

Bury St Edmunds Concept Statement
South-east Bury St Edmunds Concept Statement
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1. South-east Bury St Edmunds Concept Statement

This concept statement has been prepared to provide the parameters and framework for the development of the South-east Bury St Edmunds strategic site as defined in Policy BV7. 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 south east of Bury St Edmunds for development that:

- positively uses the framework for new development provided by the existing natural environment and character of the area, including maintaining significantly important open spaces that provide the setting of the historic centre;
- makes a positive contribution to reducing the potential for flooding both in the area and downstream in the Lark Valley;
- contributes to reducing congestion at appropriate junctions on the A14 in Bury St Edmunds;
- delivers a relief road that reduces levels of through traffic using the Rougham Road and Sicklesmere Road;
- provides improved public transport, foot and cycle links to the town centre and north towards the A14 and strategic employment sites;
- provides new high quality strategic public open space and recreation facilities;
- 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;
- delivers around 1250 homes of mixed tenure and size, including affordable homes.

1.4. The policy notes that the development is likely to commence in the latter part of the plan period 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. An overall neighbourhood of approximately 1250 new homes.
- b. Defining two distinct walkable neighbourhoods connected by a public green.
- c. A relief road which addresses congestion along A1302 / A134 (Rougham Road / Sicklesmere Road) and provides a strategic link into the new development.
- d. A generous public central green which functions as a neighbourhood centre whilst enhancing visual access to the landscape.
- e. A primary school with adjacent playing fields at the back of the block.
- f. A landscape-led plan with aspirations for drawing the surrounding landscape into the masterplan and creating an amenity for local people.
- g. Walkable neighbourhoods which consist of recognisable streets and paths throughout the development and which connect strategically to the town centre and out into the surrounding countryside.
- h. A mixed use community with a mix of retail, employment and community facilities.
- i. A footpath and cycle route along the river corridor straight to the town centre and links to the existing pedestrian and cycle network into the surrounding countryside.
- j. Creating newly located garden allotments and food producing spaces.
- k. Sports fields and playing fields making use of the flood plains.
- l. Making use of the River Lark by providing access and a local amenity.
- m. Relocation of the large lorry park.
- n. Currently the household recycling site is not seen as contributing negatively to the site and is not proposed to be removed in the early stages.
- o. Two new bus stops and a new bus route through both neighbourhoods.
- p. Travel planning developed in order to encourage other non-car modes of transportation.
- q. Creating the potential for links to the eastern side of Moreton Hall and the business park, avoiding the A14 junction.

- r. Creating a green buffer to the south of the site in order to prevent further housing expansion into the special landscape ribbon thereby discourages sprawl.
- s. Incorporating flood attenuation south-east of the disused railway line.

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 area which comprises two distinct parcels of land, is located on the south eastern side of Bury St Edmunds broadly between Sicklesmere Road (A134) to the south west and the A14 to the north east. The northern boundary is formed by Rougham Hill and Rushbrooke Lane, which includes a number of properties runs through the centre of the site.

1.11. The site lies within the plateau estate farmlands as defined in the Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment. Characteristics of these areas which are evident in the locality are:

- flat landscape of light loams and sandy soils;
- large scale rectilinear field pattern;
- network of tree belts and coverts
- 18th – 19th & 20th century landscape parks

1.12. The site forms part of the shallow valley of the River Lark, which both crosses the site and forms part of the northern and southern boundaries of each of the two parcels of land. The northern area rises gently to the north east from the river with established hedgerows. Beyond the site to the east are significant tree belts and coverts. The southern portion of the site is separated from the northern area by the river and an embankment carrying a former railway. This area includes flood plains along its northern edge, with wetland vegetation and habitats. To the south of this, the land is formed by a single large open arable field.

1.13. The northern part of the site is crossed by high voltage electricity cables supported by pylons.

Constraints and Opportunities

1.14. The varying topography with the river and valley, together with natural and man-made landscape features, provides a strong framework to assist in guiding the form of development. This will assist in providing a strong visual structure as well as adding benefit through providing the site and the land beyond, with green infrastructure opportunities.

1.15. The site has long distance views over arable farmland and parkland to the south. This area, which extends into the site is 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.

1.16. The northern part of the northern portion of the site, has views towards the historic core of Bury St Edmunds across open meadows, with the cathedral forming a focal point. This provides a strong link with the urban fabric of Bury St Edmunds.

1.17. The site is separated from the existing urban edge of Bury St Edmunds by the river. Although this could present difficulties in achieving integration with existing communities, the river could provide an opportunity to create footpath and cycle links through the site and connecting with the town and the countryside beyond.

1.18. The area around Rougham Hill includes a household waste recycling centre and a lorry park. The lorry park is located within the boundaries of the site. The integration of the household waste site will require careful consideration and a suitable new location will be required for the lorry park.

