



CABINET REPORT

Report Title	West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan – Issues Consultation
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AGENDA STATUS: PUBLIC

Cabinet Meeting Date:	24 th July 2019
Key Decision:	YES
Within Policy:	YES
Policy Document:	YES
Service Area:	Planning
Accountable Cabinet Member:	Councillor James Hill
Ward(s)	All Wards

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report seeks the approval of Cabinet for the West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit to go out to public consultation on the Issues Consultation document for the West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan (WNSP).

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that, provided Daventry District Council and South Northamptonshire Council also agree, Cabinet approves the West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan – Issues Consultation for public consultation.

3. Issues and Choices

3.1 Report Background

- 3.1.1 Members may recall that, at its meeting of 17th October 2018, Cabinet considered arrangements for the West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan. At that meeting, Cabinet agreed a Statement of Common Ground between Daventry District Council, Northampton Borough Council, Northamptonshire County Council and South Northamptonshire Council which included agreement on the need for a Strategic Plan for West Northamptonshire, its geographical coverage and the key cross boundary issues the Strategic Plan needs to address.
- 3.1.2 A Joint Local Development Scheme setting out milestones for the production of the West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan, a memorandum of co-operation and terms of reference for the West Northamptonshire Joint Planning and Infrastructure Board were also agreed.
- 3.1.3 The first stage in the production of the Strategic Plan is the Issues Consultation. At its meeting of 6th June 2019, the West Northamptonshire Joint Planning and Infrastructure Board considered the Issues Consultation document. A number of changes to the document were proposed at that meeting, and these have been incorporated into the document attached at Appendix A.
- 3.1.4 During July, the Issues Consultation document is being presented to each of the three councils (Daventry District Council, Northampton Borough Council and South Northamptonshire Council) seeking authority to consult.

3.2 Issues

- 3.2.1 The West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit have prepared an Issues Consultation document which is attached as Appendix A to this report. It should be noted that this is a text version of the document and it is intended that the published version will be supplemented by graphics, maps and diagrams.
- 3.2.2 The Issues Consultation document is designed to stimulate debate at an early stage and it is important to emphasise that no decisions have yet been made on the scale of growth or where that growth should be located. Its purpose is to engage with stakeholders and communities across the area and with a view to working together to ensure that the best possible plan is produced for a sustainable future.
- 3.2.3 The draft Issues consultation document attached as Appendix 1 covers the following matters:
- **Introduction** – setting out the broad scope of the WNSP and why it is being prepared.

- **Spatial context** – a broad overview of the plan area and its key spatial characteristics, the existing spatial strategy provided by the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) and the emerging proposals for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc.
- **Vision and objectives** – seeking views on whether changes are required to the existing vision and objectives in the JCS.
- **Place-making and Sustainable Communities** – outlining key principles to ensure that the plan creates places where existing and future residents want to live now and can do so sustainably into the future.
- **Natural and Built Environment** – setting out key principles for landscape, biodiversity, climate change resilience, green infrastructure, flood risk, water quality and supply, the historic environment and heritage assets.
- **Housing** - ensuring the right number and type of houses are delivered across West Northamptonshire
- **Economic Growth** – identifying key economic issues including retail, town centres and the rural economy
- **Infrastructure** – suggest key principles and objectives for the delivery of the infrastructure required to support growth across the plan area.
- **Process and Next Steps** – providing guidance on how to comment and the next steps in the plan preparation process

Oxford-Cambridge Arc

- 3.2.4 The West Northamptonshire area falls within the Oxford-Cambridge Arc where the Government has identified an opportunity to accelerate growth in order to maximise the economic potential of the area and to contribute towards its targets for increasing housing delivery. In March 2019 the Government published a paper setting out their ambition for the Arc together with a joint declaration agreed by local authorities and local enterprise partnerships across the area. In meeting the economic and housing ambitions for the area there is a need for substantial investment in new infrastructure and a clear commitment that growth should not be at the expense of the quality of the environment.
- 3.2.5 Negotiations on the Growth Deal have not progressed as originally anticipated. It is understood that the Government are no longer pursuing growth deals of the type agreed with Oxfordshire. They are, however, keen to explore other financial arrangements to support local authorities and other partners to deliver their ambitions for the Arc. The Government are looking to support the delivery of housing and infrastructure across the central area of the Arc, which includes West Northamptonshire, and to this end discussions with the Government's OxCam Unit are continuing.
- 3.2.6 The WNSP Issues Consultation provides an opportunity to seek views on the proposals for the Arc, and the Issues paper therefore includes questions regarding the opportunities presented by the Arc and the extent to which this would justify additional growth in the area.

