

Guidance for the delivery of a Food and Agriculture Hub for Broadland and South Norfolk



Supplementary Planning Document

Broadland district and South Norfolk district local planning authority areas



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I Introduction

I.1

This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) sets out the main considerations that will apply to any proposal for a food and agricultural sector “hub” in the greater Norwich area (the area of Broadland district and South Norfolk district local planning authority areas). It supplements policy 5: The Economy in the Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk Joint Core Strategy (JCS) adopted March 2011 (see Appendix 1). As such, this SPD does not create new planning policy, but it provides further interpretation and guidance on the application of the JCS policy, and so will be a material consideration in the determination of an application for planning permission.

I.2

The following sections explain the planning policy context to the SPD, set out the criteria that will be applied to a development proposal and indicate the type of uses that will be considered appropriate.

I.3

The Joint Core Strategy, including policy 5, was subject to a Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment) and Appropriate Assessment under the Habitat Regulations. As this SPD is not forming new policy, but merely supplements the JCS policy, a specific Sustainability Appraisal or Appropriate Assessment for the SPD is not necessary and has not been undertaken.



2 Planning policy context

2.1

This SPD expands on policy 5: The Economy contained in the Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk Joint Core Strategy Development Plan Document, adopted March 2011. That policy states:

The rural economy and diversification will also be supported by: the development of a flagship food and farming hub serving the needs of Norfolk and supporting the agri-food sector in and around greater Norwich. In addition, supporting text explains: 5.42 A food and farming hub will support local agriculture by providing opportunities for local producers to co-ordinate activity and access larger markets, provide a focus for ancillary supporting business and suppliers, and an opportunity for the re-location of the livestock market. Any proposal will need to be carefully located and controlled to ensure it fulfils this role in a sustainable way, with any retailing fulfilling an appropriate role in the retail hierarchy, (full policy and text in Appendix 1).

Therefore, a proposal for a food and agricultural hub in an appropriate location, and of an appropriate scale and range of uses is supported in principle.

2.2

The retail hierarchy is set out in Policy 19: The hierarchy of centres in the JCS. This states:

The development of new retailing, services, offices and other town centre uses as defined by government guidance will be encouraged at a scale appropriate to the form and functions of the following hierarchy of defined centres;

Before listing the hierarchy as Norwich City Centre, specified town and large district centres, specified large village and district centres, and local centres. Consequently, the focus for retailing is on existing centres, appropriate to their level in the hierarchy. In addition, supporting text states at para 6.74:

No potential has been identified for additional out-of-centre retailing.

Therefore, although an element of retailing may be acceptable within the hub, this should be ancillary to the main uses and of a scale and type that does not impact on existing centres.



2.3

The policies in the JCS were developed in accordance with national planning policies at the time. Also, the JCS policies conform to the new National Planning Policy Framework published 27 March 2012. This contains national level policies on issues such as building a strong economy, ensuring the vitality of town centres and supporting a prosperous rural economy, as well as on housing, transport, infrastructure, and environmental matters.

2.4

Of particular relevance to this SPD are the following paragraphs from the NPPF:

20. To help achieve economic growth, local planning authorities should plan proactively to meet the development needs of business and support an economy fit for the 21st century.

24. Local planning authorities should apply a sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses that are not in an existing centre and are not in accordance with an up-to-date Local Plan. They should require applications for main town centre uses to be located in town centres, then in edge of centre locations and only if suitable sites are not available should out of centre sites be considered. When considering edge of centre and out of centre proposals, preference should be given to accessible sites that are well connected to the town centre. Applicants and local planning authorities should demonstrate flexibility on issues such as format and scale.

25. This sequential approach should not be applied to applications for small scale rural offices or other small scale rural development.

26. When assessing applications for retail, leisure and office development outside of town centres, which are not in accordance with an up-to-date Local Plan, local planning authorities should require an impact assessment if the development is over a proportionate, locally set floorspace threshold (if there is no locally set threshold, the default threshold is 2,500 sq m). This should include assessment of:

The impact of the proposal on existing, committed and planned public and private investment in a centre or centres in the catchment area of the proposal;

and, the impact of the proposal on town centre vitality and viability, including local consumer choice and trade in the town centre and wider area, up to five years from the time the application is made. For major schemes where the full impact will not be realised in five years, the impact should also be assessed up to ten years from the time the application is made.

27. Where an application fails to satisfy the sequential test or is likely to have significant adverse impact on one or more of the above factors, it should be refused.

28. Planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development. To promote a strong rural economy, local and neighbourhood plans should: support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings; promote the development and diversification of agricultural and other land based rural businesses; support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside. This should include supporting the provision and expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service centres; and promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.

34. Plans and decisions should ensure developments that generate significant movement are located where the need to travel will be minimised and the use of sustainable transport modes can be maximised. However this needs to take account of policies set out elsewhere in this Framework, particularly in rural areas.

