

South Norfolk Local Plan



Development Management Policies Document

Adoption Version
October 2015



Working with you, working for you

1.4 Environmental Quality and Local Distinctiveness

Reasoned Justification

1.29 Notwithstanding the need to consider the economic and social dimensions of all decisions (Policy DM 1.1), the Council is committed to ensuring that development proposals do not cause significant harm to irreplaceable **environmental assets**, and do make positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and **historic environment** and people's quality of life. In accordance with the **National Planning Policy Framework**¹ this will include:

- moving from a net loss of bio-diversity to achieving net gains for nature;
- replacing poor design with better design;
- improving the conditions in which people live, work, travel and take leisure; and
- widening the choice of high quality homes.

1.30 In particular, all development proposals should demonstrate that full regard has been given to local circumstances and the distinctive local characters and qualities of the places found in South Norfolk. The Council will work with partners and stakeholders to identify and prepare information about these **environmental assets**; to help developers understand the important local natural, heritage and built assets and characteristics in the areas. For example the Council will work with the Local Nature Partnership – Wild Anglia, and the Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service, and with local special interest groups and parish councils to prepare conservation appraisals of conservation areas. Development proposals will also need to demonstrate that full regard has been given to the character of the Broads where they may have an impact.

1.31 The National Planning Policy Framework points to the importance of an inclusive design approach addressing the connections between people and places, and points to the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness as part of supporting and building successful local communities and vitality.

1.32 The Council is committed to ensuring that development management decisions deliver the requirements of **Joint Core Strategy** Policy 1 'Addressing climate change and protecting **environmental assets**', and Policy 2 'Promoting good design'.

1.33 The development management policies and supplementary guidance produced by the Council will advise on how development proposals can achieve high quality by protecting important **environmental assets** and respond by making positive improvements to locally distinctive

assets and characteristics. Relevant guidance will be produced to assist larger and smaller development proposals, for example: the South Norfolk Place-Making Guide SPD, Development in the Historic Environment SPD, the Residential Alterations, Conversions and Extensions SPD and South Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment. Development will be expected to contribute to bio-diversity enhancement and **green infrastructure** in the areas of most significant development growth and change

- 1.34 The **Design and Access Statements** prepared by developers to support planning applications should demonstrate an understanding and evaluation of **environmental assets** and distinctive local characteristics, and justify the proposed layout and design against an expectation that all new development should make a positive improvement. The statement should address the natural, influenced and built environment and locally distinctive characteristics of places.
- 1.35 In carrying out development management functions the Council will seek to avoid duplication of functions and overburdening of developers with unwarranted requirements, by working closely with those responsible for other aspects of environmental regulation, including activities requiring Environmental Permit approvals otherwise administered by the Council and/or Environment Agency.

Policy DM 1.4 Environmental quality and local distinctiveness

- a) **The Council will work with developers to promote and achieve high quality and positive environmental improvement from all development. All development proposals must demonstrate an understanding and evaluation of the important environmental assets including locally distinctive characteristics, and justify the design approach.**
- b) **Designated assets will be protected in accordance with their natural and historic significance, as detailed in the Development Management Policies.**
- c) **A net environmental improvement will always be sought and all proposals should avoid environmental harm or where this is not possible, adequately mitigate and compensate for the adverse environmental effects of development.**
- d) **All development should take all reasonable opportunities to:**
- i. Make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness;**
 - ii. Enhance biodiversity to achieve a net gain for nature;**
 - iii. To improve the resilience of ecosystems to environmental change including through the provision of improvements to**

- enhance identified environmental sites; stepping stones and corridors;
- iv. Protect environmental and water resources and enhance their efficient use;
 - v. Deliver the provision of essential infrastructure including water and wastewater network upgrades, waste facilities', flood defences and green infrastructure;
 - vi. Enhance, re-use and better reveal the significance of heritage assets;
 - vii. Re-use buildings rather than demolish, recycle building materials and select materials to maximise environmental sustainability and minimise impact on scarce resources and environment;
 - viii. Generate and utilise renewable energy in appropriate ways; and
 - ix. Work with the characteristics of the location to ensure that the necessary mitigation measures are not disproportionate to the benefits of the scale of development proposed.

Notes

- Important aspects of local distinctiveness that new development should respond to are identified addressed in Section 2 of the **South Norfolk Place Making Guide**; Section 4.2 of the Guide includes detailed guidance on appraising a site and its context. This should form part of the **Design and Access Statement** submitted with proposals.
- The importance of contribution to local distinctiveness is also reflected in guidance applying to domestic scale development, in the **historic environment** and setting in the wider landscape - see **Residential Alterations, Conversions and Extensions SPD, Development in the Historic Environment SPD, and South Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment**.
- Policies in Section 4 of the Development Management policies set out how the environmental dimension of a proposal will be considered. Policies DM 4.4 – 4.9 address the natural environment and **influenced landscape**, DM 4.10 address **heritage assets**. Policy DM 3.8 addresses design principles including the regard given to local distinctive character.
- Development Management policy DM 1.1 addresses the presumption in favour of sustainable development that balances the economic, social and environmental dimensions in both the immediate and longer term.
- Policy 1 ‘Addressing climate change and protecting environmental assets’, and Policy 2 ‘Promoting Good design’ apply the Vision and Objectives of the **Joint Core Strategy** to all development proposals.
- Sections 7, 10, 11, 12 of the **National Planning Policy Framework** in particular promote design and environmental quality, including the protection and mitigation of impacts. Para 15 requires local plans to set out how the ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’ will be applied locally; para 58 refers to the need to “understand and evaluate” the “defining characteristics” and to respond and reflect these, while not preventing appropriate innovation. Para 61 addresses the “connections between people and places” and the contribution to sustainable communities, para 121 points to the “desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness”.
- The statement ‘*Environmental Quality in Spatial Planning*’ – English Heritage, Environment Agency and Natural England (formerly The Countryside Agency and English Nature) provides guidance on incorporating the natural, built and historic environment, and rural issues in plans and strategies. http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/static/documents/Research/envqualityplansupp_1351829.pdf

-
- ¹ The **National Planning Policy Framework** (paragraph 9) requires positive improvement in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment, and reflecting of local circumstances (paragraph 10).