

# Report to the Cabinet

**Report reference:** C-028-2023/24

**Date of meeting:** 13 November 2023



**Epping Forest  
District Council**

**Portfolio:** Planning & Sustainability – Cllr. Bedford

**Subject:** North Weald Bassett Masterplan Allocation Site

**Responsible Officer:** Nigel Richardson (01992 564 110).

**Democratic Services Officer:** V Messenger ([democraticservices@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservices@eppingforestdc.gov.uk))

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## Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) To approve the draft North Weald Bassett Strategic Masterplan Framework and commencement of the public consultation for the NWB Strategic Masterplan Area allocation identified under Policy P6 in the Adopted Local Plan.
- (2) To note that the staged public consultation will take place over a minimum of 8 weeks from mid-November 2023 and will run through January 2024. The reason for the extended consultation period is to provide the public with the widest possible contribution and taking into account the Christmas / New Year period.
- (3) To note that a further update will be provided to share the results of the public consultation, any updates to the masterplan and/or framework document to reflect consultation and to endorse the masterplan, so that it can be given appropriate weight as a material planning consideration in the determination of future planning applications.

## Executive Summary:

The development of the North Weald Bassett (NWB) Strategic Masterplan Framework (SMF) responds to the adopted Epping Forest District Local Plan 2011-2033 and Policy P6 'North Weald Bassett'. The NWB Masterplan Area forms one of the allocated Strategic Masterplan sites where the need for an SMF is identified. Following the requirements in policies SP2 and P6, a strategic masterplan has been developed for the allocated strategic area.

Since 2018 the land promoter Vistry (previously known as Countryside PLC) have been engaging with a number of local communities in North Weald, such as the Parish Council, the North Weald Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, the Memorial Playing Fields Trust, St Andrews Primary School and the local community in general.

Land ownership is split between five sub allocations, but the site promoter representing an interest in largest allocation (NWB.R3 Land South of Vicarage Lane) is Vistry Group, who have progressed the development of the masterplan. Vistry and its predecessor company Countryside have been engaging with EFDC officers since 2018 in the development of the NWB SMF in accordance with the Strategic Masterplanning Briefing Note, which was agreed by the Council's Cabinet in October 2018. The Briefing Note sets out the detailed approach to SMF development to support the requirement of Policy P6 which states:

*Planning applications for sites NWB.R1, NWB.R2, NWB.R3, NWB.R4, NWB.R5 and NWB.T1 should be accompanied by a Strategic Masterplan for the North Weald Bassett Masterplan Area which demonstrates that the development requirements set out in this Policy have been accommodated and which has been endorsed by the Council. The endorsed Strategic Masterplan will be taken into account as an important material consideration in the determination of any planning applications.*

The applicants have engaged with EFDC's Implementation Team and ECC officers through masterplanning workshops and document reviews, and have been to the Quality Review Panel three times (*June 2019, August 2021, September 2023*).

There remain some outstanding topics yet to be resolved within the document, and which are not yet agreed by EFDC. It should therefore be noted that the agreement for consultation on the draft Strategic Masterplan Framework should not be taken as tacit approval of all elements within the draft document. However, officers are confident that at this stage of the Masterplanning process the Strategic Masterplan Framework fulfils the intentions of the EFDC Adopted Local Plan and Strategic Masterplanning Briefing Note (2018) in enabling meaningful public consultation, and could lead to high quality development.

### **Reasons for Proposed Decision:**

To ensure that members are kept fully up to date on the progress of Masterplans and Concept Frameworks and other major proposals being promoted within the District.

To comply with the Council's general obligations as a local planning authority and the requirements set out in national planning guidance.

