

District Councillors Report

September 2024

For: Litcham, Great Dunham, Little Dunham, Beeston with Bittering, Lexham and Fransham (Rougham, Kempstone and Newton by Castle Acre)

Housing Numbers and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): The new government have amended the algorithm for calculating the housing need for Breckland (applies to all local authorities in England). The local plan currently under review and update was proposing that 661 dwellings were required every year to fulfil the districts housing need. The new, mandatory, figure imposed by the new government is 917 dwelling per year. Targets across the country have been increased, some by as much as 80%, to ensure that 1.5m homes are built in the next 5 years. There will be government-imposed penalties for those local authorities which consistently fail to meet their targets.

The government is currently consulting on the changes to the NPPF which will implement the new algorithm along with other changes to planning practice. The consultation finishes on the 24th September and the amendments to the NPPF (helpfully in tracked changes format) and other documents can be found on the gov.uk website.

Local Plan: The changes to the NPPF and the mandatory increase in housing requirement is impacting on the delivery of the updated local plan. There are transitional arrangements in place for those local authorities who are currently at an advanced stage of preparing a local plan. Whether any authority can take advantage of those arrangements is dependent on (a) the date of publication of the revised NPPF and (b) the date of submission by an authority of the Regulation 19 (Preferred Options) consultation. It is suspected that the revised NPPF will be published before the end of the year. Breckland members and officers are currently considering the way ahead through consultation with government and others. The decision will be made at Cabinet on the 23rd September.

5 Year Supply of Housing Land: the (potentially) revised NPPF removes the right for local authorities to claim a 5 year supply of housing land if their local

plan I less than 5 years old. This now must be proved when challenged by developers. Breckland current local plan was adopted in 2019 and will be older than 5 years in November (subsequent amendments in 2023 do not count) however, on the housing figures in the current local plan Breckland can prove a 5 year housing land supply beyond November. The publication of the revised NPPF before the end of 2024 with the revised housing numbers will remove Breckland's ability to prove a 5-year housing land supply. Planning officers will then be obliged to consider a tilted balance in favour of sustainable development.

Nutrient Neutrality (NN): the new government have said that they will solve the NN problem to allow homes to be built within river catchments affected by nitrate and phosphate pollution. There has been no pronouncements so far, the position remains the same; Breckland cannot approve new homes in the Wensum catchment without mitigation measures in place for that development.

Ward Boundary Review: the Boundary Commission (BC) is currently undertaking a review of the ward boundaries within Breckland. The principle of single member wards (except in the market towns) and a membership increase from 49 to 51 have both been agreed by the BC. Breckland has been asked to make a submission to the BC for them to approve or alter. The warding boundaries submitted by Breckland are contained within the agenda for the Council meeting on the 5th September. There will be further consultation from the BC on their final proposals. The new boundaries will be in place for the May 2027 election.

Car Park Charging: The proposal, currently under discussion, to charge for car parking on all 31 car parks owned by Breckland is to plug a hole in Breckland's long term financial position. The quarter one overspend projections for this year are 3 times larger than last year and in later years it gets worse. The proposals include free one hour stay on at least one carpark in each market town and a longer free stay (3hrs) on market days. The proposed charging regime is set to allow recovery, in full or in part, of the £450k it currently costs to run Breckland's car parks. If the scheme recovers more than the running costs the extra money will be spent in the improving facilities in the market towns.

It is expected that the scheme will provide a "churn" in the availability of car parking spaces which are currently being blocked by all day parking.

Attleborough recently asked for a charging regime to be implemented for this purpose. Also, each band D council tax payer currently pays £5 of their tax to run the carparks whether they use them or not; the scheme will ensure users pay.

Town and Parish Council Forum: A reminder that there are 4 town and parish council engagement events being held in September you will have received details. The 2 nearest events are being held in Narborough on Monday 16th September between 18:00 and 20:00 and Dereham on Tuesday 17th September. Details from me or your clerk.

Mark Kiddle-Morris.

31st August, 2024.