

THE CORE STRATEGY & OPTIONS

THE ECONOMY

Theme 3 - Strengthening The Economy

To stimulate a prosperous economy in order to improve the quality of life for the community.

2.7 THE ECONOMY

HEADLINE FACTS – THE ECONOMY

- RSS indication is for 8000 new jobs to be provided in the period 2001-2021.
- A further 13,600 employees are likely to have to be replaced during the period 2001-2021
- Major increases in employees during the period to 2021 are most likely to occur in transport and communications and business service activities, with limited increases in health, education and retail and other services (Business service activities include real estate, computer activities, accounting, advertising etc. Other services includes social enterprise, creative and cultural and tourism, heritage and leisure) Manufacturing and agriculture and expected to continue to decline.
- There is currently a net commuting pattern out of the area
- The economic activity rate of Suffolk Coastal overall is 73.6%, this being higher in the south of the district. It is the lowest in Suffolk (average 81%).
- Unemployment levels are below that for the rest of Suffolk and the national and regional averages
- The district has the most qualified workforce within Suffolk – only 26% have no formal qualifications.
- The district suffers from the loss of young adults leaving the area.
- Despite the high qualification proportion, many jobs in the north of the district are low skilled, low paid or seasonal linked to agriculture.
- Agriculture is a major component on the economy (4.9%) with employment in this sector 5 x the national average. It has an important role to play in land management and as a continuing source of employment in the rural areas. It also has a significant role in terms of self-employment opportunities.
- There are over 4,500 businesses that trade in the district, almost all employing less than 50 and a significant number less than 5.
- Of the large employers the Port of Felixstowe is a major UK container hub, with warehousing and distribution particularly significant around it. The Port has approval for a considerable expansion/reconfiguration
- 45% of the Felixstowe workforce are either directly or indirectly related to the Port.
- 48% of people working in Felixstowe commute from elsewhere.
- The adjacent regional town of Ipswich exerts considerable influence on the labour and housing markets.
- There are two high-tech business clusters of different scales at Martlesham Heath and Framlingham.
- At Martlesham Heath BT Exact operates as an IT research and development centre employing more than 3,000 engineers and scientists.
- The A12 and A14 play an important role in the economy of the district
- The decommissioning of Sizewell 'A' will result in the loss of 525 direct and 105 indirect jobs in the next 5 years
- The overall value of tourism to Suffolk Coastal is estimated at £140 million.
- Tourism supports an estimated 2,800 full-time jobs plus approximately 1,200 seasonal and part-time jobs.
- Culture and heritage play major roles in the economy, most notably Snape Maltings with its concert hall and music school, as well as Sutton Hoo, which attracted 180,000 visitors in the year after opening a new Visitor Centre.
- The popularity of some visitor destinations has resulted in significant adverse impacts on host communities and the environment.
- There are 6 town centres - Aldeburgh, Felixstowe, Framlingham, Leiston, Saxmundham and Woodbridge.

The **Community Strategy** identifies as **PRIORITY AREAS**:

- To maintain and enhance the prosperity of our rural areas and promote opportunities for people to deliver the skills they need, by furthering small business growth, developing the workforce and fostering market towns as service employment centres
- Working with young people to meet their needs and help them remain in the district, enabling them to achieve economic wellbeing

The **Community Strategy** also identifies as **KEY ISSUES**:

- to develop tourism, maritime and high technology industries
- tackling regeneration in priority areas such as Felixstowe.

You have told us the issues are:

- Lack of accessibility to jobs, both in terms of the quality of the transport system but also the number and location of the jobs themselves
- Lack of diversity in terms of employment opportunities.
- Investment in the economy, notably in high-tech activity
- The need for further research on the local economy, particularly if it is to be used to determine the choice of new employment sites
- The pressure to develop existing employment sites for other uses, notably residential development
- Tourism is good for the economy but the environment and local communities are sensitive to visitor pressure.
- Young people leaving rural areas due to a lack of suitable jobs
- The economic impact of the decommissioning of Sizewell A
- The need for additional flexibility in respect of new policies to cover the conversion of rural buildings, particularly when close to sustainable communities
- The A12 north of Wickham Market needs to be upgraded due to the increased daily and holiday traffic
- Sustainable balance should not become subservient to economic prosperity
- Support for the development of small scale business units
- Concern that pig farms can become industrial units

THE SUPPLY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT LAND AND PROPERTY

Draft Objective 6 - Economic Development

To increase prosperity and employment growth to meet, as a minimum, the identified employment needs of the district as indicated in the RSS, to achieve a more sustainable balance between workers and jobs and to attract workers to remain in employment within the district.

