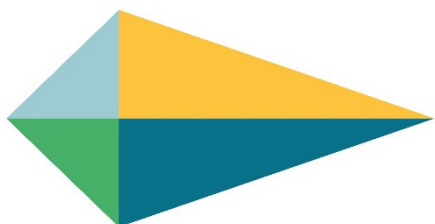


Initial Consultation Document

Rural Development Supplementary Planning Document

Draft for Local Plan Working Group

Consultation Dates: 1st February to 15th March 2023



EASTSUFFOLK
COUNCIL

What is a Supplementary Planning Document?

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) are produced to support the implementation of adopted planning policies, through the provision of additional detail or explanation that would not be appropriate to include within a Local Plan itself.

An SPD cannot create new or amend existing planning policies nor can it prescribe that particular areas of land be developed for particular uses; this is the role of the Local Plans. Once adopted, SPDs are material considerations in the determination of planning applications.

The Purpose of the Rural Development SPD

The Rural Development SPD will cover specific types of development found in rural areas and a broad range of rural issues and topics including barn conversions, rural worker dwellings, rural employment, tourism and rural character. The SPD is being produced to provide guidance primarily in relation to the following policies contained in the Council's adopted Local Plans:

Waveney Local Plan (adopted March 2019)

- [WLP8.8 \(Rural Workers Dwellings in the Countryside\)](#)
- [WLP8.10 \(Residential Annexes in the Countryside\)](#)
- [WLP8.11 \(Conversion of Rural Buildings to Residential Use\)](#)
- [WLP8.13 \(New Employment Development\)](#)
- [WLP8.14 \(Conversion and Replacement of Rural Buildings for Employment Use\)](#)
- [WLP8.15 \(New Self Catering Tourist Accommodation\)](#)
- [WLP8.29 \(Design\)](#)
- [WLP8.35 \(Landscape Character\)](#)

Suffolk Coastal Local Plan (adopted September 2020)

- [SCLP4.2 \(New Employment Development\)](#)
- [SCLP4.5 \(Economic Development in Rural Areas\)](#)
- [SCLP4.6 \(Conversion and Replacement of Rural Buildings for Employment Use\)](#)
- [SCLP4.7 \(Farm Diversification\)](#)
- [SCLP5.5 \(Conversions of Buildings in the Countryside for Housing\)](#)
- [SCLP5.6 \(Rural Workers Dwellings\)](#)
- [SCLP5.13 \(Residential Annexes\)](#)
- [SCLP5.14 \(Extensions to Residential Curtilages\)](#)
- [SCLP6.3 \(Tourism Development within the AONB and Heritage Coast\)](#)
- [SCLP6.4 \(Tourism Development outside of the AONB\)](#)
- [SCLP6.5 \(New Tourist Accommodation\)](#)
- [SCLP10.4 \(Landscape Character\)](#)
- [SCLP11.1 \(Design Quality\)](#)

The SPD will also provide guidance on Schedule 2, Part 3, Class Q of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) which permits the conversion of agricultural buildings to dwellings.

This Supplementary Planning Document will apply to the whole of East Suffolk, apart from the area within the Broads National Park, for which the Broads Authority is the Local Planning Authority.

About this Consultation

This is the first stage of consultation and will inform the preparation of the SPD. The aim of this consultation is to gather feedback on what you think the SPD should include and address.

The proposed content of the SPD and a series of consultation questions are set out below.

Please respond to this consultation by **5pm Wednesday 15 March 2023**, via one of the following means:

- Complete the [online questionnaire](#);
- Email your response to planningpolicy@eastsoffolk.gov.uk; or
- Post your response to Planning Policy & Delivery Team, Riverside, 4 Canning Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk NR33 0EQ

Please note that by responding to this consultation you are accepting that your name and response will be available for public inspection and published online in accordance with the Town and County Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations (2012). View the [Data Protection Statement](#).

Next Steps

The scope and content of the SPD will be informed by consultation responses, after which a full draft of the SPD will be prepared. The draft SPD will be supported by Strategic Environmental Assessment, Habitats Regulations Assessment and Equality Impact Assessment screening opinions and where necessary full assessments.

Public consultation will be undertaken on the full draft of the Supplementary Planning Document.

Scope for the Rural Development SPD

The focus of this SPD will be on providing guidance for certain types of development coming forward in the rural parts of the District outside of Settlement Boundaries. The settlement boundaries are defined within the Policies Maps and policy SCLP3.3 of the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan and WLP1.2 of the Waveney Local Plan.

