance the natural environment, including its biodiversity and landscape character.
11. Minimise the demand for use of resources, particularly water, energy supplies, minerals, aggregates, and other natural resources, whether finite or renewable, by encouraging efficient use, re-use, or use of recycled alternatives and trying to meet needs with minimum impact.
12. Minimise the environmental impact of travel by reducing the need to travel, encouraging the use of more environmentally friendly modes of transport and widening choice of modes.
13. Ensure that infrastructure programmes, whether for transport, utilities or social infrastructure, will meet current deficiencies and development requirements and that the responsible agencies commit the resources needed to implement these programmes and co-ordinate delivery with development.
14. Minimise the risk of flooding.

If you want to see the whole of the draft RSS14 it can be seen on the East of England Regional Assembly web site: [www.eera.gov.uk](http://www.eera.gov.uk)

## Extracts from the Draft East of England Plan (RSS 14) December 2004

### Core Spatial Strategy

The key policy extract is as follows:

#### Policy SS1: achieving sustainable development

The Spatial Strategy aims to achieve a sustainable relationship between jobs, homes and services at the strategic and local level. It requires a sequential approach to the location of major development as a core component of sustainable development. Conserving the region's environment, quality of life, local character and natural resources, whilst adapting to climate change, together with tackling the problems of social inclusion and deprivation, are also key strands in achieving sustainable development.

In most instances development will be focused in or adjacent to major urban areas where there is good public transport accessibility and where strategic networks (rail, road, bus) connect. In more rural areas, development will be focused on market towns, which have good public transport accessibility to key urban areas. By locating housing, jobs and services in close proximity the need for long distance commuting will be reduced.

Local development documents will first consider the reuse of land and buildings within urban areas, then extensions to those areas, and finally other locations where there is good accessibility to public transport, or where proposed development can contribute to improving public transport access.

## Economic Development, Retail and Tourism

The key policy extracts are as follows:

#### Policy E3: approach to employment land allocation

Local development documents will allocate employment land to provide a range of sites and premises to meet the quantitative and qualitative needs of business within the sequential approach of the Core Spatial Strategy, and job growth targets of Policy E2, enabling urban renaissance, economic regeneration, social inclusion and rural diversification.

Where development proposals and issues cross local authority boundaries this approach will be developed and applied across the whole urban or development area.

Efficient use will be made of existing employment land resources. Sites for industry and commerce will be provided in:

- urban areas and key market towns
- locations that minimise commuting and promote more sustainable communities and a closer relationship between jobs and existing or proposed labour supply
- locations where the maximum use of sustainable (public) transport can be made
- locations and ways that minimise loss or damage to environmental and social capital and, so far as possible, substitute for losses and secure positive enhancements. This will often mean giving precedence to the reuse of previously developed land and, wherever possible, the intensification of use on existing sites over the release of greenfield land
- locations which meet the needs of the region's significant clusters as set out in the Regional Economic Strategy.

#### Policy E5: supporting economic diversity and business development

Local development documents will assess the requirements of the various sectors of the local economy, including tourism and culture and formulate policies and proposals to support their

sustainable development. Local development documents will ensure that sufficient range, quantity and quality of land to meet the needs of business, including the provision of smaller units, is provided and safeguarded for a balanced economy in both urban and rural areas.

#### Policy E9: regional structure of retail centres

The regional structure of retail centres is:

- major regional centres: Basildon, Cambridge, Colchester, Chelmsford, Ipswich, Norwich, Peterborough, Southend and Watford
- regional centres: Bedford, Bury St. Edmunds, Great Yarmouth, Harlow, Hemel Hempstead, King's Lynn, Lowestoft, Luton, St Albans, Stevenage and Welwyn Garden City
- other towns and market towns. Local development documents will define the towns and market towns that comprise the structure of main retail centres within their area
- villages and local centres. Local development documents will define the villages and local centres that complete the structure of retail provision within their area.

#### Policy E10: retail strategy

In accordance with the regional structure in Policy E9:

- new retail development will be located in existing centres and will be consistent in scale with the size and character of the centre and its role in the regional structure.