- 2.7.1 Achieving a strong and diverse economy, which provides a more sustainable balance between workers and jobs is a key objective of the Plan. It is a fundamental element in achieving the Council's Vision for the area insofar as it relates to re-balancing the population structure by providing an incentive particularly for those aged 18-30 to stay locally, or to be attracted into the district.
- 2.7.2 Whilst average wage levels for the district in 2005 were above average for the UK, they remain lower than the regional average and there remain wide variations within the individual employment sectors and therefore geographic areas. At Felixstowe employment is centred on the port. At Martlesham Heath, BT's research and development HQ is a major employer. Across the more rural parts of the district, agriculture and associated trades are dominant.

Public sector employment is also important, with a larger concentration in the southern rather than northern part of the district and at the larger centres. This has implications for the spatial strategy.

- 2.7.3 Two studies have been commissioned to assess the extent of existing employment provision, the workforce, and potential changes within the economic structure currently operating within the district. The first study completed in December 2005 took a strategic overview of employment in the Haven Gateway sub-region of which the southern part of the district forms a part. A further study was commissioned by the District Council and completed in August 2006. This considered more specifically the economy of the Suffolk Coastal district in order to inform the development of employment policies. The studies confirm that there are structural changes occurring within the local economy. Contractions are occurring within the agricultural and manufacturing sectors. With agriculture being so important to the rural areas and dominant in the northern part of the area, opportunities for diversification will be important.
- 2.7.4 Sectors where the employment increase is felt most strongly are business services such as banking and finance, as well as transport and communications, education and health. These uses are most likely to be found or supported at the main urban areas and market towns.
- 2.7.5 This sectoral growth shifts the occupation structure towards more highly skilled occupation types, including professionals and associate professionals. Whilst the district enjoys very high levels of skilled worker, there is currently a pattern of out-commuting for jobs that have higher wages. The forecast infers that more highly skilled workers from the area may be employed closer to home, and improve the balance of workers versus older people.
- 2.7.6 The proposed Ipswich based University College Suffolk will go some way towards providing more education opportunities locally and is supported by this Council, including the provision of satellite facilities.
- 2.7.7 The requirements of the RSS and the findings of the two supporting studies raise a number of issues which the Core Strategy will need to address with regard to new employment provision and how it will be provided so as to best meet the Council's Vision for the district.

NEW EMPLOYMENT PROVISION

- 2.7.8 .8 The Regional Spatial Strategy identifies a need for additional jobs within the Haven Gateway sub-region. It is estimated that the Suffolk Coastal area could accommodate 8000 of the total requirement for the Haven Gateway sub-region. Such jobs will not only provide for the expanding population of Suffolk Coastal (expected to increase by 10,200 units over the same period) but also that of Ipswich.
- 2.7.9 The Council will seek to ensure that there is a continuous supply of employment land in order to:
- a) Achieve the Core Strategy objectives;
 - b) Create the jobs required by the Regional Spatial Strategy; and
 - c) Provide a choice of sites in terms of size, location and quality
- 2.7.10 The distribution of this land will reflect the spatial strategy of the Core Strategy, ensuring that employment opportunities are in places:
- a) Consistent with the RSS;
 - b) Consistent with the settlement hierarchy in the Core Strategy;
 - c) That are sustainable; and
 - d) That support regeneration

2.7.11 Changes in working arrangements are likely to be influential, most noticeably in respect of small businesses, as working from home becomes more prevalent. However, there are two principal means of achieving new employment:

- a) The identification of new areas for employment uses; and
- b) The protection of existing sites.

2.7.12 Each is examined in the following sections.

NEW EMPLOYMENT AREAS

Strategic Employment Sites

2.7.13 This strategic employment study confirmed that within the Suffolk Coastal District Council area, sufficient land is already identified in the adopted Local Plan to contribute 8000 new jobs to meet the RSS requirement for the Haven Gateway sub-region to the period to 2021. The vast majority of that land is of medium or good quality. Sites that are most likely to meet future demand include the following proposals in the current Local Plan:

- Proposed extension to Ransomes Europark at Nacton (14 ha),
- The Suffolk Innovation Park adjacent to Adastral Park at Martlesham (18 ha), and
- Land at or adjacent to the Port of Felixstowe.

2.7.14 Ransomes Europark lies within Ipswich and an extension to it into the district of Suffolk Coastal remains a valid and sustainable proposal, lying close to Ipswich and on the A14 trunk road. The Option of identifying this as a strategic employment site is not considered relevant. The extension, however, is of sub-regional significance providing as it does an extension to a substantial employment centre within Ipswich. It will constitute a General Employment Area (see below).

2.7.15 The other two areas listed above are of strategic regional significance for different reasons.

2.7.16 Adastral Park, Martlesham is centred on the reputation and international significance of the research establishment of British Telecom. There is a proposal to create a high-tech business cluster to be known as the Suffolk Innovation Park and this will provide an invaluable contribution to the employment base not only of Ipswich and Suffolk Coastal but also the region. It has the support of the East of England Development Agency and is referred to in the Regional Spatial Strategy.

