

## BRECKLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Report of:** Deputy Leader, Executive Member for Corporate Strategy and Investment

**To:** Cabinet, 16<sup>th</sup> October 2018

**Author:** Robert Campbell, Inward Investment Manager

**Subject:** Snetterton Heath Growth and Design Plan

**Purpose:** To agree a programme of activity and funding for the Council to support and influence the shaping and growth of the Snetterton Heath employment area

### **Recommendation(s):**

- 1) That the Cabinet approves to proceed with the proposed programme of activity in pursuit of supporting the growth of the Snetterton Heath employment area.
- 2) That the Cabinet agrees an allocation of £150k from the Growth and Investment Fund to allow the proposed project to be implemented.

### **1.0 BACKGROUND**

1.1 With the Council's project to upgrade Snetterton Heath's electricity power capacity moving forward, it is timely to review what additional interventions may be required in order to ensure that the potential for Snetterton Heath, as a large, successful, high value employment area, is realised. The potential returns in terms of higher wage employment and additional business rates income for the Council are significant.

### **1.2 The site at present**

1.2.1 Snetterton Heath is identified as a strategic employment site within Breckland Council's adopted LDF Core Strategy (2009). It is located four miles south-west of the market town of Attleborough and lies both north and south of the A11, with existing, well-constructed access to the dual carriageway through an all-movement junction.

With the exception of the well-developed logistics, warehousing and transport cluster to the south east, development on the site has been piecemeal with no other developed sector clusters. Many of the older buildings and pre-fab constructions house micro business activities, and the general quality of this as an environment for business is below modern standards.

Gateway entrances to the site are undeveloped and in some parts of the site are visually unappealing. There are no shared facilities on site of the type you might expect within a large business park.

Taking into account Snetterton Heath's prime location on the Cambridge Norwich Tech Corridor, the site has not been able to attract many recent quality developments, with the exception of the new Nature's Menu pet food production plant. Whilst lack of electricity power, now being addressed through a £3.43m upgrade, is a factor, Snetterton Heath has developed little reputation as a desirable business destination beyond the well-established logistics, warehousing and transport operations.

The site has no overall masterplan, brand or marketing plan and this is a limiting factor in presenting it as a strong investment opportunity within the Tech Corridor.

### 1.3 **Development Potential**

- 1.3.1 Snetterton Heath is a large employment area capable of accommodating activities across a range of sectors.
- 1.3.2 To the South East of the A11, warehousing, logistics and transport is very well established with some expansion space being available. The railhead is owned by Johnston Logistics UK and has some limited use at present. Access to the site is good.
- 1.3.3 To the north west of the A11, the only recent development is the large pet food production building owned and operated by Natures Menu. There are a number of smaller units to the east of Natures Menu supporting a number of light industrial and warehousing activities. Access to the site is good with some 80 acres of undeveloped land. Also located in the north-eastern corner is the 9 hectare (22 acres) site of the 44MW Renewable Energy Generating Plant, which is now producing power into the National Grid via a connection to Diss.
- 1.3.4 Just to the south of the A11, a petrol station and drive-through eatery is under construction. This sits in an island site and has no negative impact to adjacent developments.
- 1.3.5 To the south and south west of the existing Snetterton Park ex-retail units, there is significant land of circa 70 acres including a sizable A11 frontage.
- 1.3.6 The primary road access to the Snetterton racing circuit runs adjacent to 27 acres of employment land owned by Motor Sport Vision. Access to the land is good, with the additional potential for direct drive-on access to the circuit for vehicle testing. Some high end automotive brands already rent the circuit for testing but there is currently no automotive or engineering development centre at, or adjacent to, the circuit.
- 1.3.7 The opportunity exists to develop a significant business destination, large enough to accommodate a number of sector clusters and flexible enough to provide a mixture of quality business environments, bound together by a single overarching place brand.

### 1.4 **Proposed activities**

- 1.4.1 The core activities of the proposed project are:-
  - Design a vision and masterplan for Snetterton based around priority sectors of interest and taking account of the usage preferences set out in the new Local Plan. This provides the means of brand marketing the whole of the site as a quality destination.
  - Develop a design standards specification for Snetterton Heath, as part of Supplementary Planning Document which can add further detail to the policies in the Local Plan. This can help shape and influence the quality of development at Snetterton Heath, and defend against poor quality development which detracts from the overall appeal of Snetterton Heath as a location for inward investment, especially from higher value industry.

- Commission a 'fly-through' video for the site together with additional marketing materials to best promote Snetterton Heath as a quality business destination within the Cambridge Norwich Tech Corridor.
- Undertake an updated site audit to guide how Snetterton Heath can best be brought forward, potential uses for specific parts of the site and possible development phasing. Part of ensuring that a masterplan approach to developing the site can be achieved.
- Ensure that any identified remaining site constraints are identified and quantified, so that all stakeholders involved in the marketing of the site are aware. Determine if there is a case for any further public sector investment to overcome constraints.
- Investigate the provision of alternative means of access to the site (other than by private car). These might include cycle ways, pedestrian routes, public transport (building on the recommendations of a 2013 study entitled 'Attleborough Smarter Choices). Ensures that Snetterton Heath is able to promote an intention towards a low carbon future.

