**From:** Andy Cutcher <andy.cutcher@btinternet.com>
**Sent:** Monday, February 12, 2024 10:26 AM
**To:** Planning Policy Team <Planning.PolicyTeam@breckland.gov.uk>
**Subject:** Breckland Local Plan comment submission. Latest consultation (Deadline 19th February 2024)

Dear Sir or Madam

On behalf of Billingford Parish Council and in relation to the further consultation exercise currently being carried out on the Breckland Local Plan, we would like to make the following observations and have them recorded as our official responses. I would be grateful if you would acknowledge receipt of this email.

**Alternative development strategy options:**

**Option A Market Town Focus** is our preferred option with 80% of new homes developed here and 20% allocated to local service centres with the other options in the following order of preference:

Option C Maximise strategic sites

Option F Maximise strategic site and urban rural split (including Villages with Boundaries)

Option D Maximise strategic sites and Urban/Rural split

Option E Urban/Rural split including village with boundaries

Option B Urban/Rural split

We believe some limited small-scale growth is desirable for some rural settlements, especially for truly affordable housing.

Redevelopment of the Abbey Estate in Thetford would be desirable for regeneration.

We have concerns about just how ‘brown’ the Strategic Brownfield site at Swanton Morley Barracks is and just how fitted it is as a site for massed new housing, given its location, lack of transport links and employment opportunities.

**Sustaining rural community services:**

**Do you agree with the methodology for deciding which parishes should be Local Service Centres?**

**Yes**

The Local Service Centre definition of a parish that has five key elements – a primary school, a village shop, public transport, a community facility (such as a village hall, pub, restaurant or cafe) and employment still seems appropriate. To a lesser extent reliable and adequate internet access is also required

**Potential development sites:**

**Do you agree with this new criteria for assessing sites?**

**Yes**

But the colour coding is very coarse; for example ‘suitable access to roads’ does not seem to differentiate sufficiently between A or B roads, nor perhaps even C roads or the distance to them. Likewise what is a true Brownfield site? You refer to Swanton Morley Barracks as Brownfield when the majority of its surface area is grass (once Europe’s largest grass airstrip), so this kind of colour coding is just a very loose first tier of guidance. We are also concerned that such a large potential development (at Swanton Morley) could have considerable negative impacts upon the highly protected River Wensum which lies just a few hundred metres from this site.

**Towns, Villages and Countryside:**

**Should Breckland continue with a settlement boundary approach or develop a robust criteria-based policy?**

**Yes**

It should continue with this approach otherwise we can foresee a ‘free for all’ increase in speculative development outside of village boundaries and that there is sufficient flexibility within the current planning laws where exceptional circumstances exist.

By abolishing settlement boundaries it is likely that sites for much-needed affordable housing schemes in rural exception sites are less likely to come forward than at present. This is because once land on the edges of settlements has the potential for other development, land values will increase, and landowners will understandably keep these sites for more profitable market housing.

Yours faithfully

Andy Cutcher

Planning Lead for New Town proposal and Breckland Local Plan, Billingford Parish Council