

Bury St Edmunds Concept Statement
North-west Bury St Edmunds Concept Statement

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Prepared by:

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1. North-west Bury St Edmunds Concept Statement

1.1. This concept statement has been prepared to provide the parameters and framework for the development of the North-west Bury St Edmunds strategic site as defined in Policy BV3. 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.

1.2. 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.

1.3. 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.

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

- maintains the identity and segregation of Fornham All Saints;
- provides new high quality strategic public open space and recreation facilities between the development and Fornham All Saints;
- provides traffic relief for Fornham All Saints in the form of a relief road between the A1101 south east of the village and the B1106 to the south;
- delivers around 900 homes of mixed tenure and size, including affordable homes;
- provides opportunities for B1 use class local employment;
- 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; and
- 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 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. achieving integration of the development into existing residential areas on Mildenhall Road / Howard estate;
- b. determining the nature of the buffer between the development area and Fornham All Saints village;
- c. providing direct off road footpath/cycle links to Fornham All Saints.

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 north-western edge of Bury St Edmunds, bound by the Mildenhall Road (A1011) to the north east, the village of Fornham All Saints and Tut Hill (B1106) to the north-west, Bury St Edmunds Golf Club to the south-west and the existing urban edge to the south-east. The village of Fornham All Saints is clearly visible from most parts of the site.

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

- large scale rectilinear field pattern;
- flat landscape of light loams and sandy soils;
- network of tree belts and coverts.

1.12. The site forms part of the shallow valley of the River Lark, which is located to the north-east. The land rises gently from the north-east frontage to the south west with a plateau in the southern part. A linear covert adjoins the plateau and lines of hedgerow trees indicate former field boundaries. The north-eastern boundary, fronting Mildenhall Road is marked by mature trees predominantly of oak and ash.

Constraints and Opportunities

1.13. The varying topography with subtle ridgelines and valleys, together with the natural landscape features, provide 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 with green infrastructure opportunities.

1.14. The site has attractive long distance views over arable farmland, with views of key landmarks both within the town and in surrounding villages. 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 is separated from the exiting urban edge of Bury St Edmunds by an established tree belt. This could present difficulties in achieving integration of the new development with the existing and access to local services. New connections will be required for footpath and cycle access, together with a connecting bus route.

1.16. The setting and identity of the village of Fornham All Saints needs to be protected to avoid coalescence with the town. This can be provided through the creation of an effective green buffer, although the nature of that buffer will require careful treatment to ensure a balance between protecting the identity and integrity of the village and establishing a new neighbourhood for the town.

1.17. The construction of the relief road connecting Mildenhall Road to Tut Hill presents opportunities to divert traffic from Fornham All Saints.

Community engagement

1.18. The community consultation carried out by the developer, including stakeholder workshops, were well attended and demonstrated a strong desire to protect the identity and integrity of Fornham All Saints and integrate with the Howard and Mildenhall Estates. Other key issues arising from the consultation include:

- open land between the development and Fornham All Saints should be maintained. The majority of residents in the village expressed the view that this land should be retained as agricultural land;
- residents of Mildenhall and Howard estates should have direct access to significant new areas of public open space;
- the topography and ridgelines should be used to minimise the visual impact of the relief road;
- the existing tree belts should be retained and enhanced;
- connections to Mildenhall and Howard estates should be bus, pedestrian and cycle only;
- the priority of Tut Hill should be downgraded or closed after the relief road is built;
- green walking and cycling routes should be created
- the local centre should be located close to, but not on, the relief road;
- green radial route for Bury St Edmunds should be proposed as part of the green infrastructure network; and
- post offices, doctors' surgeries and dentists are currently lacking in the area. These facilities should be considered in the local centre.

Place making

1.19. The vision for the growth area is to deliver a fully integrated

new community with a strong sense of local identity, a vibrant local centre, an environment that encourages a healthy lifestyle and a sensitive urban edge that respects the setting of Fornham All Saints and the existing adjoining neighbourhoods.

1.20. 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.

1.21. It will provide a modern, high quality, sustainable, energy efficient community where development areas will be informed by the shape of the landscape and the urban form of Bury St Edmunds and surrounding villages.

1.22. 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.

1.23. 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.

1.24. 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. It is acknowledged that at the time of writing, the future structure of the education system in Bury St Edmunds is yet to be determined and alternative opportunities for primary school provision may arise. However, until such decisions have been made, it is necessary to make provision within the site.

1.25. In addition to the community hub identified above, the southern end of the site falls within 400m walking distance of existing facilities at St Olaves Precinct. Every opportunity should be taken to improve pedestrian and cycle links with that existing facility.

1.26. 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.

1.27. 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.

1.28. 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 tree belt, 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.

1.29. The overall density of the development will be higher close to the community hub and lower at the margins of the site, particularly to the south and west. The areas at the extreme margins adjoining the countryside and golf course provide an opportunity to construct homes within a landscape setting.

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 through to the Howard and Mildenhall estates and the town centre. Development of the site also presents opportunities to improve footpath and cycle links to Fornham All Saints. The layout of the site should facilitate bus movement, with a bus link between the site and the Howard estate. Notwithstanding the future of Howard Middle School, opportunities should be fully explored in the preparation of the masterplan, to achieve a bus connection through the site. General vehicular access between the site and the Howard and Mildenhall estates will not be permitted. 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 links with the town centre, upper schools and the allocated hospital site.

1.31. A relief road is required between the A1101 and Tut Hill which will also provide the vehicular access points to the development. The provision of this road will also present opportunities for the introduction of traffic mitigation measures in the village of Fornham All Saints, particularly along Tut Hill. This could take the form of traffic management ranging from traffic calming measures through to an outright ban on through traffic by closure of Tut Hill at one point. The most appropriate solution will be informed through consultation with the local community and the design of the relief road should not preclude any of these options being achieved.

1.32. The green buffer between the development area and the village of Fornham All Saints has a dual role, being the separation between the urban edge of Bury St Edmunds and the village, but also providing a new and important area of open space in a part of the town which has been identified as being deficient in access to parkland (St Edmundsbury annual Parks and Open Space Audit (December 2012)). The masterplan will need to address how this dual role will be best achieved and the measures which will be required to ensure that the relief road does not act as a barrier to access.

1.33. Development in the north eastern part of the site will need to take account of the unrestricted commercial activities contained within the Northern Way Industrial Estate. These have potential to give rise to disturbance and noise. This could be addressed by utilising the adjoining land for recreation purposes incorporating formal play provision or other non-noise sensitive forms of development, including commercial development.