2.7.17 The current Plan identifies greenfield land to the immediate south of Adastral park as the potential location. However, it will be necessary to consider the alternative scenario of accommodating it within the redevelopment and rationalisation of adjacent Adastral Park. Whichever Option is chosen will not diminish the significant strengthening of the strategic employment site

2.7.18 The Port of Felixstowe is a container port of national importance that has recently been granted permission for a major reconfiguration. It is anticipated that this re-configuration alone will provide directly and indirectly for approximately 1200 new jobs.

Local Employment

2.7.19 In addition to the strategic employment sites referred to above there will be a need to identify sites at the local level, the development of which will contribute to the provision of jobs. The settlement hierarchy will be used in the site selection whereby the larger settlements, notably the market towns, will be the subject of site specific allocations. This will be particularly relevant should the settlement be the location for housing growth.

2.7.20 The outcome will be a hierarchy of employment sites. This hierarchy has regard to the level, scale and siting of existing employment uses, the proposed allocations and the new overarching settlement hierarchy and countryside policies.

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- 2.7.21 **Strategic Employment Sites** – sites of more than local economic importance. Two are identified, the Port of Felixstowe and Adastral Park at Martlesham.
- 2.7.22 **General Employment Areas** – it is anticipated that most economic activity of a general nature will take place on these areas, including any extensions to them. Most existing employment provision at the market towns would fall within this category although potential may exist at Rendlesham, a key service centre, on the site of the former Bentwaters airbase. This will need to be explored in the Site Specific Allocations and Policies.
- 2.7.23 **Local Employment Areas** – these consist of more than one business and generally occur throughout the district, whether it is in urban or rural locations. They provide employment and help to retain viable and balanced communities. They are numerous and generally small in scale. Uses will be restricted to B1 and B2 uses only. The suitability of new sites will be determined by the policies of the Core strategy but will generally be resisted where traffic generation is a major concern.

EXISTING LAND AND PROPERTY

- 2.7.24 In recognition of the fact that existing employment areas comprise the bulk of employment provision within the area, and that these companies comprise the core of the local economy the policy emphasis will continue to be on retaining these areas in employment use.
- 2.7.25 It will be important to resist the loss of the employment potential to other uses and to ensure that development does not take place to the detriment of other objectives of the Core Strategy. A surplus of employment land on identified sites does not necessarily imply that it should be released elsewhere. There is likely to be demand for good quality premises that are affordable and offer good value for money. This is reflected in the identified high levels of entrepreneurship in the district and demand from start up companies.
- 2.7.26 Discussions with local commercial agents have reinforced the economic assessment. Occupier demand is strong for small premises on a freehold basis. Sites in good locations and with good communications, particularly in the south of the district, offer the best prospects for business use. However, in the short term, viability constraints (i.e. costs of development exceeding end values) may continue to hinder business workspace schemes coming forward.
- 2.7.27 Sites at risk of decline are those that are occupied by economic sectors and functions in decline, i.e. those closely related to manufacturing and production. They also include sites that have been vacant for long periods of time and have been unsuccessfully marketed, and/or where there is dereliction or a significant cost involved in bringing a site back into use. Sites that are more remote and isolated from transport networks are also likely to be at risk of decline, as well as those that have ageing premises and/or that have high vacancy levels.

Alternative Options

- 2.7.28 **Option One** – continue with existing policy. Under this policy, sites are encouraged to remain in employment use unless their loss would not cause or accentuate a significant shortfall in employment land, or there would be a substantial planning benefit in permitting alternative uses. This policy has been reasonably successful, however its guidance is limited.
- 2.7.29 **Option Two** – continues the emphasis on retaining employment land in employment use, but looks to provide more positive and explicit guidance as to what would be acceptable and what would not. This option introduces a sequential approach to the redevelopment of employment land. First and foremost land would be expected to remain in employment use, although not necessarily the same employment use. If this is not possible, the second stage would require the site to be re-developed as a mixed use site, incorporating at least some employment use. Should the first two tests not prove viable, an alternative use or mix of uses will be sought which offers greater potential benefits to the community, in meeting local business and employment needs. Only if this were not possible, or economically viable, would a change of use to residential be considered and only then if the site is located within a settlement with a

physical limit boundary. Such an approach would make positive provision for redevelopment and change of use to exploit structural and other changes in the local economy.