### **Other Options for Action:**

N/A

### **Report:**

#### **Introduction**

1. The NWB Masterplan Area is located North of the existing North Weald Bassett village, east of the North Weald Bassett Airfield and South of Vicarage Lane and West of the A414. The site is located within the North Weald Bassett Parish and it is within the administrative area of EFDC.
2. The site is allocated as part of the adopted Epping Forest District Local Plan 2011-2033 and Policy P6 'North Weald Bassett'.
3. The masterplan area is made up of five separate site allocations which reflect separate site ownerships as follows:
  - NWB.R1/T1 Land West of Tylers Green,
  - NWB.R2 Land at Tylers Farm,
  - NWB.R3 Land South of Vicarage Lane,
  - NWB.R4 Land at Chase Farm and
  - NWB.R5 Land at The Acorns, Chase Farm
4. The largest of these sites is NWB.R3 (promoted by Vistry). NWB.T1 identifies the dual allocation of site NWB.R1 as the location identified for the traveller pitches.
5. The SMF addresses surface water flooding, the preservation or enhance the special architectural or historic interest of the Grade II Listed Buildings at Bluemans Farm/Tyler's Farmhouse and their settings, the need to upgrade/widen the existing Vicarage Lane West access in order to ensure a safe access point which has sufficient capacity for the development it serves;

6. To ensure a comprehensive and cohesive approach is taken to the planning and delivery of development and infrastructure on site, the Local Plan requires a strategic masterplan to be produced for the NWB site (and for other strategic allocations). The Strategic Masterplanning Briefing Note 2018 was agreed by the Council's Cabinet in October 2018. This document sets out the requirement for the endorsement of Strategic Masterplans and Concept Frameworks as allocated in the Adopted Local Plan. This requirement is set out in Policy SP2 Place Shaping and in the place specific policy relating to NWB (Policy P6). The strategic masterplan for North Weald Bassett needs to adhere to the place-shaping and development principles set out under Policy SP2 (place-shaping) and the site specific considerations identified.

### **Proposed Consultation**

7. The promoter is currently preparing the consultation strategy in detail with officers. The draft Strategic Masterplan Framework document consultation plan currently includes:
  - a. Pre-consultation member briefing.
  - b. Meeting with North Weald Bassett Parish Council & Neighbourhood Plan team
  - c. Online consultation portal, providing independent website and feedback gathering tool.
  - d. Council's website signposting to the consultation portal
  - e. Mailshot to 3,600 local households and community and statutory stakeholders, informing them of the consultation (and providing advice on how to take part if not digitally able) – this includes homes within both Epping Forest and North Weald Parish.
  - f. Press release by relevant authorities
  - g. Pop up exhibition panel hosted in Council building(s) with printed copy of SMF and paper copy questionnaires for completion/ collection.
  - h. Questionnaire – available on the online portal and paper copies available.
8. It is noted that the consultation period will coincide with the Christmas and New year period. It is therefore proposed that the consultation period is extended by 2 weeks (from six weeks to eight weeks) to allow appropriate time for the public to contribute comments and views.

### **Programme**

9. The programme towards the endorsement of the masterplan is as follows:
  - November 13<sup>th</sup> 2023 - Cabinet Meeting/approval for consultation
  - November 14<sup>th</sup> 2023 – January 5<sup>th</sup> 2024 – Public Consultation
  - January 5<sup>th</sup> – February 5<sup>th</sup> – Post consultation revision and finalisation of SMF
  - March 18<sup>th</sup> – EFDC Cabinet for endorsement of NWB SMF

### **Masterplanning and Engagement process**

10. During 2018-2023 several meetings and workshops (as described in the endorsed Masterplanning Briefing Note 2018) have been held between key stakeholders including EFDC, the main site promoters (Vistry) and ECC (Highway and Infrastructure).
11. The Site promoter has undertaken intensive engagement throughout the project:
  - In September 2018 the Site promoter engaged with the North Weald Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG) to introduce the project and run a workshop to test preliminary ideas.
  - In February 2019 the Site Promoter engaged with the Parish Council and the NPSG to present in a workshop the progress in relation to spatial ideas, public transport and public space.
  - In November 2019 the Site Promoter engaged the NPSG and the governors of St Andrews Primary School to discuss matters of landscape design and the provision of educational facilities.
  - In January 2020 the Site promoter engaged with the NPSG to cover issues of traffic and highways and commuter services to Epping Tube Station.

