



CABINET REPORT

Report Title	Northampton Local Plan (Part 2) - Options Paper
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AGENDA STATUS: PUBLIC

Cabinet Meeting Date:	07 September 2016
Key Decision:	Yes
Within Policy:	Yes
Policy Document:	Yes
Directorate:	Regeneration, Enterprise & Planning
Accountable Cabinet Member:	Councillor Tim Hadland
Ward(s)	All wards

1. Purpose

To consider the responses received to the Scope and Issues consultation and the proposed public consultation on the Options stage of the Northampton Local Plan (Part 2).

2. Recommendations

2.1 Note the responses received to the Issues consultation.

2.2 Agree the documents and timetable as set out in this report for an Options stage public consultation on the Northampton Local Plan (Part 2).

2.3 Note that the outcome of the Options consultation will inform further consideration and the preparation of a Draft Local Plan which will be presented to Cabinet in due course.

3. Issues and Choices

3.1 Report Background

- 3.1.1 On 09 September 2015 Cabinet agreed a report setting out the importance of having an up to date Development Plan and the scope and timetable for the preparation of the Northampton Local Plan (Part 2). Cabinet also approved an updated Local Development Scheme which sets out the full timetable for preparation of the Northampton Local Plan (Part 2). The timetable sets out that the Options stage of consultation will be undertaken in September/October 2016.
- 3.1.2 The current Northampton Local Plan was adopted in 1997 and needs updating in order to effectively guide and respond to future development proposals across the Borough, and to reflect more recent Government policy. The new Local Plan (Part 2) will address the supply of sites within Northampton to deliver new homes, maintain and expand employment opportunities, enhance the Town Centre, protect the historic and natural environment and provide detailed development management policies for the whole Borough.
- 3.1.3 An initial stage of public consultation was undertaken on the Scope and Issues of the new Local Plan between 27 April and 10 June 2016. A summary of the responses that were received to that consultation is attached (Appendix 1). It is proposed that the Council now undertakes an Options stage public consultation to continue to progress the preparation of an updated Northampton Local Plan (Part 2).

3.2 Issues

3.2.1 Summary of Responses To Issues Consultation

- 3.2.1.1 The Issues stage public consultation took place for six weeks between 27 April and 10 June 2016. The following documents were published as part of the Issues stage consultation:
- **Northampton Local Plan (Part 2) Issues Paper** – This paper sought views on the key issues which should be addressed in the new Local Plan. There were 31 questions in total.
 - **Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report** – This report explained how the emerging Local Plan will be assessed for any potential significant impacts on environmental, economic and social objectives and invited comments on the proposed methodology. Further information on the Sustainability Appraisal is provided at paragraph 3.2.4.
- 3.2.1.2 In addition the Draft Statement of Community Involvement and the Land Availability Assessment Methodology were subject to consultation at the same time as the Local Plan Issues consultation. A Call for Sites was also held at the same time:

- **Draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)** – The SCI sets out how the Council intends to undertake consultations when preparing planning documents as well as in relation to planning applications and development management matters. This consultation sought to update the existing Adopted SCI. Responses to the draft SCI will be considered separately and are not summarized in this report.
- **Land Availability Assessment (LAA) Methodology Consultation** - This consultation sought views on how the Council will assess sites for development.
- **Call for Sites.** Submissions were invited of sites to be considered for suitability for development. It was explained that these sites will then be assessed using the LAA methodology. Responses to the LAA methodology and the Call for Sites will be considered in progressing the LAA and are not separately summarized in this report.

