

## **Statement of Consultation - Appendix 9**

**Princes Risborough CABE Workshop 1 draft  
report (May 2015)**

# DRAFT for discussion

## Princes Risborough Expansion Internal Workshop Report

May 2015

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## 1.0 Context

- 1.1 Princes Risborough is an attractive market town on the edge of the Green Belt and the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It has a population of 8,000 and about 3,500 homes but it has not seen major growth for many years. Wycombe District Council (the Council) is preparing the Area Action Plan for Princes Risborough and aiming to consult on the emerging growth scenarios and options by November 2015. The background studies and consultation with the community and stakeholders for the future expansion of Princes Risborough were completed by the Council in 2014 followed by the issues and responses report led by Tibbalds. The Council is now keen to translate these issues and consultation responses into a spatial diagram working collaboratively with the internal and external stakeholders.
- 1.2 Wycombe District Council have high design aspirations for this important site that will deliver circa 2,500 new homes to 2033 and help towards meeting the local housing need as set out in the emerging Local Plan. Cabe is appointed by Wycombe District Council to run two workshops for the Council officers and key stakeholders to help in preparing an urban design framework and provide independent advice for the proposed expansion of Princes Risborough.
- 1.3 Cabe is engaged as a unique, independent organisation with a successful track record of delivering design support services to bring forward well designed development. The Council is keen that the process is led by an independent facilitator and provides an open environment to discuss and debate issues. The purpose of these workshops is to set out the site specific design principles that can be further developed through the Area Action Plan (AAP) work and commission the specific evidence base studies to provide greater clarity in decision making. In our role as an independent organisation facilitating discussion between the stakeholders, we have agreed a two stage approach with the Council.
- 1.4 The first half day workshop with the Council officers and internal stakeholder is to help draw out the important priorities and discuss issues. One of the key outcomes is to have an increased understanding of the site and competing priorities. Cabe's role is to draw out the key priorities from the discussion than advocate or proposes a particular design approach. Tibbalds have documented and analysed the workshop discussion in the section one of the 'Draft Emerging Development Strategy (May 2015)' report in Appendix 2.
- 1.5 The aim of the second workshop is to invite wider external stakeholders, members and the local and technical experts on the emerging plans prior to consulting more widely. The Council will carry out the further master planning exercise to inform the Area Action Plan by developing and testing these ideas further.

## 2.0 The Workshop

2.1 The half-day workshop was held at the Council offices in High Wycombe and led by Helen Walker and Conor Moloney, Cabe Built Environment Experts (BEEs) and Mandar Puranik, Cabe Advisor. The workshop was attended by over fifteen participants representing the District Council, County Council officers and the key partners such as East West Rail Consortium. The list of attendees was provided by the Council and the complete list of attendees and agenda is included at appendix X. The workshop facilitators welcomed everyone and invited the Council to set the scene. The workshop was initiated with a discussion about “why we are here” to get different perspectives from the participants and share the key challenges and priorities for the site. There was a broad consensus amongst the participants about the list of issues that were already identified through the Issues and Responses Report (December 2014) and the urgency to prepare a coordinated plan that captures various themes. We provide a summary of comments discussed under the broad themes below. The list of bullet point notes gathered during the workshop are summarised at appendix 2.

### **Identity and character**

2.2 The expansion of Princes Risborough can help to create a new identity for the town and attract new residents. It also provides the opportunity for addressing the town’s future needs and avoids piecemeal development. The existing town needs to broaden the town centre offer and compete with neighbouring towns in terms of facilities and range of choices. There is the acknowledgement that the town needs to attract diverse range of age-groups to be sustainable over the long term, create an image that complements its existing strengths i.e. the historic town centre, natural setting and family friendly environment.