2.5

Other policies in the NPPF, JCS or other development plan documents produced by the local planning authorities may also be relevant to a particular proposal. In addition, in accordance with normal planning practice other material considerations will also be taken into account in determining an application for planning permission.



2.6

More recently the Government has consulted on 'Shaping a UK Strategy for Agri-tech' (BIS, October 2012), which highlights the need to support innovation which builds on the scientific research and development in food and life sciences. Food and life sciences are strongly represented in the Norwich area, specifically at the Norwich Research Park, and development of this sector is a key element of the successful City Deals bid. Consequently the SPD includes an element of facilitating agri-tech uses as part of the food and agriculture hub.



3 Criteria for consideration of a proposal

3.1

Following on from the above policies a proposal for a food and agriculture hub will need to comply with relevant policies of the adopted Joint Core Strategy, relevant Local Plan Documents of the respective local planning authorities, and appropriate national guidance as well as the following:

(1) Location

The site should be located close to Norwich and the related areas of population, with good public transport links and access to the main road network (ie. one or more of the A47, A11, A140 South, and proposed Northern Distributor Road). Any necessary junction or highway improvements should take into account other development that may take place in the area.

The location should also be able to take advantage of potential functional links with other elements of the existing food and agriculture sector, including proximity to education/training and research establishments.

(2) Scale and design

The scale and design of the development should be appropriate in terms of:

- Relationship with adjoining communities.
- Minimising any potential environmental impacts, including in terms of landscape, countryside, agricultural land quality, noise, smells, drainage, wildlife, and residential amenity.
- Access provision, including any necessary improvements to the highway network and public transport.
- Not impacting on the viability and vitality of strategic employment areas or city/town/district centres.
- Not impacting on the viability of other Local Plan allocations, such as strategic housing sites.
- A demonstrable need for the amount and type of floorspace proposed, with the development to be phased to reflect the identified needs and provision of necessary infrastructure.



Proposals should be based on an overall master plan demonstrating how identified needs will be met. Given the difficulty of predicting future needs in the long-term, it is expected that a development will be done in phases with the scale and uses in each phase reflecting the identified needs at that time, but having regard to the need to make provision for necessary infrastructure and give flexibility for a development. An indicative scale for an initial phase of up to 10ha is suggested, with subsequent phases brought forward at a later date to capitalise on the successful implementation of initial development.

(3) Uses

Any uses proposed will need to be closely and directly linked to food production and agriculture. The primary focus should be on crops, products etc from the greater Norwich area, though for certain elements (for example where obtaining produce from a wider area would be necessary for a use to be viable) this might extend to other parts of East Anglia. To represent a food and agriculture hub, proposals/applications should cover a range of uses and scales and not be limited to one or two users or types of use.

Acceptable primary uses will, subject to considerations of scale, impact and infrastructure requirements, include:

- Agri-tech businesses which make use of the local agri-science base.
- Processing of agricultural produce.
- Manufacture of food products.
- Storage and distribution of agricultural produce.
- Storage and distribution of agricultural products (ie. have undergone processing).
- Storage and distribution of agricultural equipment, machinery and supplies.
- Storage and distribution of livestock (eg. livestock market).
- Haulage services related to the above storage and distribution.
- Veterinary services.

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In addition, subject to the proportion constituting no more than approximately 10% of the area by floorspace, an element of other uses ancillary and subsidiary to the above uses will also be acceptable, including:

- Offices necessary as part of a primary use.
- Manufacture of non-food agricultural products (eg. timber fencing).
- Manufacture of agricultural equipment, machinery and supplies.
- Education/training related to agriculture and food.
- Display, wholesaling and retailing of agricultural and food products.

Clear justification, in terms of the benefit proposals made to the overall hub, will be needed for significantly exceeding 10%.

A food and agriculture hub will not be a suitable location for general manufacturing, offices, storage, distribution or other uses not clearly linked to the primary uses.





4 Application

4.1

The criteria set out in this document will be used to help guide the consideration of any applications for planning permission for a “food and agriculture hub” within the local planning authority areas of Broadland, and South Norfolk. The main consideration will be the policies of the adopted Joint Core Strategy, particularly policy 5; and any other relevant policies contained in other planning documents of the three authorities, together with the policies of the National Planning Policy Framework. This Supplementary Planning Document will be taken into account as a “material consideration”, as will any other factors that are regarded as “material” to the consideration of a specific proposal.

4.2

For any planning permission that is given, it is likely that conditions will be applied to ensure that the development takes place in an appropriate manner and in accordance with the relevant policies and guidance.

4.3

Potential applications are encouraged to discuss any proposals with the relevant planning authority prior to submitting a planning application.



