



# Former St. Felix Middle School Development Brief

## Development Briefs

### What is a Development Brief?

A Development Brief is a document that bridges the gap between the planning policy requirements set out in the Local Plan and the level of information contained within a planning application. In this specific context this Development Brief highlights **Suffolk County Council's proposals for the future development of the site**, interpreting Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan policies, addressing site constraints and opportunities, and presenting a number of principles and objectives that will guide future planning applications seeking development of the site.

Like a planning application, a development brief can be submitted to the local planning authority for approval so that it can form a material consideration in the preparation and determination of future planning applications.

The main difference between a Development Brief and Planning Application to understand, is that a development brief does not itself grant planning permission. Rather, it is simply a template upon which future planning applications will be based.

### What is incorporated in the development brief?

The Development Brief sets out the principles and more detailed guidance on a relation of matters for this site. This includes the following:

- An overall vision for the site;
- Identification of constraints and opportunities for the site;
- Consideration of technical constraints, such as flood risk, and other general infrastructure matters;
- Options concerning the general location of proposed land uses;
- Guidance on the type and mix of housing;
- Design principles of building design, materials, scale, height, massing and style;
- Movement framework – how pedestrians, cyclists and vehicle will access and move through the site;
- Landscape, open space and green infrastructure framework;
- Developer contributions where applicable/appropriate;
- Details concerning implementation and delivery (the party who will deliver the brief).



### What cannot be considered within the Development Brief?

A Development Brief cannot be used to review the principle of development which has already been established in the Local Plan, such as in this case set out in the Site Allocations Local Plan (2019), or to create new policies for land use.

It should also be clarified that whilst a Development Brief is intended to provide guidance on how a site should be developed, it is not necessary go into the level of detail appropriate to a planning application. For instance, the Development Brief cannot provide:

- The precise mix and size of house types for the site;
- A detailed specification of design and materials;
- Comprehensive site assessment work, such as Transport Assessments. These are required at the planning application stage, although the Applicant may wish to provide some more detailed information to inform the Development Brief.

### What is the purpose of the proposed St. Felix Development Brief?

The purpose of the Development Brief is to provide site-specific planning guidance and advice for any future development on the allocated Former St. Felix Middle School site. In practice, this means developers bringing forward schemes on the site will be informed on its respective constraints and opportunities, as well as the type of development expected or encouraged.

Whilst there is no planning policy requirement for the preparation of a Development Brief in this case, the landowner, Suffolk County Council (SCC), has prepared this document on a voluntarily basis in agreement with West Suffolk Council.

### What will happen once the Development Brief has been finalised?

Once the Development Brief has been finalised upon completion of the public consultation process, the Development Brief will be submitted to West Suffolk Council. Once approved, it will become a material consideration in determining any future applications brought forward on the site.



## Nature of the Proposal

### Where is development proposed?

The proposed development site, outlined in red on the map below, is located to the north of the town and is situated along Fordham Road, approximately 300m south from the Fordham Road roundabout. The Fordham Road is one of the main arterial roads into the town from the A14 located to the north.





### What is proposed?

This Development Brief is intended to provide high-level guidance as to how the development of up to 50 dwellings can be achieved across the 4.5 hectare site. It also includes the creation of **single priority junction with Fordham Road and the** incorporation of public open space. Moreover, it incorporates the potential provision of a Mixed Use Games Area (MUGA) should the re-location of the existing tennis courts from their current position be acceptable. Future provision is also reserved for additional sports facilities.

### How will the proposed land uses be distributed across the site?

The Development Brief contains a single option as to how the development proposed may be laid out across the site – **this indicative layout is presented as the 'Preferred Option'**.

The Preferred Option proposes the relocation of the tennis courts on land north-west of their current position, with the tennis courts being converted into a MUGA (Mixed Use Games Area). It also includes the availability of land for a future sports hall (to accommodate 4 badminton courts) should this be required. The remainder of the site will be developed for housing and open space.

