

Rushwick Strategic Growth Area

Concept Plan Narrative

Introduction

The SWDPR spatial development strategy is to focus strategic housing growth at, or within, easy reach of existing or new rail stations to reduce impacts on an already congested highway network. Rushwick has been identified as a strategic location for a new railway station. The Strategic Allocation at Rushwick will provide a housing requirement of 1,000 new dwellings which includes employment land, a new Primary School, Local Centre and green public open spaces. The provision of a new railway station is the catalyst to enable the development, as part of the SWDP rail-based strategy for the Strategic Growth Area.

The Vision

“New development at Rushwick should be of a high quality and ensure that Rushwick continues to be a community which residents feel a part of and want to live in and that Rushwick maintains its identity as a village separate from Worcester.”

Rushwick Concept Plan: The Key Elements

Landscape Led Design

The design of new development will be landscape-led, respecting both the local rich and diverse landscape character, local historic character and by preserving important views. The expanded settlement will harmonise with the natural environment by employing street level SUDs that will form part of habitat expansion areas with the creation of a centrally located GI Corridor. The inclusion of new areas of green public open space linked by Active Travel Routes further extend the green structure that cradles the new development.

The varied topography within the allocation boundary affords outstanding views towards the Malvern Hills, to the southwest, and the balance and location of proposed green space and built form within the Concept Plan ensures that these important views are retained.

Topographically, the Rushwick Strategic Allocation sits on the northern slopes of the River Teme valley and the gentle, undulating slope down to the wide flood plain is punctuated by man-made interventions such the Bransford road, running east to west and the railway line, running southwest/northeast. The railway is in a cutting for most of its length across the site and its topography has dictated the location of the new railway station - where the gradient of the track allows for a train to make a standing start.

Outstanding views of the Malvern Hills are obtained from the PROW across open pasture at Claphill Farm and this view is maintained as the path continues southwest towards the Bransford Road at Broadmore Green. This sequential view was a major consideration when determining the boundary of the Strategic Allocation and so it was tightly drawn around

existing development to retain this key view. Bransford Road and the land to its south form a plateau with the land rising gently towards the railway line.



Broadmore Green

The Concept Plan shows a new 'village green' for Broadmore Green. This new public open space gives a further continuation of the view towards the Malvern Hills as described above, as part of the Concept Plan proposals. This green space also contains an important coalescence of Active Travel Routes linking existing and new development, railway station, new school and employment area. Some of the proposed new residential development here overlooks the open space and would also include views towards the Malverns.



Christine Avenue Park

This new area of public open space is south of the railway line and backs onto Christine Avenue in the existing settlement of Rushwick. The park sits at the top of a slope that leads down towards Upper Wick and into the flood plain of the River Teme some 25/30m below. From this natural vantage point, above the treetops, uninterrupted high-level views towards the Malvern Hills are possible. The park is on the route of an Active Travel Route linking the existing residential areas of Rushwick, Rushwick CE Primary School, the proposed eastern employment area, Playing Fields/sports pitches and the railway station.



Green Infrastructure Corridor and Biodiversity

Between Rushwick and the small settlement of Broadmore Green, a Green Infrastructure (GI) corridor is proposed along a natural river valley setting of a series of watercourses and ponds running northwest/southeast through the Strategic Allocation. This provides an opportunity for biodiversity gain and habitat creation as well as maintaining the integrity/identity of the two settlements.

This corridor forms an important GI link with both the Broadmore Green 'village green' and Christine Avenue Park. Much of this corridor is already in existence south of Bransford Road, consisting of a mix of trees and dense undergrowth in a semi-wild state along a series of watercourses and ponds.



Tree Planting and Hedgerow planting

The railway line crosses this valley on an embankment that includes culverts for the watercourses to continue their journey towards the River Teme. The embankment is populated by mature trees, particularly on its southern and northwest slopes. It is intended to enhance the existing planting with appropriate habitat planting between the railway line and Bransford Road.