- In 2021 the Site promoter held a meeting with the Trustees of the Queen's Hall Charity to ensure the any proposed facilities did not compete with the memorial Playing Fields and Queen's Hall but instead to compliment them.
- In the summer 2023 the land promoters carried out informal public consultation for which around 3600 leaflets were distributed to local homes. 176 official responses were received where most of the concerns where about connectivity, education, healthcare, and flooding.
- Between 2022 and 2023 the site promoters and officers from EFDC and ECC took part in the following Topic Based Meetings:
  - Urban Design Principles
  - Education facilities and needs
  - Public Transportation, movement and highways
  - Natural Environment, Green & Blue Infrastructure
  - Social Infrastructure
  - Sustainability
  - Heritage
  - Local Centre
  - Planning & Engagement Strategy
  - Housing Needs
  - Infrastructure Delivery

12. The site has previously undertaken three reviews by the QRP, the first in June 2019, with a second review in August 2021 and a third one in September 2023.
13. The Masterplan has been developed in a comprehensive manner and it includes the whole allocation area spanning across different land ownerships. The site promoters and design team have provided the council with satisfactory options to ensure that the masterplan can be delivered around this landholding.

### **Strategic Masterplan Framework**

14. The draft SMF proposed to be taken to public consultation is enclosed at Appendix 1 and is commented upon as follows:

### **Placemaking**

15. The masterplan has been developed observing EFDC's Adopted Local Plan Policy SP2 Place Shaping, where emphasis has been given to ensure generous, well connected and biodiverse rich green space provision with a sense of place/ identity. The masterplan will be well connected through a hierarchy of streets, walking paths and cycle lanes along rich green and blue infrastructure features to the local centre that will host community facilities, retail and service opportunities as well as schools and a sustainable movement hub.

### **Transport**

16. EFDC is currently working together with Essex County Council and the Land promoters of North Weald Bassett Masterplan to explore a new bus route that will connect North Weald Bassett with the school provision at Latton Priory, further connections to Harlow Town and Epping town centre and Tube station.

### **Green Infrastructure**

17. The NWB Masterplan is a landscape-led development that will provide large areas of SANG together with Blue and Green Infrastructure features that will enhance biodiversity and the natural environment following EFDC's Adopted Local Plan Policies SP2, SP5 and SP6 as well

as the EFDC Green Infrastructure Strategy which sets out SANG requirements for North Weald Bassett. The masterplan will also provide residents with a wide range of amenities ranging from a vibrant local centre provision with access to community facilities and service/retail opportunities as well as dedicated areas for play, food growing and community gardening and sports.

### **Local centre and social facilities**

18. The NWB Masterplan provides a Local Centre following EFDC's Adopted Local Plan Policy P5. The local centre and adjoining areas will provide:
- Community Centre
  - A new primary school with early years facilities
  - Community facilities including potential for a library, café, activity studios, flexible working space
  - Mobility Hub with access to EV charging points, cycle hire, cycle repair shop, car club.

### **Sustainability**

19. The NWB Masterplan will be a sustainably connected new neighbourhood with safe, direct and attractive cycle routes integrated within the network of roads, PROWS and open space which link key facilities within the site and further afield, including Epping Town and Epping Tube Station. The development of the masterplan has observed the following documents: EFDC Sustainability Guide and Checklist, EFDC Green Infrastructure Strategy. This has indicated that further work on energy, utilities and digital infrastructure needs to be provided to ensure that this is secured at masterplanning stage. Orientation and form also need to be considered at the masterplanning level in relation to solar gain, walkability, and densities, which all attribute to holistic sustainable development. Further work on the approach to Stewardship, to ensure that it is community-led.