It should be recognised that the west of the site is reserved for the provision of public open space with appropriate pedestrian/cycle connections to the surrounding area.

### How many homes will be provided on the site?

It is proposed that up to 50 homes will be provided on the site. This will result in a density of development at around 26 dwellings per hectare (dph). This density is compatible with the surrounding built form; for instance, Exning Road to the west of the site contains a density of 32 dph.

The final number of homes that will be provided will be confirmed within the subsequent planning applications and not this Development Brief.

### What type of houses will be provided?

The exact housing mix will be determined during the course of a subsequent planning application, following the approval of the proposed Development Brief. Nevertheless, any proposal will be required to deliver a variety of housing that is appropriate in order to comply with adopted planning policy requirements.

### Will there be affordable housing?

The proposal will be required to deliver a policy compliant level of affordable housing which equates to 30% of the total housing mix proposed. In practice, the provision of 50 dwellings on the site would result in the creation of 15 dwellings for the purposes of affordable home ownership.

### Will there be open space as part of this proposal?

Open space will be provided as part of this proposal – its spatial extent is denoted by the plans within the draft Development Brief.

In particular, the proposal represents an opportunity to convert private secured space into open space that is available for use by the general public. Combined with its integration to the adjoining George Lambton Playing Fields to its north through the provision of a new public access, the proposal will facilitate the creation of a recreation hub. Consequently, the recreation opportunities for the residents of Newmarket will be increased as a result of this proposed development.

### West Suffolk Council has declared a climate emergency. How will the plans address this issue?

The Development Brief contains a set of design principles to ensure that any new development arising on the subject site is sustainable and meets future climate achievement targets. By way of example, this includes the promotion of sustainable modes of transportation, construction standards and the use of integrated surface water drainage techniques.

In any case, the proposed development would need to comply with current and future planning requirements in order to ensure a sustainable development is delivered. For instance, Policy DM7 of the adopted 'Development Management Policies Document' (2015) requires proposals for new development to optimise energy efficiency through construction techniques and its overall design.

### How was the site formerly used?

The site was previously used as an educational establishment to accommodate middle school aged students. However, the St. Felix Middle School was closed in the summer of 2012 and has not been in active use since that time.

## Timing and Programme

### When will the proposed Development Brief be submitted?

It is anticipated that the proposed Development Brief will be submitted to the local planning authority around the end of 2021.

### When will any potential planning applications be submitted?

It is anticipated that any planning applications connected to the site will be submitted in Spring 2022.

### How long does it take for planning applications to be determined?

The Council attempts to determine larger planning applications, such as this one, within 13 weeks, although sometimes this process takes longer.

## Planning Policy

### What does the adopted Local Plan say about this site?

The site is allocated for the residential development of up to 50 dwellings under Policy SA4 of the 'Site Allocations Local Plan' (2019). This means that the principle of development on the subject site has already been established; in other words, the provision of residential properties on the land is already considered to be a suitable form of development by West Suffolk Council.

Having established the principle of development, Policy SA4 gives specific requirements for the allocated site which forms the basis of the project. These can be summarised as follows:

- The provision of strategic landscaping and public open space that is suitable for the individual site requirements and location (the latter must ensure connectivity from George Lambton Playing Fields);
- Ensuring that no adverse impacts arise on horse movements and other highway users within Newmarket, employing mitigatory measures where necessary;

- Making provision for the retention of the existing tennis courts, with appropriate access and connectivity provided; and
- Protecting and enhancing the amenity/biodiversity of the Yellow Brick Road Linear Park.

## Transport and Highways

### How will the proposed site be accessed by vehicles and pedestrians?

The subject site contains two existing access points on its north-eastern and south-western boundary respectively, which both adjoin onto the A142 (Fordham road).

