



## Planning and Highways Delegations Committee

Date: **13 February 2009**

Time: **On the rise of the Planning Regulatory Committee**

Venue: **Edwards Room, County Hall, Norwich**

**Persons attending the meeting are requested to turn off mobile phones.**

### Membership

Mr A Gunson

Mr I Monson

### **Panel of Representatives from the Planning (Regulatory) Committee:**

Mr C Armes – Spokesperson – Labour Group

Mr D Baxter - Chairman of the Planning (Regulatory) Committee

Mr D Callaby - Liberal Democrat Spokesperson

Mr J Rogers - Vice-Chairman of the Planning (Regulatory) Committee

**For further details and general enquiries about this Agenda  
please contact the Committee Administrator:**

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or email [lesley.rudelhoff.scott@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:lesley.rudelhoff.scott@norfolk.gov.uk)

Where the County Council have received letters of objection in respect of any application, these are summarised in the report. If you wish to read them in full, Members can do so either at the meeting itself or beforehand in the Department of Planning and Transportation on the 3rd Floor, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich.

## **A g e n d a**

**1. To receive apologies and details of any substitute members attending.**

**2. Minutes:** To receive the Minutes of the last meeting held on 15 February 2008 (Page 1 )

**3. Members to Declare any Interests**

Please indicate whether the interest is a personal one only or one which is prejudicial. A declaration of a personal interest should indicate the nature of the interest and the agenda item to which it relates. In the case of a personal interest, the member may speak and vote on the matter. Please note that if you are exempt from declaring a personal interest because it arises solely from your position on a body to which you were nominated by the County Council or a body exercising functions of a public nature (e.g. another local authority), you need only declare your interest if and when you intend to speak on a matter.

If a prejudicial interest is declared, the member should withdraw from the room whilst the matter is discussed unless members of the public are allowed to make representations, give evidence or answer questions about the matter, in which case you may attend the meeting for that purpose. You must immediately leave the room when you have finished or the meeting decides you have finished, if earlier. **These declarations apply to all those members present, whether the member is part of the meeting, attending to speak as a local member on an item or simply observing the meeting from the public seating area.**

**4. Breckland District Council – Core Strategy and Local Development Control Policies Proposed Submission Document** (Page 5 )

Report by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development

**5. Docking Shoal Offshore Wind Farm Proposal – Centrica Energy Limited** (Page 18 )

Report by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development

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Date Agenda Published: 5 February 2009



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**Breckland District Council  
Local Development Framework  
Core Strategy and Development Control Policies  
Proposed Submission Document**

Report by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development

**Summary**

Breckland District Council has published their Proposed Submission Core Strategy and Development Control Policies for consultation. The Core Strategy and Development Control Policies form the first document produced as part of the District's Local Development Framework (LDF). This report considers the key strategic policies set out in the Core Strategy and recommends that no soundness objections ought to be raised subject to the issues set out in this report being resolved ahead of any formal Submission. However, the report does raise a number of detailed issues, which it is recommended are forwarded to the District Council.

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1. Breckland District Council has published their Core Strategy and Development Control Policies Proposed Submission Document (Reg. 27 and 28) for consultation. The Core Strategy and Development Control Policies document will replace the existing adopted Local Plan (1999) policies and will form part of the District Council's Local Development Framework (LDF).
- 1.2. Following the Proposed Submission consultation, the District Council will formally submit the document to the Secretary of State. This will be followed by a Public Examination where any representations relating to the soundness of the plan will be heard by an appointed Planning Inspector. At this time it is not known when the Public Examination will be heard. The end date for comments on the Submission Document is 16 February 2009.
- 1.3. It should be noted that any objection made at this stage has to be on the basis of the Core Strategy being considered "unsound", for example:
  - It is inconsistent with national policy;
  - It is not in general conformity with the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS);  
or
  - It is not either effective or justified.

If the plan is deemed unsound by the independent Planning Inspector, the District Council would need to re-submit the document with further evidence.

1.4. The comments and recommendations set out below take into account the views of other service departments. For the remainder of this report the Core Strategy and Development Control Policies Proposed Submission Document is simply referred to as the Submission Document.

## 2. **Background**

2.1. Members will recall that the Preferred Options version (Reg 26) of the above Document was reported to this Committee on 15 February 2008. While the County Council did not raise any objections at the Preferred Options stage, a number of issues were raised.

2.2. The key strategic comments/issues raised previously related to:

- **General Development Strategy** - The level and distribution of housing across the District. This was generally supported;
- **Growth in Attleborough** – while supporting the principle of planned growth in the town this was subject to there being clear evidence that developer funding would provide all necessary infrastructure;
- **Development outside the main settlement** – concern was raised in relation to the two villages of Weeting and Great Ellingham being identified for housing growth. There was also concern expressed about the levels of growth in some of the identified local service centres; and
- **Infrastructure** – the need to take in to account emerging government advice on proposals for a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and refer to the County Council's Planning Obligations Standards.

2.3. In addition a number of detailed issues were raised in relation to the Core Strategy. Many of these detailed issues have been addressed in the Submitted Document, such as the clarification of housing numbers and introducing some flexibility on parking standards on new development.

## 3. **Regional Background**

3.1. All LDFs are being prepared to conform to the East of England Plan. The Plan was adopted in May 2008 and provides the spatial strategy for the region up to 2021. Members will be aware that the East of England Assembly (EERA) is committed to carrying out an early review of the RSS to 2031. Government expects this review to be completed by 2011 and has indicated that the primary focus for the review should be to roll the plan forward to 2031 and further increase the house building trajectory.

3.2. At this stage the Breckland Core Strategy and Development Control Policies simply have to conform with the currently adopted East of England Plan.

3.3. It should be noted that the adopted Norfolk Structure Plan as a whole no longer forms part of the Development Plan. However, a small number of Policies from the Structure Plan have been saved, and these Policies still form part of the Development Plan.

3.4. The remainder of this report focuses on the key strategic issues.

## 4.0 **Key Strategic Planning Issues**

4.1 This section of the report sets out the key issues for consideration associated with the planned growth for Breckland. It concentrates on the (a) spatial strategy and housing numbers; (b) the major growth proposed in Attleborough and Thetford; and (c) the infrastructure implications.

### **(a) Housing Numbers and Spatial Strategy**

4.2 **Spatial Strategy** – The Submission Document (Policy SS.1) identifies the following types of place (these are shown on Map 1 – Key Diagram):

1. Key Centre for Development and Change, Thetford – 6,000 homes and 5,000 new jobs are provided for in the period up to 2021 in line with the adopted East of England Plan. A further 1,500 – 2,000 dwellings are provided for in the period between 2021 - 2026;
2. Market Town for substantial Growth: Attleborough – 4,500 new homes identified over the plan period and in combination with Snetterton will provide between 1,500 – 2,000 new jobs;
3. Three Market Towns: Dereham, Swaffham and Watton – Dereham will provide around 2,000 new homes and between 900 – 1,800 new jobs; Swaffham will provide 1,000 homes and up to 650 jobs; Watton will provide 900 homes and approximately 250 jobs;
4. Local Services Centre Villages: 14 villages have been identified, although only Harling, Narborough, Shipdham and Swanton Morley have been identified for accommodating any housing allocations;
5. Snetterton Heath Employment Area: up to 1,500 new jobs. The electricity constraints of the area will be resolved by up-grading the existing network and on-site power generation;
6. Rural Settlements: No significant expansion is intended although these settlement will provide nominal housing and employment growth; and
7. The countryside: minimal development is envisaged in the countryside although some rural diversification may be appropriate.

