



ALDEBURGH TOWN COUNCIL

THE MOOT HALL, MARKET CROSS PLACE
ALDEBURGH, SUFFOLK, IP15 5DSTel: 01728 452158
Email: townclerk@aldeburghtowncouncil.co.uk

Aldeburgh Town Council's Response to: Suffolk Coastal First Draft Local Plan

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Aldeburgh Town Council supports a number of strategies in the First Draft Local Plan, principally, the provision of fast broadband, job creation initiatives, the protection of employment sites and stricter criteria for development in the countryside.

However, the Town Council feels compelled to highlight a number of concerns which could, potentially, affect Aldeburgh and might have wider repercussions for communities within the broader area.

The continued loss of office and work space in the town is alarming. The notion of a mixed economy in Aldeburgh is being usurped by the desire of property owners to convert commercial premises into holiday accommodation. The town is now virtually dependent on tourism and the Town Council believes this to be a very unhealthy state of affairs. Sites that have traditionally supported non-tourist business activity should remain allocated for this type of employment unless there is a compelling financial case for change of use.

The Town Council supports the attempt to protect and enhance tourism and cultural activities (SCLP 12.23) but feels that this should be balanced with a concerted effort to retain and encourage alternative employment.

The Town Council questions the provisions of the Commercial Property Marketing Best Practice Guide (SCLP 4.4/4.22). These guidelines were clearly not implemented when a number of commercial premises in Aldeburgh received planning permission to convert to holiday accommodation. Employment opportunities for people living locally are also undermined by a poor public transport system which denies them access to jobs in neighbouring towns.

The Town Council calls for policies which would attract employers to the town (SCLP 12.165) to safeguard employment sites. Aldeburgh is currently categorised as a Market Town in the Settlement Hierarchy (12.165) with limited facilities. We believe the town should be re-designated as a destination town to attract potential job providers.

There are a number of proposed large projects in the vicinity of Aldeburgh but it is disappointing to note that the SCLP does not address issues relating to these developments. If any of the projects become a reality, the town could be affected for many years and certainly

during the lifetime of the next Local Plan. ATC believes it is remiss to ignore the potential disruption to the town's fragile infrastructure.

In previous consultations, ATC has stated that the provision of affordable, fast broadband is important for businesses and residents alike (SCLP 2.2). It seems ludicrous in the 21st Century that we are still asking for a reliable, cost-effective method of communication.

ATC welcomes guidance on Settlement Boundaries (SCLP 3.4) and applauds restrictions on development in the countryside. We believe there is a danger that "creeping development" on our boundaries would have a detrimental effect on the town's appearance and appeal.

ATC has been concerned for many years that the cost of affordable housing in the town is still beyond the means of local people. ATC calls for a more imaginative financial imperative to ensure the families of people living in the town can afford to rent or buy accommodation locally. Far more generous shared ownership schemes or affordable rent policies should be encouraged to stem the flow of young people being forced out of the town to seek homes and jobs elsewhere. A community will only survive if there is a diverse age demographic and there is a danger that Aldeburgh will be perceived as a haven for the well-heeled, weekender.

ATC places great pride in the appearance of the town and our trees contribute greatly to the lives of residents and visitors. We believe it is essential greater protection should be given to preserving our trees throughout the town.