2.3 There is clear focus on maintaining the physical separation between Princes Risborough and adjoining villages to retain their respective identities and avoid coalescence. In particular, Longwick will be affected by the expansion area and various approaches to address this concern were discussed at the workshop. Similarly, the Alscot Conservation Area’s character and setting requires safeguarding. The heritage assets and their landscape setting provide the opportunity to create distinctive character. At the high level masterplanning stage, it was suggested that a landscape buffer between the new development and Conservation Area is the preferred design strategy.

2.4 There is strong local landscape character that should be reflected in the development form, plot layout and routes throughout the expansion area. The vistas towards St.Mary’s Church, open spaces along Crowbrook, direct routes to the town centre and defining the boundary treatment of the rural edge could inform the structure of the new development parcels.

### **Movement network and access**

- 2.5 The proposed expansion area is away from the existing train station and public transport routes. However, there are opportunities with the East West Rail corridor improvements and resulting increase in the train network capacity to accommodate the proposed growth. The site presents one of the most sustainable locations in meeting the town's growth.
- 2.6 Strengthening alternatives to the car and relieving congestion by providing a new through road are some of the key issues that underpinned the discussion on this theme. The participants supported the principle of integrating the proposed through road with the development and provide direct access from the train station. However, further investigations are necessary to overcome some of the potential deliverability challenges i.e. rail crossings, working around the existing landownership to plan the exact road alignment will be subject to further technical studies. The study should include defining the urban design character of this route that responds to the landscape setting, views and vistas and development frontages.
- 2.7 An integrated transport network plan that includes train, roads, walking and cycling for the existing town and future expansion would provide the required framework to coordinate various projects under this theme. Putting in place long term funding for the new bus routes and having them up and running in time for the development would be the key to encourage sustainable travel patterns.
- 2.8 The timing of the train infrastructure and its impact on the development delivery programme needs to be monitored carefully. Further firm commitments from the project partners on this issue will provide more certainty to the Council and landowners in safeguarding the land required for the infrastructure.

### **Natural environment, water, ecology and landscape**

- 2.9 Princes Risborough has a fantastic landscape setting and this is a unique asset that could help in providing a distinctive identity to the new neighbourhoods. The historic landscape character and settlement patterns are special and could inform the development areas. However, they are not yet fully recognised in the emerging framework and it was suggested that the detailed evidence of the landscape character appraisal and green infrastructure strategy for the expansion area be prepared.
- 2.10 There are potential cross cutting issues when combining the green and blue infrastructure strategies. It could address number of aspects e.g. water management, sustainable urban drainage and enhancing ecological setting. Early engagement with the Environment Agency in identifying sensitive environmental areas early in the AAP process was suggested.

### **Town centre and community facilities**

- 2.11 Reinforcing and supporting the existing town centre is identified as the priority with a scope for a local centre within the expansion area when development reaches the critical mass.

The early phases of the expansion area are within the walking distance of the new town centre and it was suggested that the local centre could be located near the new 'through road' and along Longwick Road would complement the main Town Centre uses. Potential for independent retailers, co-locating the community uses and sharing and managing parking facilities were mentioned as one of the ways to optimise the existing assets.

#### **Employment and economic development**

- 2.12 The existing employment sites within the expansion area require careful integration with the new development. There is potential for their relocation elsewhere within the expansion area to the more accessible site and away from the town centre, however the critical issues such as the landownership, contamination and offering viable alternatives to the landowners should be explored prior to proposing the site specific allocations.
- 2.13 The business critical infrastructure such as providing the high speed broadband requires prioritising. Supporting small businesses, homes with home-office adaptation could be other ways to encourage business use.

#### **Infrastructure and delivery**

- 2.14 Preparing a clear vision for the expansion area in collaboration with the key stakeholders including the Local Enterprise Partnership is essential to secure the confidence of the investors. This will help in providing the much needed critical infrastructure and unlocking development land ahead of the individual plots coming forward. A high-level delivery plan of how phasing could work and what various delivery mechanism available to the Council should be explored as the priority.