The SPD will be purposefully broad in its scope providing guidance on a number of policies that relate directly to more rural matters. The SPD will not cover topics already covered in other SPDs. For example, the SPD 'Housing in Clusters and Small Scale Residential Development in the Countryside' already provides guidance on those policies (policies SCLP5.4 and WLP8.7).

The SPD cannot and will not change the policy requirements of the Local Plan.

Proposed Content of the SPD

Based upon the policies of the two Local Plans, evidence informing the Local Plan policies, and known issues, the following topics are proposed to be addressed in the SPD.

Rural Building and Barn Conversions

Many barns and rural buildings, due to their size, location or layout no longer meet the needs of modern farming but they still form part of the character of the rural landscape and history of the local area. Converting barns and other rural buildings is one way they can be retained where they are also of value to the landscape or are heritage assets. Guidance is needed to ensure the buildings are converted in a way that respects the original character of the building and ensures the building continues to have a positive impact on the character of the rural landscape. Common issues when converting barns are structural suitability of the building for conversion, retaining the fabric of the building, avoiding excessive re-build or replacement of fabric and the design of the conversion.

The Local Plans set out policies for converting barns and rural buildings into dwellings and for employment use.

The Rural Development SPD will include links to the Historic Environment SPD which already contains guidance on how to conserve, repair and maintain buildings and the conversion of historic buildings in the countryside.

The SPD will include guidance on the types of barns and rural buildings that may be suitable for conversion to dwellings and key design considerations.

Permitted development rights permit the conversion of some barns without the need for Planning Permission, and the criteria and conditions are set out in Class Q of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015. This SPD will provide guidance on submitting an application for Prior Approval for the conversion of a barn to a dwelling under Class Q of Permitted Development Rights. The guidance will focus on the level of structural information that should be submitted with a Prior Approval application, how much of the original structure should be retained and how far the design of the external appearance of the building can deviate from the original. Guidance will also be provided on submitting subsequent planning applications for additional residential curtilage following Class Q Prior Approvals to ensure the proposed dwelling has sufficient parking, vehicle turning areas and garden space.

The SPD will provide further guidance for those who have acquired a Class Q Prior Approval to convert a barn to a dwelling who may wish to secure a subsequent planning permission for the conversion and wider alterations and improvements.

Rural Worker Dwellings

The Local Plans set out policies for the creation of rural worker dwellings.

There are a number of rural activities which require full time workers to be accommodated on site or nearby. In particular there are agricultural and forestry practices which may require a worker to attend at short notice or to be available during night and day. Where a dwelling is required on-site for a necessary worker these could be permitted as a Rural Worker Dwelling. Guidance is needed to demonstrate how applicants may justify that a rural worker dwelling is a required need.

Policy SCLP5.6 of the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan and Policy WLP8.8 of the Waveney Local Plan set out the criteria for rural worker dwellings. Criterion a. in both policies requires that a rural working dwelling has a clearly established functional need. The SPD will provide further clarity as to what constitutes a functional need and what evidence should be provided to demonstrate the need. Furthermore, guidance will be provided on the how the scale should reflect the functional role.

A rural worker dwelling will be subject to planning conditions to ensure it is occupied by a person, or persons, currently or last employed in local rural employment. The policies provide for the removal of the condition only where certain criteria are met and the SPD will provide further guidance on the evidence the Council would expect to be submitted under this policy.

Farm Diversification

The Local Plans set out policies for the creation of new retail, tourist and employment opportunities.

In recent years there has been increased interest in the diversification of farms to provide retail, tourism and employment facilities. Farms have shown interest in retail spaces, not just for the farm and local produce, but also for arts, crafts and the sale of other goods. Some barns are suitable for conversion into offices which can provide local employment opportunities. Many farms are interested in diversifying to provide camping, glamping chalets, log cabins and caravan sites in various sizes and locations. Recently there has been an increase in farms providing enclosed paddocks for exercising dogs.

Many farmers are also considering opportunities to increase biodiversity or to undertake 're-wilding' projects and in some case planning permission may be required for such projects.

The Local Plans have policies WLP8.13 (New Employment Development), WLP8.14 (Conversion and Replacement of Rural Buildings for Employment Use), SCLP4.5 (Economic Development in Rural Areas), SCLP4.6 (Conversion and Replacement of Rural Buildings for Employment Use) and SCLP4.7 (Farm Diversification) each covering expectations for new employment and economic development. Policies WLP8.15 (New Self Catering Tourist Accommodation) and SCLP6.5 (New Tourist Accommodation) each set out the requirements for new tourist accommodation.

