

Item No: 6
Date: 6 <sup>th</sup> June 2019

**WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE  
JOINT PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE BOARD**

<b>West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan – Issues Consultation</b>
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**1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 To seek the views of the Board on the proposed Issues consultation for the West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan. The draft text of the proposed consultation document is attached as Appendix 1.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 That the views of the Board are sought on the draft Issues consultation document attached as Appendix 1.
- 2.2 That, subject to any amendments required by the Board and arising from the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report, the Board recommends the Issues consultation document be approved by the partner Councils for the purposes of public consultation.
- 2.3 That a revised Joint Local Development Scheme is prepared and presented to the partner Council's committees for approval.

**3. Issues Consultation Document**

- 3.1 Officers from the partner Councils, supported by the Joint Planning Unit and the County Council have prepared a draft Issues consultation document which is attached as Appendix 1 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 The Issues consultation is the first stage in preparing the West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan. The Issues 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. We want to engage with stakeholders and communities across the area and work together to ensure that we prepare the best plan possible for a sustainable future.
- 3.3 The draft Issues consultation document attached as Appendix 1 covers the following matters:
- **Introduction** – setting out the broad scope of the WNSP and why we are preparing it.

- **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

3.4 The Board is asked to consider the content of the draft Issues consultation document and the proposed consultation questions. Amendments arising from the views expressed by the Board will be incorporated into a final version of the document which will be presented to the relevant committees of the partner Councils for approval.

#### 4. Oxford-Cambridge Arc

4.1 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 clear 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.

4.2 At the meeting in December the Board received a report outlining progress on a proposed Growth Deal for West Northamptonshire along similar line the deal that was agreed for Oxfordshire earlier in 2018. Negotiations on the Growth Deal have not progressed as originally anticipated and 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 discussion with the Government's OxCam Unit are continuing.

4.3 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.

## **5. Sustainability Appraisal**

- 5.1 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. This is currently being prepared and the final report will be available by the 18<sup>th</sup> June, in advance of the consideration of the Issues consultation by the partner Council's committees. Further changes to the Issues consultation document may be required to reflect the final SA Scoping Report.
- 5.2 The SA Scoping Report will be published for comments from statutory bodies and other stakeholders as part of the Issues consultation.

## **6. Timeline for the Consultation**

- 6.1 Following consideration of the Issues paper by the Board, a final version of the consultation document will be produced. It will be necessary for this document to be agreed by each of the partner Councils before it can be published for consultation. It is proposed that reports seeking approval for the Issues consultation will be presented to the following Committees:
- Daventry District Council – Strategy Group – 4<sup>th</sup> July
  - Northampton Borough Council – Cabinet – 24<sup>th</sup> July
  - South Northamptonshire Council – Planning Policy and Regeneration Strategy Committee – 31<sup>st</sup> July
- 6.2 Following the final committee approval on 31<sup>st</sup> July it is suggested that the consultation period would start on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> August and run until Friday 11<sup>th</sup> October. This is an extended consultation period which takes account of the summer holidays.

## **7. Local Development Scheme**

- 7.1 The Joint Local Development Scheme (LDS) agreed by the partner Councils in October 2018 had originally anticipated the Issues consultation taking place in April 2019. It will therefore be necessary for the LDS to be updated to reflect the revised timing of the Issues consultation and to reschedule the subsequent stages of plan preparation. This revised LDS should be prepared and presented to the partner Councils committees for approval.

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**Date:** May 2019

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