4.3 **Housing Numbers** - The Submission Document proposes (Policy CP1) at least 19,100 homes between 2001 – 2026, which comprises the 15,200 dwellings set out in the East of England Plan (2001 – 2021) plus a roll forward of around 4, 000 dwellings in order to satisfy guidance in Planning Policy Statement 3 (Housing) (i.e. to maintain a 15 year housing land supply). The projected figures are based on the East of England Plan's residual rates.

4.4 The housing levels and distribution are set out in Policy CP.1 are shown below:

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Town/ Settlement	Completed April 2008	Permitted April 2008	New Allocations	Total
<b>Attleborough</b>	461	79	4,000	<b>4,540</b>
<b>Dereham</b>	1,062	309	600	<b>1,971</b>
<b>Swaffham</b>	214	499	250	<b>963</b>
<b>Thetford</b>	1,000	348	6,500	<b>7,848</b>
<b>Watton</b>	367	233	300	<b>900</b>
<b>Harling</b>	60	11	50	<b>121</b>
<b>Narborough</b>	32	5	50	<b>87</b>
<b>Shipdham</b>	43	31	100	<b>174</b>
<b>Swanton Morley</b>	10	16	50	<b>76</b>
<b>All other parishes</b>	1,360	1,171	0	<b>2,531</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,609</b>	<b>2,702</b>	<b>11,900</b>	<b>19,211</b>

### Comment

- 4.5 The above Spatial Strategy and Housing provision figures are broadly similar to the housing levels and distribution set out in the Preferred Options document. Major housing growth is proposed in Attleborough and Thetford. The Submission Document only allows for limited housing in Dereham, Swaffham and Watton because:
- Dereham has both education and utility capacity constraints that limit its potential to grow (i.e. the two High schools have constrained sites and the Sewage Treatment Plant would require considerable investment should any significant additional housing be proposed);
  - Swaffham and Watton have limited potential for economic growth and both suffer from congestion problems.
- 4.6 The Submission Document has taken out Great Ellingham and Weeting as villages with allocated housing. As indicated above the County Council had raised concern at the Preferred Options stage to their inclusion. Therefore it is **recommended** that the removal of these two villages for housing growth is to be supported. The level of housing proposed as new allocations in the remaining four service villages where growth is identified (Harling, Narborough, Shipdham and Swanton Morley) equates to 50 dwellings per village, except in Shipdham where 100 housing are proposed. This level of development is broadly considered acceptable and does not raise an issue of soundness.

- 4.7 The overall Spatial Strategy set out in the Submission Document together with the housing levels proposed are consistent with the adopted East of England Plan and therefore it is **recommended** that support be given to Policies SS.1 and CP.1 subject to the comments below.

## **(b) Major Growth in Attleborough and Thetford**

### **(i) Attleborough**

- 4.8 The County Council supported the principle of major housing growth in Attleborough at the Preferred Options Stage. However this was subject to there being clear evidence ahead of submission of the Core Strategy to demonstrate that developer funding will provide all necessary infrastructure and service provision, particularly in relation to transport and education. In addition issues were raised regarding the balance between jobs and housing. It was felt that large scale housing without commensurate increases in jobs could lead to more out-commuting and as such it was suggested that further employment provision should be considered for the town.

#### **Comments**

- 4.9 The Spatial Strategy (Policy SS.1) indicates that the town has the potential for substantial growth harnessing the economic expansion along the A11 corridor. In combination with the Snetterton Employment Area it will provide up to 2,000 new jobs in the plan period (i.e. up to 2021). Earlier versions of the Plan suggested a figure of up to 1,700 new jobs.
- 4.10 Overall the proposed level of housing growth for Attleborough is considered appropriate given the town's location on the A11 corridor and opportunity to access not only the strategic highway network but also the rail network. However, it is felt that further employment provision should be made in order to achieve a more sustainable balance between jobs and housing.
- 4.11 At this stage there is some uncertainty regarding the potential of the development industry to meet all the infrastructure costs associated with the planned growth for Attleborough. This is particularly relevant to the County Council in respect of key infrastructure provision, such as: the need for new schools; library and highway & transport infrastructure. It should be noted that further infrastructure work is being undertaken by Breckland District Council taking into account the current market slow down and considering the longer term potential for developer funding of infrastructure.
- 4.12 Policy CP.5 of the Core Strategy refers to the preparation of Area Action Plans (AAPs) for Thetford and Attleborough, which will be used not only as a mechanism for the release of land in the two towns, but also for developing a tariff-based approach (or Community Infrastructure Levy - CIL) for seeking developer contributions. The AAPs will provide increased evidence and clarity on the delivery of the necessary infrastructure and services.
- 4.13 A tariff-based approach (or use of a CIL), has the potential for assisting in delivery of key strategic infrastructure and services such as education and transport provision. The District Council is committed through its Core Strategy to making the "best use of planning contributions as a means of providing



infrastructure and enhancing facilities and services” and working in partnership with other infrastructure providers.

- 4.14 Clearly there are significant infrastructure issues to address and these will need to be resolved through the Local Development Framework process i.e. preparation of an AAP for the town and the development of some form of infrastructure charge (e.g. tariff and/or CIL).

Therefore at this stage it is **recommended** that:

- (1) the principle of major housing growth in Attleborough be accepted subject to all infrastructure requirements being delivered through developer funding and other possible funding streams agreed with the various service providers (see proposed revised Policy CP.5 in the Appendix);
- (2) the District Council give further consideration to the provision of additional employment land in order to achieve a more sustainable balance between jobs and housing; and
- (3) the District Council work closely with the County Council and other infrastructure providers in developing a Tariff and/or CIL through the AAP process.

The wider infrastructure delivery issues are discussed below under the heading Infrastructure and Service Provision.

#### **(ii) Thetford**

- 4.15 Members will be aware that Thetford is identified in the East of England Plan as a Key Centre for Development and Change and has Growth Point Status. The Submission Document makes provision for 6,000 houses between 2001 and 2021 plus an additional 1,500 – 2,000 houses up to 2026. In addition 5,000 new jobs are identified in the Plan period. The County Council has been working in close partnership with the District Council on the Growth Point Project, known as Moving Thetford Forward (MTF). The County Council is on the MTF Board as a partner organisation and officers are currently providing an input into the emerging Thetford Area Action Plan (TAAP). The TAAP is expected to go out to a second round of consultation early in 2009.
- 4.16 While the level of housing and employment growth set out in the Submission Document has remained unchanged since the Preferred Options Stage, the distribution of potential development sites has been reduced following the outcome of the Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA). The HRA work has been undertaken as a statutory exercise given that Breckland has a number of internationally protected habitats, including the Breckland Special Protection Area for birds (SPA). The SPA comprises farmland areas protected for the Stone Curlew and forest areas protected for the Nightjar and Woodlark.
- 4.17 The outcome of the HRA work has been the introduction of a 1,500 metre buffer zone being drawn around the habitats which support the Stone Curlew (i.e. from boundary of the SPA), where no development can take place (see Map 2). The introduction of a buffer zone has substantially reduced the options for housing and employment growth around Thetford. The area to the east of the town centre can no longer be considered for any development since it lies within the buffer zone. All development will now have to be concentrated to the

North of the town. There will of course be some opportunities for brownfield redevelopment although it is generally accepted that most development will take place on greenfield sites.