2.7.30 In respect of this Option the following criteria would be used to assess sites:

(a) Location and Accessibility

- Sites in or close to urban areas, with good access to a readily available workforce, particularly those around Ipswich and Felixstowe. Whilst demand for premises in rural areas is likely to generally be more limited because of the inferior accessibility and communications, established/existing employment sites in rural areas may well be sustainable.
- There is likely to be greater demand for sites in the south of the district, where there are higher employment densities.
- However, in the medium to longer term (10 years plus), there could be greater business opportunities in the *north of the district* which are stimulated as a result of changes to the A12, the closure of Sizewell A and the decline in agriculture.
- Sites that are located close to the primary road network (ideally with immediate access to, but otherwise within a reasonable distance e.g. 1.5 miles), and particularly the A12 and A14.
- Sites that have good access to public transport (i.e. those within 3 miles of a public transport interchange). It is likely that access to roads will be the primary driver of demand for sites particularly in the rural areas of the district, however good access to public transport is also important for sustainability reasons.

(b) Sectors and Segments

- Sites that are in B1 uses, though there will be additional requirements for B8 uses as a result of the growth of the port and there may also be a small requirement for B2 property as a result of market churn.
- Demand is likely to be greatest from business service related companies that require either; town centre/high street offices, business parks and light industrial/workshop accommodation.
- Properties offering units of smaller size to cater for small and medium enterprises (SME's).
- Properties that are well occupied and have low vacancy levels (e.g. 10% or less)
- Some rural sites will need to be retained in order to meet the needs of strong local sectors such as growing local produce, repair of motor vehicles and retail.

(c) Tenure

- There is reported to be greatest demand for freehold sites and premises away from Ipswich. There may be some demand for leasehold properties, particularly from smaller or start-up companies who require this flexibility.

(d) Site Conditions and Restraints

- Sites which have no or minimal constraints where the high cost of development would not hinder the site being taken forward. Sites that have significant constraints such as contamination or major infrastructure requirements are less likely to be taken forward in the shorter term.
- Sites where the preferred uses are compatible with neighbouring uses, for example B8 uses would not be suitable close to residential areas, but B1 uses may be.
- Serviced sites, which have good site conditions, for example where there are no derelict premises on site and where the site has a flat topography and a regular shape, which allows flexibility of development.

QUESTIONS - Economy
Retention of employment sites

- Q22 Do you consider it important to retain existing employment land? Y/N
- Q23 Which of the Options listed do you consider offers the best opportunity to retain land in employment use and why?
Option 1
Option 2

THE RURAL ECONOMY

Draft Objective 7 - The Rural Economy

To strengthen and diversify the rural economy through:

- **Fostering the maintenance and expansion of existing employment and creation of new employment in the market towns of the district**
- **Encouraging small-scale farm and rural diversification enterprises which are compatible with objectives in respect of the environment**
- **Supporting agriculture**
- **Expanding the tourism offer where it is compatible with the objectives in respect of the environment**

2.7.31 The rural economy comprises a myriad of uses the largest of which are the agricultural and horticultural businesses. In terms of land use and land coverage, it is agriculture and forestry that most influence the appearance of the countryside and thereby comprise a major influence in terms of the tourist industry, the expansion of which is a Council priority. It is important therefore that the Plan recognises the variety of uses that go on within the rural areas, and that can be satisfactorily accommodated within them. At the same time, it is crucial to ensure that uses that are more appropriately located within the main urban centres and market towns are directed to these locations, if the quality of the rural environment is to be maintained and enhanced.

AGRICULTURE AND FARM DIVERSIFICATION

2.7.32 Agriculture plays an important role in the economy of Suffolk Coastal, with employment in the sector nearly 5 times the national average. However, the industry has been undergoing many changes and will continue to do so in the future with an expected decline in the numbers of people employed. With limited opportunities for alternative employment within the rural areas the Council is keen to provide a policy framework within which alternative and supporting uses to the main agricultural use can be permitted.

2.7.33 Consistent with the general policies on the Countryside and in accordance with national and regional guidance, the Council will continue to resist development that has no need to be located there.

Farm Diversification

2.7.34 Farm diversification schemes could include the creation of workshops and other employment accommodation, tourist accommodation, leisure and recreation and farm shops.

2.7.35 Farm diversification schemes will be generally encouraged where they:

- a) Contribute to the viability of the farm enterprise as a whole, and/or its continued operation;
- b) Are for economic or community purposes, appropriate in scale and nature to the location;
- c) Do not generate traffic of a level and nature that cannot be accommodated on the existing road network;
- d) Are well related to the existing settlement pattern;
- e) Make best use of existing buildings and previously developed (brownfield) land;
- f) Are acceptable in terms of such factors as landscape impact, design, nature conservation and historic interest; and
- g) Do not involve residential development unless consistent with other policies of the Core Strategy.

Alternative Options

2.7.36 Option One – This option continues the existing approach to development within the countryside. This limits development in these areas to that which is essential for the efficient operation of agriculture, forestry and horticulture or is otherwise permitted by policies in the Local Plan, in order to protect the landscape quality and character of the countryside for its own sake. A variety of other policies provide guidance on specific issues such as change of use of redundant buildings, extensions to commercial activities etc.