3.2.1.3 The consultation comprised the following activities:

- **Statutory consultees:** Letters and email notifications explaining the Issues consultation and providing details of how to respond were sent to all statutory consultees as listed in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 including specific consultation bodies, the general consultation bodies, neighbouring authorities and prescribed bodies
- **Non Statutory consultees:** Letters and email notifications were sent to non-statutory consultees on the Borough Council's Local Plan database
- **Website:** All the information about the new Local Plan, why it was being prepared, where the consultation documents were available and how to comment were published on the Council's website
- **Social media:** The Issues stage consultation was publicised on the Council's Facebook page and Twitter feed
- **Press releases:** Two press releases were issued, one before the Cabinet papers were published and one just before the start of the public consultation period
- **Inspection Locations:** All the consultation documents and materials were made available at the One Stop Shop at the Guildhall and all the public libraries in Northampton Borough
- **Consultation Leaflets:** Leaflets were distributed to all Borough Councillors, Libraries in Northampton Borough, Parish Councils and Neighbourhood Forums in Northampton Borough, to all GPs, major supermarkets and all community centres in Northampton Borough
- **Consultation Banners:** Banners advertising the Issues consultation were placed at the One Stop Shop at the Guildhall, Kingsthorpe Library, Weston Favell Library, Wootton Community Centre and Duston Community Centre throughout the six weeks consultation period. In

addition, a set of all the consultation documents and leaflets were also available for reference at these locations

- **Workshop for Borough Councillors:** All Borough Councillors were invited to a workshop on 3 May 2016 to receive a briefing on the Local Plan preparation process and timetable and to discuss the issues identified in the consultation

- **Workshop for Parish Councils and Neighbourhood Forums:** A workshop was held on 4 May 2016 for all Parish Councils and Neighbourhood Forums in Northampton Borough to receive a briefing on the Local Plan preparation process and timetable and to discuss the issues identified in the consultation

- **Drop In Session:** On the afternoon of 18 May 2016 the Planning Policy team were available at the One Stop Shop at the Guildhall to answer questions about the Issues stage

- **Employment Workshop:** A workshop was held on 25 May to focus on generating participation from property agents and developers to input into the Employment Land Study, which will inform the Local Plan. This workshop also provided the opportunity to discuss issues identified in the Issues Paper and encourage participation in the Local Plan process.

- **Meetings with Organisations:** During the consultation period the Planning Policy Team also met with various organisations to discuss the issues. Meetings were held with NEP, SEMLEP, Environment Agency, Anglian Water, Northampton Town Centre BID, Brackmills BID, Northamptonshire County Council, South Northamptonshire Council and Daventry District Council.

3.2.1.4 Comments were invited electronically, by email and through Survey Monkey, or by post. For those who do not have access to a computer, and were unable to visit any of the inspection locations paper copies of the consultation documents were available by phone or in writing from the Planning Policy team. All the documents were also available in other languages and/ formats on request.

3.2.1.5 A total of 49 organisations and individuals responded to the Scope and Issues consultation.

- Website: 10 responses were received online
- Email: 37 responses were received by email
- Post: 2 responses were received by post

3.2.1.6 It should be noted that there were:

- 553 recorded visits to the website;
- 4,358 people received the information via Facebook; and
- 8,248 people received the information via Twitter.

3.2.1.7 More information about the Issues consultation and a summary of the comments received is included in the Summary of Responses to the

Issues Consultation (Appendix 1 to this report). The comments submitted cover a range of issues. Key points include:

- a need to identify more sites to deliver the identified requirement for new homes and to maintain the five year housing land supply
- a need to ensure that allocated sites are available and deliverable in the short term
- the importance of providing a more balanced mix of family and other housing, including in the town centre
- a need for employment land that is suitable for particular sectors, such as large scale logistics and distribution sites and also for small scale offices and businesses
- a need to deliver infrastructure to support the town's growth, including the Northampton Northern Orbital Route and the Northampton Growth Management Scheme and to encourage other modes of transport
- a need for the town centre to evolve to become a destination to attract visitors and to increase dwell time in the town centre, with a mix of destination and independent shopping, workplaces, culture and cafes
- an opportunity to improve Market Square to reflect its historical significance and to enhance the market
- the importance of the Cultural Quarter and the opportunity to contribute to a distinct sense of place within the town centre
- a need to protect the historic environment
- a need to update the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for Northampton

3.2.2 Public Consultation on the Northampton Local Plan (Part 2) - Options

3.2.2.1 It is proposed that the next stage of public consultation comprises the following documents:

- **Options Consultation Paper**, which sets out the Council's strategy for the new Local Plan (Part 2) and invites people to comment. (Appendix 2)
- **Sustainability Appraisal Options Report**, which considers the likely significant effects that the Local Plan may have on various environmental, economic and social factors. (Appendix 4)

3.2.2.2 It is proposed that the consultation period will start on Wednesday 21 September and run for 6 weeks until Wednesday 02 November 2016.