## 1.5 Target outcomes supported by the project

1.5.1 The purpose of the project is to support and influence those strategic actions and outcomes which will underpin the future of Snetterton Heath as a successful large employment site, able to match an agreed vision in terms of preferred sectors, scale and density of employment, physical layout, and the Council's own 'place' within the vision.

1.5.2 Target outcomes to include:-

- New developments with a high quality of design.
- Increased inward investment.
- Investment in the Snetterton 'gateway' entrances.
- Improvements in the reputation of Snetterton as a quality business destination.
- The development of a positive 'brand' for Snetterton Heath and the associated good PR.
- An overall increase in demand, including demand from higher value and higher skilled businesses.
- A better coordinated development.

## 1.6 Next Steps and Timing

It is proposed to commence the project from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2018 for a total nine month period. Three months would be used to scope the project and procure external resource. The following six months would be the core delivery period.

## 2.0 OPTIONS

2.1 Option 1: Agree the proposed project to support the growth of the Snetterton Heath employment area and authorise the allocation of up to £150k from the Growth and Investment Fund to allow the project to be implemented (Recommended)

2.3 Option 2: Decide not to pursue a proactive approach to Snetterton Heath and limit the Council's involvement to the provision of additional electricity power (Not Recommended)

## 3.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 3.1 Snetterton Heath is Breckland's single largest under developed employment area, with significant development potential. Without further direct actions by the Council, there is a danger that the site will not bring forward enough significant high value sector development, with a corresponding loss of high value job opportunities.
- 3.2 Proactive action by the Council can significantly increase the pace of development at Snetterton and influence the quality of developments, especially those which will support high tech sector development and corresponding higher value jobs.
- 3.3 The gathering pace of the Cambridge Norwich Tech Corridor initiative provides a timely opportunity to push forward development opportunities at Snetterton Heath.
- 3.4 The proposed project supports delivery of the new Local Plan in a significant way.

#### 4.0 **EXPECTED BENEFITS**

4.1 Snetterton Heath has the potential to support the following outcomes:-

- 3,200 jobs
- 68.1 hectares of employment land increased in density with a further 20 hectares delivered over the Local Plan period to 2036.
- 218,690 sq m of employment land created
- Net additional GVA of £106m per annum
- Private Sector Investment of £224m
- Key sector growth including Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering, Advanced Food and Drink, and Transport, Freight and Logistics.

4.2 The proposed project will provide the following benefits to the Council:-

- Additional business rates income from a large employment site.
- Higher business premises values with a corresponding impact on business rate valuations.
- The attraction of highly skilled workers, supporting the transformation of the District's economy.
- The means to influence the quality of developments at Snetterton Heath through the development of a design standards specification.
- A landmark business location within the Cambridge Norwich Tech Corridor
- Reinforcement of the Council's reputation as being open for business.

#### 5.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

##### 5.1 **Carbon Footprint / Environmental Issues**

5.1.1 Individual planning applications for individual commercial property schemes will detail any carbon footprint and environmental issues.

5.1.2 Additional employment opportunities at Snetterton have the potential to reduce average travel to work distances for workers living in Breckland, many of whom travel to Norwich and Bury St Edmunds for work at present. This becomes particularly relevant as the two major house building schemes in Attleborough and Thetford occur.

##### 5.2 **Corporate Priorities**

5.2.1 This project will contribute to the following Council priorities:-

Support Breckland to develop and thrive

Developing the local economy to be vibrant with continued growth

### 5.3 **Financial**

5.3.1 The project will be financed from the Growth and Investment Fund. See appendix B for the Proforma B.

### 5.4 **Reputation**

5.4.1 The proposed body of work is designed to help support improving the reputation of Snetterton Heath as a high quality destination for industry, capitalising upon the site's many strengths.

### 5.5 **Risk Register**

5.5.1 A risk register will be created and reviewed on a regular basis by the project's delivery board as part of the delivery management of the project.

### 5.6 **Stakeholders / Consultation / Timescales**

5.6.1 The development of an agreed vision will require careful negotiation with key public and private stakeholders, both to ensure a robust and supported vision is developed, and so that the vision finds its correct place under the major place strategies, including the District Local Plan, the LEP and Norfolk Economic Strategies, and the CNTC Spatial Vision.

5.6.2 The Council already has regular meetings with the major landowner group so this provides a well-developed forum to discuss, negotiate and agree a vision and plan for Snetterton Heath with them.

5.6.3 Engagement with the key public bodies can be done through existing channels. Breckland Council currently has direct representation on the NA LEP main and delivery boards, and has CEO and Leader representation on the relevant CNTC and Norfolk Growth Groups. Officer groups are in place to support each of these, providing further engagement channels.

5.6.4 The engagement plan and timescales will be set out in the project delivery plan.

### 6.0 **WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED**

6.1 District Wards: All Saints and Wayland  
Parish Wards : Snetterton

### 7.0 **ACRONYMS**

NA LEP	New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership
CNTC	Cambridge Norwich Tech Corridor

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Background papers:- None

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**Key Decision:** No

**Exempt Decision:** No

**This report refers to a Discretionary Service**

**Appendices attached to this report:**

Appendix A - Site Map showing key land ownership  
Appendix B - Proforma B