

North Walsham Western Extension: Draft Vision Statement and Communications & Engagement

Summary: This report provides an outline of the communications and engagement approach and the draft 'Vision' for the Western Extension

Recommendations: **To approve the Draft Vision for the Western Extension, and; note the update on the approach to communications and engagement.**

Cabinet Member(s)	Ward(s) affected
All Members	All Wards
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report will provide an outline of the communications and engagement approach and the draft 'Vision' for the Western Extension.

2. Background and update

- 2.1 At the August 2019 Working Party it was resolved that NNDC officers will lead on the delivery of the Development Brief and set up a Delivery Group to oversee the project management of the production of the Brief.
- 2.2 Work is continuing on the initial work for the production of the development brief for the Western Extension. The short/medium term focus of the development brief work is predicated on the results of Highways evidence study which has been jointly commissioned by NNDC and Norfolk County Council. The work is being carried out by NCC's highway consultants – WSP.
- 2.3 The transport study will provide the vital first stage evidence concerning the existing transport conditions in the town, together with base evidence and initial feasibility work regarding the Western Link Road and the potential for a spur over the railway line to avoid the low rail bridges.
- 2.4 This evidence study work has now commenced and is due to report its findings in July when a report will be brought back to Working Party for consideration.
- 2.5 This piece of evidence is key to the delivery of the Western Extension – as it will provide the initial 'in principle' signal that the development can function in highway terms. NNDC officers are fully involved in the management and oversight of this important piece of evidence.
- 2.6 The first meeting of the Development Brief 'Delivery Group' was held in October (attended by 3 local members) and another meeting is likely to be

arranged for late Feb/early March. There will be regular updates (and reports) to Working Party and further local member briefings as appropriate.

- 2.7 Discussions are continuing with all landowners to ensure that they are aware of ongoing work streams and timescales of the project.

3. The Draft Vision Statement

- 3.1 The Vision statement is intended to outline the overarching vision for the Development Brief and will provide the high level direction for how the development brief content will progress.
- 3.2 The vision has to reflect the core principles that are contained in the draft plan and the provisional allocation. It will include an acknowledgement the landowner's expectations whilst aiming to reflect local and community aspirations. The vision has to be ambitious but grounded in deliverability and, therefore, has to fully take account of the commercial realities of delivering complex schemes.
- 3.3 The vision will set the overarching high level principles for development that will be expanded in much more detail in the development brief.
- 3.4 The process of defining the Vision will be iterative over the coming months and ultimately will be brought back to Working Party in early summer for approval.
- 3.5 The Draft Vision document at **Appendix 1** provides an overarching 'Vision Statement', outlines the 'Core Themes' that will run through the Development Brief and details the overarching 'Spatial Objectives' for the new development.
- 3.6 The overarching **Vision Statement** is:

'The Vision is to provide a sustainable urban extension to North Walsham which integrates with, and positively contributes to, the existing community. The new development will promote high quality design and placemaking in the built and landscape environment. It will improve transport networks and enhance economic activity in the town. It will promote social cohesion through the provision of housing that meets a wide range of needs. Development will be planned around a new link road, community facilities, green infrastructure and a network of interconnected streets and open spaces. It will act as a catalyst for growth, helping to successfully integrate the sustainable urban extension into North Walsham.'

- 3.7 The **Core Themes** in the draft Vision are:

1. Delivering high environmental standards.
2. An effective and efficient transport network including new link road.
3. A mix of homes to support a sustainable community.
4. Social and community infrastructure to create sustainable neighbourhoods.
5. Design quality.
6. An integrated masterplan and comprehensive infrastructure delivery strategy.

3.8 The **Spatial Objectives** include:

1. The development will create a series of places with clear, distinctive identity and character within a new landscape setting to reflect the characteristics of North Walsham and the surrounding countryside;
2. The new community will provide mixed communities adding to the opportunities for the residents of to meet their needs at every stage of life;
3. There will be delivery of the western link road, suitable for HGV/LGV traffic that connects Norwich Road to Cromer Road including a link over the railway to connect with the highway network to the east of the railway;
4. Additional pedestrian, cycle and public transport connections will connect to the town and restrictions will be placed on the amount of motor vehicle traffic that can travel along the Aylsham Road and Skepton Road;
5. Residential development should create a network of interconnected streets and spaces that are easy to move around on foot, by bicycle and in the car;
6. A significant area of open space will be provided to the south of the site that creates a new edge of the town; Enhancement of the Weavers Way corridor so it acts as the green access spine through the development including improving biodiversity along the corridor, providing a pedestrian & cycle priority crossing point across the link road; Additional open spaces and access routes will be provided creating a linked network of Green Infrastructure;
7. The focus for community facilities should be between in a broadly central location and provide connections from the wider town.
8. The employment land provision will assist in providing a range of premises that will serve the future employment needs of the town with the highest broadband and communications connectivity standards; It will be situated in a location that enables direct access from the major road network.

3.9 Other Spatial objectives focus on two important areas:

- **Environment and Climate Change**

The development will positively confront the challenges of climate change through the use of sustainable construction materials, methods and designs and through sustainable transport. The development will seek to deliver a carbon neutral development that takes into account the highest standards in construction, energy use, the use of renewable energy and in the design; it will promote carbon neutral development in line with the council's ambitions and policies in the Local Plan.

- **Design Quality**

The development will deliver the highest levels of design quality. It will deliver high quality and exemplar placemaking, and building design standards, with a development character that respects and interprets existing settlement patterns in North Norfolk;

3.10 The full text of the draft Vision can be found at **Appendix 1**.

4. Communications and Engagement

- 4.1 In order to help inform people about the ongoing work on the Development Brief and, involve the public and stakeholders in the process, there will be the development of a communications and engagement strategy. An effective approach to communications and engagement will assist in the delivery of the Development Brief. The approach will be detailed in a 'Communications and Engagement Statement'.
- 4.2 The statement will establish the objectives of the stakeholder engagement throughout the development brief production process and indicate how the involvement of stakeholders will be achieved at each stage of the development brief preparation/adoption process.
- 4.3 The communication element of the statement will focus on how information on the production of the development brief is to be communicated beyond the development brief project team and will consider how a range of communication methods are utilised including:
- Planning Policy web pages and consider whether a discreet webpage would be appropriate
 - Local Plan newsletter – sent out to all on our consultation database.
 - Posters, display boards and printed material for consultation stage
- 4.4 The engagement component of the statement will outline how the public and stakeholders are to be involved in the Western Extension Development Brief process. It will include an engagement timetable that will outline when, and how, we intend to engage with stakeholders including the Town Council and the public.
- 4.5 At this stage it is envisaged that the initial round of engagement with the Town Council is in June/July (once we have a better understanding of the Transport Evidence) and will be followed by a public engagement event.
- 4.6 It is intended to finalise the details of the communications and engagement statement with the 'Delivery Group' at a future meeting.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 **To approve the Draft Vision for the Western Extension, and;**
- 5.2 **To note the update on the approach to communications and engagement.**

6. Legal Implications and Risks

- 6.1 There are no legal implications associated with this element of work in relation to the production of the North Walsham Western Extension Development Brief.

7. Financial Implications and Risks

- 7.1 There are no financial implications or risks. Any costs associated with the delivery of these elements of work are expected to be delivered through existing budgets.