2.7.37 This policy and its associated policies have generally worked well, restricting unnecessary and inappropriate development within the countryside. However, the approach has been criticised for being overly protective and inflexible when considering other uses not necessarily covered by other policies. For example, in relation to forestry and land owned or leased by the Forestry Commission, the government's priority for these areas is now to increase their recreation/leisure potential rather than the forestry business which is no longer expanding. The more inflexible the policy, the more difficult it becomes to respond to changing economic circumstances and the more innovative or unusual ways in which the rural economy can benefit.

2.7.38 Option Two – This option continues the existing approach required by government and regional guidance. The countryside is an important economic asset supporting a variety of uses including agriculture, horticulture, forestry, tourism and a host of other smaller service industries and businesses. The countryside is also a dynamic environment that is to be protected for its own sake.

2.7.39 This option would require that a key element of the plan would be to look to ensure that opportunities to maximise the economic potential of the rural areas, particularly where this will secure employment locally, are supported. It allows for a more refined approach to identifying what is likely to be acceptable within the different countryside areas. In relation to individual proposals, issues such as scale, access to the main road networks, to markets, labour etc. will still be important.

QUESTION – economy
Farm Diversification

Q24 With regard to the rural economy and to farm diversification, in what circumstances might the conversion or re-use of a rural building be appropriate?

TOURISM

Draft Objective 8 Tourism

To promote all year round tourism based on the attributes (environmental, cultural and people) of the area, which optimises the benefits of employment and value to the economy that is compatible with maintaining the quality of life of the area.

- 2.7.40 The variety of the environment within the district, its history and culture enable it to appeal to a range of tourist markets including day visits, short breaks and traditional summer holiday type uses. The district is within easy reach of large sections of the population of the south-east and Midlands. The opportunity also exists to raise the profile of the area as a place to visit for foreign tourists linked with the 2012 Olympics as few visit the area at present. Improving the tourism potential of Felixstowe is seen as an important element in achieving the regeneration of the town. Increasingly, the district is also seen as an area attractive to second homeowners.
- 2.7.41 Tourism is recognised as being one of the five largest industries within the UK and this importance is recognised in the district. The overall value of tourism to Suffolk Coastal has been estimated at £142 million. Of this, approximately 37%, was generated by staying visitors and 63% generated by day visitors. This expenditure supports estimated 2,800 full time job equivalents and when part-time and seasonal jobs are considered tourism expenditure supports almost 4000 actual jobs. Evidence suggests that bed-spaces are full at weekends during the summer period. Tourism is therefore an important and growing sector of the economy.
- 2.7.42 There are a number of issues in relation to increasing the tourist potential of the area. Managing visitor numbers; second homes; encouraging new tourist uses which complement/link up existing provision, maximising the maritime connections, and the potential decline of the resort of Felixstowe.
- 2.7.43 The tourism appeal of the district to the west of the A12 receives less attention but to the east has in some instances resulted in significant adverse impacts on the host communities. Also, due to the soft nature of the coastline, erosion and risk of flooding have presented a continual threat in some areas.
- 2.7.44 Improving the tourist offer is a Council priority, not only for the wider district, but also particularly in relation to its role in the regeneration of Felixstowe, and to the continuing prosperity of the market towns. Providing continued support in principle to the tourist industry would therefore remain a priority within the Plan. At the same time, it is recognised that such support needs to be tailored to ensure that any expansion does not materially harm in particular the natural and built environment assets that are the main attractions for visitors to the area.

Alternative Options

- 2.7.45 The alternative options in relation to the Core Strategy therefore relate to the approach that the Council should adopt.
- 2.7.46 **Option One** is a continuation of the current policies whereby proposals are assessed against their impact on the environment and local communities. There is a general strategy of resisting large-scale development in the AONB, notably the “honeypots” that have developed there. Small-scale activities, notably the provision of accommodation, are encouraged across the district. Such an approach tends to be sweeping in its application and fails to apply sustainability criteria.

2.7.47 Option two is to apply a discerning policy whereby the district is divided into distinct areas where the tourism potential could be managed, encouraged or resisted. The result would be a hierarchy of tourism development, linked to the hierarchy of settlements created earlier, where proposals for tourism-related development are encouraged subject to their capacity to absorb new development and additional visitors.

2.7.48 Under this Option the district of Suffolk Coastal will consist of distinct areas. The areas would be:

- a) The resort of Felixstowe, which is a priority for new tourist activity
- b) The market towns of Framlingham, Leiston and Saxmundham. These are considered to have the capacity to absorb some modest development thereby taking pressure off the more sensitive areas
- c) Aldeburgh and Woodbridge. Two small towns in sensitive locations within and adjacent to the AONB respectively. The protection of their settings will be of prime importance
- d) The Heritage Coast. The environment is of national significance and the only development to be permitted will be individual conversions to tourist accommodation to a high standard of design
- e) The Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB. Development should not have a material adverse impact on such matters as landscape and the local highway network
- f) The remaining area east of the A12. Modest developments may be permitted close to settlements that offer a range of facilities.
- g) The area west of the A12. This area has the potential to absorb additional tourist pressure and subject to the implications for the environment, including the generation of traffic, the Council will support and promote tourism west of the A12

2.7.49 Where necessary the Council will support the introduction of local management solutions to the problems created by tourism.