### **Comments**

- 4.18 The level of housing and employment growth proposed in Thetford is consistent with the East of England Plan and with the town's Growth Point Status. It is acknowledged that the HRA work has resulted in reducing the opportunities for locating growth primarily to the north of the town. This does present more of a challenge to the County Council in terms of delivering the additional secondary school provision needed to support the planned growth. Officers and Members are working through the MTF partnership to explore a full range of potential solutions, which promote excellent learning opportunities for Thetford's existing and future pupils. Members will be aware that a separate report has been taken to Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel (14 January 2009) informing members about the development of a Learning Strategy for Thetford as part of the Growth Point process. Members were also informed about the progress of a flagship learning centre initially providing post 16 opportunities.
- 4.19 It is understood from the partnership working with the District Council (i.e. on the MTF Group), that the levels of planned housing and employment growth set out in the East of England Plan can physically be accommodated to the north of the town. The County Council is working closely with the Growth Point Team (MTF) on the emerging TAAP, which contains an emerging policy on developer contributions. It is envisaged that all the necessary infrastructure and service requirements arising from the proposed levels of development will be secured through developer funding and growth point funding. Therefore while there will be challenges in delivering some key infrastructure needed to support the planned housing growth, it is **recommended** that the County Council continue to support the levels of growth proposed for Thetford as set out in the Submission Document.

### **(c) Infrastructure and Service Provision**

- 4.20 Policy CP.5 of the Submission Document and its supporting text, sets out the District Council's planning obligations policy. As indicated above the Submission Document states that the Council will make the best use of planning contributions as a means of "providing infrastructure and enhancing facilities and services". The District Council is also committed "to achieving a consistent and co-ordinated approach to providing new or improved infrastructure through partnership working". The policy also refers to the potential for a tariff-based approach being developed for Attleborough and Thetford as part of their AAPs.

### **Comment**

- 4.21 While the general thrust of Policy CP.5 is welcomed the emerging policy as drafted does lack clarity. In particular the policy does not refer specifically to education or library provision and the supporting text does not refer to the

County Council's Planning Obligations Standards. The policy also fails to make it absolutely clear that new development should not be permitted unless "there is sufficient capacity in existing local infrastructure to meet the additional requirements arising from the new development, or suitable arrangements have been put in place for necessary improvements." A suggested revised policy is set out in the Appendix, which refers to a wider range of potential infrastructure requirements and the potential need for some form of Integrated Development Programme (IDP) to be developed in partnership with other infrastructure and service providers. An IDP, or equivalent, would enable the District Council to:

- Identify in detail the infrastructure investment needed to deliver growth in the plan period; and
- Provide advance warning of major investment needed in the later years.

This would then allow the District Council to identify potential funding shortfalls; and consider alternative funding streams were necessary.

Therefore it is **recommended** that the attached Policy, together with reference to the County Council's Planning Obligations Standards, should be forwarded to the District Council for inclusion in their Core Strategy.

## 5. **Resource Implications**

5.1 **Finance** : There is insufficient County Council funding to provide the infrastructure necessary to support growth. As such there is a need for developer contributions to support the planned growth. The above report seeks greater clarification and strengthening of Policy CP.5 (Developer Obligations) of the Breckland LDF.

5.2 **Staff** : There are no immediate staff implications.

5.3 **Property** : None

5.4 **IT** : None

## 6. **Other Implications**

6.1 **Legal Implications** : There are no legal implications at this stage.

6.2 **Human Rights** : None

6.3 **Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)** : The Council's Planning functions are subject to equality impact assessments. However, as the County Council is simply a consultee in the LDF planning process no EqIA issues have been identified at this stage.

6.4 **Communications** : There are no communication implications.

## 7. **Risk Implications**

7.1 Not responding to this consultation document will result in the County Council's views not being taken into consideration in the preparation of Breckland

Council's Core Strategy and General Development Control Policies LDD.

## 8. **Alternative Options**

- 8.1 This report sets out a number of recommendations. Not pursuing these recommendations would be contrary to the aims of the adopted East of England Plan (2008).

## 9. **Section 17 – Crime and Disorder Act**

- 9.1 LDFs may contain policies or policy approaches that seek to reduce crime or the fear of crime through design.

## 10. **Conclusion**

- 10.1 The level and distribution of growth as set out in the emerging Core Strategy is consistent with the adopted East of England Plan. Many of the concerns/issues previously raised, particularly in relation to reducing the number of service villages with planned housing growth have now been addressed. Major growth in Attleborough and Thetford is supported subject to the infrastructure requirements arising from the planned growth being delivered through developer funding and other possible external funding streams agreed with the infrastructure and service providers. Furthermore it is felt that the District Council should consider additional employment provision in Attleborough in order to achieve a more sustainable balance between jobs and housing.
- 10.2 Clearly the provision of infrastructure is a major issue and it is felt that the Infrastructure Policy (CP.5) should be strengthened/clarified and the supporting text expanded to refer to the County Council's Planning Obligations Standards. Moreover, any new policy on planning obligations ought to have regard to the preparation of an Integrated Development Programme (IDP), which would assist in identifying the infrastructure investment needed to deliver growth in the plan period and any potential shortfalls. The IDP could then be used to consider alternative funding streams in partnership with other infrastructure and service providers.
- 10.3 On the basis of the above report it felt that no soundness objection should be raised to the Proposed Submission Document subject to the recommendations set out above being satisfactorily dealt with by the District Council ahead of formal Submission.

## **Recommendation**

That the Committee endorses the comments and recommendations set out in this report and appendix, and that these are submitted to Breckland District Council.

## **Background Papers**

Breckland District Council – Core Strategy and Development Control Policies Proposed Submission Consultation (2008).

**Officer Contact** - If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper please get in touch with:

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### Proposed Policy CP.5:-

All development in the Plan area will be accompanied by appropriate infrastructure in order to mitigate the impacts arising from that development and create sustainable communities.

The infrastructure should be provided when needed and appropriate arrangements will be made for its subsequent maintenance. Permission for development will not be granted unless there is sufficient capacity in existing local infrastructure to meet the additional requirements arising from the new development, or suitable arrangements have been put in place for necessary improvements.

In the early stage of the Plan period developer contributions will be sought in accordance with Circular 5/05. Contributions, for example, will be sought for:

- Affordable Housing
- Education
- Green Infrastructure
- Public realm items
- Health and Social Care
- Utilities
- libraries
- Biodiversity
- SUDS
- Emergency Services
- Transport
- Open Space;
- Landscaping
- Waste recycling
- Flood defence

The District Council will consider developing a Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which will reflect emerging guidance relating to the Government's proposed Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). A District-wide CIL, or Tariff, will be considered once new guidance and advice is formally published by central Government.