3.2.3 Consultation on the Northampton Local Plan (Part 2) - Options (Regulation 18)

3.2.3.1 This Options consultation follows the Scope and Issues consultation which was undertaken between April and June 2016. It focuses in more detail on some of the key issues in preparing the Northampton Local Plan (Part

2). This will be the second formal stage of consultation on the Northampton Local Plan (Part 2) and will invite representations on the proposed strategy for the plan.

3.2.3.2 The Options Consultation Paper sets out a vision for Northampton for 2029, the objectives which the Northampton Local Plan (Part 2) will be seeking to achieve and the strategy that will underpin future development and regeneration activity across the Borough. It also sets out some of the key challenges that the new Local Plan (Part 2) will need to address, focusing on the delivery of growth, particularly the challenges of delivering new homes, economic prosperity and the future role of our centres, in a sustainable and deliverable way. The strategy sets out how the Council can plan positively for the new homes and jobs, whilst protecting and enhancing the natural and historic assets within the borough. The vision, objectives and strategy are informed by previous work and responses to the Scope and Issues consultation.

3.2.3.3 The Central Area Action Plan (CAAP) 2013 contains development plan policies for the central area. Some of the CAAP policies have now been superseded by recent development and/or changes in legislation, such as recent changes regarding permitted development rights, and therefore need to be updated. It is proposed that the new Local Plan (Part 2) will contain those CAAP policies which remain up to date and any CAAP policies which need updating. Once adopted, the new Northampton Local Plan (Part 2) will supersede the Central Area Action Plan.

3.2.3.4 Key points identified in the proposed strategy include:

- providing for significant new growth in the most sustainable way, ensuring that the development of new homes is matched by the provision of opportunities for new employment, accessible local services and a high quality environment.
- supporting the timely delivery of the key infrastructure schemes that are critical to enabling the identified growth to take place.
- providing for as much of the Borough's growing population within the Borough as possible, with a focus on brownfield or other available sites within the existing built up area.
- identifying opportunities to make better use of land by applying higher densities, with a minimum density of 40 dwellings per hectare outside of the sustainable urban extensions and higher densities considered in and near to the town centre, other key centres and along key transport corridors.
- continuing to work with neighbouring authorities through the Duty to Cooperate, which is a statutory requirement of the Localism Act 2011 and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) for local authorities to work together to address strategic planning issues. Sustainable urban extensions have already been identified within the West Northamptonshire Joint Core

Strategy Local Plan (Part 1) and these will contribute to the ability to plan positively for the future.

- ensuring that a greater number of our housing land supply sites are capable of being delivered in the shorter term.
- providing a continuous supply of land for all types of employment development, including the growth and expansion of existing businesses, the establishment of new businesses and attracting inward investment.
- ensuring that sites are available to support the key economic sectors important to the borough's economic growth, including business and professional services, food and drink, logistics and high tech engineering.
- reflecting the changing role of the traditional high street, increasing visitor numbers and dwell time in the town centre by promoting a balanced range of leisure and other town centre uses.
- building on the strength of the Cultural Quarter and its contribution to the continued diversity and strength of the town centre.
- focusing on generating a mix of destination and independent shopping alongside new homes, workplaces and culture that contribute to creating a sense of place and attracting visitor spend into the town centre.
- reflecting the importance of the borough's public spaces in high quality design choices for our public realm and public spaces.
- ensuring that the historic environment is central to shaping the Borough's future.

3.2.4 Sustainability Appraisal Options Report

- 3.2.4.1 The preparation of a Local Plan is required to include an accompanying Sustainability Appraisal (SA) throughout its preparation. This should consider all the likely significant effects that the Local Plan may have on various environmental, economic and social factors. If the Local Plan is likely to have a significant effect on the environment, the sustainability appraisal must also meet the legal requirements of the European Directive on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).
- 3.2.4.2 The Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report was prepared in March 2016 and available for comment between 27 April and 10 June 2016. A summary of responses received is provided at Appendix 3. The Scoping Report highlighted the opportunity for the Northampton Local Plan (Part 2) to offer opportunities to directly and strongly affect existing trends and issues in a positive way, through an up-to-date plan which reflects the

requirements of the NPPF and which builds on the Joint Core Strategy policies.