Vehicular access will replace the former north eastern access, with appropriate improvements made to ensure it serves the development proposal. The second existing vehicular access will be closed to vehicles but will still be utilised to provide cycle and pedestrian access

There are a number of opportunities to integrate the site within the existing public right of way network to improve pedestrian and cycle links around Newmarket. This level of detail will be finalised in a subsequent planning application, but will include connections to George Lambton Playing Fields to its north and the Yellow Brick Linear Park to its west.

### What impact will the proposal have in terms of traffic generation and congestion?

A Transport Statement is currently being prepared which sets out various transport issues relating to the proposed development, alongside identifying the measures that may be necessary to deal with the anticipated transport impacts on the scheme in relation to all modes of travel, including horse movements and the horse related industry.

It should be stressed that upon submission of a future planning applications the respective Highways Authority will assess the acceptability of the plans proposed, including the Transport Statement. It is the role of the Highways Authority to ensure that any proposed developments do not have any unacceptable impacts on highway safety or severe residual cumulative impacts on the road network.

### How can sustainable modes of transportation be encouraged?

There is a good level of provision in terms of public transportation through both public bus services and Newmarket Train Station. In regard to the former, there are bus stops positioned immediately adjacent to the site allowing for sustainable travel along Fordham Road that connects with the centre of Newmarket and surrounding settlements. Concerning the latter, Newmarket Train Station provides the opportunity for commuting and leisure trips to large urban areas such as Cambridge and Bury St. Edmunds.

Moreover, Newmarket Town Centre is considered walkable or cyclable at approximately 1.5km via Fordham Road or 1.9km via National Cycle Route 51 which can be accessed at Noel Murless Drive. National Cycle Route 51 provides a mainly traffic-free route to Newmarket Town Centre and Studlands Park Industrial Estate to the north.

Based upon the above detail, it is considered that the future residential occupiers of the allocated site will have several viable options to travel sustainably by non-vehicular modes of movement.



### How many car parking spaces will there be for the people living in the houses?

The exact number of vehicular parking spaces will only be decided during the submission of a future planning application. However, it can be confirmed that any scheme will be required to comply with the parking standards within the 'Suffolk Guidance for Parking: Technical Guidance' (2019).

In this respect, the standards require a minimum of 1 space per 1-bedroom dwelling, 2 spaces per 2/3-bedroom dwelling, and 3 spaces per 4+bedroom dwelling. An additional 0.25 spaces per dwelling are required as unallocated visitor provision. Therefore, the total number of vehicular spaces required will depend upon the number and type of dwellings proposed.

### Does the proposal include cycle parking spaces?

It can be confirmed that the proposed development will include provision for cycle parking spaces. Although this detail will be elaborated in a future planning application, it is anticipated that this will be catered through garage or shed storage to ensure secure cycle provision. If apartments are included as part of the final housing mix, secure cycle storage will ideally be provided within the building itself. This guidance is in compliance with requirements as per the 'Suffolk Guidance for Parking: Technical Guidance' (2019).

## Ecology and Trees

### What is the main wildlife and ecology found on the site?

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) report has been undertaken in support of this Development Brief. A PEA is an initial assessment which assess the potential of a designated land parcel to support protected species based upon the habitats present.

The PEA report identifies the site as comprising primarily of grassland with species-rich hedgerow and trees, alongside existing buildings and hardstanding. It found that these habitats have the potential to support foraging bats, nesting birds, Badger, Hedgehog and invertebrates.

### How will potential wildlife be protected as part of the proposal?

The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) report has outlined a series of recommendations that the final development scheme should adhere to in order to prevent any adverse impacts upon any protected species. This includes, for example, the placement of log piles for invertebrates. A more detailed consideration of these matters will be given during a future planning application.

### Will the level of biodiversity on the site increase as a result of the proposal?

Any future planning application will be required to secure an overall increase, or net gain, in biodiversity. This will likely include the proposal including more habitat area and better-quality habitat within the proposal than what currently exists on the former St. Felix Middle School site.

