

BAWDESWELL PARISH COUNCIL COMMENTARY ON
BRECKLAND LOCAL PLAN – OCTOBER 2016 CONSULTATION

Before commenting in detail on the settlement boundary and site specific issues raised in the consultation papers, Bawdeswell Parish Council would wish to reiterate its opposition to the Breckland position of designating Bawdeswell as a Local Service Centre within the Preferred Directions element of the draft Local Plan. Its strong opposition is based on three counts:

1. That the criteria established by Breckland to assess the suitability of villages to be designated as LSCs is incomplete.
2. That officials' analysis of the incomplete criteria appertaining to Bawdeswell is inaccurate.
3. Bawdeswell have already fulfilled their quota for housing development.

While officials within the analysis have correctly highlighted some of the factors essential for sustainable development within rural communities, they have chosen to ignore the primary essential factor - that of ready access to medical facilities for all ages – presumably on the grounds that it is beyond Breckland's control and is the role and responsibility of the NHS. The same argument can be made for most of the LSC criteria chosen, as all of the factors, and in particular public transport, are beyond the control and remit of Breckland District Control. Experience to date suggests that while the principle of cooperation between district and county councils is firmly espoused, there is little in the way of practical outcomes of such cooperation.

Separate from, but associated with the lack of consideration of access to medical facilities within the LSC criteria is the seemingly purposeful simplistic approach to the criteria of access to public transport, whereby at NCC insistence only public transport service within the morning and evening peak hours are to be considered. Even then no consideration has been given to what is actually provided by the public transport available – simply that there is a service during working hours.

Turning to the officials' assessment of Bawdeswell against what the Parish Council believes to be inadequate LSC criteria, the village is credited with a school, a shop, local employment opportunities, a bus service, and a village hall and a public house. Simplistically, this is accurate, but it does not tell the whole story regarding the sustainability of Bawdeswell.

As has been said before, the school is popular and almost full, and NCC has never given us any indication of a willingness or intention to expand the facilities currently on offer. Bawdeswell does have a very good village hall, and a very small public house and a small

village shop. However, the local employment opportunities are few and far between. The Bawdeswell Garden Centre does offer some local, fairly low paid work for a few residents, but the Bluebell Square 'Shopping Centre' which comprises 8 small 'one man craft type' businesses, offers virtually no employment opportunities. The remaining 24+ businesses quoted in the document are largely single-person affairs operating from homes also have no prospect of employment opportunities.

The hourly bus service is solely between Norwich and Fakenham and is limited to working hours only. The young and elderly non-driving residents have no opportunities to pursue social and cultural activities outside of normal working hours beyond Bawdeswell. Shift workers face similar problems. There is no public transport to Bawdeswell's local market towns of Dereham and Reepham, and access to medical facilities by public transport is non-existent. Attempts by the Parish Council to correct these inadequacies with NCC officials over the past 5 years have proved to be fruitless.

Bawdeswell Parish Council is not against housing development within its settlement boundary, per se. Indeed, housing development over the past 20 years has been close to that imagined for the village within the draft Local Plan for the next 20 years. In Para 10.1 of the LP Preferred Sites and Settlement Boundaries 2016, our allocation is shown as 30 dwellings for the remainder of the Local Plan period. This total has already been exceeded by 20% with the granting of planning permission for 36 dwellings on land off Hall Road – LP (004) 008.

Bawdeswell Parish Council and the vast majority of its parishioners feel the case for Bawdeswell being made an LSC is based on poor flawed evidence and incorrect criteria. When this is conjoined with the fact that we have already exceeded our quota, this council can see no possible reason to persevere in making Bawdeswell a Local Service Centre.

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BAWDESWELL PREFERRED AND ALTERNATIVE SITES**

Bawdeswell Parish Council is opposed to the 2 alternative sites – LP (004)005 and LP (004)007 for the following reasons:

Bawdeswell Alternative Site LP(004)005: As stated in the analysis, this land West of Reepham Road is Grade 3 Agricultural land which, by definition is within the category referred to Best and Most Versatile land; as such, it should enjoy significant protection from development. Albeit adjoining, it also sits outside what Bawdeswell Parish Council believes should be a strong settlement boundary. More importantly, not only are there no safe footpaths from this site in Reepham Road to facilities within the village, the obvious entry/exit from the site on to a busy Reepham Road is close to a serious ‘pinch point’ in that road and in an area of blind bends. This would make the ensuing increased traffic situation extremely dangerous.

For this reason alone, the site should not be considered as an ‘alternative’ and should be discounted.

Bawdeswell Alternative Site LP(004)007: Although not stated in the analysis, this land off Reepham Road is also a Greenfield site comprising of agricultural land (presumably Grade 3) which should enjoy some protection from development. It also sits adjacent to but outside what should be, in the Parish Council’s opinion, a strong settlement boundary if the character of the village is to be maintained. The site also sits adjacent to an old Roman Road (Common Lane) which currently exists as an agricultural access point and a public bridleway. Noting Highways’ concerns about safe access on to the B1145, the exit point of this site is likely to result in a distinctly unsafe ‘crossroads’ with The Street and the Norwich and Reepham roads. It would also affect the Roman road and very heart of the village - the village green.

The PC notes with interest that the small site LP(004)006 has been considered unreasonable by Breckland as it would change the character of the settlement and the associated conservation area, yet the other larger site adjacent to it LP(004)007 is still considered as an alternative.

For all of above reasons this site should also be discounted as an alternative option particularly as Bawdeswell’s quota for development has already been exceeded.

