

# Planning Committee

08 October 2021

Agenda item number 12

## October- Issues and Options Bite Size Pieces

Report by Planning Policy Officer

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### Summary

The review of the Local Plan for the Broads is underway. This report introduces some sections of the emerging draft Issues and Options stage of the Local Plan. These sections cover the topics of tranquillity, farm diversification, your part of the Broads, and agriculture.

### Recommendation

Members' thoughts and comments on the draft sections are requested.

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. The review of the Local Plan for the Broads is underway. The first document produced as part of the review of the Local Plan will be an Issues and Options consultation. As well as advertising that we are reviewing the Local Plan, this stage identifies some issues and related options and seeks comments. Responses will inform the subsequent stages of the Local Plan.
- 1.2. This report introduces bite size pieces of the Issues and Options. Members will of course be presented with the final draft version of the Issues and Options to endorse it for consultation at a later Planning Committee.
- 1.3. The bite size pieces are as follows, and are attached as appendices to this report. Members' views on these reports/draft sections of the Issues and Options are welcomed.
  - i. tranquillity
  - ii. farm diversification
  - iii. your part of the Broads
  - iv. agriculture

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Date of report: 22 September 2021



**Local Plan for the Broads - Review  
Issues and Options bitesize pieces  
July 2021**

**Agriculture**

The following is one of the draft sections of the Issues and Options. It relates to Agriculture development. Members' thoughts are welcomed as we finalise this section of the Issues and Options.

1. Introduction

Agriculture is a key land use in the Broads and is important to the local economy. Indeed, we tend to receive a number of applications each year for development relating to agriculture which does not fall within the scope of Agricultural Permitted Development rights. The current local plan has policies relating to rural enterprise dwellings (DM38) and business and farm diversification (DM27). Currently, other types of agriculture development would be assessed against various policies in the local plan; we wonder if there is a need for a policy that helps guide agriculture development.

2. Issue

Policy DM1 of the current Local Plan relates to development that can impact on the Broads – Major Development. It says 'for the purposes of this policy, 'major development' is defined in this Local Plan as development which has the potential to have a significant adverse impact on the Broads and its special qualities due to the development's nature, scale and setting'.

With agriculture related development often being at a large scale, it may have an impact on the special qualities of the Broads. On the other hand, agricultural development in some ways typifies the character and appearance of parts of the Broads. Subject to sympathetic siting and design considerations, this type of development can be less visually intrusive than a similar footprint of commercial or residential development. Agricultural development tends not to be exceptional – indeed, they tend to be standard buildings. Arguably, agricultural development may pass the tests in DM1 and the NPPF, such as being in the public interest and this being the exceptional circumstance. But perhaps the local plan needs a policy specific to agricultural buildings to ensure the assessment is as clear and comprehensive as possible whilst still allowing for sustainable development.

Other potential issues include:

- After a few years in place, there may be pressure to convert the agricultural buildings into another use. Whilst the conversion options through PD regulations are

limited in the Broads Authority Executive area, is there a need to prove a longer-term financial case for the building?

- There are areas of intensive farming in the Broads and the point at which an application is made for new development at a farm might be an opportunity to address issues with an existing site. The development itself may seek to address these issues, but would this be an opportunity to seek wider biodiversity/social etc benefits?
- Is there scope for agriculture development to aid in the production of low carbon/renewable energy?
- Some agriculture related applications result in new tracks/bridges. Is there scope for these to be open for the public to use?

It therefore seems there is potential for a new policy to cover particular aspects relating to agricultural development in the Broads that also links to the two existing farming related policies of rural enterprise dwellings and business and farm diversification.

### 3. Options

A: No specific policy. Use existing policies to guide and determine applications for agricultural development.

B: A new development management policy, specifically on agricultural buildings which would cover design, longevity of use, landscaping and environmental considerations as well as the justification for development and potential benefits through contributions/access/biodiversity/flood improvements/water quality/water storage.

**Question x. What are your thoughts on the need to address agriculture development in the new Local Plan? Are there any other issues to address if a policy were to be produced?**



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**Farm Diversification**

The following is one of the draft sections of the Issues and Options. It relates to Agriculture development. Members' thoughts are welcomed as we finalise this section of the Issues and Options.

**Introduction**

Agriculture is one of the main land uses in the Broads. It is an important part of local economy, important to society for the provision of food and is part of the character and vitality of countryside.

We understand that agricultural incomes will change as a result of agricultural policy post BREXIT and the subsidies regime will evolve. The Agricultural Transition Plan 2021 to 2024 notes that: "We will pay farmers to improve the environment, improve animal health and welfare, and reduce carbon emissions". As such, there are lots of factors that tend to be out of farmers' control that can impact income and could make farming less viable. As a result, farmers may need to make changes to their businesses. We also understand that farmers may want to look at diversification schemes that may provide more certainty and control over the use of land. Farm diversification can assist in making farms more viable and we hope to assist in that.

**Do you support this policy approach generally?**

The aim of the farm diversification policy is not to facilitate the renting of small parcels of land to separate individuals to run separate businesses on. This would result in the fragmentation of farm holdings and inappropriate development in the countryside that would not be acceptable under other policies in the Local Plan. The renting of small parcels of land is not farm diversification, but subdivision of the farm holding.

**Do you have any thoughts on this particular issue in relation to farm diversification?  
Do you agree that the uses should be linked, so that it remains associated with the farm?**

The point of this policy is to help farms to stay viable. We wonder if we need to ask for supporting information on how the diversification project/proposal will enable the farm to be viable. This could be in the form of a viability study. This is important as this policy may allow development which would not otherwise be allowed and so we need to be clear that the scheme will benefit the farm business.

