

ITEM FOR DECISION

North Walsham: Proposed Sustainable Western Extension Development Brief

Summary: This report seeks to agree the proposed approach for the delivery of a comprehensive development brief for the North Walsham Sustainable Western Extension.

Recommendations: **That the Working Party agree:**

- 1. NNDC Officers to lead on the delivery of the North Walsham Sustainable Western Extension; and,**
- 2. to the setting up of a Delivery Group to oversee and guide the production of the Development Brief; and,**
- 3. to delegate final decisions as to the project lead and constitution of the Delivery Group to the Planning Policy Manager.**

Cabinet Member –Cllr A Brown	Ward(s) affected
All Members	All Wards
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report presents an outline of the proposed approach in relation to the production of a comprehensive development brief for the North Walsham Sustainable Western Extension.
- 1.2 There is a clear need to start to move forward and to seek to resolve some of the known issues around deliverability and infrastructure in relation to the provisional allocation for the sustainable western extension at North Walsham. Members of the Working Party have previously supported the need for a comprehensive development brief and sought greater assurances on infrastructure delivery.
- 1.3 The report sets out the scope of work that is required in order to produce and inform the content of the development brief. It recommends the establishment of a 'delivery group' to oversee and manage the project.
- 1.4 A comprehensive Development Brief for the North Walsham Sustainable Western Extension will provide the clarity on deliverability of the proposed allocation with particular focus on the key infrastructure such as the link road.

2. Background

- 2.1 At the June 2018 Working Party the provisional preferred options were identified for North Walsham including the provision preferred allocation for the North Walsham Western Extension (NW62).
- 2.2 The proposed sustainable extension for North Walsham covers a significant area of land that stretches from the railway line (to the north west of the town), across arable land - around the west of the town, to Norwich Road (to the south). The area covers 95 hectares and would envelope the area around Link Road, Greens Road, Aylsham Road, Tungate Road and Skeyton Road.
- 2.3 The First Draft Local Plan site policy for the Western Extension stated that the site (in part or whole) cannot be brought forward without the adoption of a comprehensive Development Brief for the whole site. It is the intention to have a Development Brief produced by the Regulation 19 stage of the plan process.
- 2.4 The Western Extension allocation includes the delivery of the following:
- approximately 1800 dwellings;
 - a western link road - linking Cromer Road (with improvements to 'Links Road') to Norwich Road;
 - 7 hectares of serviced employment land and retail provision;
 - a new primary school;
 - significant areas of landscaping and public open space;
 - other required infrastructure, improvements and mitigation.
- 2.5 An extract from the consultation version of the First Draft Local Plan – North Walsham Western Extension can be seen at **Appendix 1**.

3. Landownership and Promoters

- 3.1 The large 95ha site is in multiple landownerships. However, a significant proportion of the land (87ha) is in the control of three landowners who are operating together as a consortium and have appointed Larkfleet Homes as the principle site promoter. Other landowners will be involved in the development brief process. There may also be a need to involve other landowners outside the allocation area to ensure that there is a wide ranging approach to delivery of the Development Brief.

4. Draft Plan update

- 4.1 The First Draft Local Plan was published on the 7th May followed by a 6-week consultation period up to the 19th June 2109. A public consultation 'drop in' event held in North Walsham on the 16th May between 2pm and 7pm. This consultation event was attended by approximately 150 people.
- 4.2 A number of representations (general comments, objections and in support) were made to the growth proposals for North Walsham during the public consultation. These representations will be reported to the Working Party at a later date.
- 4.3 In June (in response to the consultation) Larkfleet Homes submitted a Deliverability Statement which states the following:

The purpose of this statement is to demonstrate the deliverability of the NWSUE and to help inform the progression of North Norfolk's emerging Local Plan. The proposed strategic scale of development will contribute to North Norfolk's current and future housing needs and help enable the provision of a link road to the west of the town. This will help to ensure that the proposed development will not add to the existing traffic problems of the town, but will actually be a potential solution to the existing problems.

As part of the site's promotion, Larkfleet Homes have commissioned reports in respect of the infrastructure, planning and technical issues associated with its deliverability. The initial assessment of the site is summarised and concluded in this statement.

The statement's conclusion draws upon a growing evidence base and confirms that the NWSUE is a suitable, sustainable, available and deliverable site.

The Larkfleet Delivery Statement can be seen at **Appendix 2** including indicative options for the link road.

