



# Masterplanning for Rural Areas



Our rural masterplanning service brings together a range of affordable tools to support place shaping and place making in market towns, rural centres, and villages. Our dedicated service enables rural areas across the UK to properly plan and deliver projects that can support sustainable economic, social and physical growth for the future.

**Sound analysis, inspiring ideas, effective delivery**

# Why is Rural Masterplanning Important?

Government policy has identified small towns (those with a population between 2,000 and 20,000) as having significant potential to accommodate new growth through urban extensions, but this needs to be properly considered, planned and managed. Matthew Taylor's review of the rural economy and affordable housing for the Government in 2008 set out proposals for new growth to be accommodated in market towns. His report identified the extent of pressure on many market towns and rural centres to house new growth and presented a number of recommendations to Government which promoted the notion of masterplanning for rural communities. He saw it as a choice between:

**...'ringing country towns with anonymous housing estates, business and retail parks'... or encouraging ...'planning practices to deliver genuinely attractive new neighbourhoods and community extensions which actually enhance the town'...**

The Government responded to the Taylor Review in March 2009 and agreed that it is essential that improved mechanisms are devised to help shape the future of rural areas.

This impetus culminated in the launch of a 'rural masterplanning fund prospectus' in November 2009 which would provide the opportunity for local authorities and partners to secure investment to:

- Support a compelling vision for their futures by securing a package of resources and expert support to help develop their vision into workable masterplans
- The resulting plans, and the experience and expertise developed through the process, would be used to develop a range of rural-proofed tools to support other authorities to build on these exemplar programmes





# What is the purpose and benefit of Rural Masterplanning?

Masterplans are a vital tool to ensure that places are planned properly and act as a focus and reference for future activity. They help to shape for future action and ensure that activities come together in a joined up programme rather than a collection of ad hoc project ideas. They act to galvanise local stakeholders such as local business and communities and when undertaken proactively can draw together participation and action to facilitate change. Our rural masterplanning services support this by:

- Providing an overall vision to guide future development
- Identifying and responding to physical, economic, social and environmental issues
- Providing a blueprint for future development
- Providing a tool for mediation or marketing
- Engaging with local communities and local stakeholders
- Focusing on delivering place based outcomes

Effective masterplanning can also provide a catalyst for key funding bodies and agencies to become more aligned with the aims and objectives of settlements. They can provide a greater level of understanding through a clear and single plan for action; assist a funder to recognise priority projects and issues requiring investment; and enable an organisation to understand where it fits strategically alongside local level priorities.

As resources and investment becomes ever more constrained at all levels; masterplanning provides an opportunity to seize the initiative, undertake integrated planning and project implementation, provide a mechanism for engaging with funding agencies, and build a package for place shaping. The outcomes of this process must ensure that market towns, rural centres and villages continue to be vibrant and sustainable places to live and work.



# Our Rural Masterplanning Service Offer

Our holistic masterplanning service for market towns, rural centres and villages brings together a range of affordable tools that cover the entire masterplanning process to support local communities, businesses and public and voluntary sector partners to properly plan for new growth and make and shape places across individual and clusters of settlements. Our rural masterplanning service provides all local authorities and their partners with a tool which can:

- Set a vision for an area that is undergoing change
- Develop a strategy for implementing the vision
- Produce a deliverable action plan
- Take the initiative in terms of design, layout, housing, jobs and services
- Involve local communities in the development process
- Illustrate what the area might look like in the future

From town and parish councils to local strategic partnerships and local authorities we offer a range of affordable tools that cover the whole masterplanning process including:

- Stages**
- **Baselining**
    - to establish what is currently happening in the local economy, environment and community.
  - **Needs Analyses**
    - to identify the key priorities and actions which should be addressed through the masterplan.
  - **Consultation and Engagement**
    - securing the involvement and participation of key stakeholders in the creation of the masterplan.
  - **Surveying**
    - in-depth engagement with communities and businesses
  - **Concept Statements**
    - a community-led statement informing the kind of place future development should create.
  - **Feasibility Assessment**
    - to consider the demand and viability of a potential project.
  - **Action Planning Development**
    - to produce a plan of deliverable projects for the short, medium and long term.
  - **Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks**
    - to track progress and the demonstrate achievements to a range of audiences including funding agencies.

**Result**  
**A Robust, Holistic,  
Relevant and Future  
Proofed Masterplan**





## Baselining and Needs Analysis

ECOTEC can undertake a baseline analysis of the location's physical, economic, social and environmental performance. Using a bespoke suite of indicators, ECOTEC can assess the town's current position and identify emerging trends and drivers of change to inform the masterplanning process.

We are also well placed to carry out robust and evidence based needs analyses to inform the masterplanning process, focusing on the current and future economic, social and environmental needs of the town.

An example of our needs analysis work was completed for Craven District Council. This project undertook a District wide Business and Employment Needs Analysis in preparation of the new Local Development Framework. The project particularly concentrated on reviewing land and property requirements for the Craven area.

