



# NORTHSTOWE PHASE 2 PLANNING APPLICATION

Town Centre Strategy

August 2014



Homes &  
Communities  
Agency



# Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Purpose	1
3. Developing the Strategy	2
4. Northstowe Town Centre Vision	3
5. A Successful Town Centre	4
5.1 Distinctive	6
5.2 Dynamic	8
5.3 Convenient	12
6. The Potential Offer	14
6.1 Retail Capacity and Impact	16
6.2 Anchors	18
6.3 Town Centre Floorspace to serve future phases	19
6.4 Town centre parking	20
6.5 Local trading centres	22
7. Guiding Principles	24
8. Implementing the Strategy	26
8.1 Town Centre phasing	28
8.2 Measuring success	30
8.3 The Power of 10	30
9. Action Steps	31
10. Policy Review	32



# 1. Introduction

Northstowe will be the first new town in England for many years, and will be the first and only town in the South Cambridgeshire District. Northstowe will comprise a town centre, plus two local centres, education facilities, other community infrastructure, and up to 10,000 new houses. These new houses will provide homes to around 25,000 people.

The overarching vision for Northstowe is for a sustainable and thriving new town where residents can lead happy, healthy lives, and the provision of the right type of housing is integral to support this.

Northstowe is being delivered in a number of phases. Phase 1 has been granted planning permission (S/0388/12/OL) for up to 1,500 homes, one primary school, the northern local centre, a section of the dedicated busway, a sports hub, employment uses and the waste recycling centre. Phase 1 is due to produce the first housing completions in Q1 2016.

Phase 2 of Northstowe will deliver the central section of the town, including the town centre area. A more detailed explanation of the Phase 2 planning application can be found in the Planning Statement submitted with the application.

The Northstowe Town Centre Strategy (TCS) is submitted in support of the application for Phase 2 of Northstowe, submitted by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA).

# 2. Purpose

The role of the Town Centre Strategy (TCS) is to set a framework that will encourage delivery of a sustainable and dynamic town centre. The Northstowe Area Action Plan (NAAP) policy NS/5 requires the creation of a Town Centre Strategy to aid the long-term planning of the town centre.

The Strategy outlines the development of the town centre and the long-term influences which will affect it and translates them into a starting point for the sustainable implementation of the town centre using a set of Guiding Principles (Section 4).

The TCS is not intended to be a business plan for the town centre. It is the first stage in delivering the town centre which will be informed further through design coding, S106 negotiation and more detailed planning throughout the course of the Northstowe development.

The Strategy provides a starting point for the evolution of the town centre and should be adapted as necessary to take best advantage of the conditions at the time and emerging trends.

# 3. Developing the Strategy

The Town Centre Strategy (TCS) has been developed in line with policy, a range of technical studies and various consultation events with statutory stakeholders and the public.

The Economic Development Strategy (EDS) for Northstowe (Genecon, 2014) is the foundation of the TCS. It is recognised that the town centre will be at the heart of economic activity in Northstowe, and so it follows that this Strategy is completely aligned with the aims of the EDS. The four key aims of the EDS have been interpreted and applied to the town centre environment in this Strategy to provide a framework for the evolution of the town centre. Using this approach, the development of the town centre aims to complement and encourage wider economic activity at Northstowe.

There is a clear aspiration for Northstowe to be more than simply a residential development and be a productive place. The TCS draws on retail studies, as well as sub-regional market analysis (focussing on housing, employment, services etc.) to establish the commercial potential of the town centre and its effect on the wider area. These reports estimate what may be delivered by the market at various stages of the Northstowe development. The results have formed the basis of the indicative floorspace in the Phase 2 masterplan.

The quality of the built environment is of paramount importance to the success of the town centre. High quality buildings and public spaces create a place that encourages frequent use, inspires confidence and can promote the whole of Northstowe as a desirable place to live and work. The town centre will, in effect, be the 'shop window' for the rest of Northstowe. The quality of the connection between the buildings, public spaces and landscaping will create a distinctive contemporary character that will differentiate Northstowe from other centres. The Strategy sets out a framework for the creation of this character and how this can spread and influence the rest of the town in a positive way.

Consultation with the public, the Cambridgeshire Quality Panel and the Local Authorities and other stakeholders has consistently highlighted the character and design of the town centre as being crucial to its success. This Strategy does not deal with design in detail. However, it does introduce a set of intentions and guiding principles which are informed by the pre-application engagement on Phase 2. These guiding principles illustrate the potential of the place to form a distinct character and are articulated further in the Design and Access Statement (DAS). Detailed development of these principles will be considered in the Phase 2 Design Code, which will be produced prior to commencement of development of the main Phase 2 area.

