



Council
27th January 2020

Rushden East Sustainable Urban Extension Draft Masterplan Framework Document

Purpose of report

Council's approval is sought to issue the draft Rushden East Sustainable Urban Extension Masterplan Framework Document for public and stakeholder consultation between 10th February 2020 and 23rd March 2020.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The concept of creating a new mixed-use Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE) for around 2,500 new homes, employment uses, and a full range of community uses to the east of the A6 at Rushden and Higham Ferrers is established by Policy 33 of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (NNJCS).
- 1.2 The NNJCS was adopted in July 2016 and, since then, the council has been working closely with stakeholders to bring forward a more detailed landscape and place-making focused draft Rushden East SUE Masterplan Framework Document, which develops the planning principles and economic, environmental and social requirements set out in NNJCS Policy 33.
- 1.3 The council's Rushden East Project Board (REPB) has co-ordinated the masterplanning process. The REPB's membership includes district, county, and town councillors from Rushden and Higham Ferrers. The REPB is chaired by the Leader of the Council, and the Deputy Leader is the deputy chair, emphasising the fact that the successful planning and delivery of the Rushden East SUE is a corporate priority.
- 1.4 The indicative development area for the SUE is identified in NNJCS Policy 33. The area is largely 'green-field' agricultural land which is in a range of ownerships. Much, but not all, of the potential development land is under the control of a main developer consortium comprising the Duchy of Lancaster, Barratts, Taylor Wimpey, and Camland / Bowbridge Homes. Other interested parties control important potential development land within the indicative SUE development area.
- 1.5 The council has engaged with the main developer consortium and others in the preparation of the draft Masterplan Framework Document. The main developer consortium has prepared its own masterplan covering the land under its control, and it was subject to a public consultation in summer 2019. Whilst this has been a significant and detailed piece of work, the council needs its own Masterplan Development Framework to guide all aspects of the planning and development process and the decision-making process on forthcoming planning applications.
- 1.6 The vision and objectives that underpin the draft Masterplan Framework Document were established in the Rushden East Vision Statement (REVS) that was approved by Council at its meeting on 17 July 2017.

1.7 The main developer consortium has indicated that it intends to submit a hybrid planning application for the land under its control in Spring 2020. This is likely to be close to the time that the Council approves the final version of the Masterplan Development Framework, following the public and stakeholder consultation process. It is understood that the hybrid planning application will comprise an outline planning application for the full area under the consortium's control, along with detailed applications for the first phase of development. Section 106 Planning Obligations will be negotiated as part of the planning application process.

2.0 Overview of the Draft Rushden East Sustainable Urban Extension Masterplan Framework Document

2.1 The draft Masterplan Development Framework document can be viewed here <https://www.east-northamptonshire.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/1031/council>

2.2 The draft Masterplan Development Framework identifies the key principles that developers will need to address when preparing planning applications for the Rushden East SUE. These include:

- The form and disposition of development across the area.
- Environmental factors, including the scale and type of green infrastructure that needs to be incorporated.
- Accessibility and movement for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists, including the permeability of the development itself and also how it integrates with the existing urban areas of Rushden and Higham Ferrers.
- The character of housing that should be provided within the development.
- The type and location of employment generating uses that should be provided to create a sustainable mixed-use development.
- The locations of schools (2 x primary schools and space for 1 x secondary schools), community facilities, and neighbourhood centres including shops to serve the development.
- Energy and sustainability factors to be incorporated into the design of the SUE and the homes and facilities provided within it.
- The urban form and character of the development.
- A Delivery Strategy that identifies the practical matters to be addressed to secure the successful delivery of all aspects of the SUE.
- Statements that clearly set out the Council's expectations on how the SUE complies with the government's Garden Communities programme.
- The principles that underpin ongoing consultation and community engagement on future planning applications.

2.3 The council procured the services of LDA Design, one of the UK's leading masterplanning consultancies, to assist officers and the members of the REPB to prepare the draft Masterplan Development Framework. LDA Design engaged with a range of stakeholders, including the main developer consortium, in the preparation of the document.

2.4 The draft Masterplan Development Framework covers a range of complex and interrelated planning and development factors. In particular, it seeks to address three key issues:

- Integration with Rushden and Higham Ferrers
- Employment development
- Phasing and future development

Integration with Rushden and Higham Ferrers

- 2.5 It is important to secure practical ways to ensure the integration of the SUE with the existing urban areas of Rushden and Higham Ferrers. The main barrier to this is the presence of the A6 Liberty Way bypass which divides the SUE area from the existing urban areas.
- 2.5 The draft Masterplan Development Framework identifies ways of providing improved vehicular, pedestrian and cycle connections at the two existing roundabouts at John Clark Way and Newton Road, and potentially at a new point in the vicinity of Alexandra Road and Haydon Road.
- 2.6 The council and the main developer consortium have been engaged with Northamptonshire County Council as Local Highways Authority to identify potential mechanisms that would 'calm' the traffic on the A6 and provide an attractive environment to enable ease of pedestrian and cyclists movements to and from the town – and especially through to the town centres. The detailed work on these matters will be handled through the forthcoming planning applications.

