

Eye Town Council Finance and Governance Committee

2nd November 2017

Proposed Response to the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Local Plan Consultation Document

Report of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Chair

Recommendation

That Finance and Governance Committee should recommend that Council approves the following comments for submission to Mid Suffolk District Council in response to its Consultation Document.

General comments

Eye Town Councils response is set within the context of our experience of planning and development issues in Eye over a number of years, which is that:

- a. There has been a complete absence of a vision for the future of Eye which has led to ad hoc decision making.
- b. The refusal by BMSDC to designate a Neighbourhood Plan area for Eye has robbed the people of Eye of the opportunity to create its own vision.
- c. The Plans that have been prepared such as the Development Framework for Eye Airfield have been ignored in subsequent decisions and that there is a lack of clarity about the role of the employment area – is it a centre for logistics, food processing or energy generation for example?
- d. Major residential development north of Castleton Way has been permitted even though it contributes only 25% of the funding identified by the District Council as being required to meet the infrastructure needs it will create.
- e. The District Council has acquired Paddock House and left it as a boarded up eye sore without any engagement with the local community despite commitments to do so.
- f. There was minimal consultation on the de-scheduling of Tacon close despite the Local Plan consultation document making the case for more residential accommodation for older people.

As a result there is an existing infrastructure deficit which will be increased by development in the pipeline and any additional designations made in the Local Plan.

The Local Plan consultation document still lacks any vision for Eye. It identifies Eye as a Market Town, which it is to some extent, but it is not of the same scale as other places categorised as Market Towns such as Sudbury and Stowmarket. This designation should be reviewed for the following reasons:

- a. Local Plan background documents which look at settlement hierarchy simply assume that Eye is a Market Town and do not examine the evidence for this. It is notable that Debenham is examined and the evidence presented shows that it is similar in scale and facilities to Eye and could therefore also be identified as a Market Town.
- b. Diss fulfils more of a Market Town function for north-west Suffolk but this is not recognised in the consultation document presumably because it is outside the District.
- c. Eye Town Council and local people regard Eye as a unique and special place with heritage and historical character which should be reflected in its designation.

The Town Council therefore considers that the case has not been made by the District Council to identify Eye as a Market Town and that the District Council should consider a different designation which might also include other small historic towns/settlements such as Debenham.

The consultation document also lacks any vision for the Eye Airfield and opportunities to promote this asset for specific uses are being lost.

The Town Council demands that all future decisions on planning or economic development are taken within the context of an overall vision and plan for Eye which:

- a. Recognises the qualities of Eye and seeks to protect and enhance its assets and provide for quality in services and design.
- b. Plans for movement in a way that protects the town from unnecessary through traffic, provides improved access to the A140 for residents and businesses and improves opportunities for cycling and walking in and around the Town.
- c. Redresses the existing infrastructure deficit and makes long term plans for the future of schools, healthcare and other infrastructure in the Town.
- d. Creates the conditions for shops and services to meet the needs of current and future Eye residents and those of the surrounding area including a plan for Town Centre parking.
- e. Explains the role of the Eye Airfield Industrial area in terms of its expected contribution to the economic plan for Suffolk.
- f. Ensures that developer contributions and other funding enable the plan to be fully implemented.

It offers to work in partnership with the District Council using the Neighbourhood Plan to help achieve this.

Specific comments:

Eye Town Council consulted local residents and their views are reproduced in Appendix 1.

Based on these results the Town Council wishes to make the following specific comments:

- a. The Town is likely to support limited additional residential development but only within an overall vision and plan.
- b. There seems to be majority support for the residential development of Paddock House but there is a strong feeling of being let down by the District Council's lack of engagement on the future of the site.
- c. The extent and location of other sites for residential development should be informed by the overall plan - how they help achieve the required outcomes for movement, schools, health and other services and shops/town centre services.
- d. It may be that concentrating development around the land north of Castleton Way/south of the Airfield is the best way to achieve these outcomes but this should be tested.
- e. The Council puts forward land in its ownership at Victoria Mill (see map 1) for residential development. It would contribute to the supply of affordable housing and provide the Town Council with income to invest to implement the overall plan. This site should also be considered within the context of c. above.
- f. Access to the A140 is difficult and dangerous and should be addressed through a traffic study. This study should also identify how the impact of traffic and HGVs in particular on the town can be reduced, how parking can be improved for shoppers and residents and how modal shift to cycling and walking can be achieved for internal movement.
- g. The Primary School is close to capacity and short term increases in capacity may not be the best medium to long term solution. Alternative locations for a primary school should be investigated as part of the overall plan.
- h. The town centre is identified as a District Shopping Centre. Retail and service uses are declining and a strategy is required to reverse this.

