



Independent Commission  
on the  
Future of Brandon

# **Memorandum of understanding between Brandon Commission and West Suffolk Council**

## **1. Work to be undertaken**

The commission will be responsible for:

- a. Commissioning of a housing, community and economy study by external consultants or experts, which will involve:
  1. Gathering evidence on the current character of Brandon and the challenges it faces. This will include looking at population structure, housing availability and quality, employment, transport, education and skills, retail and services, deprivation, equality of opportunity, healthcare, self-containment and other matters.
  2. Gathering evidence on the relationship between Brandon and the rest of the West Suffolk district (and neighbouring authorities) in terms of patterns of migration, housing need, social mobility, and so on.
  3. Developing options for how Brandon could grow in a sustainable way in the future, thereby improving the quality of life and outcomes for current and future residents. This will include:
    - a. establishing what level and scale of housing growth would be possible in Brandon if growth were possible with what impacts on infrastructure. This will include comparisons to similar places elsewhere
    - b. comparing all options to a 'no growth' or 'do nothing' option.
- b. A significant element of the commission's work will be dialogue with local stakeholders and the local community to understand their views.
- c. The conclusion of this work will lead to a gateway review, where the commission will be expected to report to the Leader of West Suffolk Council with the outcome of the housing, community and economy study.

## 2. Schedule

The ambition is for the commission to complete its activities within nine months. A provisional schedule has been developed to achieve this. As the schedule of work evolves, material revisions will be reported to West Suffolk Council.

There is a recognition that the commission's work needs to be done well and this may require more time. Moreover, there is an open question over the need for further ecological studies – which, if needed, may not be achievable until 2026.

a. February 2025:

1. Non-local commissioners identified and approached.
2. Preparation for initial consultation with local community.
3. Identify and contact potential stakeholder consultative group members.
4. Understand state of ecological knowledge – and need for a new study.

b. March 2025:

1. 20 March 'launch' – including survey and invitation to stakeholder groups.
2. Local commissioners identified and approached.
3. Commissioners appointed.

c. April 2025:

1. First commission full meeting including: presentation from West Suffolk Council officers on background and key issues; confirm terms of reference; receive feedback on initial consultation; agree consultation next steps; agree invitations to give evidence; and first round discussion of scope of consultancy brief.
2. Consider list of possible consultants.

d. May 2025:

1. Second commission full meeting: to receive and consider evidence from stakeholders.
2. Third commission full meeting (if needed): to receive and consider evidence from stakeholders.
3. Commissioners finalise and agree consultancy brief.

e. June 2025:

1. Consultancy tender decision.

f. July and August 2025:

1. Economics consultancy study.

g. September 2025:

1. Fourth commission full meeting: to receive, consider and discuss the draft report from the consultants.
2. Production of commission's draft report.

- h. October 2025:
  - 1. Meeting(s) of commissioners to finalise and sign off report.
  - 2. Delivery of report to the Leader of West Suffolk Council.
- i. November 2025:
  - 1. Communication and dissemination of report recommendations and as needed.
  - 2. Project contingency.

### **3. Communication**

All communication about the work of the commission will be through the chair, who will inform the Council's communications team of the timing and content of any announcements in advance of any external communication.

### **4. Resource support**

West Suffolk Council will provide reasonable and appropriate secretariat services to the commission, including a dedicated project manager with 60 to 80 per cent full time equivalent availability to work on commission-related activities under the direction of the chair.

Although employees of West Suffolk Council, those working as secretariat will recognise the importance of and maintain the independence (and the perception of independence) of the commission.

The commission may seek reasonable technical support from West Suffolk Council as appropriate. An officer support team will be formed, including:

- a. Head of Service for Growth
- b. Head of Service for Policy, Projects and Performance
- c. Brandon Commission Project Manager
- d. Expert officers from the relevant council teams
- e. Officers from Democratic Services and Communications

West Suffolk Council's Director of Planning and Growth will be the senior responsible officer for the relationship with the commission and will make the final decision on any allocation of West Suffolk Council resources.

### **5. Remuneration and expenses**

Independent non-local commissioners may be remunerated on a basis and at a rate acceptable to West Suffolk Council. Local commissioners and all other commission member posts are unremunerated.

Commissioners will have reasonable and appropriate expenses reimbursed by West Suffolk Council.

## 6. Governance

The commission is independent and reports to the Leader of West Suffolk Council. A lead portfolio holder will be appointed to act as the primary liaison with the chair. The chair will meet with the portfolio holder throughout the lifetime of the commission at mutually agreed intervals.

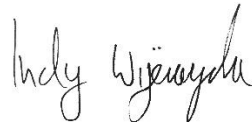
## 7. Membership of stakeholder consultative groups

Although membership of stakeholder consultative groups is at the discretion of the chair, the ambition is to be open to, and inclusive of, the widest range of experts and interested parties.

The chair will be open to receive and consider requests for membership for all individuals and parties. In addition, the chair and secretariat will identify and approach appropriate organisations and individuals and invite them to join a relevant stakeholder consultative group.



**Mark Pragnell**  
**Brandon Commission Chair**



**Cllr Indy Wijenayaka**  
**Cabinet Member for Growth**

**March 2025**