## 4. Northstowe Town Centre Vision

*“Northstowe town centre will be distinctive, dynamic and convenient. It will be the place to learn, do business and have fun.”*

The Vision statement for the town centre at Northstowe captures the aspiration for a successful and active place which contributes to the economy and wellbeing of the local area.

The Vision has two important elements.

- First, encouraging the personality and character of Northstowe town centre – ***distinctive, dynamic and convenient***.
- Second, that the town centre will offer a variety of ways to experience it – ***learn, do business and have fun***.

This Strategy is organised into sections which show how these aims could be met in the town centre.

In the next section entitled, ‘*A Successful Town Centre*’ the proposed personality, character and purpose of Northstowe town centre is outlined, suggesting how it could become distinctive, dynamic and convenient.

The section entitled, ‘*The Potential Offer*’ shows the results of detailed research conducted in the local area which has highlighted the aspirations of potential future residents and commercial investors. This section provides details on the likely commercial occupiers and service providers in the town centre; education, retail, leisure, employment and others which will make the town centre a place to learn, do business and have fun.

This section also discusses how these uses may change through the many years of development at Northstowe. It shows what could be delivered by the market in the early years of the town centre, and the strategy for the development and adaptation of the town centre in the intervening period until it reaches maturity.

‘*The Guiding Principles*’ takes the evidence presented in the previous sections and sets out clear development principles which aim to shape the town centre.

‘*Implementing the Strategy*’ discusses a wide variety of important issues including the key elements of the town centre and an indicative phased delivery plan. It also proposes future Governance arrangements and provides a set of initial Action Steps needed to ensure the town centre fulfils its potential.

## 5. A Successful Town Centre

The town centre will be the defining feature of Northstowe and will shape the perception of the whole town.

Given this, it is crucial that the town centre is *distinctive, dynamic and convenient* and that the Vision is implemented imaginatively.

The following pages outline the character and personality that will be encouraged to form in the town centre and suggests how they translate into action and delivery.







## 5.1 Distinctive

### Principle 1: Aesthetically distinctive

Northstowe town centre should be shaped by confident architecture which references the local context in a contemporary way, providing an exceptional setting for a vibrant place.

The tallest buildings and highest density housing will be built in the town centre. Accommodation within the town centre will create a resident community bringing activity to the streets and using bars and restaurants during the evenings. The frontages of commercial buildings on the ground floor of residential buildings will add variety and interest to the street as well as being easily accessible.

Northstowe will seek to encourage a mix of uses and businesses, encouraging a range of building types and styles. These are likely to be delivered over a number of years bringing a rich variety of buildings and spaces with the flexibility for the town centre to adapt successfully over the long-term.

The Northstowe Phase 2 Design Code will develop the guidelines that shape the way Phase 2 will look and feel.



### Principle 2: Connected to nature

The town centre will have a symbiotic relationship with the landscape. This is achieved in the masterplan with natural elements flowing from the wider landscape into the heart of the town centre.

A landscaped route will run east-to-west through Northstowe, linking the water park on the eastern edge to the town square. From the town square, visitors will be able to travel along an avenue with cycle/pedestrian paths and swales, passing the education and recreational facilities, leading to the water park. Later in the development of Phase 2, the route will continue to connect the town square with the water tower area and enhance cycle and pedestrian links to Longstanton.

More detail on the delivery of these routes can be found in the 'Implementing the Strategy' section.

This route, together with the network of Greenways and areas of Green Separation provide an attractive way to access the town centre facilities from within Northstowe, nearby villages and from the CGB.

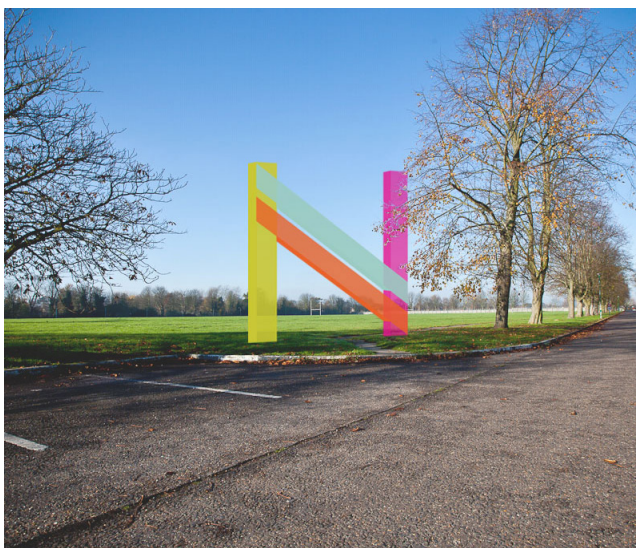


### Principle 3: Offering something different

In order to offer something different, there should be an emphasis on encouraging small and medium enterprises to provide retail, service and leisure opportunities in addition to the national operators you may expect in a town centre of this size. The town square provides an opportunity for an outdoor marketplace and live events which over time can build Northstowe's reputation for creativity.