### **Specific Site requirements**

20. The Policy specifically identifies the following requirements for the masterplan:
- i. a local centre including retail, community, and appropriate provision of health facilities.
  - ii. addressing surface water flooding.
  - iii. education provision including early years and primary school places.
  - iv. adequate levels of public open space to be provided on the site.
  - v. a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace, the location of which will be determined through the Strategic Masterplanning process.
  - vi. a minimum of 1,050 homes and five traveller pitches.
  - vii. preserving or enhancing the special architectural or historic interest of the Grade II Listed Buildings at Bluemans Farm/Tyler's Farmhouse and their settings.
  - viii. new and improved Public Rights of Way and cycle linkages with the surrounding area including East to West connectivity between the two Masterplan Areas.
  - ix. careful design and layout to ensure that where sensitive land uses are proposed near the intermediate High-Pressure Gas Pipeline they accord with the requirements set out in the HSE's Land Use Planning Methodology;
  - x. the need to upgrade/widen the existing Vicarage Lane West access in order to ensure a safe access point which has sufficient capacity for the development it serves.
  - xi. the continued protection of those trees benefitting from a Tree Preservation Order, and other identified Veteran Trees; and
  - xii. strengthening of the existing field boundary along the Western edge of the Strategic Masterplan Area to form the defensible boundary to the Green Belt.

## **Housing Numbers and Tenure**

21. The masterplan has a capacity for a minimum of 1,050 dwellings in line with the EFDC Adopted Local Plan. While the masterplan allows the potential for increases in this number to be explored, any increase in the site capacity at the NWB site will need to be fully assessed in terms of traffic impacts and by reference to the Habitat Assessment Regulations with regards to the potential impact on air quality Epping Forest SAC.
22. Housing tenure is stated as being targeted to be in accordance with the EFDC Adopted Local Plan with a position of 40% affordable housing sought with the right type of housing to assist the delivery of the Council Social Housing List.

## **Conclusion**

23. The development of the NWB Masterplan has been developed in consultation with officers from EFDC and ECC. In conclusion, there remain some outstanding topics yet to be resolved within the document. It should therefore be noted that the agreement for consultation on the draft Strategic Masterplan Framework should not be taken as tacit approval of all elements within the draft document. However, officers are confident that at this stage of the Masterplanning process the Strategic Masterplan Framework fulfils the intentions of the EFDC Adopted Local Plan and Strategic Masterplanning Briefing Note (2018) in enabling meaningful public consultation, and could lead to high quality development, supporting the following EFDC Adopted Local Plan strategic policies:
  - Policy SP1 – Spatial Development Strategy 2011-2033
  - Policy SP2 – Place Shaping
  - Policy SP6 – The Natural Environment, Landscape Character and Green and Blue Infrastructure
  - Policy H1 – Housing Mix and Accommodation Types
  - Policy H2 – Affordable Homes
  - Policy H4 – Traveller Site Development
  - Policy P6 – North Weald Bassett
24. Further guidance documents observed:
  - EFDC Green Infrastructure Strategy
  - EFDC Statement of Community Involvement
  - EFDC Endorsed Strategic Masterplanning Briefing Note
  - EFDC Infrastructure Delivery Plan

### **Resource Implications:**

The successful delivery of the strategic sites within Epping Forest District will require considerable commitment of officer time from EFDC. The noting of the contents of this report do not give rise to additional resource implications.

### **Legal and Governance Implications:**

The work on Strategic Masterplans has been developed in accordance with Government policy (NPPF and NPPG) and Planning Law

### **Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:**

The Local Plan contains a policy designed to promote the notion of making good places to live, work and visit. This will include safer by design principles, sustainable development, the provision of alternatives to the car, energy efficiency and environmental considerations as well as sustainable drainage systems and quality green infrastructure. Strategic Masterplans and Concept Framework

Plans will be the mechanism for these place-making measures to be delivered in identified Masterplan Areas.