**Do you have any thoughts on requiring supporting viability information for farm diversification projects? What other information may be required to support applications?**

One way of diversifying is through the provision of holiday accommodation. This should be through the conversion of existing buildings converted rather than new build, unless there are particular justifications for this. This is because by converting an existing building, there could be limited landscape impacts and this approach makes use of existing buildings with the associated embodied carbon. New build in the context of this policy covers all structures (including yurts, pods and cabins).

**Do you have any thoughts on conversion and new build in terms of farm diversification?**

In all cases, the diversified uses should only form a subsidiary part of the farming business as a whole and should not prejudice the existing or future agricultural operations. We need to consider and understand the cumulative impact of farm diversification projects on the farm as a whole. We wonder if there is a point where a farm has been diversified to such extent that the farming aspect is now the subsidiary part of the business.

**Do you have any thoughts on this particular issue in relation to farm diversification?**

It is important to note that this section only refers to the farm diversification policy. A farmer may wish to undertake development on their farm and submit these proposals under a scheme that is not considered farm diversification. The relevant policies in the Local Plan will then be engaged and used to determine the application.



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**Tranquillity**

The following is one of the draft sections of the Issues and Options. It relates to tranquillity. Members' thoughts are welcomed as we finalise this section of the Issues and Options

**1. What is tranquillity?**

It is more than just noise; it is about remoteness and where you feel calm. Maybe few if any people or interruptions. When talking about tranquillity, these are common factors:

- Feeling close to nature and wildlife
- Feeling solitude and remoteness
- Hearing natural sounds
- Seeing unspoilt natural beauty

The Lake District Local Plan defines tranquillity as 'freedom from the noise and visual intrusion, including light pollution, associated with developed areas, roads, transport and traffic, and areas with intensive recreational activities and other uses that contribute to disturbance'.

**2. Tranquillity and National Policy**

The NPPF refers to tranquillity at paragraph 102b (in relation to local green spaces) and paragraph 185b which says that planning policies and decisions should 'identify and protect tranquil areas which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason'.

The NPPG refers to tranquillity here: [Noise - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/noise-and-vibration-assessment)

What factors are relevant if seeking to identify areas of tranquillity?

For an area to justify being protected for its tranquillity, it is likely to be relatively undisturbed by noise from human sources that undermine the intrinsic character of the area. It may, for example, provide a sense of peace and quiet or a positive soundscape where natural sounds such as birdsong or flowing water are more prominent than background noise, e.g. from transport.

Consideration may be given to how existing areas of tranquillity could be further enhanced through specific improvements in soundscape, landscape design (e.g. through the provision of green infrastructure) and/or access.

Paragraph: 008 Reference ID: 30-008-20190722

Revision date: 22 07 2019

### 3. Dark skies and lighting

One aspect of tranquillity is lack of light pollution and good dark skies. The Broads Authority already has a policy relating to dark skies and light pollution which it intends to take forward into the new Local Plan for the Broads.

### 4. What do National Parks do?

Dartmoor National Park Authority have a stand-alone criteria-based policy in their Local Plan. Lake District Local Plan includes tranquillity in their policy that seeks to protect the spectacular landscape. North York Moors have a stand-alone policy with four key issues to consider: visual intrusion, noise, activity levels and traffic generation.

### 5. Tranquillity and the Broads

In the Broads, there are high levels of tranquillity through much of the Broads; in particular, a sense of remoteness in some parts despite these being located close to concentrations of housing and industry. One of the special qualities of the Broads is views, remoteness, tranquillity, wildness and 'big skies'. The Trinity Broads and upper Thurne area are particular considered tranquil areas in the Broads.

### 6. Options

Option 1: do not address tranquillity specifically in the Local Plan. Rely on other landscape, dark skies and amenity policies that will be in the Local Plan.

Option 2: improve the consideration of tranquillity in the Local Plan by including it in related policies, potentially the landscape section of the local plan.

Option 3: a stand-alone, criteria-based policy, following the example of some National Park Authority local plans. The dark skies policy remains a separate policy.

Option 4: as per option 3, but also including the dark skies policy.

**How do you think we should consider/address tranquillity in the Local Plan?**



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**Your part of the Broads**

The following is one of the draft sections of the Issues and Options. It relates to local communities and their views on what is important about their area. Members' thoughts are welcomed as we finalise this section of the Issues and Options

**Your part of the Broads**

In the Broads, there are only parts of parishes and settlements – all are shared for planning purposes between the Broads and the relevant district. But we would like to know what makes your village or town a good place to live, and what do we need to do to protect it, or improve it? Here are some questions for you to consider. We cannot guarantee that we can enable sites to be developed or address all of your concerns or suggestions but we would welcome your thoughts.

- a) What aspects of your town, village or parish or part of the Broads, are particularly important and valued by residents?
- b) Are there any features or areas in your part of the Broads that you would like to see altered or improved?
- c) Are there any other issues that affect your community/your part of the Broads that you would like to be considered in the preparation of the new Local Plan?
- d) What changes do you expect to see over the next twenty years in your part of the Broads which the plan might need to cater for?
- e) Are there any areas of previously developed land which are currently unused within the Broads part of your town or village? If so, can you please identify the location and tell us what your preferences would be for these areas in the future?
- f) What kind of development, if any, do you think your part of the Broads would benefit from?