Opening Statement for the Waveney Local Plan Examination Hearings

October 2018

1. Thank you for the opportunity to say a few words at the start of these hearings into the new Waveney Local Plan.

2. My name is Desi Reed and I am the Planning Policy and Delivery Manager for Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils. As many of you will be aware, the two Council’s have been working in partnership since 2008 and as of 1 April next year both Council’s will become one new super District called East Suffolk. But for now our focus and the focus of these hearings is on the Waveney Local Plan which covers the geographic area of the current District, excluding the Broads Authority area. The Broads Authority prepares a Local Plan for its own area, in close collaboration with this Council.

3. The Waveney Local Plan plans for the period 2014 to 2036 and is the culmination of 3 years hard and diligent work from a considerable number of people, some of which will be representing the Council at these hearings.

4. The Council is proud of its submitted Local Plan and considers it lays out a robust, resilient and sound spatial development strategy for the District.

The Plan

5. The Council consider that the Plan meets all its statutory obligations, not least the statutory Duty to Cooperate. It has been prepared in accordance with an up to date Local Development Scheme and meets the requirements of the Statement of Community Involvement.

6. The Plan has been through public and stakeholder consultation and contributions have been made from a wide range of individuals and organisations at the various stages of preparation. I would like to express my thanks to them all for taking the time to participate in the process of plan-making. The contributions have been invaluable in shaping the Final Draft version of the plan.

7. The plan sets down a vision, key priorities, a strategy plus policies and proposals for enabling sustainable development to be achieved across what is a diverse District with a mix of urban, rural and coastal communities.
8. An important thread, running throughout the plan and its policies is to improve the health and well-being of the existing and future population.

9. The Council consider that the plan provides for the delivery of the necessary number of new dwellings, including affordable dwellings, to meet the District’s Objectively Assessed Housing Need. A mix of housing is proposed, to address the diversity of needs and in particular our aging population.

10. The Plan also provides for a mix of new employment and tourism provision across the District. It has a particular regeneration focus on the heart and coastal areas of Lowestoft and seeks to capitalise on the growth of the offshore energy opportunities to deliver higher skilled and better paid local jobs.

11. The Plan seeks to create new special places that existing and future residents will be proud to call home, in the form of new housing allocations and garden neighbourhoods that seek to raise the quality of design, are inclusive and provide the necessary infrastructure alongside the development.

12. The provision of new infrastructure to support the delivery of growth is an essential part of the Plan’s approach to achieving sustainable development and responds to strong local opinion on this matter. Significant progress on existing infrastructure projects, such as the recent opening of the Beccles Southern Relief Road, the forthcoming delivery of the Lowestoft Third Crossing and flood defence projects, and pedestrian and cycle improvements provide a strong basis for further enhancing quality of life across the District.

13. This plan focuses more growth than in the past in the rural areas, in recognition of the importance of sustaining rural communities and taking advantage of advances in digital technology.

14. Maintaining the vitality and viability of the District’s town centres, namely Lowestoft, Beccles, Bungay, Halesworth and Southwold, is a key facet of the Plan. Central to that aim is the protection and promotion of the considerable heritage present in those centres, as well as across the rest of the District.

15. The plan safeguards the high quality environment of the District in urban, rural and coastal areas. High quality design, landscape and
townscape character are all important elements of the plan, as are the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, together with mitigating the impacts of Climate Change, including responding to coastal change.

16. Crucially the delivery achievements of the Plan will need to be monitored in order to gauge the success of the Plan and to inform its further review. To this end a clear approach to the delivery and monitoring of the Plan is set down.

17. The Council welcomes the independent Examination of the Local Plan and looks forward to actively engaging in positive discussion with the Inspector and participants throughout the hearing sessions.