Peter Gould

Appendix 1

Results of public drop in on the local plan 20th October 2017

Summary

Nearly 100 people attended the drop in on Mid Suffolk District Council's Local Plan organised by the Town Council on the 20th September. They were able to feed back their views on the options presented by the District Council for the distribution of development across the District, the options for housing in Eye, the need for a Neighbourhood Plan for Eye, the potential of development of land owned by the Town Council and the priorities for infrastructure and services.

On the distribution of land for development across the District, 46 people supported options that might lead to less development being allocated to Eye while 10 supported the options that might lead to more development being allocated in Eye.

Regarding housing in and around Eye, 64 people opposed the allocation of all the options for housing development put forward by the District Council which would lead to around 300 houses in addition to the 290 houses already granted permission. But only 19 people opposed any further housing in addition to the 290 houses already granted planning permission. Of the 3 site options put forward by the District Council most people supported the use of the Paddock House site for housing.

The Town Council own some land used for agriculture at Victoria Mill north of the allotments. 56 people thought the site should be brought forward for housing while 19 were against this.

The preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan was supported by 91 people and opposed by 3.

The main concerns about infrastructure and services were:

- Traffic in the town, now and how it would get worse with more development, the need for a 20 mph area and/or HGV controls.
- The need to increase the capacity of schools with some specific suggestions for how this can be achieved.
- The need for adequate doctors/local surgery capacity.
- Parking control, 'misuse' of parking, the need for more parking in the town centre and a suggestion for edge of town parking.
- How busy the A140 is, difficulty in accessing it and suggestions for improvements.

Details

Strategy

Should more land than is strictly necessary be allocated?

46 people said no - nobody agreed land should be over allocated.

Is the emphasis on housing for older people correct?

17 people thought it is right to make special provision for older people while 24 people disagreed.

Which strategy do you support?

Option 1 – County Town Focused

14 people supported this option

Option 2 – Market Towns and Rural Areas Balanced

10 people supported this option

Option 3 – A12/14 Transport Corridor Focused

17 people supported this option

Option 4 – New Settlement

15 people supported this option

So 46 people supported options that might lead to less development being allocated to Eye while 10 supported the options that might lead to more development being allocated in Eye.

Housing

Should all these sites be allocated meaning more than 300 houses in addition to the 290 dwellings that have permission already?

64 people opposed the allocation of 300 additional houses – nobody supported it.

Should none of the additional sites be allocated?

19 thought no further land should be allocated over and above the site that already has permission.

If only some of the sites should be allocated which sites do you prefer?

An additional 30 dwellings north of Castleton Road?

17 people supported this

Land to the East of Century Road?

12 people supported this

Paddock House

43 people supported this

Town Council Land at Victoria Mill

Should the site be put forward in addition to the other sites?

23 thought it should

Should the site be put forward instead of other sites?

33 thought it should

Should the site not be put forward at all?

19 thought it should not be

So 56 people thought the site should be brought forward while 19 were against this.

Neighbourhood Plan

Do you support a Neighbourhood Plan being prepared?

Yes - 91

No - 3

Vision for Prosperity

50 people thought MSDC should support a 'Vision for Prosperity' for Eye with 2 opposed.

Comments about infrastructure requirements and other issues

33 comments were concerned about traffic in the town, now and how it would get worse with more development, wanted a 20 mph area or HGV controls

29 comments concerned the need to increase the capacity of schools with some specific suggestions for how this can be achieved

25 comments were about the need for adequate doctors/local surgery capacity

24 comments were about parking control, 'misuse' of parking the need for more parking in the town centre and a suggestion for edge of town parking

20 comments concerned how busy the A140 is, difficulty in accessing it and suggestions for improvements

12 comments were against more major development

12 comments were concerned with the need for better drainage and sewerage

8 people wanted more/better policing

6 comments wanted more facilities of young people

6 comments wanted Hertismere Hospital to be better used.

6 comments were concerned about the attitude/ability of the District or Town Council

5 comments were concerned about toilets

5 comments supported more affordable housing

4 comments were about library facilities

3 comments wanted more dentist capacity

3 comments wanted more shops

2 comments wanted developer contributions to be well used

2 comments wanted the chicken factory moved and the site used for housing

2 comments were about the condition of Cross Street

2 comments wanted CCTV

One comment on these items

Road cleaning

What happened to the 2009 Parish Plan?

Use local suppliers for building

Is a new care home still proposed?

Public transport

Use ETC site as town would get more benefit

Make Paddock House into the library with a museum, gardens etc

Road access to Century Road site is a concern