



**NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Name of Committee

CABINET

Directorate: People, Performance & Regeneration

Corporate Manager: Chris Cavanagh, Regeneration, Growth & Community Development

Date: 15 March 2007

Report Title

Northampton Local Development Framework – Revised Local Development Scheme

Key Decision

YES

1. Recommendations

- a) That Cabinet approves the revised Joint Local Development Scheme (LDS) for submission to the Government Office for the East Midlands (GOEM).
- b) That any modifications to that part of the revised Joint LDS accountable to this Council arising from comments from GOEM or as the result of consideration by Daventry and South Northamptonshire District Councils, be delegated to the Corporate Manager (Regeneration, Growth and Community Development) in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for the Economy and Infrastructure. Also, modifications required for parts not directly accountable to this Council be delegated to the Corporate Manager (Regeneration, Growth and Community Development).
- c) That the Local Development Scheme is brought into effect from 31 March 2007.
- d) That the Cabinet expresses its thanks to the Government Office for the East Midlands and Addison Associates in facilitating the discussions which have led to an agreed and revised Scheme.

2. Summary

- 2.1 The report explains the reasons for the need to submit a revised LDS and explains why a joint LDS has been prepared with Daventry and South Northamptonshire Councils. It describes the contents of the revised LDS, which is attached to the report as Appendix 1. A copy of the LDS timetable (Appendix 2) is attached to the report showing the timetable for documents to be prepared jointly with Daventry and South Northamptonshire Councils and documents to be prepared separately by the Borough Council. The report explains the process GOEM will follow after the revised LDS is submitted to them. The report explains why Council is required to keep the LDS under review and amend it as appropriate.

3. Report Background

Purpose

- 3.1 The Local Development Scheme (LDS) is a statutory document that the Council is required by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 to prepare as part of the Local Development Framework (LDF)
- 3.2 The LDS is a public statement of the Council's programme for the production of local development documents. It is the document that the public can use to ascertain what the local planning authority is proposing and when, and at what stage they can expect to be involved in the process. It also sets out the LDS commitment to delivery which it will be monitored against.

The LDS focuses on a three year time horizon and is kept under review by way of an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) and rolled forward at appropriate times. The AMR will identify whether the Council is achieving the timetable set out in the scheme or if there is a need to revise and/ or prepare new local development documents.

- 3.3 The LDS sets out the following information:
- A brief description of all the local development documents to be prepared and the content and geographic area to which they will relate;
 - Which local development documents will be statutory development plan documents and which will be non-statutory supplementary planning documents;
 - Which policies and proposals in the existing Local Plan and supplementary planning guidance are to be saved;
 - Which, if any, local development documents are to be prepared on a joint basis with one or more local planning authorities;
 - The planned timetable for preparing each local development document and the key milestone to be achieved.

Recent Events

- 3.4 In September 2006, Cabinet agreed to the preparation of a Joint Core Strategy covering the whole of the administrative boundaries of Daventry District, Northampton Borough and South Northamptonshire Councils (the three Councils), and that a revised Local Development Scheme for Northampton be prepared for approval by Cabinet prior to submission to GOEM.
- 3.5 In December 2006, Cabinet approved a revised Joint Local Development Scheme for submission to GOEM.
- 3.6 The Joint LDS was subsequently submitted to GOEM in December 2006. GOEM sent a letter to the three Councils on 19 January 2007 stating that it was issuing a holding direction on the LDS. The legal implication of this direction is that the Councils cannot bring the LDS "into effect" i.e. they cannot publish the Issues and Options on the Joint Core Strategy.
- 3.7 Senior members from the three Councils have subsequently met with GOEM who have made it clear that with regard to those documents prepared by DDC and SNDC, the LDS needs to contain fewer documents and to provide more information on the resources that will be made available to deliver these documents. GOEM has also stated that the LDS must be brought into effect by 31 March 2007 in order to qualify for Planning Delivery Grant monies for plan making for next year.
- 3.8 Consequently the three Councils have jointly prepared a revised Joint Local Development Scheme (attached as Appendix 1). Each Council will have its own LDF but certain Local Development Documents (LDDs) will be common to each, including the overarching Joint Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD). All future LDDs must be in conformity with the Joint Core Strategy. This reflects the commitment of all of the Councils to joint working and the fundamental importance of the Joint Core Strategy to the whole LDF process. This represents a major step forward in joint working between the three LAs.
- 3.9 As well as the Joint Core Strategy the revised LDS commits the Councils to increased joint working with the preparation of a joint Northampton Implementation Area DPD, a joint Development Control Policies DPD, a joint Rural Areas DPD and a joint Affordable Housing SPD.
- 3.10 The LDS also sets out those LDDs that each of the three Councils intend to prepare individually over the next three years. For Northampton Borough Council, the DPDs that will be prepared are:
- Central Area Action Plan DPD
 - Sixfields Area Action Plan DPD

