

Broads Local Plan – Issues and Options

Report by Planning Policy Officer

Summary:

This report introduces the Broads Local Plan Issues and Options Stage. This is the first stage in the preparation of a draft Local Plan and highlights the key topics which future planning policies will be required to cover and also outlines some options for the direction of that planning policy. Local Planning Authorities are required to undertake public consultation at specific stages of plan preparation and it is anticipated that the Issues and Options will be the subject of public consultation beginning in February 2016 after consideration by Full Authority in January.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Local Planning Authorities are required to prepare a Local Plan which will define planning policies within its local planning authority area. These are given significant weight when deciding planning applications as all decisions are required to be made in accordance with the policies unless there are strong material reasons not to. Local plans must be positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy.
- 1.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (The Framework) states that every local planning authority in England should have a clear, up to date Local Plan, which conforms to the Framework, meets local development needs, and reflects local people's views of how they wish their community to develop. The process should fully involve everyone who has an interest in the document or area and they should have had the chance to comment.
- 1.3 The Broads Authority has three adopted Planning Policy documents: The Core Strategy, Development Management Document and the Sites Specifics Local Plan. Some of the policies have existed since 2007 and some are not fully in line with Government policy now. As such, we are reviewing all our current policies and looking into new issues as we produce a new and up to date Local Plan.
- 1.4 For the avoidance of doubt, until the new Local Plan is adopted, the existing adopted and saved policies are in place and will be used in determining planning applications.

2 The Issues and Options Stage

- 2.1 This is the first stage of producing a Local Plan. The document identifies issues and discusses potential options to address that issue. The purpose of the consultation is to ensure that all potential issues have been covered and to seek views on the appropriate approaches to those issues.
- 2.2 At this stage, there is no policy content. Potential policy content is discussed at a high level. It is for the next stage of the Local Plan (Preferred Options) to come up with potential policy wording.
- 2.3 The following table shows the Local Plan production process.

Broads Local Plan Process

Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulation Assessment	1: Identify issues	Review existing policies and identify any gaps in policies.
	2: Collect evidence	Research that will inform and influence the Local Plan.
	3: Consult (Issues and Options)	The Authority will inform stakeholders and the public that the Local Plan is being produced and ask for views on what the plan should cover. Minimum of 6 week consultation period.
	4: Prepare Draft Plan	The evidence and comments received help produce a draft Local Plan.
	5: Consult (Preferred Options)	The Authority will consult with stakeholders and the public on the draft Local Plan for a minimum of 6 weeks.
	6: Improve Plan	The Authority will take on board comments received and any further evidence as they improve the Local Plan.
	7: Publish Plan (Publication)	The plan is available for stakeholders and the public to comment on for a minimum of 6 weeks. (Regulation 19)
	8: Submit	The Authority will assess the comments received. If it considers that the Local Plan is sound, it can submit the Plan to the Planning Inspectorate. If the Authority wishes to improve the plan, then stages 6 and 7 are repeated.
	9: Examine	The Plan is examined by an independent Planning Inspector. There may be Public Hearings.
	10: Adopt	If the independent Planning Inspector finds the Local Plan sound, the Plan can be adopted by the Authority. If the Inspector does not find the Local Plan sound, the process goes back to stage 6.

3 About the Issues and Options

- 3.1 Whilst the document is 160 pages long, this is an early stage on the production of the Local Plan and Members have the opportunity to input. Any relevant comments that are made will be incorporated into the document which will go out to public consultation in early 2016.

3.2 Of particular interest may be these sections which address an issue for the first time in a Planning Policy document or suggest a new approach to a particular issue:

- Water efficiency of new residential development
- Climate change
- Peat
- Biodiversity on brownfield land and compensation for loss of biodiversity
- Tranquillity
- Housing
- Healthy living
- Retail
- Dualling of the Acle Straight
- Car parking
- Thorpe Island
- Safety by the water
- Call for residential moorings
- Call for Local Green Space
- Call for areas of tranquillity

4 Sustainability Appraisal

4.1 The term “sustainability appraisal” is used to describe a form of assessment that considers the social, environmental and economic effects of implementing a particular plan or planning policy document.

4.2 Accompanying the Issues and Options document is an interim Sustainability Appraisal which is also on the subject of consultation. It is not a full appraisal as the Issues and Options document does not have any policy content to assess. This interim stage gives a broad assessment of the impact of a general policy approach.

5 Consultation

5.1 The Authority is required to do the following activities to advertise the consultation of the Local Plan:

- Write/Email to specific statutory consultees (like Natural England and the Environment Agency)
- Write/Email to other consultees the Authority considers should be consulted (such as local groups and others who have expressed an interest in the Local Plan – e.g NSBA, BHBF)
- A formal notice in the newspaper
- Place hard copies in accessible venues around the Broads Executive Area and beyond (such as libraries and District Council Offices)
- Place the document on the Authority’s website

5.2 At the time of writing, other ways to advertise the consultation are being considered. It is intended that where relevant, these events and activities will be used to gauge views on the Broads Plan and Broads Local Plan. More details will be available at the meeting.

6 Links with the Broads Plan

- 6.1 The Broads Plan is the management plan for the Broads. It is another statutory plan and is being reviewed currently. With similar names, there is great potential for confusion between the Broads Plan and the Broads Local Plan.
- 6.2 The Authority is consulting on the first versions of these two plans at the same time. That way the Authority can highlight both documents but explain the difference between the two documents. There is also the opportunity to share costs and time during the consultation stage by using the same letters to advertise both consultations for example. As both Plans are statutory plans they will both need to be accompanied by Sustainability Appraisals which will share a number of sustainability objectives.
- 6.3 The Broads Plan (management plan) has a shorter production process so it is unlikely that later stages of both plan's productions will coincide. But the officers working on the plans will ensure that they continue to liaise to ensure consistency.

7 Next Steps

- 7.1 If the Authority agrees, the Issues and Options will then be published for public consultation for eight weeks, beginning on the 15 or 22 February 2016.
- 7.2 When the consultation ends, the comments will be considered.

8 Conclusion

- 8.1 The Issues and Options of the Local Plan is the first stage of producing a new Local Plan for the Broads. It identifies issues and considers options to address that issue.
- 8.2 This report seeks to explain the process, advertise the consultation as well as highlight particular issues.

Background papers:	None
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Broads Plan Objectives:	None
Appendices:	None