## Housing

The key policy extracts are as follows:

#### Policy H1: distribution of dwelling provision 2001-2021

Local development documents will provide for the following net increase in dwellings Forest Heath - annual average 320, total 6,400.

#### Policy CSR2: Cambridge Sub-Region, scale and distribution of housing provision

Market towns and rural centres in Suffolk, 2,900 homes between 2001 and 2016, and 800 homes between 2016 and 2021.

#### Policy SS13: overall housing provision

Affordable housing must constitute at least 30% of housing supply in all local authority areas, though the overall aspiration is to secure at least 40% where housing stress warrants higher provision. Provision in excess of 30% will be defined and justified in local development documents and housing strategies, informed by local housing assessments.

## Transport

The key policy extracts are as follows:

#### Policy T1: regional transport strategy objectives

Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) seeks to:

- widen travel choice: increasing and promoting opportunities for travel by means other than the private car, particularly walking, cycling and public transport, improving seamless travel through the provision of quality interchange facilities and raising travel awareness
- promote the carriage of freight by rail and water and encourage environmentally sensitive distribution
- stimulate efficient use of the existing transport infrastructure, efficiently maintaining and managing existing road, rail, port and airport infrastructure.

#### Policy T12: walking and cycling

Walking and cycling will be encouraged and provision for both will be improved. Strategic access to and within the Regional Interchange Centres (see Policy T2) will integrate with pedestrian and cycle provision at the local level. Support will be given to the completion (by 2010) of the National Cycle Network in the region and linking it with local cycling networks to form continuous routes.

#### Policy T13: public transport accessibility

Public transport provision will be improved and its use encouraged. Levels of public transport accessibility will be increased in line with the standards set out in table 8.1.

#### Policy T16: parking

As public transport accessibility improves, demand-constraining maximum parking standards will be applied for commercial development. In Regional Interchange Centres and other urban centres, once the public transport accessibility levels in table 8.1 have been met, parking standards will be no higher than 70% of PPG13 standards (for those uses set out

in table 8.2). Elsewhere PPG13 standards will be achieved.

#### Policy T17: investment priorities

Investment will be sought for the regional and sub-regional proposals in table 8.3, as reviewed from time to time.

Table 8.3 schemes relevant to Forest Heath:

- National Cycle Network
- A11 Fiveways to Thetford dualling
- Haven Gateway to Nuneaton rail freight enhancement
- East/West rail link - Bedford/Cambridge/Ipswich
- Felixstowe to Cambridge A14 corridor study
- Bury St Edmunds/Peterborough/Midlands rail corridor.

## Environmental Resources

### The key policy extracts are as follows:

#### Policy ENV2: landscape character

The diversity and local distinctiveness of landscape character throughout the East of England should be protected and enhanced. Planning authorities and other agencies in their plans, policies and programmes will conserve and enhance landscape character by:

- developing area wide strategies based on character assessments, to set longterm goals for landscape change, particularly in the regional growth areas identified in chapter 5 and by targeting planning and land management tools and resources to influence change
- developing criteria based policies, informed by landscape character assessments to ensure that all development, wherever possible respects and enhances local landscape character
- providing appropriate mitigation measures where avoidance of damage to local landscape character is unavoidable.

#### Policy ENV3: biodiversity and earth heritage

Planning authorities and other agencies in their plans, policies and proposals will ensure that the internationally and nationally designated sites in the region, shown on map 9.2, are given the strongest level of protection. The region's biodiversity, earth heritage and natural resources will be protected and enriched through conservation, restoration and re-establishment of key resources by:

- promoting the restoration and re-establishment of habitats and species populations in accordance with the East of England regional biodiversity targets in Appendix B and the targets set out in the UK, England and local biodiversity action plans
- identifying and safeguarding areas for habitat restoration and re-establishment, in particular for large-scale (greater than 200 ha) habitat restoration which bring associated social and economic benefits
- identifying and safeguarding regionally important geological and/or geomorphological sites (RIGS) and promoting the expansion of the number of sites receiving active conservation management
- ensuring the appropriate management and further expansion of wildlife corridors that are important for the migration and dispersal of wildlife
- establishing networks of semi-natural green spaces in built up areas as part of the process of developing more sustainable, safer, secure and attractive urban and built forms
- ensuring that all new development minimises any damage to the biodiversity and earth heritage resource and, where possible, enhances it.

