

24 September 2024

Dear Colleague,

Re: Cabinet Decision to Pause the Breckland Local Plan Update

I am writing to inform you of a significant decision made by Breckland Council's Cabinet today concerning the progression of the Breckland Local Plan update. After thorough deliberation, we have resolved to pause the development of the Local Plan in response to the Labour Government's recent consultation on proposed revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and increase in Housing Target, published on 30th July 2024.

As you are aware, we have been diligently working with you and our whole communities to update our Local Plan, with the final Regulation 18 consultation on Preferred Options concluding in July 2024. Our schedule aimed to produce the Regulation 19 (Draft Submission) Document by the end of this year, followed by a consultation with yourselves and our community in the first quarter of 2025 and submission of the plan in May 2025.

However, the proposed Government revisions to the NPPF have introduced substantial changes that have profound implications for our Local Plan. Chief among these is a considerable uplift in housing numbers to meet the Government's ambition of delivering 1.5 million houses during its term. Specifically, Breckland's housing requirement is proposed to increase from the figure used in the recent draft of the new Local Plan of 661 dwellings per annum to 917 dwellings – a staggering increase of 39%.

I must express my deep disappointment and bitter frustration with these unexpected changes. The timing and scale of the proposed uplift not only disregard the extensive work already undertaken by the Council and our communities, but also the unique challenges Breckland faces with Nutrient Neutrality, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and the Defence Training Estate which constrain growth.

Continuing with the current timetable under these circumstances would be impractical and inefficient and possibly create abortive work. Proceeding with the Regulation 19 Document based on outdated housing figures would necessitate a comprehensive revision shortly thereafter to accommodate the new targets. This would result in duplicated efforts, increased costs, and potential confusion among stakeholders.

By pausing the Local Plan update, we aim to minimise additional expenses, prevent unnecessary repetition of consultations, and utilise our resources more effectively. This pause will allow us to await the publication of the revised NPPF later this year and adjust our plans accordingly. We will focus on working with you to identifying suitable sites through the call for sites activity to meet the increased housing requirement and updating our evidence base to ensure compliance with the new national policies.

I want to assure you that this decision was not taken lightly. We understand that this pause may raise concerns, and I share your sentiments regarding the challenges it presents. However, we believe this course of action is in the best interest of Breckland, allowing us to navigate the changes and the new Governments Housing Target thoughtfully and responsibly.

I will keep you informed of any developments and look forward to your continued engagement as we move forward. Should you have any questions or wish to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for your understanding and ongoing support.

Yours sincerely,



Cllr. Sam Chapman-Allen
Leader, Breckland Council