Appendices

Appendix I: Extract from Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk Joint Core Strategy adopted March 2011

The local economy will be developed in a sustainable way to support jobs and economic growth both in urban and rural locations. This will:

- Provide for a rising population and develop its role as an engine of the wider economy.
- Facilitate its job growth potential with a target at least 27,000 additional jobs in the period 2008-2026.
- Increase the proportion of higher value, knowledge economy jobs while ensuring that opportunities are available for the development of all types and levels of jobs in all sectors of the economy and for all the workforce.

Sufficient employment land will be allocated in accessible locations consistent with the 'Policies for places' in this strategy to meet identified need and provide for choice. In particular:

- The needs of small, medium and start-up businesses will be addressed through the allocation of new smaller scale employment sites and the retention of, and the potential expansion of, a range of existing small and medium employment sites across the area and by requiring the provision of small-scale business opportunities in

all significant residential and commercial developments. Flexible building design and innovative approaches will be sought in new and existing residential developments to encourage local working and business opportunities.

- Larger scale needs will be addressed through the allocation of sufficient land to provide a choice and range of sites. Development Plan documents and investment strategies will ensure that a readily available supply of land is maintained throughout the Joint Core Strategy period.
- Investment strategies will focus on overcoming constraints to the release and development of key sites.
- Land identified for employment uses on proposals maps will only be considered for other uses that are ancillary and supportive to its employment role. Employment land with potential for redevelopment for other uses will be identified in supporting DPDs or SPDs.

Opportunities for innovation, skills and training will be expanded through:

- Facilitating the expansion of and access to, vocational, further and higher education provision.

- Encouraging links between training/education provision and relevant business concentrations including co-location where appropriate.
- Support for enterprise hubs at Norwich Research Park, the University of East Anglia, EPIC (East of England Production Innovation Centre) and Hethel, and at easily accessible locations in the area.

Tourism, leisure, environmental and cultural industries will be promoted. This will be assisted by:

- The general emphasis of the Joint Core Strategy on achieving high quality design, resource efficiency, environmental enhancement and retention of local distinctiveness.
- Implementation of the green infrastructure network.
- Encouragement for appropriate development including sustainable tourism initiatives.
- Encouragement for development that creates supportive environment for cultural Industries.
- Promotion of the creative industries cluster.
- Support for cultural initiatives including festivals.



The rural economy and diversification will also be supported by:

- A preference for the re-use of appropriate redundant non-residential buildings for commercial uses, including holiday homes to support the tourism industry (affordable housing may be an acceptable alternative use).
- Promotion of farmers markets, farm shops and cottage industry, including:
- e-commerce in villages.
- The development of a flagship food and farming hub serving the needs of Norfolk and supporting the agri-food sector in and around greater Norwich.
- Promoting the development of appropriate new and expanded businesses, which provide either tourism or other local employment opportunities.

Contributes to spatial planning objectives 1, 3, 4, 8 and 9.

5.38 Achieving the full economic potential of the area is dependent on improved connectivity, including the implementation of the priorities set out in the sustainable transport policy and maintaining and enhancing the environment and quality of life in the area. Research suggests that the local economy has the potential to provide sufficient jobs to support the level of housing

growth proposed. Indeed jobs growth will be dependent on housing growth. Jobs and employment potential should be a key priority when considering any form of development, especially rural development.

5.39 Enhancing the knowledge economy and promoting innovation will be important across all sectors and parts of the area. However, the expansion of activity at the Norwich Research Park, a refocus on employment and education in and around the city centre, and building on the early success of the Hethel Engineering Centre will play a fundamental role.

5.40 A range and choice of employment sites are allocated and retained, including sites suitable for workshop and light industrial type uses.

5.41 Tourism, leisure, and cultural industries are recognised as crucial sectors in the local economy that are also fundamental to local quality of life and the attraction and retention of other businesses and staff.

5.42 A food and farming hub will support local agriculture by providing opportunities for local producers to co-ordinate activity and access larger markets, provide a focus for ancillary supporting businesses and suppliers, and an opportunity for the re-location of the livestock market. Any proposal will need to be carefully located

and controlled to ensure it fulfils this role in a sustainable way, with any retailing fulfilling an appropriate role in the retail hierarchy.

5.43 A wide range of businesses can be appropriate in rural areas, either because they are of a scale that is appropriate to a small town or village, they serve local needs or because they have a particular connection to the area such as rural leisure and tourism.

References

- 05 Area-wide policies, Policy 5
- PPG4 Industrial, commercial development and small firms.
 - PPS7 Sustainable development in rural areas.
 - East of England Plan Policies EI-E6.
 - East of England Regional Economic Strategy.
 - Greater Norwich Economic Strategy 2009-2014.
 - Employment Growth and Sites and Premises Study (2008).
 - Feasibility Study for a Conference Centre and Concert Hall for the Greater Norwich Area (2009).

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