The SPD will provide further detailed guidance on the issues that need to be considered when assessing whether a location is suitable for retail, tourism and employment facilities, such as utilities, infrastructure and highways access. Guidance will also be provided on the appropriate scale and design of developments in rural locations.

Rural Annexes

The Local Plans set out requirements for the creation of annexes in rural areas.

Annexes in rural areas have their own unique challenges and will often be on larger plots with particular character constraints. The greater land and spacing available and the lower densities mean that annexes must be carefully considered to ensure a separate planning unit is not created particularly as the location can be less sustainable. Guidance is needed to ensure that an annex in a rural setting is suitably connected to the existing property to ensure a separate unit is not created.

The Suffolk Coastal Local Plan sets criteria for residential annexes under policy SCLP5.13 Waveney Local Plan has a specific policy that governs residential annexes in the countryside under policy WLP8.10. This policy requires, 'Residential annexes must be designed to reflect the character and setting of the original dwelling. The size, scale, design, location and provision of accommodation in

the annex must be subordinate to the existing dwelling.' The SPD will provide guidance on the suitability of location and design in relation to these requirements.

The SPD will provide guidance on the difference in planning terms between a new dwelling and an annex.

Rural Curtilage Expansion

In rural areas there can be demand to extend the curtilage of residential properties into neighbouring agricultural land to create larger gardens, paddocks and stabling, tennis courts, garden rooms/offices, garages, car parking or spaces other residential uses. This SPD will provide guidance on when planning permission is required and what issues need to be considered such as design, impact on the character of the landscape and impact on biodiversity.

Economic development in the Countryside

The Local Plans set out requirements for economic development in the countryside.

Economic developments within the countryside can support a prosperous rural economy and provide jobs for local residents, but guidance is required to ensure that the development is sustainable and either avoids or adequately adverse impact upon the countryside.

Suffolk Coastal Local Plan policy SCLP4.2 (New Employment Development) sets out a sequential approach to where new employment uses could be considered acceptable. The Local Plan contains a policy specifically relating to economic development within rural areas in policy SCLP4.5 (Economic Development in Rural Areas) and a policy SCLP4.6 (Conversion and Replacement of Rural Buildings for Employment Use) for the conversion and replacement of rural buildings for employment use.

Waveney Local Plan policy WLP8.13 (New Employment Development) sets out a sequential approach to where new employment uses could be considered acceptable. Policy WLP8.14 (Conversion and Replacement of Rural Buildings for Employment Use) provides a further policy relating to the conversion and replacement of rural buildings for employment use.

The guidance will include details of the types of employment use suitable/compatible in certain rural situations, and appropriate scale and design considerations. It will also recognise some permitted development opportunities which exist to introduce employment and commercial uses in the countryside and guidance on process and expectations will be included.

Equestrian Developments

Equestrian developments can vary in size depending on whether they are private or commercial. They can comprise of stables, paddocks, outdoor exercise areas/manèges, indoor arenas and other facilities. The impact of developments can vary depending on the size and location and whether external floodlights are proposed around manèges. Developments can potentially impact the character of the landscape, the historic environment, wildlife and local dark skies. This SPD will provide guidance on when planning permission is required and what issues need to be considered.

Access to the countryside

East Suffolk is fortunate to have access via public footpaths, cycle routes and bridleways to beautiful countryside and beaches. Many footpaths link villages and settlements and have evolved over many

centuries. Many residents value access to the countryside and make regular use public footpaths, cycle routes and bridleways.

The SPD will provide an opportunity to give guidance on issues relating to Public Rights of Way in rural areas including links to information available on appropriate websites.

Questions

1. Do you consider the proposed content of the SPD to be appropriate?
Yes/No
If no, please suggest how the proposed content of the SPD should be amended.
2. Are there any specific elements of the Local Plan policies relating specifically to rural matters that you consider require additional guidance in the SPD?
If yes, please explain what guidance is required.
3. Are there any elements of national policy or aspects of the General Permitted Development Order that you consider require additional guidance in the SPD?
If yes, please explain what guidance is required.
4. Are you aware of any good practice in existing SPDs from elsewhere that could be applied in East Suffolk?
If yes, please provide details.
5. Do you have any other comments for us to consider in drafting the SPD?