

Appendices

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NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Item No:

8

CABINET REPORT

Report Title	Northampton Central Area Action Plan Issues and Options Discussion Paper
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AGENDA STATUS: PUBLIC

Cabinet Meeting Date:	3 September 2007
Key Decision:	Yes
Listed on Forward Plan:	Yes
Within Policy:	Yes
Policy Document:	Yes
Directorate:	People, Planning & Regeneration
Accountable Cabinet Member:	Councillor Richard Church
Ward(s)	St Crispin / Castle

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The report explains the purpose and background of the Central Area Action Plan (CAAP) Issues and Options Discussion Paper. The report explains the nature of the issues and options stage and describes the contents of the Discussion Paper. The Discussion Paper is attached as Appendix 1. The report also sets out the next stages in the preparation of the Central Area Action Plan and seeks agreement to commence public consultation.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet approves for consultation the Central Area Action Plan Issues and Options Discussion Paper as set out in Appendix 1 of this report.
- 2.2 That Cabinet agrees the outline of the consultation process for the Central Area Action Plan Strategy Issues and Options Discussion Paper as set out in Appendix 2 of this report.

- 2.3 That Cabinet agrees that the detail of the consultation process be agreed with the Portfolio Holder (Regeneration).
- 2.4 That any modifications to the Central Area Action Plan Issues and Options Discussion Paper arising as the result of further information and editing to be delegated to the Corporate Manager (Regeneration and Growth) in consultation with the Portfolio Holder (Regeneration).

3. Issues and Choices

3.1 Purpose and Background of the Central Area Action Plan

- 3.1.1 The CAAP is a statutory document that the Council is preparing as part of the Local Development Framework (LDF).
- 3.1.2 In September 2006, Northampton Borough Council's Cabinet agreed that a revised Local Development Scheme for Northampton be prepared and submitted to the Government Office for the East Midlands (GOEM). Consequently the three Councils of Northampton Borough Council, Daventry District Council and South Northamptonshire District Councils jointly prepared a Local Development Scheme (LDS). The Joint LDS was approved by the Northampton Borough Council's Cabinet in March 2007 for submission to GOEM. GOEM approved the Joint LDS on 19 March 2007 and it was brought into effect on 31 March 2007.
- 3.1.3 The LDS is a public statement of the Council's programme for the production of local development documents. 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 (DPD) and which will be non-statutory supplementary planning documents (SPD);
 - 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.

- 3.1.4 The Joint LDS sets out those local development documents that will be

common and those local development documents that each Council will prepare individually. The Joint LDS also sets out those Local Development Documents (LDD) 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

3.1.5 The timetable for the production of Central Area Action Plan is set out below:

Commencement of Preparation	Nov 2006
Preparation of Scoping Report for the Sustainability Appraisal Report	Dec 2006-Mar 2007
Strategic Options and Issues (Pre-Submission consultation)	June-July 2007
Public participation on Preferred Options and initial Sustainability Appraisal report	Dec 2007-Jan 2008
Pre-Examination Meeting	April 2009
Independent Examination	June-July 2009
Adoption of the CAAP	May 2010

3.1.6 The Preferred Options stage for the CAAP is slightly in advance of that for the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) (Preferred Options Feb/March 2008). This reflects the clear steer for its preparation in the Regional Spatial Strategy and the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub Regional Strategy. However, in reality the CAAP and JCS are running broadly in parallel and the preparation of the two Plans is being co-ordinated. This includes maximizing the benefits of joint consultation where possible. However, the JCS will be submitted three months ahead of the CAAP and have its Examination earlier than CAAP. This programme has been approved by GO-EM.