QUESTION - Tourism

Q25 Are there any other issues relating to either the provision of tourist facilities or tourist accommodation which you think the Issues and Options consultation should address?

RETAIL AND RETAIL CENTRES

Draft Objective 9 Retail Centres

To sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of town centres; to foster market towns as service, employment and retail centres; and to encourage the retention of appropriate local services including post offices and shops in villages and district centres.

2.7.50 National and regional policy guidance requires Local Authorities to identify a retail hierarchy within their areas reflecting, for each centre, both their current and future roles. It acknowledges that this may include the expansion or managed contraction of centres.

2.7.51 Research undertaken both within the region as a whole and within the district did not identify any need for major change to the retail structure within the district to meet future and existing need. Emphasis within this part of the region is on maintaining and enhancing the viability and vitality of existing retail centres, and making proper provision for new forms of retail distribution. No need has been proven requiring a new retail centre to be provided.

2.7.52 This advice is supplemented by a Retail Study commissioned by the Council and published

August 2003. This looked at the main urban areas of Felixstowe and Ipswich Fringe and the five market towns. Whilst some of the findings in the study have been acted upon, or been superseded by events, much of their commentary remains valid and useful. Where minor adjustments in provision are promoted, through the study it is intended that these will be addressed under the site-specific policies or area action plans, due to their limited impact in relation to the overall strategic approach to be set out in the Core Strategy. The role of the Core Strategy in relation to retail provision is to identify the retail hierarchy within the District and to provide guidance in relation to the type, scale and level of development appropriate to each level of the hierarchy.

2.7.53 The district is supported by a number of retail centres. These are:

- a) towns and market towns (Felixstowe and the five market towns of Aldeburgh of Framlingham; Leiston Saxmundham and Woodbridge)
- b) Villages and
- c) District and local centres in the urban areas

2.7.54 Beyond the district boundaries the retail pattern is influenced by:

- a) Regional centres – Ipswich and Norwich
- b) Major retail centres – Lowestoft and Bury St Edmunds

2.7.55 The Option is available to draw up a retail hierarchy to reflect the existing levels of provision and settlement roles as set out in a settlement hierarchy. This also takes on board the likely scales of future development as set out in the development Options. New development will also be considered in respect of the profiles set out in the Council's Vision. The hierarchy is defined as follows:

Major Centre - (Felixstowe)

Should incorporate a range of provision including convenience stores, supermarket, comparison goods, and retail warehousing

Market Towns – (Aldeburgh, Framlingham, Leiston, Saxmundham, Woodbridge)

Should incorporate a range of provision including convenience stores, supermarket, and comparison shopping provision. Emphasis will be on retaining the range of provision to meet the needs of the towns and their hinterlands whilst supporting their role as local tourist centres.

Key Service Centres - (Alderton, Blythburgh, Bramfield, Dennington, Earl Soham, Eyke, Grundisburgh, Hollesley, Kirton, Knodishall, Martlesham Village, Melton Village Orford, Otley, Peasenhall, Rendlesham, Snape, Trimley St Martin, Trimley St Mary, Ufford Westleton, Wickham Market, Witnesham, Yoxford)

Should include provision of convenience and a small range of comparison goods shopping. Emphasis will be on retention of existing provision.

Local Service Centres

Should include provision of convenience shopping. This could include provision in the form of a local farm shop, or similar linked/ancillary to another use. Emphasis will be on retention of existing provision.

Other Villages/Countryside

Where no provision currently exists, (this includes the provision of a farm shop or similar) this situation is unlikely to change. Any proposals for development should be re-directed towards higher order settlements that by their nature are more sustainable.

2.7.56 The only area where a potential alternative option would apply is the Ipswich Policy Area. This area is seen as an extension to the urban area of Ipswich, which is identified within the RSS retail hierarchy as a major regional centre, reflecting its role as the county town. Within the Core Strategy, it is an area that is identified as capable of accommodating significant

levels of development and already contains retail provision at local and district centres within Rushmere and Kesgrave. At the eastern extent of the Ipswich Policy Area within the Suffolk Coastal Area, is Martlesham Heath, which effectively operates as an out of town retail centre, including a superstore and retail warehouse and leisure provision. It is well related to local areas of housing, public transport provision and the strategic employment site at Adastral Park and would serve an expanded population within this wider Ipswich Policy Area.