5. What is a Development Brief?

- 5.1 The Development Brief will provide the planning policy framework for the development of the site, drawing together relevant emerging policies and applying, amplifying or interpreting them for the site-specific circumstances. It will set out the key aspects of the vision for the site and the guiding principles for the development. It will provide clarification of emerging Local Plan policy, providing certainty over required infrastructure delivery, promote high standards of layout and design and aid the comprehensive approach to delivery.
- 5.2 The Development Brief will make clear what is likely to be acceptable and what is unacceptable; where there is flexibility and where requirements are firm. Matters such as the design, delivery and phasing of the link road along with other required infrastructure will be outlined, together with the approach to the phasing of the housing, employment, green infrastructure and other land uses.
- 5.3 The Development Brief will influence the design of the site. It will focus on the characteristics of the area, look at developing a design code and seek to bring best practice of urban design principles to the site. The overall aim of the brief is to:
 - improve the efficiency of the planning and development process
 - ensure delivery of key infrastructure
 - ensure high quality of development.
 - appropriate phasing ensuring a comprehensive development scheme

6. Potential areas of work

- 6.1 There will be a range of workstreams that will have to be considered, commissioned and managed in order to provide the key information that is required to inform the Development Brief.

Some of these workstreams will include:

- 6.2 **Highways:** including developing a more detailed understanding of the proposed link road including, design, routing, phasing and funding. There will be a consideration of the wider impact on the transport network of the town and any required mitigation. We will work with NCC Highways and the developer/promotor to agree the scope for the evidence gathering and analysis required to inform the development brief.

To date, NCC have suggested that a staged approach is required;

- Traffic count data at key junctions across the town backed up with ANPR work to determine flows and movements (including distribution).
- High level analysis of the traffic count data using a spreadsheet model to determine traffic patterns and issues emerging for the growth proposals.

The scope of the following stages will depend on the outcome of the task 2 analysis but will include;

- More detailed evidence gathering to investigate the identified issues.
- Development of the appropriate traffic models to provide the evidence required for the proposal of growth to be proven.

- 6.3 **Infrastructure delivery:** including working with NCC Education on the delivery of the primary school, agree the approach to the community facilities, the water & drainage strategy, provision and integration of utilities including telecommunications.
- 6.4 **Climate Change and Green Infrastructure:** consideration of how the development meets the challenges of climate change, how it will deliver net biodiversity gains, the provision of new open space, new and improved access routes and the enhancement of the Weavers Way.
- 6.5 **Design:** this will be an important element of the development brief and the production of a design code will be considered to provide a deeper understanding and explanation of the design considerations.
- 6.6 **Funding:** there will have to be an appraisal of the funding opportunities/arrangements for the commissioning of the evidence base and furthermore, an agreed funding/phasing strategy for the delivery of key infrastructure. There may well be opportunities for a range of revenue and capital bids including Business Rates Pool, Local Enterprise Partnership and Government funding. These opportunities will be explored together with colleagues' in Economic Growth.
- 6.7 **Document Production:** there will be a requirement to produce a Development Brief document that effectively communicates the principles and details of the development brief. It will include plans and diagrams and illustrations. The document would include an overarching illustrative master plan and/or a parameters plan and indicative phasing plan.
- 6.8 **Project Plan and Communications Strategy:** a project plan will be produced for the Delivery Group to detail the process and timescales involved – leading to adoption of the Development Brief. It will examine the evidence base and consider what new information is required and who will deliver it – i.e. NNDC and/or the developer. It will identify any specialist input that may be required.
- 6.9 The Communications Strategy will outline what engagement and consultation will be carried out to inform and publicise the Brief. This will include an outline of how the group intends to inform and engage with the local community and all stakeholders.

7. **Options for the delivery of the Development Brief**

- 7.1 There are a number of options available to the Council when considering how the Development Brief could be delivered. These options are discussed in further detail below.
- 7.2 **Option 1: Developer led Development Brief**
- 7.3 This option would see the developer/promoter lead on the work that is required to inform a Development Brief. The scope of the work, the detail and content of the Brief and associated timescales would be driven by the developer. NNDC involvement would be more reactionary and akin to the traditional development management planning application process.
- 7.4 The advantage of this approach is it may be less NNDC officer resource intensive – as the work will be commissioned and managed by the developers with officers taking more of an advisory and approval role.
- 7.5 The disadvantage is the lack of control and direct involvement in the process. The ultimate Development Brief may not contain the level of information that may be considered acceptable for inclusion at the Reg. 19 stage. Furthermore, there will be no control of timescales or certainty in its delivery
- 7.6 **Option 2: Consultant led Development Brief**
- 7.7 A consultancy would be employed and managed, either directly by NNDC or jointly with the developers, and would take on the production of the Development Brief.
- 7.8 The advantage of this approach is that it would 'buy in' particular expertise in delivering development briefs and master planning. It would produce a document that may be considered to be an independent assessment of what is required.