To the north of Bransford Road, rear gardens of properties in Broadmore Green back onto the watercourses. It is anticipated that appropriate habitat enhancement and planting along the banks of the watercourse, although on a smaller scale than proposed south of Bransford Road, would still play an important part in 'reaching out' to existing Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) sites and the potential for creating biodiversity net gain.

New Structural tree & Hedgerow Planting

The Concept Plan indicates the GI corridor extending into the River Teme floodplain will 'connect' with existing tree lined boundaries, BAP traditional orchard sites at Upper Wick and the River Teme SSSI enabling substantial sections of the corridor to become habitat expansion zones to enhance the biodiversity and ecological connectivity across the Strategic Allocation. This would be achieved by the structural planting of trees and flora appropriate to habitat creation in this floodplain area.

Playing Fields – Sports Pitches

In accordance with guidance from Sport England, the Concept Plan includes sports provision that will meet the requirements of the expanded settlement at Rushwick. The provision includes football pitches, an additional cricket pitch and tennis courts. In addition, the Concept Plan includes new community facilities in the form of changing rooms and car park to serve the sports provision.

Community Orchard and Allotment Gardens

The Concept Plan includes two areas of allotments and a community orchard. One area of allotments and the Community Orchard are located within the GI buffer between the development proposals south of Christine Avenue and Upper Wick. The intention is to provide a wide, multifunctional green space buffer to Upper Wick and, in the case of the Community Orchard, to increase the habitat potential of an existing BAP site traditional orchard at this south-eastern corner of the Concept Plan.

Heritage Assets

The close proximity of Upper Wick and its numerous heritage assets has a 'special sense of place' The character of the historic built form, limited road access and its rural setting are qualities that the Concept Plan seeks to protect and enhance. An existing boundary of mature trees and hedgerow along the extensive rear gardens, paddocks and orchards of dwellings along Tan House Lane adjoins a Traditional Orchard BAP site. The Concept Plan includes a wide, tree planted buffer (including community orchard and allotments) as an enhancement to this historic boundary to maintain the rural nature of the PROW that passes through here and maintains the integrity and sense of remoteness of Upper Wick.

Willow House on the Bransford Road is the only statutory heritage asset within the Strategic Allocation boundary. The Broadmore Green 'village green' and the GI Corridor along central watercourses and ponds further adds to this rural setting for this heritage asset.

Residential Development

The expanded settlement will be consistent with the 20-minute neighbourhood principles and community garden principles. Design of buildings will be both locally distinctive to the Rushwick area and innovative, using local materials as part of 'the mix' in line with design policies in the SWDP and National Planning Policy Framework guidance. The settlement will have an overall site-wide average net density of 30 to 35dph in accordance with SWDPR 15 which shall be determined through the masterplanning and development management process. Boundary treatments would, extensively be of traditional hedgerows and roads and pavements will include 'street level' sustainable urban drainage systems including tree pits to

combat any surface water flooding. These 'natural' treatments would also help to expand natural habitat across the Strategic Allocation.

A new Primary School

A proposed new Primary School to serve an enlarged population at Rushwick has a central location on the Bransford Road close to both the existing settlement and new Concept Plan proposals. As with all facilities in the expanded settlement, Active Travel Routes make it possible for the school to be accessed on foot or by cycle.

Mixed Use Development

The area near the railway station includes a mixed-use business area (that might include, for example, business start-up units, farm shop and café). The railway station and these adjacent uses will be served by an access road that has its own exit from a new traffic island on the A4103. The intention here is to encourage rail users from beyond the village to use the surrounding main road network as the quickest and most convenient route to the station. A further incentive towards this will be the introduction of a 20mph speed limit throughout the expanded settlement including the Bransford Road.

Convenience Store and Improved Community Facilities

A small retail provision is planned adjacent to the school and improved Village Hall, this will include a convenience store. The Bransford Road would be subject to a 20mph speed limit to make walking and cycling to local amenities a safe experience for residents of the village.

