



## Cabinet 30 July 2008

### Breckland Local Development Framework – Thetford Area Action Plan: Issues & Options Consultation

#### 1. Summary and Reasons for Recommendation

- 1.1 The Borough Council has been consulted by Breckland District Council on the Thetford Area Action Plan – Issues and Options Report. The closing date for comments is 5 August 2008.
- 1.2 The scale of growth proposed for Thetford could, without careful planning, have a significant impact on the Borough.
- 1.3 Cabinet approval is sought for the Council's response to the consultation on the Thetford Area Action Plan – Issues and Options Consultation.

#### 2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the comments contained in Section 4 of this report be endorsed and form the basis for the Borough Council's formal response to Breckland District Council on the Thetford Area Action Plan – Issues and Options Report.

#### 3. Corporate Objectives

- 3.1 The recommendation meets the following, as contained within the Corporate Plan:-
  - (a) Corporate Priority : *'Securing a sustainable and attractive environment' and 'Creating a prosperous local economy';*
  - Cabinet Commitment 2 : *'Managing the Future Growth and Development of the Borough';*

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#### 4. Key Issues

- 4.1 Neighbouring local planning authorities are required to consult the Borough Council as part of the preparation of their Local Development Framework. In this respect, the Borough Council has been consulted by Breckland District Council on the Issues and Options report for the Thetford Area Action Plan. This matter would normally have been considered by Sustainable Development Panel but, due to the timing of the consultation, it was not possible to prepare a report in time for the Panel to consider at its meeting on 8 July 2008. The Panel therefore agreed that Cabinet should consider the matter at this meeting. Consultation on the Issues and Options report closes on 5 August 2008.
- 4.2 The Issues and Options report seeks comments on options for the growth of Thetford over the next 20 years. During this time it is anticipated that the town's population will have doubled from what it was in 2001 with over 6,000 new homes being built by 2021 and a further, unspecified, level of growth to 2031. In addition, a further 5,000 new jobs together with associated services and facilities are planned to accommodate this growth. By 2021 Thetford could be a similar size to what Bury St Edmunds is at present.
- 4.3 In responses to previous consultation on the Breckland Core Strategy, the Borough Council has raised concerns on the level of growth proposed at Thetford and the potential impact of this growth on St Edmundsbury. The most recent consultation was in February/March 2008 and the following comment was submitted:
- "In relation to the growth of Thetford, we remain concerned about the potential impact on the borough of this scale of growth. In particular the increase in journeys south along the A134 to employment, shopping, health, further education and leisure destinations in Bury St Edmunds. There is also concern that, with Thetford planning to increase its population to around 30-35,000, the growth will undermine rather than compliment the role that Bury St Edmunds currently plays. There is a need for careful planning to ensure the growth of Thetford is viable without placing undue pressure on the services and infrastructure of Bury St Edmunds and the associated impact on roads and communities. These include Barnham, Ingham and the junctions of the A14 at Bury St Edmunds."*
- 4.4 Although the level and distribution of growth in Breckland is fixed by the East of England Plan and the emerging Breckland Core Strategy, the detailed Area Action Plan will identify the location of development within the town and will need to consider the potential impact of this development. However, the scale of growth is likely to have an impact on a much wider area than that covered by the Action Plan. In this respect, officers remain concerned that the impact on other centres, especially Bury St Edmunds, has not been addressed.
- 4.5 The Issues and Options report suggests that:-
- (a) provision should be made for a sixth form college and possibly facilities for other further / higher education;
  - (b) extensions to an existing Healthy Living Centre and a new primary care centre or smaller GP surgeries will be required;
  - (c) indoor leisure is well provided for but that there may be sufficient demand for a new sports centre by 2031; and
  - (d) up to 2,500 sq metres of convenience goods floorspace and 7,500 comparison goods floorspace will be required in the town by 2018.

4.6	However, unless the community and social infrastructure is put in place before, or at certain thresholds in the growth of Thetford, there could be a significant number of journeys out of the town to Bury St Edmunds for example to West Suffolk Hospital, West Suffolk College and journeys for work, shopping and recreational purposes. This is all likely to place a further burden on the A134 and on villages such as Barnham and Ingham.
4.7	Given the level of growth proposed in Thetford, officers consider that considerably higher levels of infrastructure to that identified will be required to make the growth sustainable. Failure to do this will place additional burdens on existing services in other towns such as Bury St Edmunds, for which no consideration has been made. The points listed in paragraph 4.5 above, for example, appear to make insufficient additional provision for health, education and retail.
4.8	The officers are of the opinion that a response should be submitted to Breckland District Council reinforcing previous concerns about the level of housing growth and the need for an appropriate level of infrastructure, or for a realistic consideration of the impact of this growth on other areas, such as Bury St Edmunds. In the case of mitigating impacts on other areas, consideration should be given to making developer contributions to the improvement of the infrastructure in other settlements that will receive additional demands as a result of this growth.
4.9	The consultation document also identifies potential greenfield locations for development around the town. Three of these sites are located to the south of the town with one large area abutting the Borough boundary between Barnham and Euston. These sites are identified as having low potential for both residential and employment development by Breckland District Council's consultants and officers recommend that objections be submitted to these sites on the basis of potential environmental impact on Barnham and Euston and the rural landscape of this part of St Edmundsbury.
<b>5.</b>	<b>Other Options considered</b>
5.1	The Council has the option of not responding to this consultation. However, this would not be consistent with the Borough Council's previous comments on the Breckland Local Development Framework.

<b>6.</b>	<b>Community impact</b> <i>(including Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and diversity issues)</i>
6.1	<u>General</u>
6.1.1	The potential development proposed at Thetford could have a detrimental impact on communities in St Edmundsbury. Because of this, the recommendation seeks to highlight these impacts in a formal response on the consultation document.
6.2	<u>Diversity</u>
6.2.1	There are no direct impacts on diversity resulting from the recommendations in this report.
<b>7.</b>	<b>Consultation</b>
7.1	Consultation has not been undertaken by officers on the content of this paper as it is a report on a consultation being undertaken by others.
<b>8.</b>	<b>Resource implications</b> <i>(including asset management implications)</i>
8.1	There is no additional revenue impact arising from the recommendations in this report.

<b>9. Risk Assessment</b> <i>(potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)</i>
9.1 There are no risks affecting corporate, service or project objectives arising from the recommendations in this report.
<b>10. Legal or policy implications</b>
10.1 There are no adverse legal implications arising from this report or policy.

<b>Wards affected</b>	All	<b>Portfolio Holder</b>	Transport and Planning
<b>Background Papers</b>		<b>Subject Area</b>	Planning and Development Control

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