In addition the District will consider, as part of the major growth proposed in Attleborough and Thetford, developing area specific tariffs through the Area Action Plans being prepared for these two towns.

### Proposed Supporting Text:-

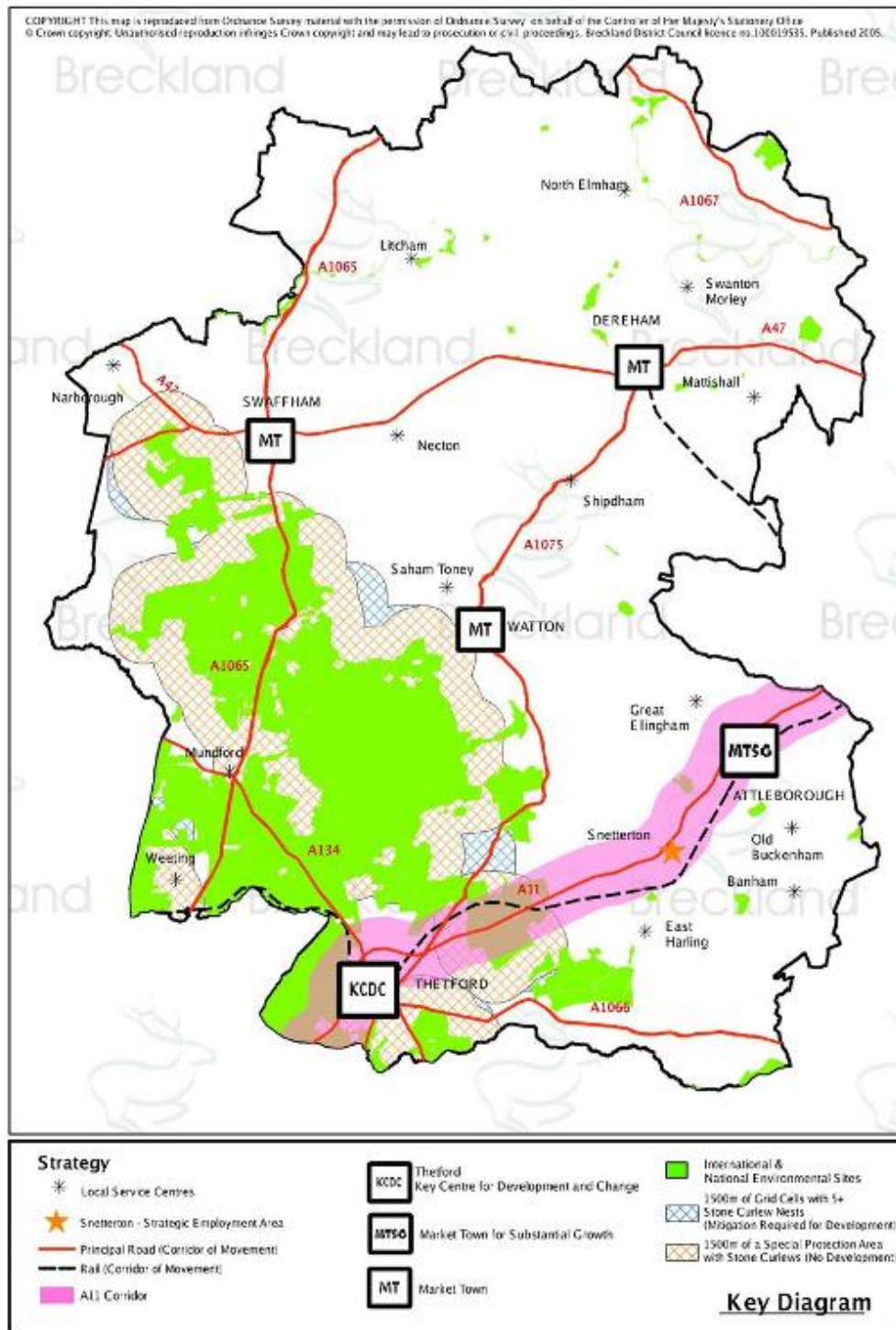
The District Council will work closely with all infrastructure and service providers in order to deliver sustainable communities. The District Council recognise that not all infrastructure needed is capable of being delivered through either planning obligations, or proposals for a CIL/Tariff, and as such the District will consider the preparation of an Integrated Development Programme (IDP) with its partners to:

- Identify the infrastructure investment needed to deliver growth in the plan period;
- Provide advance warning of major investment needed in the later years.

From this work the District Council will: identify potential funding shortfalls; and consider alternative funding streams were necessary.

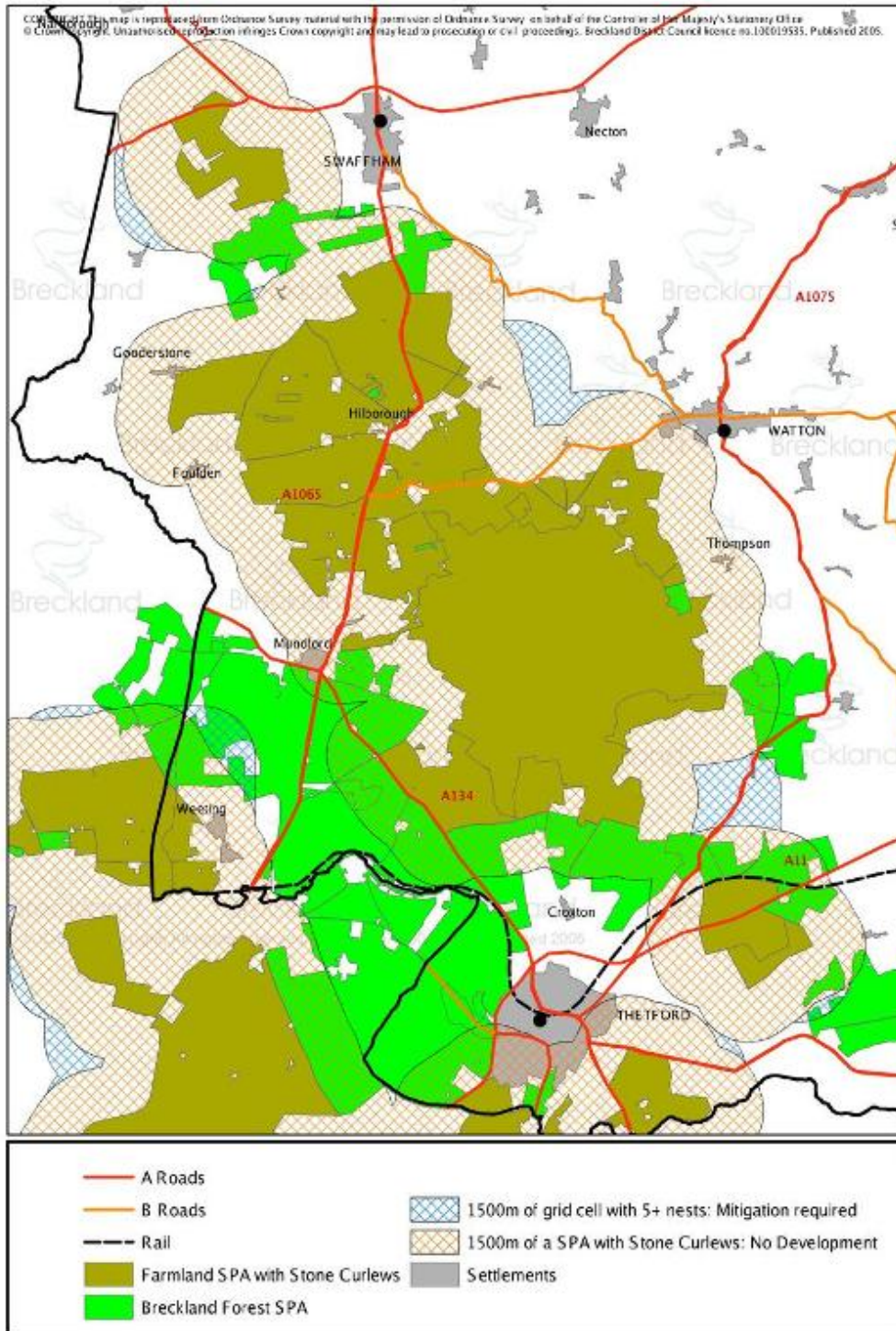
# Map 1 – Breckland Core Strategy and Development Control Policies – Key Diagram