The town centre includes an educational facility and business space within walking distance from the town square and busway stop. In contrast to other centres, Northstowe will become a place where people can also come to learn and do business, rather than just be consumers.

The offer at Northstowe will take a number of years to develop. Indicative phasing diagrams are shown in the Implementing the Strategy section.



### Principle 4: Active and clear marketing of the town centre

The marketing of Northstowe has begun through consultation events and communication messages which have continued throughout 2014. A distinctive brand has been created for the whole town and will be used throughout the development of the town to help create a shared identity between the phases.

As the town centre begins to be built, Northstowe residents, visitors and potential investors should be made aware of the new facilities and be encouraged to participate. The marketing of the town centre will be an important element of the inward investment strands of the EDS implementation plan.

Feedback should be continually sought from residents, visitors, key stakeholders and potential investors to improve the offer and positioning of the town centre.

As the town centre develops and Northstowe begins to form into a significant centre of activity, the perception of the place will become defined more and more by visitor's experiences and word-of-mouth rather than informative marketing. The key to the success of the town centre is to ensure that the quality of the place exceeds the expectations of visitors who have been attracted to visit by marketing efforts.

## 5.2 Dynamic

### Principle 5: Active Town Square

The town square will be a catalyst for creativity at Northstowe. Acting as the main gathering point for residents and visitors alike, the square can become a hub of activity that breeds the innovation and dynamism called for in the Northstowe Economic Development Strategy.

Town squares provide the most impact when they allow for multiple uses, encourage activity throughout the day and are a pleasure to be in. Northstowe town square will be planned to be surrounded by active, frequently-used facilities. Cafes, restaurants and performances will be encouraged to 'spill-over' into the square. The movement, sounds and smells that they create will add to the experience of the place and encourage repeated use of the square.

There should be a combination of day-time uses such as retail, education, employment uses and health facilities. These can be complemented by bars, restaurants and sporting facilities to provide activity in the evening. The masterplan makes employment uses integral to the town centre, rather than placing them in a separate zoned area, and the increased footfall this creates should improve the use of facilities. Residential accommodation in the town centre will have a similar effect, and will aid the vitality of the square during the evening.

The formal uses surrounding the town square should be supported by spontaneous use by residents and visitors - people taking picnics, meeting each other and children playing together. The design of the square has the greatest impact on whether people will feel comfortable enough to claim ownership of the space and use it for themselves.

The town square will have three main modes of use – default, market and event. These cover the three main ways in which the space will be used.

#### Everyday mode

The everyday mode is how the square will be configured most of the time. The design of the square

will integrate landscaped elements flowing from the edge of the town, seamlessly bringing them into the heart of Northstowe. The town square has been sized specifically to concentrate the 'buzz' of activity within it to produce a memorable vibrant place.

The design of the square will encourage visitors to be playful, take part in activities and experience what Northstowe has to offer.

#### Market mode

An outdoor market in the town square could offer incredible vibrancy and variety of choice. The design of the square should enable it to be used for this purpose.

Outdoor markets, particularly in affluent areas, have undergone a renaissance in recent years. Formerly underused and forgotten markets have become spectacles in themselves, drawing visitors in from surrounding towns and villages. They offer an unrivalled diversity of goods and an opportunity for independent businesses to trade with a prominence usually reserved for the national multiple-store brands.

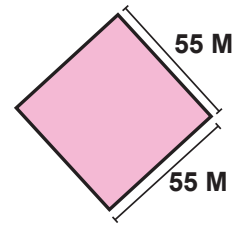
The design of the market mode should plan for the equipment, facilities and circulation needed to host an outdoor market effectively. The materials used for the public realm, the provision of utilities and fixed landscaping in everyday mode will have a direct impact on the ability of the square to adapt.

#### Event mode

The town square should have the ability to host events such as live music and theatre performances. The infrastructure and spatial requirements for performances such as these should be integrated into the design of the square, allowing them to be seamlessly stored when not in use.

See Section 6 of the *Design and Access Statement* for more information.

**PROPOSED NORTHSTOWE TOWN SQUARE**



**CAMBRIDGE MARKET SQUARE**



**CATHEDRAL SQUARE, PETERBOROUGH**