1.19. The high voltage electricity cables which cross the site currently detract from the appearance and character of the landscape. The relocation of these cables underground would result in a significant improvement to the locality.

1.20. The site is located at the furthest point from the waste water treatment works located at Fornham St Martin. The existing sewerage network through the centre of Bury St Edmunds will not accommodate significant additional flows. Alternative sewerage network provision will be required to link the site with the treatment works.

1.21. A relief road is required between Rougham Road to the north and Sicklesmere Road to the south. The purpose of this road is not intended to bypass the existing roads, but to provide an alternative relief route for traffic wishing to access the A14 from the A134, which currently converges on Southgate Green roundabout, sharing the route with traffic wishing to access Bury St Edmunds, the West Suffolk Hospital and the A143 to Haverhill.

Community engagement

1.22. The community consultation events were carried out by The Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment on behalf of the developers which included two public meetings which included facilitated exercises to identify and map positive and negative issues and opportunities. This was followed by two Enquiry by Design Workshops. These identified five key issues as follows:

- landscape and ecology;
- transport and movement;
- employment;
- community facilities; and
- development and design.

1.23. Detailed consideration was given to a range of issues arising under each of the above headings.

Place making

1.24. The vision for the growth area is to create an attractive, cohesive and well-balanced community that is influenced by the surrounding high quality natural environment, which sits sympathetically around the existing properties on Rushbrooke Lane.

1.25. It will provide a modern, high quality, sustainable, energy efficient community where development will be informed by the shape of the landscape and the urban form of Bury St Edmunds, and provide an attractive urban extension to the town.

1.26. 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.

1.27. Mature trees and tree belts will be retained and provide the opportunity for linear parks, public open space and allotments, informing the layout and creating place making features and movement connections, together with the creation of interconnected habitats to encourage both flora and fauna within the built environment. These areas also provide opportunities for informal play shaping throughout the site.

1.28. The existence of the river through the site should be capitalised on to provide a continuous riverside walk, providing a green corridor linking a series of open spaces, tree belts and plantations, with potential to enhance the biodiversity of the area. These open spaces should link in with existing open space and river corridor beyond the site, in accordance with the Green Infrastructure Strategy.

1.29. Consideration needs 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.

1.30. In accordance with the principle of walkable communities identified in Bury St Edmunds Vision 2031, a community hub is identified. This should provide a focus for the new community and activities such as shops, community facilities, primary school and healthcare facilities. It would also provide a focus for any employment uses. The design of the community hub should allow flexibility of use and help engender community interaction and strong sense of place. Given the distances involved, a second hub may need to be considered, supported by further employment opportunities towards the southern end of the site.

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

1.32. 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 and executive housing. Provision also needs to be made to meet the accommodation needs of the older generation. The masterplan should make provision for self build properties and opportunities for community build projects should be explored together with opportunities for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation should a need be identified at the time of the development.

1.33. Successful neighbourhoods have a sense of place that helps residents feel a sense of identity. The separation of this site from the existing urban edge of Bury St Edmunds by the river, but close affinity with the historic core through visual and footpath links, coupled with the size of the site, provides an opportunity for the creation of a variety of distinctive character areas to be created, making it possible for people to recognise different parts of the development and know where they are. This can be assisted through high quality urban design, the use of public art and the creation of high quality public realm. However, there is a need to balance the variety of different parts with a coherence of character for the place as a whole, particularly where the development will be built out in phases.

1.34. The overall density of the site will be higher close to the community hub(s) and lower at the margins of the site, particularly to the east and west. The area at the extreme margin to the north at the highest part of the site provides an opportunity to construct homes within a landscape setting.

1.35. 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 through to the town centre. Opportunities to provide a footpath/cycleway link to the existing bridleway crossing of the A14 to Suffolk Business Park should be fully explored, to provide a direct connection to the proposed secondary school at Moreton Hall. This could also serve to provide improved cycle links to the village of Rougham. The layout of the site should facilitate bus movement and accessibility. The focus will be on encouraging the use of public transport, cycleways and footpaths within the town and reducing dependence on cars. This may require appropriate contributions towards off-site improvements to improving the links identified above.

1.36. The principal vehicular access points will be from the Rougham Road to the north and Sicklesmere Road to the south, connected via a spine road which will allow access for cars and buses. This spine road may double as the relief road and will provide access to the community hubs and connected network of streets. That part of Rushbrooke Lane serving the existing properties will be retained and by-passed by the spine road.

1.37. The proximity of Nowton Park to the south west of the site will provide access to a significant informal parkland recreation facility. However, provision will be required for sports fields and recreation facilities within the site, which could be sited within the flood plain accessible from the community hub.