### Will there be any impact on ecology or wildlife, including protected sites, within the wider area?

There is one nature conservation site with statutory designation, and three non-statutory designated nature conservation sites within 2km radius of the site. However, there will not be any impacts upon these identified sites as there is no potential habitat connectivity between them.

### What impact will there be on existing trees positioned on the site?

The site is framed on all boundaries by established trees with accompanying hedgerow. Internally there are several bands of mature trees which subdivide the site between the former playing fields (now proposed as public open space) and the previously developed component (now proposed for residential development). The diagram below shows the spatial extent of the identified trees.



It is expected that the trees bordering the site will not be removed as part of any proposal due to their position within the site. In comparison, it is anticipated that some trees located in the centre of the site may need to be removed to facilitate the proposed development. Nevertheless, the quality of these trees is only moderate at most.

### How will the remaining trees be protected during the construction process?

A 'Tree Retention Plan' and 'Tree Protection Plan' will be designed once the layout of the development area has been finalised at a future planning application stage. This will ensure appropriate protection is in place to the relevant trees before any construction works proceed on site.

## Flooding and Drainage

### Is the site liable to flooding?

According to the Environment Agency's indicative floodplain mapping, the site is classified as being within Flood Zone 1. This means that there is a low probability of river (fluvial) and/or tidal flooding (less than 1 in 1,000-year annual probability of river and sea flooding (<0.1% in any year).

The same mapping tool also indicates that the majority of the site is also not susceptible to surface water (pluvial) flooding). Any residual risk from surface water risk is restricted to the western edge of the site by virtue of an existing watercourse.



### How will the risk of flooding be managed on the application site?

This will be managed by virtue of the developable area being located away from the areas to be at risk of flooding. Nevertheless, a subsequent planning application will be required to be accompanied by a Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SuDS). Its purpose will be to ensure that any surface water created by the development proposal will be controlled and thus not increase the risk of flooding off-site.

It will seek to utilise a range of features such as storing water in natural sources (such as basins or ponds). The exact details of the sustainable urban drainage systems deployed will be fully detailed at the planning application stage.

## Contamination

### Is the site contaminated?

An initial site appraisal has been undertaken which did not identify any contaminant concentrations at a level that would be detrimental to human health. A low risk of contamination associated with the former electrical substation was detected, but samples gathered nearby did not identify any elevated contaminant concentrations.

## Noise

### Will the site be susceptible to noise impacts?

There are no notable noise sources within close proximity of the site with exception vehicular movements on the Fordham Road. This will be addressed through standard glazing specifications to new dwellings.

## Heritage

### Are there any heritage assets within or in close proximity to the application site?

There are no heritage assets within the application site itself, but there are two listed buildings within a 500m radius of the site. These include the Grade II listed Newmarket General Hospital 500 metres to its south, and a Grade II listed dwelling 400 metres to its east. Newmarket Conservation Area is also situated approximately 150 metres to the south-east of the site. Given their distance from the site impacts are considered unlikely.

## Archaeology

### Is the site important for archaeology?

A desk-based study of the currently available evidence has identified that there may be archaeological remains across the site. This is due to the former use of the site as arable land during the medieval and post-medieval periods. However, these are not likely to be of sufficient significance as to warrant preservation in situ.

Any planning application will need to be accompanied by an appropriate mitigation strategy as agreed with an archaeological advisor to the local planning authority. It is envisaged that the programme of archaeological works will be undertaken prior to the commencement of any development.



## Infrastructure

### How will the proposed Masterplan impact upon existing infrastructure provision?

During the formulation of the proposed Development Brief there has been no identification of immediate infrastructure constraints that would preclude development from proceeding on the application site.

It is of course recognised that proposed developments of any size place an increased requirement in terms of local infrastructure and, the proposed development will be required to provide financial contributions towards the provision or expansion of infrastructure, related to the impacts placed, during the planning application stage.