



Document Reference
PS.EVR13

East Cambridgeshire
District Council

Policy LP13 –Holiday Cottages Accommodation

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 LP13 (of the Proposed Submission Local Plan, November 2017), which relates to holiday cottage accommodation.

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 LP13 in particular.

2 East Cambridgeshire Context in Relation to Policy LP13

- 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 towns 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/>
- 2.3 Unserviced holiday cottage accommodation can bring benefits to the rural economy, particularly where under-used buildings are brought back into productive use, or where development forms part of a rural diversification scheme.
- 2.4 The collection of attractions described above makes East Cambridgeshire an increasingly popular destination for overnight stays. In addition, the demand for homes, and high prices

for housing in some areas, means there is a need for a policy to address holiday cottage accommodation.

3 Local Plan Policy: Preliminary Draft

- 3.1 In principle, the Council supports the development of holiday cottages, and recognises the economic benefits such development can bring. However, it is also conscious that such development needs to be properly controlled, and measures put in place so that support for such accommodation is not used as a 'back door' way of establishing permanent residential homes in inappropriate locations. If this happened, it would also take away the economic benefits which arise from holiday cottage accommodation (such as visitor spend at local shops, attractions and facilities) and it would increase public service costs of occupants (because those people occupying holiday cottages have low demand for public services such as doctors, dentists and schools compared with permanent residents).
- 3.2 The intention of policy LP13 is to create a clear distinction between residential accommodation (which may or may not be a second homes) and accommodation that is used as commercial holiday let and therefore bring economic benefit to the area.
- 3.3 The Preliminary Draft Local Plan (February 2016) contained a policy entitled "Holiday Cottage Accommodation". A limited number of representations were made on the policy, and in summary the key issues raised for the policy were:
- Policy supported by one responded, stating that Growth Policies which deliver design led sustainable development should be supported.
 - Policy on holiday cottage accommodation should not be so restrictive. Should be able to take advantage of recreation opportunities in countryside locations, such as adjacent to rivers, lakes, etc
 - 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.*".
- 3.5 We did not amend the policy to take on these comments. The policy is intentionally restrictive, for reasons set out in both the Local Plan and this Evidence Report. That said, the policy is already less restrictive than for 'normal' permanent dwellings, in that it does give the opportunity to locate such accommodation outside a development envelope (which otherwise would not normally be the case with permanent dwellings).
- 3.6 Policy LP13 is a generic policy which covers all forms of holiday cottage accommodation. As such, it covers the matter raised by the respondents 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 was not, therefore, amended to address this concern.
- 3.7 No changes, therefore, were made to policy LP13 for the Further Draft Local Plan. However, minor wording changes, for clarity, were made to the supporting text of the Policy.

4 Local Plan Policy: Further Draft

- 4.1 The Further Draft was published for consultation in January – February 2017.
- 4.2 A very small number of comments were received during the Further Draft consultation, either in support of the policy or expressing concern over certain aspects of the policy. In summary the points raised were:
- Comments broadly supporting the policy (especially seasonal occupancy);
 - Concern that the policy is too restrictive in its definitions, with comment seeking specific inclusion of equine tourism accommodation (especially accommodation adjacent to equestrian facilities, for use by visitors).
- 4.3 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.
- 4.4 However, some amendments have been made, though not as a direct result of representations.
- 4.5 First, the supporting text has been amended so as to make it clear that a ‘holiday cottage’ is of a design so that it constitutes a C3 use.
- 4.6 The opening two bullets of the policy are amended, so that they are consistent with policies elsewhere in the plan relating to housing in the countryside.
- 4.7 The bullet points relating to occupancy conditions has been relaxed slightly, first by saying that occupancy conditions ‘may’ be placed on any permission (recognising that sometimes it might not be necessary to do so) and that such conditions will only be attached if the proposal is ‘in the countryside’, recognising that if the proposal was within a development envelope, occupancy conditions would be unnecessary.
- 4.8 Finally, the bullet point relating to minimum 140 days let a year, and maximum 28 days single let, has been dropped. The bullet was both unnecessary (in the context of the rest of the policy restrictions) as well as very hard to enforce, if applied.

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 relatively high demand for tourist accommodation, which the Council is keen to address through local policy. Relying on national policy will not tackle local issues.
- 5.3 **Option 3:** A policy generally supporting holiday cottage accommodation without placing restriction on location or building conversion. This is similar to Option 1 but Option 1 might provide more support to the local tourism economy than option 3 (due to closeness of accommodation to shops and services). Re-use of existing buildings in open countryside will help to regenerate the buildings and improve the appearance of the countryside,

something which option 3 might not achieve compared with option 1. By restricting development so that it is well related to existing settlements will help to prevent unrestrained development in the countryside, something which option 3 might not achieve.

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.