## Consultation and Community Engagement

ECOTEC and BlueFish Regeneration have extensive experience in consulting with key stakeholders and engaging with communities through the use of effective and innovative consultation methods. We can draw upon the services of our Equality and Diversity team to ensure that our approaches and techniques are fully inclusive of all groups, and using the services of our Creative Services team can help to ensure that your messages can get across to the local community as effectively as possible.

**"...Wells for the Future presents a holistic view that doesn't try too much. It is well focused, grounded on consultations and is in tune with what the community is prioritising..."**

Stephen Eldred, Chairman, North Norfolk Community Partnership

## Surveys

ECOTEC Survey is a full service market research agency, specialising in regeneration and renewal; housing; transport; and employment, skills and training. With a complement of around 600 trained survey workers, ECOTEC Survey can offer a comprehensive range of research services including:

- Door to door interviews
- Street or locational interviews
- Telephone interviews
- Postal and self completion surveys
- Focus groups
- In depth interviews
- Online surveys

## Concept Statements

Concept statements are:

...'a clear and simple expression of the kind of place that a new development should create'...

The aim of a concept statement is to achieve development that is good enough to approve. It is less detailed than a development brief but more informative for local communities and developers. It is usually used on sites of between 6 and 3,500 dwellings. The site's assets are identified and evaluated and a spatial framework is produced. Together with information on the character of the landscape, the environmental capital, sustainability indicators, and development principles, the concept statement can be developed.

## Physical Masterplanning and Delivery Plans

BlueFish Regeneration works with architects, funding specialists and regeneration experts to help and support communities to deliver high quality regeneration which meets the needs of future generations. BlueFish can offer:

- Masterplanning project management
- Feasibility assessment
- Business Plan development
- Project concept briefs – we ensure architects are clearly briefed and appointed on appropriate skills

A recent project we have completed was “Wells for the Future” – A Feasibility Study into the development of 12 sites across Wells-next-the-Sea, North Norfolk. Architect: Bramhall Blenkharn and the client was the North Norfolk Community Partnership. The image (right) was one outcome of the work demonstrating the potential of the Quayside



## Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks

ECOTEC has experience in developing monitoring and evaluation frameworks that can be used to evaluate and track change in the economic, social and environmental position of rural areas through the use of quantitative and qualitative indicators and impact measures to gauge the 'difference' a project is making.

A recent example of our work on monitoring and evaluation frameworks includes:

ECOTEC were commissioned by The Scottish Government to investigate and scope the development of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Rural Scotland. The study considered the relevance of rurality within the national set of indicators and identified potential gaps in terms of what is relevant for rural Scotland with a view to inform developing a set of KPIs.





ECOTEC worked with Leicestershire County Council to consider the **need and priorities** for a future Rural Economy Support Programme.

“...This **influential report** has added greatly to our understanding of rural economy sectors within Leicestershire. It has provided essential evidence in identifying and prioritising interventions, providing evidence to **secure additional funding** to support key sectors in the rural economy over the coming years...”

**Matthew Kempson**

Rural Partnerships Manager, Leicestershire County Council



# Rural Masterplanning Service Partners

ECOTEC, a market leader in Rural Development across the UK and Europe, together with our partner, BlueFish Regeneration offer an integrated service to individuals, organisations and agencies working across rural areas.

**ECOTEC Research and Consulting** provides research, consultancy and technical assistance to support to businesses, economies, people and places achieve optimal performance. With 25 years experience of working with public, private and community based organisations across the UK and Europe. Our approach to rural renewal is to bring together experience in economic development and regeneration, housing, social policy and the natural environment to mirror the wide ranging issues facing rural communities.

**BlueFish Regeneration Ltd** is a regeneration project development and management company, and offers stakeholder and community consultation to ensure that rural development is in step with the communities it will benefit. BlueFish works with the client to leave a legacy of regeneration delivery, including by creating long lasting delivery bodies which can take projects forward.

In addition, we are supported by a wider network of support that draws on the skills and abilities of **amti** and **EC Harris**. We would be very happy to discuss this with you in more detail.

**To find out more about our innovative masterplanning for rural areas service please contact:**

**David Gluck, Associate Director, Leeds**

on 0113 290 4100 or email [david.gluck@ecotec.com](mailto:david.gluck@ecotec.com)

**Tom Gill, Senior Consultant , Leeds**

on 0113 290 4114 or email [tom.gill@ecotec.com](mailto:tom.gill@ecotec.com)

**Imelda Havers, Managing Director, BlueFish Regeneration**

on 01904 520109 or email [imelda@bluefishregen.com](mailto:imelda@bluefishregen.com) [www.bluefishregen.com](http://www.bluefishregen.com)

**ECOTEC Research and Consulting**

Vincent House, Quay Place, 92-93 Edward Street, Birmingham, B1 2RA

Tel +44 (0) 0845 313 7455

Fax: +44 (0) 0845 313 7454

**[www.ecotec.com](http://www.ecotec.com)**

ECOTEC Research and Consulting is the UK arm of the ECORYS Group.  
The ECORYS Group has over 600 in-house staff working from 18 permanent offices in 10 countries.



**ECOTEC is an ISO9001 accredited company**