

North Walsham Development Brief	
Executive Summary	<p>This report seeks the approval from Members for the use of the updated North Walsham Development Brief in assisting in the determination of proposals in association with the strategic policies and site allocation NW62/A, Land West of North Walsham as detailed in the emerging Local Plan (hereafter referred to as eLP).</p>
Options Considered	<p>The Planning Policy and Built Heritage Working Party has previously considered the alternatives to approving the Development Brief, which is a condition of the emerging Local Plan site allocation policy NW62/A. Not approving the Development Brief could significantly delay the application process for the site and the ability of the Council to rely on the site within the eLP's housing delivery trajectory and the Council's updated Five Year Housing Land Supply Statement.</p> <p>An option remains that further work could be requested prior to endorsement to provide additional certainty or update the Development Brief to any new or upcoming changes in national legislation or to reflect newer version(s) of the eLP.</p>
Consultation(s)	<p>Public Consultation on the draft development brief was undertaken from 4th September – 1st October 2023. The Council had consulted prior to this on the scope of the development brief, a draft Master Plan, Vision and set of high-level principles of development. The Development Brief builds on these themes.</p>
Recommendations	<p>Members are asked to recommend to Cabinet that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Development Brief is endorsed as a material consideration in order to assist in the development and determination of applications in relation to the emerging site allocation, Land West of North Walsham (NW62/A) <p style="text-align: center;">and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior to Cabinet, authority to make further minor changes to the Development Brief is delegated to the acting Planning Policy Manager.
Reasons for recommendations	<p>The Local Plan is now at an advanced stage of examination and has undergone Public Examination.</p> <p>Preparation and prior approval of the Development Brief is a policy requirement of the site allocation in the Local Plan (NW62/A). Its approval by the Council will be a key indicator of the site's deliverability in the ongoing eLP examination. Approval is also required in order to progress the next stages of developing a Design Code for the site</p>

	and to assist in the determination of an outline planning application for the site, expected in Autumn 2024.
Background papers	The Submission version of the Local Plan, background papers and supporting evidence including the previous consultation documents for North Walsham and the Council's Hearing Statements at Local plan examination are published and available on the Councils emerging Local Plan examination Library Home Local Plan Examination Library (north-norfolk.gov.uk)

Wards affected	North Walsham wards
Cabinet member(s)	Cllr Andrew Brown, Portfolio holder for Planning
Contact Officer	Matthew Gutteridge – Senior Planning Policy Officer

Links to key documents:	
Corporate Plan:	Production of the Local Plan is a cross cutting theme in regard to delivery of the Corporate Plan's priorities.
Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)	N/A
Council Policies & Strategies	Emerging Local Plan, Housing Strategy.

Corporate Governance:	
Is this a key decision	No
Has the public interest test been applied	N/A
Details of any previous decision(s) on this matter	<p>August 2023 – Members were presented with a summary of the development brief and key highways proposals included within</p> <p>December 2023 – Members were informally presented with a more in-depth review of the emerging development brief and invited to provide any commentary and feedback prior to finalisation.</p>

1. Purpose of the report

The emerging North Norfolk Local Plan proposes a large-scale urban extension to the west of North Walsham. The draft Local Plan policy attached to the proposed

allocation includes a requirement that Planning Permission will only be granted subject to a number of requirements. One such condition is *the prior approval before the determination of the first application of a comprehensive Development Brief incorporating a site wide Vision and Master Plan demonstrating how the development will respond to the particular characteristics of the site and detailing the delivery of all of the uses and infrastructure required in this policy*¹.

2. Introduction & Background

The preparation and approval of a Development Brief is an important stage in the planning of the site. It is a tool often used on largescale, multi-phase developments to establish the basic principles that subsequent planning applications should be informed by and should help guide the determination of any such applications. The site-specific policy set out in the submitted emerging Local Plan (as modified at the Examination in Public) requires the prior approval of the Development Brief, Design Code and other technical documents that will be produced at a later date.

The in-principal decision to allocate this site has been tested via the emerging Local Plan (eLP) examination. The Hearing Sessions for the examination ended in March 2024, and the initial findings and next stages are expected to be outlined shortly via a letter from the examining Inspector. This is expected soon after the General Election. However, the selection of the site and the principal of development for the inclusion in the submitted eLP-has already been established through extensive site assessment, consultation (both internal and publicly) and through previous discussions with Members.

Production of the Development Brief has been led by the site promoters in conjunction with officers and statutory consultees and has involved public input. A public consultation for the draft Development Brief took place in September 2023 where responses were received by members of the public and both internal & external consultees. The site promoters then subsequently produced a revised version of the Development Brief in December / January 2023 which the Planning Policy Team presented to Members through an informal workshop and invited feedback. During this time, members of the public who attended public consultation events were invited to provide feedback on the North Walsham development. A total of 147 responses were received by the end of the consultation period from those who attended the public consultation events. The most common key themes from the public feedback were:

- The site's ability to integrate with the existing community through existing and new linkages
- The site's impact on the environment and Climate Change
- Providing housing for a range of needs
- Transport and the site's impact on the local network – especially the B1150 and impacts on Coltishall
- Design Quality
- Green Infrastructure – especially taking into account the historical and local importance of Weaver's Way and the site's impact on this. Also impact on wildlife and habitats
- Community Facilities
- Pedestrian and Cycle links

¹ Incorporating proposed modification presented at EIP March 2024

Feedback provided during the workshop by Members in December 2023 mainly agreed with that put forward during the consultation and sought further engagement of officers to ensure greater clarity and address presentational issues. These comments then fed into further engagement between the Planning Policy Team and site promoters and an updated iteration of the Development Brief was provided to the Council on 5th July 2024

The production of this Development Brief is a clear indicator that the site promoters are committed to bringing this site forward for development. Endorsing the Brief for informing and for use in the determination of subsequent planning applications is a key milestone in the site's process towards delivery.