### **Consultation / Scrutiny Undertaken:**

The Site promoter has undertaken intensive engagement throughout the project:

- In September 2018 the Site promoter engaged with the North Weald Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG) to introduce the project and run a workshop to test preliminary ideas.
- In February 2019 the Site Promoter engaged with the Parish Council and the NPSG to present in a workshop the progress in relation to spatial ideas, public transport and public space.
- In November 2019 the Site Promoter engaged the NPSG and the governors of St Andrews Primary School to discuss matters of landscape design and the provision of educational facilities.
- In January 2020 the Site promoter engaged with the NPSG to cover issues of traffic and highways and commuter services to Epping Tube Station.
- In 2021 the Site promoter held a meeting with the Trustees of the Queen's Hall Charity to ensure the any proposed facilities did not compete with the memorial Playing Fields and Queen's Hall but instead to compliment them.
- In the summer 2023 the land promoters carried out informal public consultation for which around 3600 leaflets were distributed to local homes. 176 official responses were received where most of the concerns were about connectivity, education, healthcare, and flooding.
- Between 2022 and 2023 the site promoters and officers from EFDC and ECC took part in the following Topic Based Meetings:
  - Urban Design Principles
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  - Social Infrastructure
  - Sustainability
  - Heritage
  - Local Centre
  - Planning & Engagement Strategy
  - Housing Needs
  - Infrastructure Delivery

The site has previously undertaken three reviews by the QRP, the first in June 2019, with a second review in August 2021 and a third one in September 2023.

### **Background Papers:**

N/A

### **Risk Management:**

If the Council was not to take a pro-active stance on the delivery of Masterplans and major applications arising from the Local Plan, there is a real risk of development occurring of a type that does not extract maximum value for the provision of social infrastructure and poor quality development may occur.

## Equality:

### Equality Impact Assessment

1. Under s.149 of the Equality Act 2010, when making decisions, Epping District Council must have regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty, ie have due regard to:
  - eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and other conduct prohibited by the Act,
  - advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not,
  - fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
2. The characteristics protected by the Equality Act are:
  - age
  - disability
  - gender
  - gender reassignment
  - marriage/civil partnership
  - pregnancy/maternity
  - race
  - religion/belief
  - sexual orientation.
3. In addition to the above protected characteristics you should consider the cross-cutting elements of the proposed policy, namely the social, economic and environmental impact (including rurality) as part of this assessment. These cross-cutting elements are not a characteristic protected by law but are regarded as good practice to include.
4. The Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) document should be used as a tool to test and analyse the nature and impact of either what we do or are planning to do in the future. It can be used flexibly for reviewing existing arrangements but in particular should enable identification where further consultation, engagement and data is required.
5. Use the questions in this document to record your findings. This should include the nature and extent of the impact on those likely to be affected by the proposed policy or change.
6. Where this EqIA relates to a continuing project, it must be reviewed and updated at each stage of the decision.
7. **All Cabinet, Council, and Portfolio Holder reports must be accompanied by an EqIA.** An EqIA should also be completed/reviewed at key stages of projects.
8. To assist you in completing this report, please ensure you read the guidance notes in the Equality Analysis Toolkit and refer to the following Factsheets:
  - Factsheet 1: Equality Profile of the Epping Forest District
  - Factsheet 2: Sources of information about equality protected characteristics

- Factsheet 3: Glossary of equality related terms
- Factsheet 4: Common misunderstandings about the Equality Duty
- Factsheet 5: Frequently asked questions
- Factsheet 6: Reporting equality analysis to a committee or other decision making body

