



Mid Suffolk Core Strategy Focused Review (CSFR) Examination

Main issues and questions

Matter 2 Duty to co-operate

Whether the Council has complied with the duty to co-operate. This includes in relation to planning issues that cross administrative boundaries, particularly those that relate to strategic priorities, for the mutual benefit of neighbouring authorities.

2.1 Under s20(5)(c) of the 2004 Act, whether the Council has complied with any duty imposed on them by section 33A of the 2004 Act in relation to the Plan's preparation.

The legal duty was introduced by the Localism Act 2011 and applied to the Council from the 15th November 2011 until submission of the Plan for examination.

Preparation of the Mid Suffolk Core Strategy and the Focused Review has included consultation and engagement with neighbouring authorities and other prescribed bodies including English Heritage, Natural England, the Homes and Communities Agency, Highways Agency, Local Enterprise Partnership and the Primary Care Trust.

Details of consultations and responses are set out in the schedule and statements of representations (evidence documents number FR A2, 3 and 4)

There has been joint working with neighbouring authorities, other agencies and infrastructure providers under the past and present planning arrangements for preparing regional strategies, county structure plans and local plans / local development frameworks.

Arrangements are in place for this approach to be continued and extended in the absence of regional strategies. Cross boundary working on sub regional requirements is already established in arrangements for preparing joint Strategic Housing Market Assessments and Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments. These and other examples relating to employment, infrastructure, transport etc. are described in the Record of Cooperation, June 2012 (evidence document number FR B14 B)

2.2 The Council should seek to demonstrate with relevant meeting notes and dates of meetings cross-boundary working/ inter party working and agreement achieved.

The Council has prepared a Record of Cooperation, June 2012 (evidence document number FR B14 B) to set out details of cross-boundary cooperation, joint working and strategic planning carried out during preparation of the Mid Suffolk Core Strategy and the Focused Review. This includes dates and notes of relevant meetings as supporting evidence.

2.3 The relevance of developments, joint studies or development plans in neighbouring authorities should be brought to the Inspector's attention if relevant to the content and soundness of the CSFR. This should be in sufficient detail for the Inspector to understand their relevance.

Babergh / Mid Suffolk Integration: Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Councils have agreed to work more closely together to achieve savings. This involves joining together our services and integrating our staffing structures. It is intended that future joint working will include review and coordination of development plans. Initial work on a joint Development Management Policies document started in April 2011.

Another important area of cross-boundary joint working is regarding Ipswich Policy Area and involving Ipswich Borough Council, Suffolk County Council, Babergh District Council and Suffolk Coastal District Council, as described in 2.5 below.

There are some potentially relevant developments in neighbouring authorities for which see para 3.5 of the Employment Paper (Matter 3)

2.4 Is there any joint committee, memorandum of understanding or a jointly prepared strategy that represents an agreed position between authorities on any matter covered by the CSFR?

There is a Joint Members' Board for Babergh and Mid Suffolk integration.

Examples of jointly prepared strategies include the Local Investment Plan with Babergh, SCC, HCA, PCT etc., housing strategy for the Greater Haven Gateway sub-region covering 8 local authorities, strategy for Ipswich Policy Area as built into the Core Strategy. These and other examples are described in the Record of Cooperation.

There is a statement of common ground between the Council and Babergh District Council dated 20 July 2011 in connection with the Stowmarket Area Action Plan and previous statements of common ground were agreed with Suffolk County Council and the Highways Agency in May 2008 during preparation of the original Core Strategy.

Resulting from discussions regarding an agreed position on possible cross boundary employment impacts, undertaken on the 13th March 2012, St Edmundsbury Borough Council have suggested

1. an alternative form of words that reduces the amount of evidential information included in the CSFR chapter on employment
2. the need for some degree of certainty over the types of development proposed within the site and
3. an indicative statement of phasing.

2.5 Is the plan based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic priorities? Does the plan meet any unmet requirements from neighbouring authorities where it is reasonable to do so and consistent with achieving sustainable development?

The Mid Suffolk Core Strategy and Focused Review has been based on continuing joint working with Suffolk County Council and neighbouring District and Borough Councils and other agencies to address strategic issues and priorities. This includes county-wide and sub-regional assessment of housing and employment requirements, assessment of population, household and migration projections and annual monitoring of development and sustainability. Such arrangements can fill any gaps left by abolition of regional plans.

The main example of meeting cross-boundary requirements is continuing joint working for Ipswich Policy Area. This approach was established in the 1970s for the Suffolk Structure Plan. In the past the Borough Council boundaries for Ipswich were drawn close to the town, so outward expansion has been across boundaries into neighbouring Districts. Previous Suffolk Structure Plans have included separate policies and allocations for the Ipswich Policy Area, prepared jointly by Suffolk County Ipswich, Ipswich Borough Council, Babergh District Council, Mid Suffolk District Council and Suffolk Coastal District Council.

This approach of involving neighbouring authorities has continued in preparing the Mid Suffolk Core Strategy and the Focused Review and their contribution to Ipswich Policy Area. There are six Mid Suffolk parishes in the Ipswich Policy Area, including Bramford and Great Blakenham where previously developed sites have been identified to contribute towards Core Strategy housing and employment requirements for the Policy Area.

Tenant nomination rights have been agreed with Ipswich Borough Council for affordable housing in the Mid Suffolk Area and the Councils cooperate through the innovative Gateway to Housing partnership overseen by the Haven Gateway Partnership.

There has been a free exchange of information between the Council and St Edmundsbury B.C. on the subject of the impact of the SAAP Mill Lane proposal upon the strategic aims for the Suffolk Business Park. There has been appropriate and effective communication but outright resolution of the matter has not yet been achieved.