2.7.57 However, wider expansion of the area would be likely to result in an unacceptable impact on the vitality and viability of Woodbridge town centre situated only four miles distant. Policy emphasis from the national and regional level is that the role of market towns should be supported. Given the importance of Woodbridge in its wider role as a market town, important both to local residents, businesses and visitors, and to its role in shaping the future Vision for the district, further expansion of Martlesham Heath has significant potential consequences.

Town Centres

2.7.58 .58 The boundaries of town centres and district centres will be identified on the Proposals Map. Key to the commercial success of town centres is retail activity. Where necessary, frontages will be identified where retail (A1) uses should be focused. These will be primary frontages.

2.7.59 Within primary frontages it is recognised that non-retail uses such as food and drink outlets and financial services can play a complementary role to retail. However, these should not dominate and the Council will seek to ensure that such uses continue to occupy a minor proportion of the overall floorspace and not create an over-concentration along a particular frontage.

2.7.60 The extent of such concentration may vary within each town centre. Any amendments to these designations will be dealt with under site specific policies or area action plans, whichever is the most appropriate to individual circumstances.

2.7.61 A mixture of uses in a town centre can add to its vitality particularly at night. However, it has to be recognised that there may be some loss of amenity, particularly for local residents.

QUESTION - Retail

Q26 Are there any issues relating to retailing that you think should be addressed as a priority?

TRANSPORT AND ACCESSIBILITY

HEADLINE FACTS – TRANSPORT AND ACCESSIBILITY

- Rail services exist between Ipswich and Felixstowe giving direct access into London; and between Ipswich and Lowestoft providing Woodbridge, Saxmundham and a number of smaller settlements with direct rail access.
- Funding of improvements to the rail freight network has been agreed as part of the re-configuration package recently agreed for the port of Felixstowe
- The only trunk road in the district is the A14 running between Felixstowe and Ipswich that is dualled for the major part of its length, giving access eventually to the national motorway network. Although a major freight route difficulties can be experienced if blockages occur east of the Orwell Bridge, as no suitable alternative route is available.
- The A12 provides the main route north to south through the district, but is only dualled for a small part of its length.

- Most of the higher order settlements are served by “B” class roads. Elsewhere much of the road network is single-track roads’ with passing places.
- Good bus routes operate within and between the larger settlements, particularly between Martlesham Heath out of town centre and BT HQ and Ipswich.
- A number of local and longer distance cycle ways exist throughout the district.
- The district contains a good network of footpaths
- For many of the residents living in the rural parts of the district having access to a car is essential to the quality of life. Many do not have regular public transport links to market towns.
- The district is a net exporter of labour.
- 68% of the population travels to work by car compared with 61% in Great Britain as a whole
- One Air Quality Management Zone has been declared at the Lime Kiln Quay /Thoroughfare/St Johns Street cross roads in Woodbridge.
- The district council has very few powers or responsibilities in relation to the operation of either the road or rail network. The majority of relevant planning policies are therefore contained in the RSS.

The Community Strategy identifies as Key Aims:

- Develop appropriate public transport services, including community transport, in market towns linked to good public transport from the major towns and employment areas;
- Develop good community transport services
- Improve road safety through traffic management measures and education

You have told us the issues are:

- Future development should be located in areas where day-to-day facilities and services are available by public transport, walking and cycling.
- It is naïve to think that most people will live close to work and not to travel by car
- There is a need for policies supporting cycling and walking
- The A12 north of Wickham Market needs to be upgraded due to increased daily and holiday traffic.
- Support for the strategic employment sites should also include reference to the need for transport infrastructure.
- Increasing tourism development may have traffic implications.
- Concern at the volume of heavy lorries on rural roads.

TRANSPORT PROVISION

Introduction

- 2.7.62 Responsibility for local transport lies with Suffolk County Council as the highway authority for Suffolk. The authority prepares transport strategy, primarily in the form of the Local Transport Plan (LTP).
- 2.7.63 A key objective of both county and national policy is to ensure that jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services are accessible by public transport, walking and cycling.
- 2.7.64 The diverse nature of Suffolk coastal is a particular challenge for transport delivery. The northern part is predominantly rural with the population living in towns and villages that increasingly act as dormitory settlements. Transport policies for these areas need to reflect the facts that:
- Facilities are dispersed and employment opportunities may be distant; and
 - Many people do not have access to a car

- 2.7.65 The southern part of the district is more densely populated and transport issues relate to the movement of people between residential, employment and commercial centres. The links to Ipswich and Felixstowe, as major employment centres, are important for accessibility to jobs and services.

Draft Objective 10 Transport

To 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.