Employment Areas

Land for employment use is located at the eastern and western ends of the expanded settlement with direct access onto the surrounding primary road network (A4440, A4103 and A44) to avoid introducing any additional vehicular traffic through the village. Active Travel Routes would connect residential and employment areas from within the expanded settlement which will ensure good access to a variety of employment opportunities for the local community.

Travelling Showpeople Site

A Travelling Showpeople site for 10 plots is proposed west of Crown East. This will have good access to the road network and will be within walking distance of the new school and shops.

Movement Principles

The Rushwick Strategic Allocation seeks to minimise car dependency by encouraging walking and cycling and providing a railway station for the expanded settlement.

Unlike the other SWDP Strategic Allocations, Rushwick is an expansion of an existing settlement and one of the main objectives of developing the Concept Plan has been to integrate the existing village with the new Active Travel routes that enable safe, easy access to all parts of the expanded settlement, including the new railway station, without the need to resort to using the car.



Active Travel

The network of existing and new foot and cycle (i.e. active travel) paths throughout the existing and expanded settlement will achieve safe green routes connecting all residential areas to the schools, railway station, employment areas, green public open spaces and sports pitches. An existing Active Travel Route to Worcester, south of the railway, beneath the A4440 via the Bransford Road, provides a commutable route beyond the confines of the village. Another existing underpass beneath the A4440 and on the north side of the railway is an existing Public Right of Way that could provide a secondary Active Travel Route in the future.

The Active Travel Route network would ensure that both the existing and new schools have easy walking access to green public open spaces that can be enjoyed by families at the end of the school day.



Development Roads

The main highway interventions proposed by the Concept Plan area are in relation to the new Railway Station and employment areas. They are:

A new traffic island on the A4103 that would serve an access road to the railway station. On the western side of this road would be one of the employment sites planned for the Rushwick expanded settlement and on the east, a new residential area close to Broadmore Green. It is proposed that both employment and new residential areas will be accessed from the access road to avoid unnecessary vehicular traffic encroaching further into the settlement along the Bransford Road and to discourage use of the Bransford Road as a 'cut through' route.

At the A4440 traffic island at the eastern end of Rushwick it is proposed to create a new road that feeds directly into the new residential areas south of the railway line. Bransford Road would be a 'T junction' on this road to limit its appeal as a 'cut through' route and so that it would primarily serve residents of the existing Rushwick settlement. A second 'T junction' on the south of the new road will give direct access into the eastern employment area at Rushwick. The intention is that at both employment areas, employment traffic would have direct access onto the surrounding main highway network. The new sports pitches will also have vehicular access through the eastern employment area. This would also help to alleviate additional traffic onto Upper Wick Lane.

It is proposed that all roads within the Strategic Allocation boundary would be subject to a 20mph speed limit.



New Railway Station, Mobility Hubs and Car Parks

The ambition for the new railway station is that it becomes a public transport/Mobility Hub for the village with secure cycle storage, e-mobility hire, bus stop and a last mile delivery solution. The 308 and 417 bus services operate through Rushwick and could be extended to include this stop. Rushwick railway station will be on the Worcester to Hereford line with wider travel destinations via Worcester Foregate Street and Worcestershire Parkway Stations. The location is determined by the gradient of the rail line and trains being able to move off from a standing start.

A new car park will serve the station, initially for 250 vehicles with potential land provision for a further 250 vehicles. A new, smaller car park will serve the existing cricket club and new sports pitches and changing facilities.

The Concept Plan indicates a second Mobility Hub opposite Rushwick CE Primary School, near to the Active travel Route beneath the A4440 that could include cycle hire and storage facilities etc in the future.



Railway Crossing

An existing pedestrian crossing over the rail line will need to be closed for operational reasons and will be replaced with a new Active Travel bridge over the railway cutting. This bridge is a crucial link in the Concept Plan that, primarily, provides direct ramp access to both railway platforms and important active travel route connectivity between development north and south of the railway.