3.1.7 All development plan documents, including the CAAP, will be assessed against the nine tests of soundness by an independent planning inspector appointed by the Planning Inspectorate. The tests of soundness are set out in the Government's Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks. The tests are:

- It has been prepared in accordance with the local development scheme;
- It has been prepared in compliance with the statement of community involvement,
- The plan and its policies have been subjected to sustainability appraisal;
- It is a spatial plan which is consistent with national planning policy

and in general conformity with the regional spatial strategy for the region and it has properly had regard to any other relevant plans, policies and strategies relating to the area or to adjoining areas;

- It has had regard to the authority's community strategy;
- The strategies/ policies/allocations represent the most appropriate in all the circumstances, having considered the relevant alternatives, and they are founded on a robust and credible evidence base;
- There are clear mechanisms for implementation and monitoring; and
- The plan is reasonably flexible to enable it to deal with changing circumstances.

3.2 Issues and Options Stage

3.2.1 One of the key aims of the local development framework system is "front loading". This means that Councils should take key decisions early in the preparation of local development documents. The aim is to seek consensus on essential issues early in the preparation of local development documents and so avoid late changes being made. This is why the issues and options stage is so important – enabling a wide ranging and open debate at the start of the CAAP's preparation.

3.2.2 The purpose of the issues and options stage is to identify the key issues and develop alternative options to address those issues. The alternative options will come from the evidence base and the views of everyone with an interest in the central area.

3.2.3 The evidence base takes many forms. It includes facts and figures, e.g. population statistics, house prices through to detailed and complex studies. The evidence for the central area is extensive and developing.

3.3 The Central Area Action Plan Issues and Options Discussion Paper

3.3.1 Drawing on the work to date the Local Development Framework team has prepared the CAAP Issues and Options Discussion Paper for consultation. The Discussion Paper is attached to this report as Appendix 1.

3.3.2 The Discussion Paper sets out the main issues that have been identified so far that the Central Area Action Plan must address, what has happened so far in terms of parts of the central area and suggests a series of options for the future to address the issues. The purpose of these options is to stimulate debate and discussion on the key priorities for the central area.

3.3.3 The Discussion Paper does not seek to set out all possible issues and alternative options, instead it represents initial thoughts and provides

the opportunity to raise new issues and options.

- 3.3.4 Questions are asked throughout the Discussion Paper to generate debate and seek feedback on the vision, the objectives, the issues and the options.
- 3.3.5 The CAAP Issues and Options Discussion Paper will be subjected to a strategic sustainability appraisal by independent environmental consultants Environ. This strategic appraisal will then form the basis of the detailed initial sustainability appraisal report, which will be prepared alongside the Preferred Options document and published with the Preferred Options document for consultation in December 2007-January 2008.

The Consultation Process

- 3.3.6 The Discussion Paper will be used as the basis for discussion up to the production of the Preferred Option in December 2007. Consultations have already taken place on specific sites and specific proposals. Whilst these were not part of the formal Issues and Options consultation stage, this early front-loading with key stakeholders is important. A function of the CAAP Issues and Options Discussion Paper, therefore, is to bring all previous consultations together as a position statement for all to comment upon.
- 3.3.7 It is, however, proposed to “piggy back” on some of the consultation events being arranged for consultation on the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy, in order to promote discussion on the CAAP. Regard will also be had to the Council’s Statements of Community Involvement that was adopted in Spring 2006. The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is a statutory document that forms part of the Local Development Framework. The SCI sets out how the community will be involved in the preparation of the LDDs and consulted on planning applications. The second test of soundness is that the LDD has been prepared in compliance with the Statement of Community Involvement.
- 3.3.8 The detailed arrangements for the consultation process are currently being made and will be available within the next few days. These need to be agreed by the Council’s Portfolio Holder.

The Next Stages

- 3.3.9 The responses to the Issues and Options Discussion Paper will be assessed and used in the preparation of the next stage, the ‘Preferred Options’ document that will set out the preferred approach to the spatial vision, the spatial objectives and the policies that the CAAP will contain. The Preferred Options document will also take into account national and regional guidance and any additional evidence. The Preferred Options document will be subject to consultation and again, the responses to that consultation will be fed into the production of the ‘Submission CAAP’ which will be the final version produced by the Council. This will then be published for comment at the same time as

being submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for consideration at a Public Examination. Those making representations on the Submission document will be able to submit their case for consideration. A report and final document will be produced by the Inspectorate and adopted by the Council.

