

Summary

The Joint Core Strategy

The JCS sets out the spatial vision for development in the Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk areas. It will form the key document in the Local Development Framework (LDF) portfolio of planning documents for each local authority, which will set out the vision, objectives and spatial strategy for future development until 2026.

Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk Council are working together under the Greater Norwich Development Partnership (GNDP) to prepare the Joint Core Strategy (JCS), a framework to plan for future development in Norwich city and the surrounding area.

Task 1 Appropriate Assessment: Likely Significant Effects

Following the detailed review of the JCS and the formulation of the Task 1 Test of Likely Significance Appropriate Assessment screening matrix, a number of policies were identified which could potentially result in likely significant effects on European and Ramsar designated sites. These were:

Direct and Indirect Impacts on Designated Sites:

- The Broads SAC: potential impacts from the implementation of Policies 4 and 5 (all habitats and the species Desmoulin's whorl snail).
- Broadland Ramsar: potential impacts from the implementation of Policies 4 and 5 (to calcareous fens with *Cladium mariscus* and species of the *Caricion davalliana*, alkaline fens, alluvial forests with *Alnus aglutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* and to Desmoulin's whorl snail).

In-combination and Cumulative Impacts on Designated Sites:

- Broadland SPA: potential in-combination impacts from the implementation of Policies 4, 5 and 7.
- River Wensum SAC: potential in-combination impacts from the implementation of Policies 4, 5, 7 and 16.
- The Broads SAC: potential in-combination impacts from the implementation of Policies 4, 5, 7 & 16.
- Broadland Ramsar: potential in-combination impacts from the implementation of Policies 4, 5, 7 and 16.

Task 2 Appropriate Assessment Findings

After taking into consideration the findings from Task 1 Appropriate Assessment, the JCS policies were reviewed and revised. Subsequently, this Task 2 AA concludes that it is highly unlikely that significant direct and indirect impacts are anticipated from the implementation of the JCS alone. This is due to:

- The inclusion of two new policies (Policies 1 and 2) which offer protection to environmental assets in particular European and Ramsar designated sites, and;
- Compliance with the Water Framework Directive (WFD), which will avoid harm to water dependent habitats and species that they support. This should be achieved through: (i) enhancements to existing STW where an increase discharge is anticipated; (ii) amendment of water abstraction licences where applicable.

However, uncertainty remains regarding in-combination and cumulative impacts, for which it is deemed that there is insufficient information, at this stage to determine whether the impact would be significant or not.

Task 2 Appropriate Assessment Recommendations

Following the undertaking of the Task 2 Appropriate Assessment a series of recommendations are made for modification to the JCS policies. These modifications would strengthen the policies to ensure no significant impacts:

- Policy 3, reference to be made of the Water Framework Directive. The WFD makes it very clear that all abstraction must be in compliance and have no adverse impacts on designated sites;
- Policy 7, revise text: “All access and transport developments will be undertaken in accordance with national planning guidance and have no significant adverse impact on European & Ramsar designated sites. Where possible all new access and transportation developments will seek, through appropriate mitigations, to provide benefits to biodiversity.”
- Policy 12, revise text: “A significant area north of Rackheath will be provided as green space to ensure no significant adverse impacts on the Broads SAC. This area is to act as an ecological buffer zone between the development area and the designated site. All new developments in the area will seek to result in a beneficial impact on biodiversity”, and;
- Policy 20, a Supplementary Development Plan is introduced which specifically deals with developments within the JCS area. This will have due regard to the required considerations to ensure the conservation of European & Ramsar designated sites and European protected species.

In addition, and regarding the uncertain in-combination and cumulative impacts, it is recommend that a more detailed assessment is undertaken to ascertain the impact and to identify appropriate mitigations, if they are required. It is recommended that the outcomes (appropriate mitigations) from the uncertain in-combination and cumulative assessment then feed into the Area Action Plans (AAPs) through the formulation of a Supplementary Development Plan, which covers the need to consider European and Ramsar designated sites and European protected species in planning and development processes.

The purpose of feeding into the AAPs would be to ensure proper implementation and enforcement of any potential incombination impacts, which may result following the further assessments. Further review of the JCS policies is not deemed necessary, as the JCS alone would not have any significant impact on European and Ramsar designated sites.