Employment development

- 2.7 The draft Masterplan Development Framework identifies a significant area for new employment development to the north of the SUE area, accessed from the A6. Smaller areas are identified in and around the locations of the neighbourhood centres, sitting alongside other appropriate uses.
- 2.8 The council is seeking to diversify the district's employment offer, especially in the southern part of the district. To do this it aims to focus economic development activities on bringing in new types of employers. With that in mind, the draft Masterplan Development Framework identifies the large employment area to the north of the SUE as a 'Catalyst for enterprise and employment'. Within that area, it is intended that new large-scale B8 warehousing developments will be resisted and other forms of employment development will be encouraged.

Phasing and future development

- 2.9 The draft Masterplan Development Framework identifies a 'two neighbourhood' approach to the development of the SUE. The indicative boundary zone between the southern and northern neighbourhoods is the area of land in multiple ownerships centred on Alexandra Road.
- 2.10 This is a practical measure that is designed to enable development in the southern part of the SUE to proceed (subject to planning permission) as early as possible whilst allowing more time for the detailed planning proposals for the northern part of the SUE to evolve in discussion with the various stakeholders in that area.
- 2.11 The reason for this is that the proposals by the main developer consortium for the 'southern neighbourhood' are well developed, but proposals for the 'northern neighbourhood' require more fundamental work to be done.
- 2.12 It is anticipated, therefore, that the 'southern neighbourhood' would be where the first phases of development would take place, with the development in the 'northern neighbourhood' taking place when the more fundamental issues have been resolved.

- 2.13 It is important to note that the Rushden East SUE will be developed over a long period, beyond the 2031 plan period of the NNJCS. The draft Masterplan Development Framework anticipates the potential for future expansion of the SUE by identifying access points into land that is not included in the current document. Such land may be proposed for development through the statutory planning process to meet future housing requirements, and it is important to 'future-proof' accessibility to such areas.

3.0 Consultation processes

- 3.1 The draft Masterplan Development Framework will be subject to a public and stakeholder consultation for a period of six weeks from 10th February 2020 and 23rd March 2020.
- 3.2 The consultation process will include meetings with Rushden and Higham Ferrers Town Councils, and a public exhibition (venue to be confirmed). All consultation materials will be accessible via the East Northamptonshire Council website, and copies of the draft Masterplan Development Framework document will be deposited at appropriate libraries and public places.
- 3.3 At the conclusion of the consultation, all representations will be assessed and suitable amendments to the document will be considered by officers reporting to the REPB. The finalised Masterplan Development Framework will be brought back to Council for approval at the first appropriate Council meeting following the May 2020 elections.

4.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

- 4.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and all equality and diversity implications are neutral. Neither a positive nor a negative impact has been identified. The initial Equality Impact Assessment can be accessed as a background document.

5.0 Privacy Impact Implications

- 5.1 All personal data collected as part of the consultation process will be handled in accordance with the council's responsibilities under the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and its own policies on privacy through the collection of use of information or through other monitoring.

6.0 Health Impact Assessments

- 6.1 A Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is not required at this stage. The purpose of the Rushden East SUE masterplanning process is to ensure from the outset that a high quality and sustainable development is achieved. The masterplanning process has incorporated extensive areas of accessible green infrastructure and a range of community facilities into the SUE and these, along with a range of new community facilities, should create a good environment for the mental and physical wellbeing of the community that establishes when the SUE is constructed. HIAs will be prepared when the planning applications are considered at Planning Management Committee.

7.0 Legal Implications

- 7.1 There are no legal implications arising from the proposed consultation process.

8.0 Risk Management

8.1 There are no significant risks arising from the proposed recommendations in this report. All public consultation events will be subject to a Risk Assessment and relevant actions and mitigations will be put in place to manage risks effectively.

9.0 Resource and Financial Implications

9.1 There are no additional resource or financial implications arising from the proposed consultation process. Funding for the masterplanning process is provided through the government's Garden Communities programme managed by the North Northamptonshire Joint Planning and Delivery Unit. Staff resources to manage and support the consultation process are available from the Planning Services team.

10.0 Constitutional Implications

10.1 There are no constitutional implications related to this report. The Rushden East SUE masterplanning project is a corporate priority.

11.0 Implications for our Customers

11.1 The consultation process will be managed by the council's Planning Services team. There may be increased contact with the Customer Services team if residents or stakeholders have enquiries about anything related to the consultation process. However, the publicity for the consultation process will clearly signpost all relevant contact details and the response mechanisms that will be led by Planning Services, working closely with the council's Communications team. The council's website will be one of the key tools used to manage the consultation process.

12.0 Corporate Outcomes

12.1 The Corporate Outcomes are:

- Good Quality of Life – the Rushden East Masterplan is designed to ensure that future residents and businesses enjoy a high quality of life in a major new residential and mixed use area planned to meet Garden Communities principles.
- High Quality Service Delivery – the Rushden East Masterplan will guide the consideration of planning applications and the decision-making processes of the Planning Management Committee.
- Knowledge of Customers and Communities – the consultation process will enable the council to identify and address the views of residents and stakeholders on the proposals for the Rushden East SUE.

13.0 Recommendation

13.1 The Committee is recommended to

- (1) Approve the draft Rushden East Sustainable Urban Extension Masterplan Framework Document for public and stakeholder consultation between 10th February 2020 and 23rd March 2020.

(Reason: To enable the council to seek views on the planning of the Rushden East SUE, which is a corporate priority)

Legal	Power: Town and Country Planning legislation				
	Other considerations: N/A				
Background Papers: Rushden East Vision Statement Equality Impact Assessment					
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Date: 8 th January 2020					
CFO		MO		CX	