### **3.0 Conclusions**

- 3.1 The expansion area provides once in a lifetime opportunity to address the town's future needs comprehensively and create a sustainable community than retains its own unique identity. The new development should be well-integrate well with Princes Risborough but avoid coalescence with Longwick. The benefits of the expansion to the existing town and surround villages, for example improvements to the public transport, meeting the local housing need, green infrastructure, town centre and community facilities needs to be outlined clearly to community. This work would help in informing the mix of development uses and test their viability at the next stage.
- 3.2 Majority of the expansion area land is in the private ownership and enabling works to unlock parts of the site will require a long lead-in time for delivering infrastructure. These challenges observed in Princes Risborough are not dissimilar to other new settlements planned elsewhere in the UK. However, the unique landscape setting and sensitivities around the existing settlements requires a comprehensively planned development at this location that addresses the local issues by working collaboratively with the landowners.

- 3.3 An expansion area of this scale and complexity requires a mechanism that goes beyond the Council's statutory planning authority role with the focus on the 'partnership' and 'delivery'. It is timely to establish a clear project governance structure that can provide the context for progressing the Area Action Plan but also guides the future thinking about managing and maintaining the green infrastructure and community assets.
- 3.4 The Emerging Development Strategy (May 2015) report prepared by Tibbalds suggests a clear direction of travel on taking forward some of the key issues. These require debating and discussion with the wider stakeholders prior to arriving at the preferred spatial strategy for the expansion of Princes Risborough. We will facilitate the discussion on these emerging design principles at the next workshop and provide a set of recommendations and actions to take forward the project delivery.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1

### Workshop Agenda

## Princes Risborough Expansion, Wycombe District Council

27.04.15

**Venue:** Wycombe District Council, Queen Victoria Road, High Wycombe, HP11 1BB

**Time:** 1400-1700

**Facilitators:** Helen Walker, Cabe Built Environment Expert  
Conor Moloney, Cabe Built Environment Expert  
Mandar Puranik, Cabe Advisor

**Preparation:** *Please come prepared to outline your team's key priority and challenge for Princes Risborough*

1345-1400	Tea/ coffee	
1400-1410	<b>Welcome-</b> introductions and purpose of the workshop <b>Where we are now</b> -scene setting presentation	Penelope Tollitt
1410-1415	A brief introduction to Cabe Design Council- our role and expected outcomes for the day	Mandar Puranik
1415-1430	<b>Why we are here-</b> Sharing perspectives and identifying the key priorities and challenges for Princes Risborough Expansion	Helen Walker and Conor Moloney
1430-1520	Theme based discussion focussing on the key issues - one issue at a time and understanding different perspectives (50 minutes)	Discussion led by Cabe
1520-1530	Tea/coffee break	
1530-1630	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparing a spatial diagram/s for the site (30 minutes)</li> <li>• Agreeing the design priorities and site specific principles (30 minutes)</li> </ul>	Discussion led by Cabe
1630-1645	Creating the roadmap going forward (plenary session)	All
1645-1700	<b>Pulling it all together-</b> summary of the day and next steps	Cabe
1700	Close	

**List of attendees:**

Wycombe District Council

- Penelope Tollitt, Head of Planning and Sustainability
- Ian Manktelow, Planning Policy team leader
- Rosie Brake, Planning Policy officer
- Gerard Coll, S106 / infrastructure
- Lucy Bellinger, Principal Development Management Officer
- Rebecca Hart, Urban Designer
- Add name
- Add name

Tibbalds

- Hilary Satchwell
- Julia Beyer

Buckinghamshire County Council

- Ryan Bunce, Transport strategy
- Steve Watson, East West Rail consortium
- Dave Roberts, Passenger Transport
- Karen Fisher, Flood team leader
- Jessica Dippie, Flood team officer
- Jon Clark, Rights of Way
- Sally Sharp, Planning liaison with Districts