- 3.11 The timetable for all the documents to be prepared jointly by the three Councils and separately by each Council is shown as Appendix 2 to this report.
- 3.12 The timing of the DPDs and SPDs has reflected the following factors:
- Joint Core Strategy is the priority document. It is the overarching document that all subsequent documents must be in conformity with;
 - National, regional and local priorities including regeneration, growth and conservation objectives;
 - The need to co-ordinate, phase and deliver growth and infrastructure in the right locations and at the right time;
 - The presence of "Saved" Structure and Local Plan policies as the basis for development control decisions and supplementary planning documents;
 - Opportunities for combined community and technical stakeholder engagement reducing costs and enabling increased involvement;
 - The availability of key evidence such as the West Northamptonshire Housing Market Assessment;
 - The timetable for the review of the East Midlands Regional Plan; and
 - The availability of and requirement for the Councils' and partners' resources.
 - Take into account local election periods with associated purdah periods.
- 3.13 The time needed and resources available to produce each document have been rigorously tested using a methodology which identifies down to individual officer level the amount of time anticipated to be required in undertaking each stage. It is important that sufficient time is built into the programme to enable enough opportunity for proper member debate and reconsideration and this has been factored into each programme. Once approved, the timetable will become a measure against which the Councils performance is judged and planning delivery grant is awarded.
- 3.14 The delay in bringing a new local development scheme into effect and the re-assessment of time needed to complete each stage has had implications for the start and finish dates for each document. The timings of the Joint LDDs needs to be agreed by all three Councils. The timings of the individual LDDs for Northampton (Central Area and Sixfields LDD) is a matter for determination by the Borough Council alone.

3.15 Compared with the timetable submitted as part of the Joint LDS in December 2006 there have been the following differences to the planned adoption dates of the documents to be prepared jointly and individually by Northampton Borough Council:

Title of Document in Dec 2006 Joint LDS	Adoption Date in Dec 2006 Joint LDS	Title of Document in March 2007 Joint LDS	Adoption Date in March 2007 Joint LDS	Difference
Joint Core Strategy	March 2009	Joint Core Strategy	December 2009	9 Months
Joint Sustainable Urban Extension Area Action Plan (s) DPD	March 2010	Northampton Implementation Area DPD	February 2011	11 Months
Site Specific Allocations DPD	February 2010			12 Months
Development Control Policies DPD	January 2010	Joint Development Control Policies DPD	March 2011	14 Months
Central Area Action Plan DPD	July 2009	Central Area Action Plan DPD	May 2010	10 Months
Sixfields Area Action Plan DPD	October 2009 (includes 5 month acceleration previously requested)	Sixfields Area Action Plan DPD	February 2011	16 Months
Affordable Housing SPD	December 2007	Joint Affordable Housing SPD	November 2007	1 Month Earlier

3.16 At the Cabinet meeting in December members asked that the Sixfields DPD programme be advanced by five months compared with the recommendation which would have resulted in adoption in December 2009. The new and recommended programme for Sixfields DPD has an issues consultation co-inciding with the publication of a preferred option Core Spatial Strategy which will contain firm proposals relating to the future location, scale and future development of District Centres in Northampton. The Sixfields DPD process must take this Strategy into account. Once begun, the proposed programme for Sixfields matches the timetable for the Joint Allocations DPD, and DPDs for each key town in West Northamptonshire. Adoption is only nine months behind the DPD for Northampton Central Area. Final inspection of the Sixfields DPD will therefore take place in the context of an adopted

Core Strategy and Central Area DPD and is the most robust and effective programme in order to arrive at a sound and adoptable plan.

