



Document Reference
PS.EVR12

East Cambridgeshire
District Council

Policy LP12 – Tourist Accommodation (excluding holiday cottages)

November 2017

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1. Introduction and Policy Context

Introduction

- 1.1 East Cambridgeshire District Council is reviewing its Local Plan, which was last adopted in April 2015. The new Local Plan, which is hoped to be adopted in 2018, will provide a framework for development in the district until 2036 and beyond.
- 1.2 This Evidence Report (which is one of a collection) provides background information and justification for policy LP12 (of the Proposed Submission Local Plan, November 2017), which relates to the tourist accommodation (excluding holiday cottages).

National policy

- 1.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in March 2012 and the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) was introduced in 2014 which offers 'live' government guidance.
- 1.4 Paragraph 28 of the NPPF is particularly relevant to this policy:
"To promote a strong rural economy, local and neighbourhood plans should: ... support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside. This should include supporting the provision and expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service centres..."
- 1.5 The NPPG also includes specific guidance on planning for tourism. Paragraph 007 (reference ID 2b-007-20140306) advises that local planning authorities should, where appropriate, articulate a vision for tourism in their local plan, including identifying optimal locations for tourism. It highlights that opportunities for tourism to support local services and the vibrancy of the built environment should be examined.
- 1.6 The above NPPF policy and NPPG guidance has been taken into account in preparing the Local Plan as a whole, and policy LP12 in particular. Please note that 'holiday cottages' are addressed by a separate specific policy, LP13.

2 East Cambridgeshire Context in Relation to Policy LP12

- 2.1 East Cambridgeshire has its own visitor attractions (such as Ely Cathedral, Wicken Fen, Anglesey Abbey and Oliver Cromwell's House) and is surrounded by historic settlements such as Cambridge, Newmarket, King's Lynn and Norwich. Additionally, on-going improvements to the navigable waterways, including the Fens Waterways Link, mean that East Cambridgeshire is ideally placed to capitalise on growth within the leisure marine and boating holiday market.
- 2.2 The Council does not have a separate 'tourism strategy', though it does have its own bespoke webpage facilitating the tourism industry - <http://visitley.eastcambs.gov.uk/>

3 Local Plan Policy: Preliminary Draft

- 3.1 The collection of attractions described above makes East Cambridgeshire an increasingly popular destination for overnight stays. There is, therefore, a need for a policy to address additional tourist-related accommodation.

- 3.2 The Preliminary Draft Local Plan (February 2016) contained a policy entitled "Tourist Accommodation (excluding holiday cottages)". A limited number of representations were made on the policy, and in summary the key issues raised for the policy were:
- There should be no adverse impacts on natural assets arising from major tourism accommodation. Important in Ely as much of the river system and floodplain habitats are of significant biodiversity value and vulnerable to inappropriate development.
 - Policy should ensure that the potential effects of increased recreation pressure are fully considered.
 - There ought to be recognition of the contribution that diversification can make to the on-going success of existing businesses and historic parks and gardens. It is requested that the following sentence be added after the bullet points so as to maintain a degree of flexibility as part of the proposal and recognising that the best way to preserve is to give a value in use: "*Where the proposals involve works within historic parks and gardens weight will be given to the contribution that the proposals make to the continued maintenance and integrity of the heritage asset as well as to the local economy.*"
 - Support the policy, but also need a more specific policy/land allocation approach to the Fish & Duck Marina.
- 3.3 In response to the comments received at the Preliminary Draft stage, together with further consideration of existing or new evidence, the policy was amended for the Further Draft in the following way.
- 3.4 Similar to LP11, a new bullet point was added which confirms that tourist accommodation proposals need to consider the potential harm on protected sites, in respect of the potential of increased recreational pressure on such protected sites. As such, the policy now states that tourist accommodation will, inter alia, be supported where it can be demonstrated that (new bullet added):
- *It is demonstrated that recreational pressure on nearby protected nature conservation sites (especially those with European protection status) is not significantly increased, or, if the proposed development has the potential to significantly increase recreational pressure, it will need to be demonstrated through an appropriate (but proportionate) assessment that such an increase is not likely to have a significant negative impact on the protected site.*
- 3.3 Policy LP12 is a generic policy which covers all forms of tourist accommodation (except holiday cottages). As such, it covers matters raised by some respondents (eg relating to historic parks and gardens), and there is no need for such specific sectors or issues to be addressed directly in the policy. The policy has not, therefore, been amended to address these concerns. The specific request relating to the Fish and Duck Marina is considered in other evidence reports as a site specific suggested allocation.

4 Local Plan Policy: Further Draft

- 4.1 The Further Draft was published for consultation in January – February 2017.
- 4.2 A small number of comments were received during the Further Draft consultation, either supporting the policy or expressing concern over certain aspects of the policy. In summary, the key issues raised for the policy were:
- Comments broadly supporting the policy;

- Concern that the policy as written would add burden on developers by being too restrictive, particularly in relation to 12 months marketing;
- Comment seeking specific inclusion of equine tourism development (especially accommodation adjacent to equestrian facilities, for use by visitors)
- Detailed suggestions, to improve clarity of policy wording, particularly in relation to including heritage assets.

- 4.3 In response to the comments received at the Further Draft stage, a minor amendment has been made. The third bullet point within the policy has been amended to refer to “*natural its assets*”. This then covers all assets, including heritage.
- 4.4 No amendments have been made in response to the comment relating to equine tourism development (and the need for accommodation linked to such tourism) – the policy is suitably flexible to deal with all forms of tourism, and does not need to single out one particular form.
- 4.5 An amendment has been made in relation to the ‘12 month marketing’ concern. This has been reduced to 6 months, as well as additional word changing. The wording reflects the recently adopted Local Plan for Central Lincolnshire (the examination and hearing sessions for that plan having had a detailed discussion as to what was an appropriate period of marketing, and the circumstances of East Cambridgeshire, in terms of values and tourism demand, appear broadly comparable to Central Lincolnshire).
- 4.6 Two other amendments have been made. The first bullet has been amended in the same way as LP11 (to give greater clarity on what is needed, and the locations where the bullet point would apply). And the final bullet point has been amended by the addition of ‘riverside walks’, because new marinas and moorings should not conflict with the ability for this popular, healthy and cheap pastime.

5 Alternative Reasonable Options

- 5.1 The following alternative options have been considered for this policy. (Option 1 is the preferred policy approach which has been included in the Proposed Submission Local Plan.)
- 5.2 **Option 2:** No policy, and rely on national policy for this subject area. This option has been rejected, because there is a reasonable level of demand for tourist accommodation, which the Council is keen to address through local policy. Relying on national policy will not tackle local issues (such as nature conservation and waterways/marinas).
- 5.3 **Option 3:** A policy that allows greater flexibility for the development of tourist accommodation. There is not much difference between option 1 and option 3. However, option 3 could result in inappropriate development, such as development some distance from development envelopes (when it would be more appropriate for it to be located inside or adjacent to such boundaries) and greater impact on matters such as landscape and protected sites.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 This Evidence Report demonstrates the rationale for the policy as contained in the Proposed Submission Draft Local Plan (November 2017). It is hoped this helps demonstrate how we have responded to comments received during the consultation stages, as well as how the latest evidence and national guidance has been taken into account.