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1 Policy

Report will have implications for changing existing planning policies for the town centre.

4.2 Resources and Risk

The Council has already established a Local Development Framework team which is responsible for preparing the DPDs, including the CAAP. The team has suffered from staff shortages recently, which accounted for the programmed Issues and Options consultation in June-July not being met. Interim management is currently being provided by Jacobs Ltd and a new Team Leader has recently been appointed to the team.

The Northampton Local Development Framework budget for 2007/08 is £66,390. This is currently further supported by Planning Delivery Grant. Allowance has been made within this budget for the Borough Council to contribute to the CAAP Issues and Options consultation process. This consultation work is resourced from within existing budgets.

In preparing the Joint Local Development Scheme 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.

The Joint LDS identifies measures that will be taken to address these risks.

The principal opportunity is the strengthening of existing partnerships through joint working resulting in sounder policies.

4.3 Legal

The Legal section has no particular comments to make on the report.

4.4 Equality

The report deals with issues such as affordable housing, access to the town centre by means other than the car, and areas in need of community

regeneration. The report will be discussed with the Council's representative community forums and neighbourhood partnerships. Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken where appropriate.

4.5 Consultees (Internal and External)

None to date but a wide range of internal and external bodies will be consulted including the following:

Daventry District Council, South Northamptonshire Council, Northamptonshire County Council, Wellingborough Council, Government Office for the East Midlands, West Northamptonshire Development Corporation, Technical Stakeholders and the general public.

4.6 How the Proposals deliver Priority Outcomes

The preparation of the CAAP in accordance with the Joint Local Development Scheme affects the Council's Strategic Improvement Plan, the Corporate Plan and the allocation of Planning Delivery Grant to the Council.

Cabinet may decide to make amendments to CAAP Issues and Options Discussion Paper. However, significant changes would affect the ability to meet the timetable set out in the Joint Local Development Scheme.

4.7 Other Implications

None

4.8 Compliance Issues

A: How Proposals Deliver Priority Outcomes

Strategic Improvement Plan

The CAAP will be fundamental to the achievement of the following outcomes in the Strategic Improvement Plan 2006/09:

- We will deliver sustainable growth that meets the aspirations of current and future generations; and
- We will produce a vision for the town, based on consultation with local people, which sets out for the short, medium and long term the type of place we want Northampton to be.

Corporate Plan

The first, second, fourth and fifth objectives, and their sub-components, of the Corporate Plan 2007-2011 are relevant to the CAAP.

- To ensure that our communities are safer, greener and cleaner;
- To improve housing and health to enhance the well-being of our

communities;

- To promote economic development and growth in Northampton:
- To strengthen our commitment to partnership working and engaging with our communities to deliver better outcomes.

B: Other Implications

Other Strategies

The CAAP influences and is influenced by all the Council's strategies and plans, including the Council's Housing Strategy.

As a key document within the Local Development Framework and as a spatial plan the CAAP 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.

Another key role of the CAAP 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 and The West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy.

The CAAP also influences and is influenced by the Northampton Community Strategy.

5. Background Papers

Title	Description	Source
Planning Policy Statement 12 – Local Development Frameworks	Sets out the policies that should be taken into account by local planning authorities in the preparation of local development frameworks and minerals and waste development frameworks.	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (now Department for Communities and Local Government)
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 will be prepared.	Government Office for the East Midlands
Draft East Midlands Regional Plan	Consultation draft replacement of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands, covers the period to 2026.	East Midlands Regional Assembly

Title	Description	Source
Northampton Local Development Framework – Revised Local Development Scheme	Report to Cabinet – 15 March 2007	Northampton Borough Council
Northampton Statement of Community Involvement	Sets out how the community will be involved in the preparation of local development documents and consulted on planning applications.	Northampton Borough Council

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