

**Bury St Edmunds Concept Statement**  
**West Bury St Edmunds Concept Statement**  
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**Prepared by:**

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## **1. West Bury St Edmunds Concept Statement**

This concept statement has been prepared to provide the parameters and framework for the development of the West Bury St Edmunds strategic site as defined in Policy BV5. Its purpose is to inform the preparation of more detailed development proposals for the site within the context of current and emerging national and local planning policies and local environmental and infrastructure constraints.

1.1. The Borough Council expects that the issues raised in this concept statement will be given full consideration in the masterplan which will be developed for this site at a later date and prior to any planning applications for this site being determined.

1.2. This concept statement has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the council's adopted protocol for the preparation of concept statements and the emerging policies relating to the preparation of concept statements and masterplans in the Joint Development Management Policies Submission Document (October 2012). The concept statement will inform the preparation of a masterplan for the area.

1.3. Policy CS11 of the St Edmundsbury Core Strategy (December 2010) identifies the area to the West of Bury St Edmunds for development that:

- maintains the identity and segregation of Westley;
- provides new high quality public open space and recreation facilities between the development and Westley;
- provides traffic relief for Westley in the form of a relief road to the east of the village;
- delivers around 450 homes of mixed tenure and size, including affordable homes;
- makes provision for the long term development of a sub-regional health campus (relocation of the West Suffolk Hospital) of landmark buildings set within high quality landscapes;
- delivers additional education, community and leisure facilities to meet the needs of this development and is located in a way that can achieve positive integration with the wider area;
- provides improved public transport, foot and cycle links to the town centre and other locally significant leisure, employment and service destinations.

1.4. The policy notes that the development is likely to commence early in the medium term and the actual amount of development will be determined by environmental and infrastructure capacity considerations and the preparation and adoption of a detailed masterplan in which the community and other stakeholders have been fully engaged.

1.5. The Core Strategy neither defined the boundary, nor the extent of the site, which has been achieved in the preparation of this Concept Statement and the draft Bury St Edmunds Vision 2031 local plan document. In doing so, careful regard has been paid especially to:

- a. ensuring the segregation and distinctiveness of Westley is maintained as a result of the development;
- b. ensuring that the buffer between the development and Westley is attractive and effective;
- c. links to the Westley estate to enable support of existing facilities;
- d. integration of Westley middle school site and any future uses;
- e. the health campus is accessible by a range of modes of travel.

## **Policy Context**

1.6. It is not the purpose of the Concept Statement to repeat all relevant planning policies published elsewhere. However, in preparing this document, the following local policies are of particular relevance.

1.7. Core Strategy (December 2010):

- Policy CS2 – Sustainable Development
- Policy CS3 – Design and Local Distinctiveness
- Policy CS5 – Affordable Housing
- Policy CS7 – Sustainable Transport
- Policy CS11 – Bury St Edmunds Strategic Growth
- Policy CS14 – Community infrastructure capacity and tariffs

1.8. Replacement St Edmundsbury Borough Local Plan (2006)

- Policy DS4 – Masterplans
- Policy H5 – Mix of housing
- Policy L4 – Standards of Open Space and Recreation Provision
- Policy L7 – Public Rights of Way
- Policy T1 – Transport Assessments
- Policy T2 – Hierarchical Approach to Site Access
- Policy T5 – Parking standards
- Policy T8 – Cycling and Pedestrian Strategies
- Policy NE2 – Protected Species
- Policy NE3 – Protection of the Landscape
- Policy IM1 – Developer Contributions

1.9. Submission Draft Joint Development Management Policies Local Plan

- Policy DM2 – Creating Places – Development Principles and Local Distinctiveness
- Policy DM3 – Masterplans
- Policy DM6 – Flooding and Sustainable drainage
- Policy DM7 – Sustainable Design and Construction

- Policy DM8 – Improving Energy Efficiency and Reducing Carbon Dioxide Emissions
- Policy DM13 – Mitigation, Enhancement, Management and Monitoring of Biodiversity
- Policy DM14 – Landscape Features
- Policy DM21 - Archaeology
- Policy DM23 – Residential
- Policy DM36 – Protection of Local Centres
- Policy DM41 – Community Facilities and Services
- Policy DM45 – Transport Assessments and Travel Plans
- Policy DM46 – Parking Standards

## **Landscape Context**

1.10. The site is located on the western edge of Bury St Edmunds, bound by Newmarket Road (A1302) and the Ipswich to Cambridge railway line to the north and Westley Road to the south. The eastern side of the site adjoins the western urban edge of Bury St Edmunds (known as the Westley Estate), and the western edge adjoins the village of Westley. Westley village is served by a road which runs in a north south direction adjoining the site, connecting the A1302 and the A14 at junction 42 to the north with Westley Road and Westley Lane to the south which connect with the A143 at Horringer.

1.11. The site lies predominantly within the plateau estate farmlands as defined within the Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment, but is also partly within the undulating estate farmlands at its southern end. Characteristics of these areas are:

- large scale rectilinear field pattern;
- flat landscape of light loams and sandy soils (plateau estate);
- undulating arable landscape (undulating estate); and
- network of tree belts and coverts.

1.12. The northern part of the site is typical of the plateau estate farmland, being a flat landscape containing a rectilinear field pattern with hedges and tree belts. The southern part of the site, however, sits on the edge of the Linnet valley and falls away to the south.

## **Constraints and Opportunities**

1.13. The varying topography together with natural landscape features, provides a strong framework to assist in guiding the form of the development. This will assist in providing a strong visual structure as well as adding benefit through providing the site with green infrastructure opportunities.