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# Map 2 - Breckland Core Strategy and Development Control Policies – 1,500 metre Buffers around Special Protection Areas with Stone Curlews

Planning and Highways Delegations Committee  
13 February 2009





**Docking Shoal Offshore Wind Farm Proposal  
Centrica Energy LTD**

Report by the Director of Environment, Transport and Development

**Summary**

Consultation by Centrica Energy LTD for an Offshore Wind Farm and ancillary development approximately 9 miles off Wells-next-the-Sea on the North Norfolk Coast. This application will be determined by the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) under Section 36 of the Electricity Act (1989).

The proposal could potentially provide enough electricity for 340,000 homes and make a significant national contribution towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The proposal is consistent with national, regional and local policies on tackling climate change.

While recognising the significant benefits potentially arising from this proposal, there are issues about the combined impact of this proposal, with other planned and proposed schemes in the area, on the North Norfolk coast (Heritage Coast and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty).

It is recommended that no objection be raised.

No highway objection is raised to this proposal.

**1. The Proposal**

1.1. The application for the Docking Shoal Offshore Wind Farm comprises:

Location	:	The site is approximately 14 km (9 miles) from the coast of North Norfolk and approximately 19.6 km (12 miles) from the Lincolnshire coast (see Map 1).
Number of turbines (Indicative)	:	Between 83 (6 MW Turbines) – 166 (3 MW Turbines) all with three blades
Tower Height (maximum)	:	100 metres
Blade Diameter (maximum)	:	140 metres
Mean sea level to tip of blade at highest point	:	170 metres

Total Area	:	75 sq.km. (29 sq.miles).
Total Output	:	Installed Capacity of 500 Mega Watts (MW) (1,324 GW/h of electricity per year)

1.2. The proposed development also includes:

- Up to three offshore electrical substations comprising a single main deck area of 800 sq.m. with a modular structure measuring 35m x 22m with a height of 11 m. the structure would be mounted 20 metres above the lowest tidal level; and
- Cabling route to landfall. Landfall is to the north of Sutton Bridge (to the east of the River Nene River mouth). The cables would be buried in the seabed to a sufficient depth.

1.3. **Grid Connection -**

1. Two marine cables would make landfall close to the River Nene (near Sutton Bridge in Lincolnshire);
2. The installation of 11 km underground cable route from Sutton Bridge to Walpole substation (see Map 1); and
3. Extension of the existing substation at Walpole.

1.4. It is understood from the Applicant's Environmental Statement (ES) that the onshore works associated with the Docking Shoal Offshore wind farm have planning permission.

## 2. **Background**

2.1. **(1) Comparative Information – Table 1**

<b>Specification</b>	<b>Scroby Sands Great Yarmouth (Built)</b>	<b>Proposed Sheringham Shoal (Permitted)</b>	<b>Lincs Proposal (Maximum figures) (awaiting decision)</b>	<b>Docking shoal (Proposal)</b>
Tower Height	52 metres	97 metres	100 metres	100 metres
Blade diameter	80 metres	150 metres	140 metres	140 metres
Total Height to tip of Blade at highest point	92 metres	172 metres	170 metres	170 metres
Number of Turbines	38	Up to 108	Up to 83	Up to 166
Kilometres offshore (Norfolk)	2.5 km	17 – 23 km	18 km	14 km
Area Covered (sq.km.)	6.5 sq.km.	35 sq.km.	35 sq.km.	75 sq.km.
Generating Capacity mega-watts (MW)	76 MW	315 MW	250 MW	500 MW

Number of homes which could be supplied	52,400	176,000	150,000	340,000
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- 2.2. While no objection was raised to the Great Yarmouth schemes, the County Council did raise objections to the Sheringham Shoal proposal which was considered on 18 August 2006. Objections were raised on the following grounds:
- The proposal would have a detrimental impact on the North Norfolk Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Heritage Coast and be contrary to Norfolk Structure Plan Policy ENV.2; and
  - The proposal would appear to have a detrimental impact on the local fishing industry and local economy and be contrary to Structure Plan Policy EC.1.
- 2.3. Furthermore this Committee also objected to the Lincs Proposal on 23 March 2007 as it was felt that the Environmental Statement failed to sufficiently address the wider cumulative impacts on Norfolk and the Greater Wash Area. In particular it was felt that the proposal could have serious landscape, nature conservation and economic impacts on Norfolk when combined with further offshore schemes at Docking Shoal and Race Bank.
- 2.4. The table below shows current permitted and planned wind farms off the North Norfolk coast (see Map 2):

**(2) Status of Other Wind Farm Proposals off the Norfolk Coast – Table 2**

Wind Farm	Status	Location off Norfolk Coast	Number of turbines
1.Lynn	Permitted/operational	18 km	27
2. Inner Dowsing	Permitted/ under-construction	23 km	27
3. Race Bank	Application expected shortly.	27 km	Not known
4. Docking Shoal	Application submitted	14 km	166 (Maximum)
5. Tritton Knoll	No proposals at this time	40 km	Not known
6. Dudgeon Shoal	As above	32 km	Not known
7. Sheringham Shoal	Approved/Not started	17 km	108
8. Lincs	Approved/Not started	18 km	83 (Maximum)
9. Cromer	Withdrawn after being Permitted	7km	30
10. Scroby Sands	Permitted/operational	3km	30