Sustainability Appraisal

- 3.2.7 The preparation of the WNSP must be informed by a Sustainability Appraisal (SA), incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment. Land Use

Consultants Ltd have been commissioned to produce an initial SA Scoping Report. If consultation on the WNSP Issues Consultation document goes ahead, it will be accompanied by the SA Scoping Report (attached at Appendix B).

Timeline for the Consultation

3.2.8 Reports seeking approval for the Issues consultation are also being presented at the following Committees:

- Daventry District Council Strategy Group – 4th July
- South Northamptonshire Council Planning Policy and Regeneration Strategy Committee – 31st July

3.2.9 If the Issues paper is approved by all three councils, a final version will be produced including graphics, maps and diagrams. It is envisaged that consultation on the Issues paper would start on Monday 5th August and run until Friday 11th October. This is an extended consultation period which takes account of the summer holidays.

3.3 Choices (Options)

Option 1: Agree to the recommendation

3.3.1 If Cabinet approves it for public consultation, and it has been agreed by Daventry District Council and South Northamptonshire Council, the West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan Issues Consultation will be put out to public consultation from 5th August to 11th October. This should then make it possible to achieve other milestones in the preparation of the Strategic Plan.

Option 2: Do not agree to the recommendation

3.3.2 Cabinet could decide not to approve the WNSP Issues Consultation for public consultation. This would delay the process of producing the Strategic Plan, delaying the adoption of an up-to-date suit of strategic policies and making it harder to plan for future development in West Northamptonshire and to take up opportunities that may arise from the Government's agenda for the Oxford – Cambridge Arc.

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1 Policy

4.1.1 When it is adopted, it is envisaged that the West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan will replace most of the policies in the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy.

4.2 Resources and Risk

4.2.1 These proposals do not have any immediate implications for financial resources. The costs associated with the design and printing of the document

and the consultation exercise can be met from budgets held by the Joint Planning Unit.

4.3 Legal

4.3.1 The Strategic Plan will be a statutory document. It has to be prepared in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 as amended. Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 requires local planning authorities to invite stakeholders and the public to make representations about what a local plan ought to contain. The Issues consultation helps to meet this requirement.

4.4 Equality and Health

4.4.1 An equality impact assessment is not required at this stage in the preparation of the Strategic Plan because the Issues Consultation is seeking views rather than making proposals for new policy. Equality impact assessments will be made at later stages in the process when proposals for policies are being made.

4.5 Consultees (Internal and External)

4.5.1 Officers of the partner authorities and Northamptonshire County Council have been consulted in the production of the Issues paper. The purpose of the Issues Consultation is to seek the views of a range of stakeholders and the public.

4.6 How the Proposals deliver Priority Outcomes

4.6.1 When it is eventually adopted, the West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan will help to guide all development across West Northamptonshire, including Northampton. In terms of the priorities set out in the Council's Corporate Plan, the Strategic Plan will help to deliver a stronger economy by providing strategic policies that help Northampton to grow and prosper. It will also help to deliver resilient communities by facilitating the delivery of new and better homes.

4.7 Other Implications

4.7.1 There are no other implications arising directly from the proposals in this report.

5. Background Papers

5.1 Appendix A – West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan – Issues Consultation, West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit.

5.2 Appendix B – West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan Sustainability Appraisal
Scoping Report

6. Next Steps

- 6.1 The results of this consultation will inform the formulation of the West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan – Options Consultation which it is estimated will be published in December 2019 or January 2020.

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