### Key Issues

The Thetford SUE site had a number of key environmental issues which had to be addressed and reconciled through the design of the masterplan which incorporated significant mitigation measures. This involved extensive public and stakeholder consultation which included a two day environmental stakeholder seminar which was organised and run by Wardell Armstrong and attended by Breckland District Council, Natural England, English Heritage, Environment Agency, RSPB, Norfolk Wildlife Trust, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Forestry Commission, Norfolk County Council, Greater Norwich Development Partnership (GNDP), Croxton Parish Council, Moving Thetford Forward, Thetford Town Council, Kilverstone Parish Council and Anglian Water.

Key environmental issues included ecology (junction improvements within an SPA and SAC, breeding birds); significant buried archaeology; Scheduled Monument within west of site; and transport.

### Purpose of the project

The Crown Estate and Kilverstone Estate are seeking outline planning permission for the Thetford SUE site. Wardell Armstrong was commissioned to prepare the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and provide input into the masterplan with particular emphasis on the environmental constraints. The proposals have been brought forward within the context of a robust policy framework whereby the options for spatial development in Thetford has been considered at a regional, sub-regional and local level.

### Description of the project

A Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE) to the north of Thetford, Norfolk. The scheme comprises up to 5,000 residential properties, as well as employment, retail and other mixed uses. The site consists of approximately 270 hectares of agricultural land and is located within the district of Breckland.
## Lessons learnt

The scheme was conceived, developed and refined through an extensive, iterative process of EIA, masterplanning and consultation, involving technical experts, local government, key stakeholders and the general public. This holistic and participatory approach ensured that all economic, social and environmental considerations had been properly reconciled in the development proposals. In line with the aspirations of central Government and local councils to involve communities more fully with the planning process, an extensive consultation process took place to ensure that the proposal considered and incorporated the views of local residents and stakeholders.

The consultation approach consisted of 3 key areas: public consultation events, environmental stakeholder workshops and meetings with Parish Councils and Local Residents Groups. At each stage of the process residents were encouraged to give feedback both verbally and through written forms and were provided with leaflets updating them on any progress with the application and major changes.

Early and thorough engagement with the environmental stakeholders was invaluable as it allowed the environmental issues to be addressed while allowing the masterplan to fulfil the aspirations of Breckland District Council. In particular:

- Close liaison with English Heritage and the County Archaeologist allowed the sensitive Scheduled Monument to be incorporated into the masterplan. After discussion with Natural England the area was proposed to be used to provide a focus for developing viable populations of UK BAP beetle and rare saprophytic species which were found on site. A phased approach to intrusive archaeological investigation was also agreed.

- Consultation with Natural England and Breckland District Council regarding the need for appropriate assessment early in the process allowed sufficient time for the necessary survey work to be done prior to submission of the planning application and EIA.

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