## Appendix 2

### Workshop discussion points

1. Infrastructure- uncertainty over rail corridor and easements and it is likely to be determined in coming two years
2. What can the urban extension do to address the long-term liabilities of the existing town?
3. How to attract the people you want move to Princes Risborough? What sort of lifestyle can you offer?
4. The new road: purpose, alignment, character?
5. Boundary definition, gaps between settlement- if a gap can be frames as a boundary it will be more durable
6. Town centre offer – independent retailers, night time economy etc. rather than charity shops etc.
7. A safe place to live. How roads could be made safer to walk e.g. 20mph roads, cycle only etc.
8. A good place to bring up kids – safe, good schools etc.
9. Hypnos site key link to town centre; pedestrian/cycle crossing of railway is key
10. Infrastructure deficit: water supply, sewage, broadband etc.
11. Bus services: currently no bus service to Thame
12. Bus solution is inter-urban
13. Pedestrian/cycle routes
  - a. To countryside
  - b. Via pedestrian crossing of rail
  - c. A large railway could be bundled with open space
  - d. To Thane
  - e. Through Alscot
  - f. Direct connection to Princes Risborough station
14. Way finding issue from Princes Risborough station

### Issues and Priorities discussion

#### Strategy and Infrastructure

- Covering North and South County
- Also Broadband access, Mobile coverage, Electricity-Longwick
- Superfast Broadband- County objective

#### Integrated Landscape Approach

- Defining a new eye
- Perception, misconception- that anything not protected is not of value
- District Settlements
- Green infrastructure links
- Natural environment
- Character/ecology

#### Image and Identity

- Princes Risborough Plus
- What image of a place are we trying to create?

### **Image and purpose**

- Perception of 'PR' as an old place to live
- Could attract more variety to the town centre
- Centre- make it more sustainable
- Critical mass- innovative approach to housing
- Balance of different land uses

### **Deliverability of transport infrastructure**

- Ransom strips, fragmented land ownership
- Multiple transport modes and settings
- Rail crossings working for all modes
- Landowners summit in May
- Rationalisation of crossings- especially of walking trails and bridgeways

### **Integration**

- Avoiding disjointed developments
- Overcoming the perception of 'Building beyond the railway' and creating a new edge.

### **Sustainable Drainage**

- Looking at comprehensive integrated drainage, rather than plot by plot approach
- Link to EW and Ecology
- Key is surface integration

### **Buses**

- 300 Aylesbury HW- when used but commercial operation unlikely to divert?
- 120-121R, infrequent, under review, to Thame
- Risborough County Bus- 16 seater scheduled service
- Access issues at PR Station
- Long term funding an issue

### **Historic Landscaping**

- Strangely rectangular- Provenance of Icknield Way
- No formal recognition- apart from Historic landscape character appraisal
- No architectural, landscape pattern

### **Railway**

- Issues of opportunities- from March 2019
- One train per hour MK- Aylesbury-London Marylebone
- Potential two trains per hour- Economic value 11:1
- Timing is critical- if not 2015-2019 then 2019-2024

- This will address that gap
- Passenger and freight capacity,
- Capacity and Constraints- Junction at PR may need reconfiguring of station

### **Integrated Transport**

- Integrating with existing town- new route
- Road vs street- not just a 'highways decision'
- Railway severance an issue in developing the whole place
- Schools, shops, bikes, buses etc

### **Shops and Parking**

- Where new rental? Town centre or extension?
- Resistance to major out of town rental
- Demographic/ ownership- likely different in existing and new

### **Place making**

- How placemaking influences behaviour
- Roads buses cycles

### **Cycling**

- Need to connect
- PR with Thame and town with Alscot
- Also Ridgeway
- Phoenix trail
- Rail crossings

### **Catchment Management**

- Streams- environment
- Sediment management
- Flooding- water management
- Floods from surface water- groundwater- as it doesn't show on mapping
- Is there something we need to do upstream?
- No plans from Environment Agency to mitigate locally some plans near station?
- Thames water strategy- published