#### Policy ENV6: agriculture, land and soils

Planning authorities and other agencies in their plans, policies and proposals will:

- include policies that integrate the need to accommodate the changes taking place in agriculture to address issues such as changing support mechanisms, climate change, consumer demands for higher standards of animal welfare and food safety, organic farming and other less intensive agricultural practices, with the potential implications of resultant development in the countryside
- encourage the sustainable use of soil resources and, where soil and land have been degraded, maximise the opportunities for restoration to beneficial after-uses including agriculture, woodland, amenity and habitat creation schemes in accordance with regional priorities set out in other policies of the RSS
- encourage more sustainable use of water resources through winter storage schemes and new wetland creation.

#### Policy ENV8: renewable energy and energy efficiency

To help the region move towards energy self-sufficiency, and meet and improve on its renewable energy targets set out in table 9.2, local development documents will contain policies for promoting and encouraging energy efficiency and renewable energy. These policies will presume in favour of, and emphasise the wider sustainable development benefits associated with, energy efficiency and renewable energy and will:

- require developers to maximise energy efficiencies to be gained from sustainable design and construction, community heating and combined heat and power schemes, and encourage developers to strive to achieve energy efficiency standards that exceed minimum standards;
- require energy consumption statements for development proposals above a threshold of 1,000 sq m or 50 dwellings, in order to ensure that the technical, environmental and economic feasibility of alternative systems such as:
  - a) decentralised energy supply systems based on renewable energy
  - b) combined heat and power (CHP)
  - c) district or block heating or cooling, if available
  - d) heat pumps, under certain conditions is considered and is taken into account before construction starts
- require all developments above the same threshold to incorporate equipment for renewable power generation so as to provide at least 10% of their predicted energy requirements
- specify the locational and other criteria by which applications for renewable energy developments will be assessed. Local development documents policies will define and relate renewable energy and energy efficiency policies to:
  - a) Sustainable Communities Plan growth areas (see chapter 5, 'sub-regional and sub-area policies')
  - b) settlements outside growth areas
  - c) non-designated landscapes
  - d) designated landscapes

in accordance with the detailed guidance in Appendix C to the RSS.

#### Policy ENV9: water supply, management and drainage

New development will be located, designed and its implementation planned in such a way to allow for sustainable provision of water supply and enable timely investment in sewage treatment and discharge systems to maintain the required standard of water quality.

Local authorities will:

- in preparing local development documents, take account of the Environment Agency's Regional Water Resources Strategy, catchment abstraction management strategies, groundwater vulnerability maps and groundwater source protection zone maps. The protection of water resources and provision for water abstraction should take into account environmental constraints
- ensure that rates of development do not exceed the capacity of existing water supply systems or, where relevant, proceed ahead of essential planned improvements that will increase the supply
- maintain ongoing liaison with the Environment Agency, water companies and sewage statutory undertakers in order to ensure timely and sustainable provision of infrastructure for the supply of water and sewage treatment and discharge systems, particularly in connection with major new development
- require the introduction of water conservation measures and sustainable drainage solutions. Local planning authorities should produce detailed supplementary planning guidance to implement water conservation and sustainable drainage solutions
- encourage the provision of on-farm winter storage facilities for water, where that does not conflict with other planning policies, for use in summer and to provide a resource for wildlife and recreation.

All relevant agencies and developers should include water conservation measures in new development and promote public awareness of the need to reduce water consumption.