<b>Section 1: Identifying details</b>
Your function, service area and team: Planning Service
If you are submitting this EqIA on behalf of another function, service area or team, specify the originating function, service area or team: N/A
Title of policy or decision: Progress of Strategic Masterplans & Planning Performance Agreements
Officer completing the EqIA: Rick Schunemann Email: rschunemann@eppingforestdc.gov.uk
Date of completing the assessment: 26/09/2023

<b>Section 2: Policy to be analysed</b>	
2.1	Is this a new policy (or decision) or a change to an existing policy, practice or project? No
2.2	Describe the main aims, objectives and purpose of the policy (or decision): The report is to seek approval from cabinet members to take the North Weald Bassett Strategic Masterplan Framework for official 8 week public consultation.  What outcome(s) are you hoping to achieve (ie decommissioning or commissioning a service)? To brief members of the masterplanning process for the North Weald Bassett strategic allocation and to gain approval to go to official 8-week public consultation.
2.3	Does or will the policy or decision affect: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• service users</li> <li>• employees</li> <li>• the wider community or groups of people, particularly where there are areas of known inequalities?</li> </ul> Not directly but supports the development identified within the Adopted Local Plan

	Will the policy or decision influence how organisations operate? No
2.4	Will the policy or decision involve substantial changes in resources? No, the report is for information only
2.5	Is this policy or decision associated with any of the Council's other policies and how, if applicable, does the proposed policy support corporate outcomes? It is associated to Adopted Local Plan policies SP2 and P6. Approval for consultation should not have any adverse effect on other Policies

### Section 3: Evidence/data about the user population and consultation<sup>1</sup>

As a minimum you must consider what is known about the population likely to be affected which will support your understanding of the impact of the policy, eg service uptake/usage, customer satisfaction surveys, staffing data, performance data, research information (national, regional and local data sources).

3.1

What does the information tell you about those groups identified? N/A

3.2

Have you consulted or involved those groups that are likely to be affected by the policy or decision you want to implement? If so, what were their views and how have their views influenced your decision?

The groups mentioned in 2.3 have been consulted previously and we will seek updated views and if necessary the view will inform changes to the North Weald Bassett SMF.

3.3

If you have not consulted or engaged with communities that are likely to be affected by the policy or decision, give details about when you intend to carry out consultation or provide reasons for why you feel this is not necessary:

Informal public consultation on North Weald Bassett has taken place in 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2023. This will be the first time the project team is seeking approval from Cabinet to go to formal 8-week public consultation. Should approval be gained at this Cabinet meeting, public consultation would take place from the second week of November 2023 and run for six weeks.

**Section 4: Impact of policy or decision**

Use this section to assess any potential impact on equality groups based on what you now know.

<b>Description of impact</b>	<b>Nature of impact</b> Positive, neutral, adverse (explain why)	<b>Extent of impact</b> Low, medium, high (use L, M or H)
Age	None	N/A
Disability	None	N/A
Gender	None	N/A
Gender reassignment	None	N/A
Marriage/civil partnership	None	N/A
Pregnancy/maternity	None	N/A
Race	None	N/A
Religion/belief	None	N/A
Sexual orientation	None	N/A

## Section 5: Conclusion

		Tick Yes/No as appropriate	
5.1	Does the EqIA in Section 4 indicate that the policy or decision would have a medium or high adverse impact on one or more equality groups?	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	If ' <b>YES</b> ', use the action plan at <b>Section 6</b> to describe the adverse impacts and what mitigating actions you could put in place.



**Section 7: Sign off**

**I confirm that this initial analysis has been completed appropriately.  
(A typed signature is sufficient.)**

Signature of Head of Service: Nigel Richardson

Date: 27/09/23

Signature of person completing the EqlA: Rick Schunemann

Date: 27/09/23

**Advice**

Keep your director informed of all equality & diversity issues. We recommend that you forward a copy of every EqlA you undertake to the director responsible for the service area. Retain a copy of this EqlA for your records. If this EqlA relates to a continuing project, ensure this document is kept under review and updated, eg after a consultation has been undertaken.