

North Walsham Western Extension: Public Engagement

Summary: This report provides an outline of the upcoming public engagement approach for the Western Extension.

- Recommendations:**
- 1. To approve the approach to public engagement on the emerging principles in the Western Extension Development Brief, and;**
 - 2. That delegated authority is given to the Planning Policy Manager on the final timing and content of the engagement material following consultation with the Chair of the Planning Policy and Built Heritage Working Group and North Walsham Members.**

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

- 1.1 This report provides information on the upcoming public engagement on the emerging themes the Western Extension Development Brief.
- 1.2 Officers are intending to carry out an online engagement with the public and stakeholders in May to present some of the headline principles in order to gather views on the work carried out so far and how the next stage of work could be developed.
- 1.3 Robust evidence and technical work will also inform the production of the Development Brief.

2. Background and update

- 2.1 At the December 2020 Working Party it was resolved that the Western Extension (site NW62A) should be considered as a preferred option for allocation and should be taken forward into the Regulation 19 stage of the Local Plan. The site area for the Western Extension was increased to include more land within the allocation to facilitate the delivery of the Western Link Road and increased provision of Green Infrastructure. Officers are continuing the work to produce a Development Brief.

North Walsham Link Road Feasibility Study

- 2.2 In November 2020 the North Walsham Link Road Feasibility Study was published. This evidence study was jointly commissioned by NNDC and Norfolk County Council.

- 2.3 The study concludes that the existing highway network of North Walsham will come under increased pressure as a result of traffic growth associated with the proposed development. However, the delivery of a Western Link Road (WLR) connecting to the industrial estate is expected to mitigate the traffic impacts that the growth could cause. Additionally, the WLR is expected to solve some of the existing routing issues for HGVs caused by the low bridges in the town.
- 2.4 A subsequent study has been commissioned to provide further detail on the potential link from Cromer Road, via Bradfield Road, to the industrial estate. This study will include an assessment of the works required along Bradfield Road to provide a suitable route, together with an assessment of options for the bridge across the railway.
- 2.5 This material will be published alongside the Engagement Draft of the Brief.

3. Development Brief production

- 3.1 The purpose of the Western Extension Development Brief is to provide a clear framework for the development at planning application stage and set out site-specific principles to guide development proposals. This will help ensure that any development on the site is appropriate and meets the aspirations and needs of the local community, stakeholders and the requirements of the Local Plan.
- 3.2 Preparation of the Development Brief for the Western Extension is a collaborative process between the Council, the landowners and local stakeholders. The Brief will be worked up over multiple iterations, and will ultimately go through a statutory process to be adopted as a 'Supplementary Planning Document' (SPD). Legally, an SPD does not form part of the Local Plan itself and they are not subject to independent examination, but they are material considerations in determining planning applications.
- 3.3 Paragraph 153 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) says, '*Supplementary planning documents should be used where they can help applicants make successful applications or aid infrastructure delivery, and should not be used to add unnecessarily to the financial burdens on development*'. The requirements for producing Supplementary Planning Documents are set out in Regulations 11 to 16 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
- 3.4 After the upcoming informal engagement process, the Brief will be produced in draft form and will be presented to Working Party for endorsement. It will then be subject to a formal, statutory, consultation process. At the current time it is envisaged that this formal consultation (Regulation 13) will take place alongside the 'Regulation 19' publication of the new Local Plan in the summer 2021.

4. The Draft Vision Statement

- 4.1 The draft Vision Statement outlines the overarching vision for the development and will provide the high level direction for how the Development Brief content will progress.

4.2 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.'

4.3 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. To deliver an integrated masterplan and comprehensive infrastructure delivery strategy.

4.4 These core themes will be expanded and will form the main areas for engagement with the general public and stakeholders as detailed below.

5. **Engagement Process**

- 5.1 In order to ensure that we take on board the views of the North Walsham community and stakeholders early in the process, and to continue momentum on the production of the Development Brief, we believe it is important to undertake engagement as soon as possible to inform the next stage of work.
- 5.2 Engagement with the public and stakeholders in a time of social distancing and Covid-19 restrictions provides a challenge to how we are able to communicate and consult with our local community.
- 5.3 The Government's 'Roadmap out of lockdown' provides a four-step roadmap that offers a route back to a more 'normal life' by mid-summer. However, it is still likely that ongoing restrictions will mean that face to face public events, where members of the public are invited to 'drop in', may not be possible or feasible. Delaying the engagement until a point in time where restrictions are fully lifted could jeopardise the production timetable for the Development Brief and the Local Plan.
- 5.4 There is an excellent opportunity to undertake a valuable and worthwhile engagement exercise using engagement methods which don't require meeting in person. We will be using a range of media and communication methods to gather the views and thoughts of the public and stakeholders, including the following:

Website

We will produce a bespoke Western Extension engagement website that will present the emerging information regarding the key themes for the Development Brief. It will provide headline information and ask for comments via a web form.

Stakeholder Virtual Meetings

A number of meetings will be arranged with local stakeholders such as the Town Council, landowners, highways and other interested parties.

Social Media

Key messages and information on how people can get involved in the engagement will be provided through social media channels.

Telephone and video calls

Officers will make themselves available via phone and video calls during the engagement period.

Leaflet and posters

Posters will be distributed on notice boards through-out the town and leaflets will be made available for those who may not have access to the internet. All those who made representations at Regulation 18 stage of Plan preparation will receive written notification.

Engagement timetable

- 5.5 The engagement period will commence in mid-May (exact date to be confirmed) and will run for approximately 4 weeks. As this is a non-statutory part of the process and there will be a degree of flexibility in accepting comments outside the specified engagement period.
- 5.6 Engagement and dialogue will continue with all key stakeholders beyond this specific engagement exercise and draft proposals will be shared at the earliest opportunity.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 **To approve the approach to public engagement on the emerging principles in the Western Extension Development Brief, and;**
- 6.2 **That delegated authority is given to the Planning Policy Manager on the final timing and content of the engagement material following consultation with the Chair of the Planning Policy and Built Heritage Working Group and North Walsham Members.**

7. Legal Implications and Risks

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

8. Financial Implications and Risks

- 8.1 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.