1.14. The site has attractive long distance views over arable farmland

to the south designated as a Special Landscape Area. However, long views out from the site mean that the site itself, is visible from a wide area with potential to have a significant impact upon the surrounding landscape, unless compensatory measures are put in place as part of the development.

1.15. The site has a continuous open boundary with the urban edge of Bury St Edmunds which should assist in integrating development. However, much of this boundary is formed by the rear gardens of houses fronting Oliver Road and opportunities for access to permeate between the two areas is limited. New connections will be required for footpath and cycle access, but not for vehicular access. An existing footpath and part cycleway adjacent to Westley Middle school has potential for upgrading to a full footpath/cycleway.

1.16. The eastern part of the site is within 400 metres of existing community facilities located at Oliver and Ridley Road.

1.17. The setting and identity of the village of Westley must be protected to avoid coalescence with the town. This can be achieved through the creation of an effective green buffer.

1.18. The need to reserve a site to accommodate a future sub-regional health campus for West Suffolk requires careful consideration. However, its early identification provides an opportunity to integrate the site with its surroundings through the early provision and establishment of green infrastructure.

1.19. The construction of the relief road connecting Westley Road with Newmarket road presents an opportunity to divert through traffic from Westley.

## **Community engagement**

1.20. The community consultation was carried out by the developer and included a two day public exhibition which identified local assets and issues which were then tested and explored through a workshop session. The key themes which emerged from the exhibition were a desire for a buffer zone to keep Westley separate from Bury St Edmunds, ensuring open space is retained near to Oliver Road and a desire for a mixture of onsite and offsite community facilities. Other key issues arising from the consultation include:

- new and improved bus services to the new neighbourhood and Westley;
- cycleways connecting Westley to Bury St Edmunds;
- the whole local road infrastructure needs improving
- any new relief road must accommodate HGVs;
- significant permanent buffer needed between Westley and new development;

- Westley must retain village status;
- access to the hospital should be from Newmarket Road; and
- HGVs should be restricted from Oliver Road

## **Place making**

1.21. The vision for the growth area is to deliver a sustainable and vibrant new community, set within an attractive environment with a sensitive urban edge which respects the adjoining neighbourhoods and the identity and setting of Westley village.

1.22. It will provide a modern, high quality, sustainable, energy efficient development which integrates with the existing development to the east and provides an attractive urban edge to Bury St Edmunds.

1.23. Within St Edmundsbury borough there are several nature conservation sites of international importance, one of which is the Breckland Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area for Conservation (SAC). The Brecks area supports the Stone Curlew, Woodlark and Nightjar species and as an area this has been given additional protection from the potential impact of future development through Policy CS2 of the Core Strategy. Although the SPA does not fall within the area covered by the Bury St Edmunds Vision document, impact on the SPA, in terms of increased recreational pressure resulting from the strategic growth, will need to be carefully considered in appraising the proposals for development on the site. A Habitat Regulations (Screening) Assessment of the strategic site, as part of the Bury St Edmunds Vision 2031 document process, has concluded that a small increase in visitors to Breckland SPA is likely to be concentrated in areas closer to Bury St Edmunds, although not in sufficient extra numbers to cause any harm to the SPA.

1.24. That part of the site which sits on the plateau above the ridge of the south facing river valley has the greatest impact upon long distance views from the south. This area should be kept clear of built development and offers an opportunity for significant landscape enhancement through the provision of parkland which would reinforce the visual separation between Bury St Edmunds and Westley. The masterplan should fully explore opportunities for varied tree planting in this area in the form of coverts, tree belts and specimen trees. These should be extended into the development to create place making features and movement connections, together with the creation of interconnected habitats to encourage both flora and fauna within the built environment.

1.25. Consideration will need to be given to the incorporation of sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) from the outset. This can incorporate features such as rainwater capture and integrated attenuation systems.

1.26. In accordance with the principle of walkable communities identified in the Bury St Edmunds Vision 2031, residential development is located within the eastern part of the site within 400m of the existing community facilities located at Oliver Road and Ridley Road. The nearest schools are located in Oliver Road and Greene Road. Although within easy reach of existing facilities, the proposed development will be required to contribute to enhancement of those services to meet the additional demands created.

1.27. The masterplan should address how opportunities will be created to achieve the establishment of local community governance groups and other community runs initiatives, so that individuals feel able to get involved in managing the community they live in.

1.28. In order to achieve a balanced community, the new neighbourhoods will provide a mix of housing types and sizes, including affordable housing (30%), general market housing, executive housing and self build housing. Provision also needs to be made to meet the accommodation needs of the older generation.

1.29. The overall density of development will vary through the development, being lower at the margins of the site and in particular, the south eastern part of the site most prominent from views from the south.

1.30. Opportunities to reduce short trips by car will be an important factor in measuring the environmental sustainability of the development. Movement through the site will be facilitated by a network of footpaths and cycleways, which will connect with the existing system at Newmarket Road and Oliver Road which provide access to the town centre. In addition, an enhanced footpath/cycle link should be provided to the village of Westley through the area of parkland/open space.

1.31. Policy CS11 of the adopted Core Strategy requires traffic relief for Westley through the delivery of a relief road to the east of the village in the medium term. This road will connect Newmarket road to the north with Westley lane to the south and will provide direct access to the development. The masterplan will need to address the full nature and route of this road, together with its delivery and appropriate traffic mitigation measures in Westley, ranging from traffic calming, to an outright ban on through traffic by the closure of Fornham Lane at one point.

1.32. The north west portion of the site is identified for the provision of a Sub-Regional Health Campus. Although this facility is unlikely to be required until the latter part of the plan period, the masterplan will need to address how it will be integrated with the rest of the development site and Westley village. This will include consideration of the landscape infrastructure and its potential for delivery in advance of the health campus. Consideration will also need to be given to a movement strategy for the health campus.