# Culture

## The key policy extracts are as follows:

### Policy C2: provision and location of strategic leisure, sport, recreation, arts or tourism facilities

Regionally or nationally significant leisure, sport, recreation, arts or tourism facilities will be supported in locations where proposals:

- satisfy the sequential test. Priority should be given to the location of development in central urban locations before off-centre or out-of-town locations, and to the use of brownfield land in preference to greenfield sites. Exceptionally the specific attributes of a rural site may make it uniquely appropriate for a regionally strategic cultural development proposal
- do not adversely affect areas designated for their ecological, landscape or historic value
- meet sustainable development objectives as outlined in chapter 4, Core Spatial Strategy of the RSS
- maximise opportunities to use means of transport other than the car and use transport networks that have adequate capacity to accommodate passenger and rail freight requirements without adverse affect upon rail, bus and other transport services
- are well related to Regional Interchange Centres as defined in chapter 8, Regional Transport Strategy
- minimise their use of energy and natural resources and their impact on public services and have satisfactory proposals for minimising their long term use and impact
- have appropriate scale and impact
- meet other relevant criteria or considerations specific to the proposed location of the development.

The above criteria may be met by the introduction of measures to ameliorate or mitigate adverse effects provided these are appropriate and satisfactory to the relevant local planning authority.

Proposals that both meet the above criteria and would bring benefit to an assisted area or priority area for regeneration will be given particular support.

### Policy C4: sporting facilities

In preparing plans, local planning authorities will liaise with Sport England and local community groups to determine the best locations for appropriate facilities. In consultation with local community groups, they should identify needs and set out clear strategies for the provision of additional community sport and recreation facilities, as well as for the protection and enhancement of existing sporting facilities, following an extensive audit of existing recreational open spaces and sports facilities in the area, and a needs assessment of the type of sports facilities required.

Local development documents will include policies designed to:

- meet the needs of urban and rural communities, in locations that encourage sustainable modes of travel, are not detrimental to the environment and wherever possible seek, to utilise previously developed land
- protect and enhance existing sporting facilities of regional and local significance
- make provision for new sporting facilities where a need has been identified. If these are of regional significance they should satisfy policy C2.

### Policy C5: recreation and natural resources

Local authorities, in consultation with local community groups, will develop clear strategies for improving opportunities for informal recreation for both local residents and visitors, as well as making adequate provision for formal recreational activities, which rely on the use of natural and manmade features/resources.

In particular, local development documents will include policies which:

- ensure satisfactory access to sites and facilities
- seek to protect the most valuable existing recreational resources and assets from inappropriate development that would harm their character and amenity value
- seek to maximise the development of regional recreational assets such as major urban parks, regional and country parks, woodlands and community forests, trails, bridleways and cycleways, stretches of coastline or estuary, and canals and waterways that may attract visitors as well as meet local needs
- seek to improve access for formal sporting activities that rely on natural resources such as rivers, lakes, coastline, estuaries and areas of upland, where such activities can take place

without harming the overall environmental quality of the location

- ensure that satisfactory provision for informal recreation forms an integral part of major regeneration schemes, in a way that benefits the local population and adds value to the economic benefits of the development.

### Policy IMP3: establishment of local delivery vehicles (LDVs)

EERA recognises the importance of establishing locally accountable LDVs. EERA will ensure that in other areas facing major change, the scope for creation of appropriate LDVs is considered, and will assist local partners in setting up suitable bodies.

# Implementation

## The key policy extracts are as follows:

### Policy IMP1: conditions for success

East of England Regional Assembly will seek priority for investment in:

- support for all forms of affordable housing
- social infrastructure to underpin economic growth and regeneration, with particular priority for health and education provision
- transport infrastructure, particularly to:
  - a) address existing infrastructure deficits prioritised by the Regional Transport Strategy set out in chapter 8
  - b) implement improved demand management systems
  - c) achieve the Regional Transport Strategy's modal shift targets
- the delivery mechanisms needed to achieve the employment growth.

### Policy IMP2: development contributions

EERA will:

- work with partner organisations to establish consistent approaches to the negotiation of planning agreements (and equivalent legal agreements) by developing good practice guidance and fostering best practice throughout the East of England
- work with Government and partner organisations to develop innovative approaches to value capture, up-front funding of infrastructure schemes, and establish revolving funds, and to ensure that new approaches are implemented vigorously and consistently across the region.