- 3.2.4.3 A Sustainability Appraisal Options Report has been prepared and is available on the Council's website. The final sustainability appraisal/strategic environmental assessment will be submitted to the Secretary of State with the Local Plan (Part 2) for examination.

3.2.5 What Happens Next?

- 3.2.5.1 This is the second formal stage in preparing a new Local Plan for Northampton. Comments received will be considered in progressing work on the Northampton Local Plan (Part 2) and will be published on the Council's consultation portal in accordance with the Data Protection Act.
- 3.2.5.2 Responses will be reported to the Council's Cabinet Advisory Group, which advises on the preparation of the Northampton Local Plan (Part 2). They will also be reported in summary to the Council's Cabinet. The Council will use the comments and suggestions it receives to help to develop a Draft Local Plan for further consultation in March 2017.

3.3 Choices (Options)

3.3.1 Option 1: Agree

- 3.3.2 There is an urgent need for the Council to have an up to date and robust planning policy in the light of on-going reforms to the planning system. The Joint Core Strategy only provides the strategic policies for the Borough and does not allocate all of the sites that will be required or set up-to-date detailed development management policies.

3.3.3 Option 2: Do not agree

- 3.3.4 The Cabinet could defer or decide not to prepare the Northampton Local Plan (Part 2), however this would mean that the Council would not have an up to date Development Plan to guide development across the Borough and would increase the risk of planning applications being allowed at appeal. This option is therefore not recommended.

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1 Policy

- 4.1.1 The Northampton Local Plan (Part 2) will review and update the Local Plan Saved Policies and replace extant interim guidance. An up to date Plan will provide greater certainty and allow policies at the local level to address local issues and to be fully compliant with up to date requirements. In accordance with Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 planning applications will then be determined in accordance with the

Development Plan, including the Local Plan (Part 2), unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

4.2 Resources and Risk

4.2.1 Sufficient resources are available for the preparation of the Local Plan (Part 2) within this year's resources. Additional resources are expected to be required for 2017/18 and costs of £150,000 were built in as part of the 2016/21 Budget setting process.

4.3 Legal

4.3.1 The Local Plan is a statutory document and has to be prepared in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, as amended; the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2012, as amended; the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004; and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010.

4.3.2 Legal support and advice will be required throughout the preparation process. This will require both support and advice from LGSS Law Limited and external Counsel at key stages.

4.4 Equality and Health

4.4.1 The Local Plan (Part 2) will be subject to full Community Impact Assessment.

4.5 Consultees (Internal and External)

4.5.1 The Cabinet Advisory Group was established on 03 February 2016 and has held several meetings to consider the main issues relating to the Local Plan throughout the preparation of the Proposed Options consultation, informed by officers and key evidence.

4.5.2 All Borough Councillors will be invited to attend a workshop in early October to find out more about the Local Plan (Part 2), the proposed consultation and the ongoing work towards adoption of an updated Local Plan for Northampton.

4.5.3 Parish Councils and Neighbourhood Forums in the Borough will also be invited to attend a workshop.

4.5.4 Further details of the proposed consultation actions are set out in the Options Stage Consultation and Engagement Strategy. (Appendix 5)

4.6 How the Proposals deliver Priority Outcomes

4.6.1 The preparation of an up to date Local Plan (Part 2) will assist in all aspects of the Corporate Plan and guide and influence many of the Council and its partners' strategies.

4.7 Other Implications

4.7.1 None.

5. Appendices

5.1 Appendix 1 –Summary of Responses to Issues Consultation

5.2 Appendix 2 –Northampton Local Plan (Part 2) Options Paper – for consultation

5.3 Appendix 3 – Summary of Responses to Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report

5.4 Appendix 4 - Sustainability Appraisal Options Report – for consultation

5.5 Appendix 5 - Consultation and Engagement Strategy for the Local Plan (Part 2) Options Consultation

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