7.9 The disadvantages are: the experience of working with consultants is that there would still have to be a great deal of officer involvement in the process. There will be time delays in having to scope the brief, in procuring consultants and setting up of the contract. There will be a considerable cost involved in such an approach which may consume much of the NNDC budget that may be required to commission some of the technical evidence – particularly in relation to highways (which will still have to be produced).

7.10 **Option 3: NNDC led Development Brief**

7.11 This option would entail NNDC taking the lead on the delivery of the Development Brief. Officers within the Planning Policy team would manage the ultimate production of the development brief – in cooperation with the developers and other partners and stakeholders. Any specialist expertise required, will be commissioned (either by NNDC, the developer or partners) as and when required.

7.12 The advantages of this approach are that NNDC would take control of the process in particular the scope and content of the Brief and the timescale for delivery. There is the required expertise within the Planning Policy Team on areas such as project management, master planning, highways and infrastructure delivery. Officers will work with the developers and partners in delivering the evidence and information base required for the Brief.

7.13 The disadvantages of this method are that it will take officer resource to manage the delivery of the Brief and there is the risk that officer resource and time could be drawn away onto other matters. There may be the perception that the production process and final document may not be seen as an independently produced document.

7.14 **Recommended option:**

7.15 That NNDC officers lead on the production of the Development Brief with the setting up of a Delivery Group to manage and oversee the production of the Brief.

7.16 Experience has shown that there is a need for NNDC to have a greater involvement in the delivery and production of development briefs. Although, consultancy support can be commissioned to deliver the work, again, experience has shown that this ultimately requires a great deal of work and input from officers. The recommended approach is for NNDC to work closely with the developer and partners and ‘buy in’ specialist expertise – as and when required.

7.17 A lead officer will be appointed from within the Planning Policy team who has the lead in delivering the Development Brief and managing the project. In order to provide an overall and purposeful steer to the project it is suggested that a dedicated steering group is set up as detailed below.

Setting up a ‘Delivery Group’

7.18 It is recommended that to facilitate the delivery of the development brief that a dedicated steering group is set up to oversee production and the commissioning of workstreams. It will be an inclusive group that will be managed by NNDC officers with the promoters an integral and vital constituent part. The group will include partners from NCC and other core organisations and groups as appropriate (suggested on an ad-hoc basis – when specialist input is required).

7.19 It is important that in any such steering group there is also a Member involvement in the delivery group. Members of the Working Party may wish to nominate a Member to join the delivery group or the Member nomination can be agreed at a later date.

7.20 The Delivery Group will oversee the further detail on all of the workstreams and detailed reports will be presented to the Group to explain the approach or methodology. The Delivery Group will be managed in accordance with general project management principles.

7.21 A project plan and communications plan will detail the reporting schedules and stages where reports will be brought back to the Working Party – either for information/updates or where further decisions may be required.

7.22 Possible composition of the Delivery Group is as follows:

Project Lead:	Senior Planning Policy Officer
NNDC Officers:	Planning Policy Manager, Major Projects & Economic Development
Developers/Promoters:	Larkfleet Homes representatives
Partners:	NCC Highways and NCC Strategic Planning
NNDC Member:	Local Member and/or Portfolio Holder

8. Recommendation

8.1 **That the Working Party agree:**

- 1. NNDC Officers to lead on the delivery of the North Walsham Sustainable Western Extension**
- 2. The setting up of a Delivery Group to oversee and guide the production of the Development Brief.**
- 3. To delegate final decisions as to the project lead and constitution of the Delivery Group to the Planning Policy Manager.**

9. Legal Implications and Risks

9.2 The North Walsham Western Extension is a significant element of the ability to deliver the growth proposals for North Norfolk and it is imperative that the Council can demonstrate deliverability of the proposed allocation when the Local Plan is examined. Failure to adequately provide information on the deliverability could render a Local Plan unsound and result in failure at the independent examination.

10. Financial Implications and Risks

10.1 The initial phase of the production of the Development Brief can be funded through existing budgets. Further work may need to be commissioned and funded – including the need for external funding bids. The funding of the project will be managed by the Delivery Group.