

District Councillors Report

January 2025

For: Litcham, Great Dunham, Little Dunham, Beeston with Bittering, Lexham and Fransham (Rougham, Kempstone and Newton by Castle Acre)

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): the new National Planning Policy Framework was published on the 12th December. It contains the changes signposted by the government in the earlier consultation document. Most importantly it removes the ability to establish a 5 year supply of housing land through an Annual Position Statement.

Alongside the NPPF the government issued updated regulations in Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) on the calculation of the expected numbers of dwellings each local planning authority should plan for in Local Plans (LP). The figure for Breckland is confirmed as 903 dwellings every year. The LP which Breckland were working on (until it was paused) was planning for 661 dwellings every year.

The issue of the new dwelling requirement at 903 means that Breckland no longer has a 5 year supply of building land. This means that the “tilted balance” in favour of sustainable development will be used to assess planning applications, this means applications should be approved unless there is a strong (replaces “clear” in the new NPPF) reason for refusal.

Local Plan: Work will start immediately on the paused Local Plan using the new dwelling requirement of 903 and the updated NPPF. The target is to have the new LP submitted for examination by the end of 2026.

Local Government Review: the government has indicated that unitary councils working under a Mayoral Combined Authority should be the default position for future local government. This means that in the near future Breckland will be absorbed into a larger unitary authority with other district councils. The government has not committed to writing of the debts of any councils absorbed in a unitary authority. Norfolk County Council will cease to exist, NCC currently has a capital debt of £1 billion which will have to be divided among the 2 or 3 new unitary councils in Norfolk. I surmise that the residents of Breckland will see a substantial council tax rise to pay for other current council debt.

Mark Kiddle-Morris.

29th December, 2024.