### 3. **Policy Context**

#### **(1) National Policy**

- 3.1. The current Government target for electricity generated from renewable sources is 10% by 2010 and 20% by 2020. The Government's latest Energy White paper - Meeting the Energy Challenge (May 2007) confirms its intention to support renewable energy generation.
- 3.2. The Climate Change Act (2008) - The UK Government is committed to addressing both the causes and consequences of climate change and has passed a Climate Change Act. The Act aims to improve carbon management and help the transition towards a low carbon economy in the UK.
- 3.3. The Energy Act 2008 seeks to strengthen the Renewables Obligation to drive greater and more rapid deployment of renewable in the UK. The Government's long term aspiration for renewable energy recognises that technologies, such as off shore wind, will need to come forward.
- 3.4. The Planning Act (2008) makes specific reference to the need for local authorities and Regional Planning bodies to tackle climate change.
- 3.5. National Planning Policy on renewable energy is set out in Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 22 Renewable Energy published in August 2004. However, offshore renewable energy generation projects (such as offshore wind farms) are not covered by the land use planning system. PPS:22 does indicate that Regional Spatial Strategies should contain an indication of the output that might be expected to be achieved from offshore renewables.
- 3.6. The 2000 UK Climate Change Programme set out a range of policies and measures of meeting the UK's Kyoto Protocol target of a 12.5% reduction in green house gas emissions below base year levels between 2008 and 2012 and moving to towards a domestic goal of a 20 % reduction in carbon dioxide emission below 1990 levels by 2010. The supplement to PPS.1, Planning and Climate Change (December 2007), indicates that tackling climate change is a key Government priority.
- 3.7. The Stern Review (2006) – "The Economics of Climate Change" commissioned by Chancellor of the Exchequer considered the economics of climate change. It concluded that scientific evidence for climate change is so overwhelming that it presents very serious global risks and now demands an urgent global response.

#### **(2) Regional Policy**

- 3.8. The adopted East of England Plan (May 2008) Policy ENG.1 (Carbon Dioxide Emissions and Energy Performance) indicates that Local Authorities should encourage the supply of "decentralised, renewable and low carbon sources..".
- 3.9. Policy ENG.2 indicates that the development of renewable power generation should be supported, with the aim that by 2010 10% of the region's energy should come from renewable sources rising to 17% by 2020. These figures, exclude offshore wind and are subject to meeting European and international obligations to protect wildlife.

- 3.10. Policy ENV.2 indicates that local planning authorities (LPAs) and other agencies should afford the highest level of protection to the East of England's nationally designated landscapes, which include in the context of Norfolk, the Heritage Coast and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Within the AONBs priority over other considerations should be given to conserving the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of each area.
- 3.11. Policy ENV.3 indicates, *inter alia*, that LPAs should ensure that internationally and nationally designated sites are given the strongest level of protection and that development does not have adverse effects on the integrity of sites of European or international importance for nature conservation and should ensure that new development minimises damage to biodiversity and avoid harm to local wildlife sites.

### **(3) A Climate Change Strategy for Norfolk**

- 3.12. The above Strategy was commissioned by the Norfolk Local Government Association (LGA) and has been agreed by the County Council (2008) and was formally launched on 6 February 2009. The Strategy has two high level goals of mitigating and adapting to climate change.

The Strategy recognises the need for decisive action now to save energy and reduce emissions in order to avert the worst effects of climate change (e.g. coastal erosion; flooding; water shortages etc).

With regard to renewable energy priority is given to understanding the supply and demand in the renewables and low carbon market. A Norfolk wide study of the renewables energy market will be commissioned through the Climate Change Strategy with the aim of developing a sustainable energy strategy for Norfolk, which will include targets for the development of renewable energy.

## **4. Local Members' Views**

- 4.1. Cllr Stephen Bett has raised concerns about the visual impact of the proposed development and has raised doubt about the effectiveness of the proposal.
- 4.2. Cllr Tony Wright has raised concerns about the proposed cabling route across the Wash given its international nature conservation designation. He has also raised concern about the potential impact on tourism in the area and has raised doubt about the effectiveness of the wind turbines in terms of providing a consistent energy supply.
- 4.3. The views of other local members will be reported at Committee.

## **5. Assessment of Proposal**

- 5.1. The assessment below considers the key strategic implications of the proposed Docking Shoal wind farm on the County in terms of potential benefits, impact on the landscape and seascape, nature conservation impact, and potential socio-economic impacts. While the ES also considers the wider implications of the proposal in respect of, for example shipping and navigation, marine ecology, and electromagnetic interference, these matters are not considered in the assessment below as they are detailed issues for other consultees with specialist responsibilities to address.

### **(a) Potential Benefits**

- 5.2. The proposed offshore wind farm would produce approximately 1,324 GWh of electricity per year, which according to the applicant would be the equivalent to 5% of the Government's national target for 2010. The total installed capacity of the wind farm would be 500 MW, enough to meet the domestic requirements for approximately 340,000 homes. These figures are based on a net capacity of 30% and take into the account: the intermittent nature of the wind; the "down-time" of the turbines due to maintenance and adverse weather; and other energy losses in cabling etc.
- 5.3. On the above basis the Docking Shoal wind farm would collectively displace carbon emissions totalling up to 1.1 million tonnes annually. In addition the wind farm would result in the displacement of 13,140 tonnes of sulphur dioxide and 4,000 tonnes of nitrogen oxides annually.

### **(b) Seascape and visual Impact**

- 5.4. The Environmental Statement (ES) accompanying the application has considered in detail the seascape and visual impact arising from the above proposal. The ES has undertaken a thorough cumulative assessment taking into account those relevant schemes in table 2 above (including: Inner Dowsing; Lynn; Lincs; Race Bank; and Sheringham Shoal). The Triton Knoll and Dudgeon schemes have not been considered as part of the cumulative assessment as no planning applications have yet been submitted in relation to these schemes.
- 5.5. The broad methodology and photomontages set out in the ES are considered, on balance, to be soundly based and accurate. The ES recognises that the cumulative impacts arising in combination with other schemes would depend upon the location where the turbines are viewed. Overall the wind turbines would become a noticeable feature on the distant sea horizon along the north Norfolk Coast. The ES indicates that the Docking Shoal scheme would contribute to the cumulative change in the seascape character along the coastline. It suggests that significant cumulative effects would be limited to the North Norfolk Coast margins and include localised effects on the North Norfolk Heritage Coast and AONB. The most significant impacts will be between Cley and Brancaster. Overall it is felt that the cumulative visual effects would be major for the stretch of coastline between Cley and Brancaster.
- 5.6. PPS 22 (Renewable Energy) indicates that proposals within nationally recognised designations (e.g. Heritage Coast and AONB) should only be granted where it can be demonstrated that the objectives of designation will not be compromised by the development and the environmental, social and economic benefits outweigh any significant adverse effect. While this is an offshore proposal lying outside the AONB (14 km off the North Norfolk coast), it is nevertheless felt that there would be an impact on this stretch of North Norfolk coastline. Given the landscape importance of the North Norfolk coast, the proposal in combination with other permitted and proposed schemes would, it is felt, be contrary to Policy ENV.2 of the East of England Plan.

## **(b) Nature Conservation**

- 5.7. The ES provides a very detailed assessment of nature conservation issues covering: seabed ecology, marine mammals, fish and birds. The seabed ecology, marine mammals and fish aspects of the proposal are matters for other consultees with specialist knowledge to respond to accordingly.
- 5.8. The Wash is designated as a Ramsar site (international designation), Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Protection Area (SPA). These designations extend inland around the Norfolk coast.
- 5.9. As part of the ES a three year bird survey has been undertaken. The potential impact on birds include:
- Cumulative Disturbance and displacement effects by the wind farm and associated vessel traffic;
  - Cumulative Collision Risk with the turbines;
  - Indirect effect through loss of, or change of, habitat.