Sustainable Transport (including car parking)

- 2.7.66 The basis of the transport objective is to promote more sustainable transport choices for people. Although parts of the district are rural and alternative modes are not available the overall aim should be to encourage the use of transport modes other than the car. New development that is likely to generate significant journeys in terms of numbers and lengths should be sited in locations that are well served, or have the potential to be well served by public transport, walking and cycling. The most accessible locations tend to be the major urban areas, market towns and key service centres which all act as transport hubs. This is the basis of the Settlement Hierarchy.
- 2.7.67 In general the Council will seek to improve pedestrian and cycling networks in the district, not only in respect of access to jobs and shops but also the countryside (including equestrian facilities), green space and recreational facilities. Multi-user routes will be supported.
- 2.7.68 In respect of the provision of car parking the Council has options.
- 2.7.69 Option One is to apply a uniform parking standard across the district. Such an option does not enable the most efficient use of land in areas well served by public transport such as town centres where a proportion of the site does not need to be devoted to the motor car. It also fails to recognise the needs of rural areas where one (or more) cars may be essential.
- 2.7.70 The alternative is Option Two whereby the level of parking provision required for new development will be linked to the accessibility of the local area. This will mean a differential approach to parking standards within the district. This runs the risk of being confusing to planning applicants and the public.

**QUESTIONS - Transport
Car parking**

- Q27 Which of the two options do you prefer and why?
Option 1
Option 2
- Q28 Under what circumstances do you think, might a lower standard of car parking be justified.

Connectivity

- 2.7.71 Ensuring effective transport links within the district has already been highlighted. In addition, links to Ipswich are also considered important given its role as a regional centre. The establishment of such links will require effective joint working between the District Council, County Council and adjoining authorities if a high quality, reliable network is to be achieved.
- 2.7.72 The market towns already act as transport hubs that act as feeder networks serving the surrounding areas. It is also important that these provide effective links to Ipswich and ultimately to other parts of the Haven Gateway sub-region, the region and the rest of the country. Important to the network is the East Suffolk rail line with stations at Westerfield, Woodbridge, Melton, Wickham Market (sited at Campsea Ash), Saxmundham and Darsham. The Council will work in partnership with relevant authorities and agencies to help improve services on this line.
- 2.7.73 Also important to the district are the freight and passenger connections to Felixstowe. In this respect the Council supports the improvements to the rail network that facilitate increased freight movement to and from the port by rail.

Demand Management

- 2.7.74 Suffolk Coastal does not suffer the congestion problems that an urban authority might face. However, the district does contain part of the urban fringe of Ipswich, including the A12 and A14 trunk road, and there are issues in respect of the capacity of these roads to accommodate further traffic.
- 2.7.75 A recent study of the A14 Newmarket to Felixstowe corridor has identified two key issues that affect Suffolk Coastal:
- The overall capacity of the A14 to accommodate further traffic; and
 - East-west travel movements across Ipswich
- 2.7.76 In particular, the Orwell Bridge is of concern. The current usage by 60,000 vehicles per day brings it close to capacity at peak periods. This is predicted to rise to 76,000 by 2021. Of these movements only 59% are through movements. The remaining 41% are local – drivers using the bridge as a local southern ring road around Ipswich. When blockages occur the effects are very disruptive, particularly in respect of traffic serving the Port.
- 2.7.77 A further study is underway to examine east-west movements across Ipswich and to formulate proposals to increase capacity through management, road improvements or new construction. The outcome of this study will be available for a subsequent review of the Core Strategy.

The A12

- 2.7.78 The A12 is a valuable artery running north to south through the district, connecting the rural areas with the primary route network and the rest of the country. It is essential to the local economy (including that of Lowestoft to the north) but journey times are hampered by stretches of single carriageway and reduced speed limits. Discussions are currently underway regarding the possible provision of a by-pass, or other solution for Farnham and Stratford St Andrew where the road is particularly narrow and twisting with buildings located very close to the roadline.
- 2.7.79 Option One. As noted earlier, the maintenance and up grading of the road system within the district is the responsibility of the County Council. Policies are included within the RSS that provide general support for improving the network, throughout the county and wider afield as part of the Regional Transport Strategy. Under this option, no specific reference to the up grading of the A12 or the possible provision of a by-pass would be included within the Core Strategy. Reliance for any such provision would be dealt with under policies within the RSS.

Government advice is that policies should not be repeated unnecessarily.

- 2.7.80 Option Two. Under this Option, a policy would be included within the Core Strategy, specifically supporting the upgrading of this route, given its importance to local traffic movements to much of the district, and to the lack of suitable alternative routes, particularly for delivery and other heavy goods vehicles. Such support would however need to be caveated to reflect other local issues, not least the fact that the settlements are located within a Special Landscape Area. Any scheme to improve the road would therefore have to be fully acceptable in terms of its environmental impact.

TRANSPORT - Connectivity

Q29 What significant gaps in the transport network are there, across the district?

Q30 What suggestions do you have as to how those gaps might be filled?