3. Proposals and Options

The updated version involves no significant changes to the fundamental design of the site. Key elements of the site such as the link road, school location, open space and residential character areas / parcels remain the same however, updated language and references, more detail and 'hooks' are now provided throughout the Development Brief on other areas of infrastructure and key matters so as to enable a clearer focus and more Council control during planning application stages. Specific details on design within each character area have been removed with direct reference to the information being included and explored further through the creation of the Design Code. Changes were also made to the layout of the Development Brief itself. Some of the key changes are as follows:

- The Brief has been shortened in length, removing the pages that did not serve a purpose to the function of the Brief.
- The Brief has been simplified for clarity. Some pages detailing the site's history, existing transport links and existing land-uses have been moved to an appendix at the end of the document.
- More detail has been added on the Transport Hub being proposed in the southern portion of the site (Pg. 53), near to the southern access point, and establishes how buses are expected to turn within the site.
- The Brief now provides more detail on the requirements for self-build plots and care, including their integration across the development.
- The Brief now includes improved maps which provide annotations to help identify certain uses, and map legends have also been improved.
- The Brief has been updated to reflect the latest version of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- More detail is provided on primary and secondary frontages across the site to help indicate the relationship between dwellings and residential streets.
- An additional Local Equipped Area for Play is detailed in the Southern Character Area map.
- Additional hook to ensure moves towards carbon reduction through design is addressed within the Design Code and future planning applications.

The version is based on the policy position at submission of the Local Plan and covers the full extent of the proposed allocation. It should be noted that the consortium is only able to bring forward a proposal that reflects their land holdings as detailed in Fig 7.1 and that the policy is yet to be fully concluded through modifications put forward during the examination process. These proposed

modifications clarify the overall housing requirements in terms of residential and specialist adult care but mainly clarify the additional transport work required as part of an application and reflect the subsequent Statement of Common ground signed by a number of parties, including the Council.

The Planning Policy Team advise that the Development Brief, as attached, provides a decent basis from which to build upon in terms of influencing planning applications, informing the determination of any such applications and aiding the production of a Design Code.

As part of the Recommendations, authority is sought to enable minor editing changes should it be necessary to make some to the Development Brief – e.g. due to changes resulting from the findings of the eLP examination or changes in national policy positions.

Further work with Bidwells as the site promoters has now started on the creation of the Design Code. It is this Design Code that will seek to build on the layout and the in-principal hooks contained in the Development Brief and will add more detail to inform the emerging development proposals and aid in their determination.

As well as our Planning Policy Team, Officers from the Council's Development Management and Conservation, Design and Landscape Teams have been involved in discussions on the Brief and how it will link to the proposed Design Code and planning applications.

A copy of the July 2024 version of the Development Brief has been provided as an appendix to this report.

An option remains not to accept the Development Brief in this form and or request further additions and delegating this to officers. However, it is considered that the work has been taken as far as it can be in the time scales and resources available through the partnership work of Bidwells and the Planning Policy team.

If a decision on the Development Brief is deferred, it could impact and delay the anticipated submission of an initial outline application expected Autumn 2024, and the preceding public consultation that is expected to be undertaken by the site promoters in the summer. Additionally, there may be wider ramifications on the delivery timescales of the site which could have an impact on the Council's future 5-Year Housing Land Supply and ongoing Local Plan examination.

Whilst it is hoped that progress from here will be smooth, it is recognised that at the time of writing this report there is some uncertainty as to what the contents of the Inspector's letter on the Local Plan will include and when it will arrive. It is possible therefore, that (a) the Working Party will receive an update regarding this letter at the meeting and (b) Officers might decide, after the meeting, that an additional Working Party discussion – and potentially further work – is required on the Development Brief prior to it being finalised / reported to Cabinet. This could involve taking the Brief to the next available Working Party and Cabinet thereafter.

4. Corporate Priorities

N/A

5. Financial and Resource Implications

No known financial implications, there are some resource implications for the team should further work be necessary.

6. Legal Implications

There are no known legal implications arising from this report.

7. Risks

There remains a residual risk of the emerging Local Plan being modified through the Examination process and through the requirements of further planning reform which, could undermine the production of the Plan to date. For example, further changes to the National Planning Policy Framework, NPPF. There is also a reputational risk if the Council opts not to endorse the Development Brief at this time along with unintended consequences such as delay to other work streams.

8. Net Zero Target

N/A

9. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Not a relevant consideration at this time.

10. Community Safety issues

N/A

11. Conclusion and Recommendations

Following the changes made to the draft brief, Members are asked to recommend to Cabinet:

- **The development brief is endorsed as a material consideration in order to assist in the development and determination of applications in relation to the emerging site allocation, Land West of North Walsham (NW62/A)**
and
- **Prior to Cabinet, authority to make further minor changes to the Development Brief is delegated to the acting Planning Policy Manager.**

Post Working Party Update

Since the Working Party, the Council has received the Inspector Letter, 22nd July 2024 (EH006f) which is available on the Examination website. In Paragraph 22 of the letter, the Inspector instructs the Council to delete a small parcel of land north of the railway line included within the existing allocation boundary to the north of the site. This is due to potential access difficulties. The Planning Inspector confirmed in his letter that the removal of this land will not impact the site's ability to meet the required number of dwellings being sought on the site and will have no impact on the site's ability to deliver the site-specific requirements set out in the Local Plan Policy. Approval is therefore sought of the attached Development Brief but incorporating this intended change.

Attached Development Brief, July 2024