The overall conclusions reached in the ES suggest that most of the impact on the bird community would be negligible to minor. It is understood that further studies are on-going considering the impact on Sandwich Terns, which breed in the National Nature Reserve sites at Scolt Head and Blakeney. Overall it is felt that the conclusions reached in the ES relating to the impact on the bird community are reasonable and therefore the proposal does not raise concern in respect of Policy ENV.3 of the East of England Plan.

## **(d) Commercial Fishing**

- 5.10. The ES has considered the impact on the commercial fishing taking into account the other proposed wind farms in the area. It has examined the existing fishing grounds relating to beam trawling, shellfish dragging, potting, long-lining, netting, otter trawling and hand working. It has also assessed the cumulative impact on commercial fishing. The ES has specifically looked at the long-term loss of fishing areas, loss of access to fishing grounds during construction, and the knock-on effects on neighbouring fishing grounds.
- 5.11. The ES indicates that fishing on Docking Shoal is limited to a small number of local potters and shrimping beam trawlers. It is suggested that the wind farm would not occupy primary fishing grounds. The ES concludes that there would be a minor impact on the commercial fisheries as a result of a loss of fishing grounds. It indicates that the route of the export cable avoids most of the Wash cockle and mussel beds, with only negligible to minor impacts predicted in this area during cable construction.
- 5.12. The overall findings of the ES indicate that the cumulative effect of the proposed wind farms in the area on commercial fishing will only be negligible, but of moderate significance if no fishing takes place in any of the operational wind farms. While these findings would suggest there is little impact on commercial fishing it is difficult for officers to verify these results. It is understood that the applicant has consulted a number of fishermen's organisations.
- 5.13. **(e) Highways** - There are no highway concerns relating to the offshore wind farm proposal.

## **(f) Socio-Economic**

- 5.14. As Map 2 shows there are a number of permitted and proposed wind farms off the North Norfolk coast. It is unclear from the applicant's ES what the level of impact would be on the local economy if all these schemes were to go ahead. The ES suggests that at a national level these wind farms could lead to the establishment of a substantial new UK industry providing long term jobs. However, it is unclear whether there would be any long term local economic benefits. There is a suggestion that in relation to tourism that the wind farms could help attract additional visitor numbers with an environmental interest.
- 5.15. While the ES indicates that there could be an increased tourism potential arising from the wind farms, there is no real evidence to support this view. Moreover there is a risk that if all these wind farms were to be constructed this could reduce visitor numbers, as there could be a significant adverse impact on the North Norfolk coastal landscape.

## **6. Resource Implications**

6.1. **Finance** : There are no financial implications to the County Council arising from this proposal.

6.2. **Staff** : There are no staff implications.

6.3. **Property** : None

6.4. **IT** : None

## **7. Other Implications**

7.1. **Legal Implications** : There are no legal implications.

7.2. **Human Rights** : None

7.3. **Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)** : The County Council's planning functions are subject to equality impact assessments. However, as the County Council is simply a consultee on this offshore wind farm application no EqIA issues have been identified at this stage.

7.4. **Communications** : None

7.5. **Human Rights** : There are no human rights implications.

8. **Section 17 – Crime and Disorder Act** - No implications

## **9. Alternative Options**

9.1. Clearly any decision relating to this proposal is very finely balanced in respect of assessing the local and national objectives for addressing climate change, while at the same time needing to protect a very precious and sensitive part of the County's environment. The scale of this proposal in combination with the other offshore wind farm schemes does, however, raise a landscape concern which in turn could undermine the tourism offer in this part of Norfolk, although at this time there is no firm evidence as to whether there would be an adverse impact on tourism. As such it is felt that any further offshore proposals beyond those already permitted should be discouraged from locating within such close proximity to the North Norfolk Coast. On this basis Members may feel that it is



appropriate to raise an objection to this application.

## 10. **Conclusion**

10.1. The proposed Docking Shoal wind farm development would undoubtedly have major environmental benefits in terms of producing significant amounts of renewable energy. The Applicant's Environmental Statement indicates that the proposal could supply electricity for around 340,000 homes and lead to the reduction of up to 1.1 million tonnes carbon dioxide each year. These benefits are clearly consistent with:

- National Policy on renewable energy targets;
- Meeting the UK's Kyoto Protocol targets for reducing emissions of greenhouse gases;
- Meeting the aspirations/objectives set out in the Climate Change Act (2008), Energy Act (2008), and Planning Act (2008);
- The conclusions reached in the Stern Report;
- Policy ENG.1 of the East of England Plan (2008); and
- A Climate Change Strategy for Norfolk (2008).

10.2. However, offset against these wider benefits, it has to be recognised that this proposal is the latest in a series of offshore wind proposals off the North Norfolk coast and will have a significant cumulative impact on the North Norfolk coast, which has a variety of national landscape designations (e.g. Heritage Coast and AONB). As such this proposal in combination with other permitted and proposed offshore wind farms would have a detrimental impact on the landscape character of the North Norfolk coast. This in turn could detract from the County's tourism offer and have an adverse economic impact.

10.3. In responding to the last two offshore wind farms proposals (August 2006 and March 2007) the County Council has taken a cautious view, raising concern about the cumulative adverse impact on the North Norfolk coast. While this clearly remains an important issue there has subsequently been (since 2007) a strengthening of national policy on renewable energy and climate change as evidenced in the: Climate Change Act (2008); Planning Act (2008); and the Energy Act (2008). Moreover, the County Council has signed up to the Norfolk Climate Change Strategy (2008), which firmly recognises the need to cut carbon emissions by reducing energy consumption and promoting a shift to low-carbon technology. These are important material considerations when assessing the above proposal.

10.4. Therefore given the wider strategic benefits outlined above together with the national, regional and local policy objectives for tackling climate change, it is recommended not to raise any objection to this proposal. However, it is recognised that any decision is finely balanced, since there would be an adverse cumulative impact on the North Norfolk coastline in the event that all permitted and planned offshore wind farms are constructed. As such Members may feel that a more cautious approach should be made as set out in the "Alternative Option" section.

## Recommendation

That the Department of Energy and Climate Change be informed that the County Council does not wish to raise any objection to the Docking Shoal wind farm.