- 3.17 Whilst all DPDs have therefore been subject to a extension in terms of planned adoption dates, the proposed adopted date for Sixfields appears longer owing to the Cabinet decision in December to advance the proposed timetable. For the reasons as set out in paragraphs 3.12 to 3.16, Members are at this time strongly advised to accept the new programme, for this and other DPDs.
- 3.18 The current Local Plan is 'saved' until September 2007. Supplementary planning guidance is also saved. The Council is working with GOEM to ensure that the most important policies continue to be saved for at least a further year after this date to ensure that there is a planning policy framework in place whilst the LDDs are prepared.
- 3.19 Assistance in developing the proposed documents and timetable has been gratefully received from the Planning Advisory Service through the Government Office for the East Midlands. Linda Addison of Addison Associates, a senior planning practitioner worked with the joint planning team, senior officers, the County Council and West Northamptonshire Development Corporation and finally senior members to derive a project timetable which is now acceptable to all parties. Officers are grateful for GOEM in making this service available to the Councils at no cost.
- 3.20 If agreed by the Cabinet, the LDS will be submitted to the Secretary of State (represented by the Government Office for the East Midlands) for approval. It will not be subject to independent examination and it will not be published for the public to make formal comment. The Government Office will assess whether the LDS is robust and deliverable, particularly in terms of priorities. It will also seek the comments of the Planning Inspectorate to ascertain whether the timetabling leading up to and including the Examination is realistic and achievable.
- 3.21 When the LDS takes effect a copy will be made available for inspection at the Council's offices at the Guildhall and Cliftonville House and it will be published on the website. All those interested in the development of the LDF will also be notified of the LDS' availability.

4. Options and Evaluations

- 4.1 Cabinet may decide not to approve the revised LDS. However, this is not recommended as the Council cannot bring any local development documents into affect until the LDS has been approved by the Government Office for the East Midlands. Furthermore, the amount of Planning Delivery Grant to be allocated to the Council next year will be

adversely affected if the LDS is not brought into effect by 31 March 2007.

4.2 The Cabinet may decide to make amendments to the revised LDS.

5. Resource Implications (including Financial Implications)

5.1 The revised LDS sets out which local development documents and supplementary planning documents will be produced, when and by which authorities. The revised LDS proposes that Northampton Borough, Daventry District and South Northamptonshire Councils will produce the Joint Core Strategy, Northampton Implementation Area DPD, West Northamptonshire Development Control Policies DPD, West Northamptonshire Rural Areas DPD and West Northamptonshire Affordable Housing SPD jointly.

5.2 In the development of the revised LDS the Councils have committed a significant amount of time to LDD programming and resource management. This process has involved detailed consideration of all the tasks required to produce each of the LDDs and co-ordinated allocation of resources to each of the tasks across the three Councils. For the purposes of programming the LDDs listed in the LDS, all of these resources have been viewed as a single pool of resources. In programming this available resource, allowances have been made for other areas of responsibility outside of LDF work. Examples of the wider responsibilities outside core LDF work are: Consultations, Development Control Advice and General Enquiries.

5.3 The work that the three Councils have completed on LDD programming and resource management for the revised LDS has indicated that there are enough staff resources across the three Councils to deliver the LDS.

5.4 The three Councils have already informally established the West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit (JPU). The JPU is responsible for preparing the joint DPDs and SPDs. Each Council will continue to be responsible for preparing DPDs and SPDs addressing local matters where joint agreement is not required although co-ordination of the overall programme of documents by the JPU will be necessary.

5.5 In order to formalise this, the JPU agreement has already been reached on the creation of a Joint Planning Unit Manager and resources from each Councils' existing LDF budgets allocated. In principal agreement has also been reached on the creation of a senior project manager post to support the JPU Manager in terms of project management, IT and office administration. Further consideration is required by the three Councils of the most appropriate model for

staffing the JPU. One option is to second staff from each Council for a fixed period to prepare the joint documents. However, this may lead to a need to redistribute work, reprioritise work, cease certain work or recruit further staff at each Council to replace the staff seconded to the JPU.