## Background Papers

Docking Shoal Offshore Wind Farm – Environmental Statement (December 2008)

**Officer Contact** - If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper please get in touch with:

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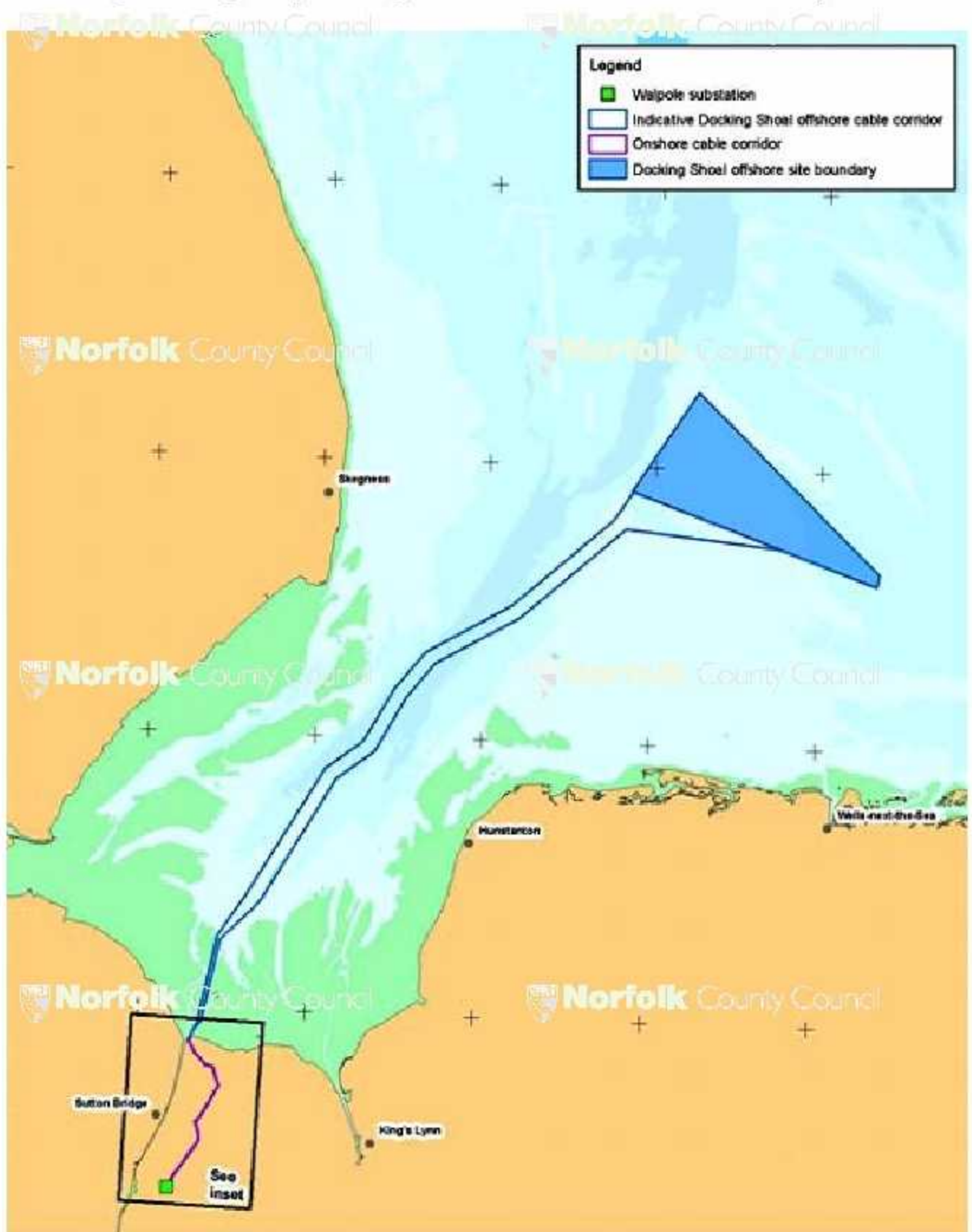


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# Map 1 – Docking Shoal Offshore Wind Farm








Planning and Highways Delegations Committee - 13 February 2009

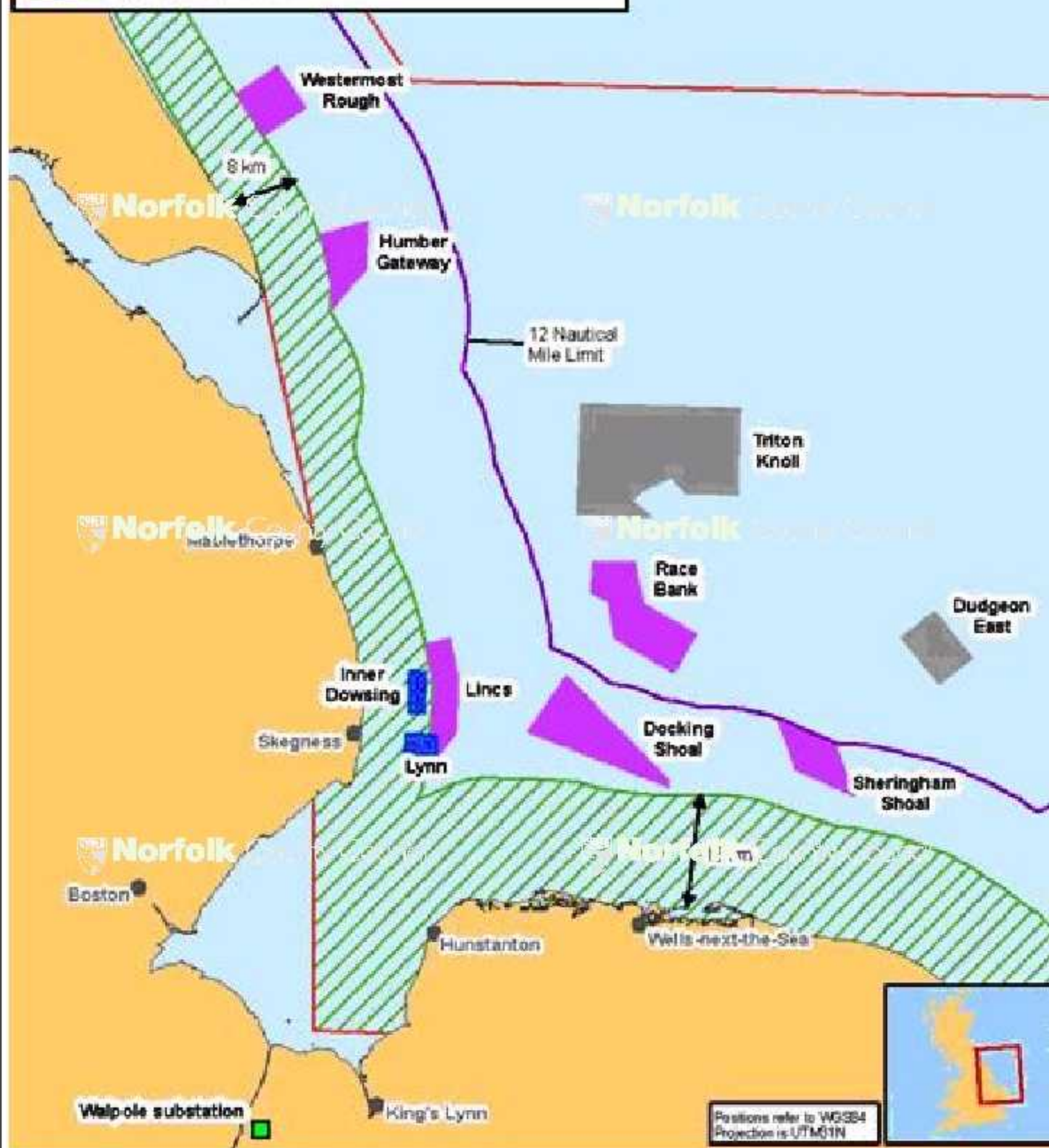


03 February 2009



### Legend

-  Round 2 project
-  Round 1 project
-  Awarded site boundary subject to change
-  Strategic Environmental Assessment Area (SEA)
-  SEA exclusion zone



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Map 2 - Docking Shoal Offshore Wind Farm