- 5.6 The Northampton Local Development Framework base budget is already allocated at £66,000 pa for the next three years and is currently further supported by Planning Delivery Grant, of which £367,000 has been available in 2006/7, £89,000 spent to date and some £258,000 is committed to delivery of the Local Development Framework, enhancing the planning policy service and responding to the growth agenda over the period 2006/7 – 2008/9
- 5.7 There may be opportunities in the medium-term for efficiencies through joint working in terms of sharing consultation, printing and technical consultancy service costs.

6. Risk and Opportunity Issues

- 6.1 In preparing the revised LDS it was found that the main areas of risk relate to:
- Staff turnover;
 - Capacity of the Planning Inspectorate and other agencies to cope with demand nationwide;
 - Programme slippage;
 - Political differences;
 - Delays in Examination process and/ or legal challenge;
 - Changes to national or regional guidance.
 - Pressure from external developer organisations;
- 6.2 The revised LDS identifies measures that will be taken to address these risks.
- 6.3 The three Councils have agreed that in addition to further consideration of the most appropriate model for staffing the JPU, consideration should also be given to the governance arrangements for the joint DPDs and SPDs.
- 6.4 The principal opportunity will be the strengthening of existing partnerships through joint working resulting in sounder policies.

7. Consultees (Internal and External)

Internal	Finance, Development Control,
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External	Daventry District Council, South Northamptonshire Council, Northamptonshire County Council, Government Office for the East Midlands, West Northamptonshire Development Corporation.
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8. Compliance Issues

A: How Proposals Deliver Priority Outcomes

Recovery Plan

The LDF underpins the future regeneration, growth and conservation of Northampton and the Northampton Implementation Area. In particular it sets the framework for inward investment and the recovery of the heart of the Borough. Together with the Housing Strategy it provides the impetus for the recovery of key services including housing and the delivery of the Government's growth agenda. The LDF, therefore, underpins the Recovery Plan.

Corporate Plan

Priority 2 of the Corporate Priorities 2007-2011 is the most relevant to the LDF. Priority 2 is: Invest in the planning and regeneration of the Town, providing economic development and growth. Priority 1 is also relevant but to a lesser extent. Priority 1 is: Make Northampton a safer, cleaner and greener place to live.

B: Other Implications

Other Strategies

The Local Development Framework influences and is influenced by all the Council's strategies and plans, including the Council's Housing Strategy, which was approved by Cabinet on 5 March 2007 and has been submitted to GOEM for approval.

As a spatial plan the Local Development Framework will guide the decisions of a wider range of organisations, agencies and individuals beyond the Council itself. These will include: the West Northamptonshire Development Corporation; Northamptonshire County Council; infrastructure and service providers such as the Highways Agency, the Primary Care Trust, Anglian Water, telecommunications and energy providers; environmental bodies such as the Environment Agency and the Wildlife Trust; voluntary agencies; registered social landowners; and land and property developers.



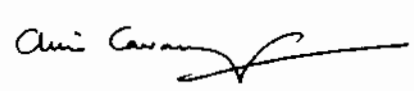

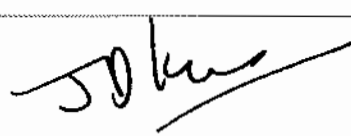
A key role of the Local Development Framework is to implement the Government's growth agenda as expressed in the Sustainable Communities Plan and the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy.

Finance Comments

Legal Comments

9. Background Papers

Title	Description	Source
Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands (RSS8)	The development strategy for the East Midlands for the period up to 2021 within which the Local Development Framework will be prepared.	Government Office for the East Midlands
Northampton Local Development Framework – Revised Local Development Scheme	Report to Cabinet - 4 December 2006	Northampton Borough Council

Name	Signature	Date	Ext.
Author		9 March	8734
Planning Manager		9 March	8734
Corporate Manager		9 March	8461
Director		13 March	8531
Monitoring Officer or Deputy (Key decision only)		13 March 2007	7335
Section 151 Officer or Deputy (Key decision only)			