

WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLANNING POLICY COMMITTEE

25 April 2023

Councillor Rebecca Breese

Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Built Environment and Rural Affairs

Report Title	Updated West Northamptonshire Local Development Scheme
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Contributors/Checkers/Approvers

West S151	Martin Henry Executive Director, Finance	Email approval obtained 28/03/23
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Legal	Neil Weeks Planning Lawyer	Email approval obtained 11/04/23
Communications	Becky Hutson Head of Communications	Email approval obtained 29/03/23

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Updated West Northamptonshire Local Development Scheme

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To seek approval for an updated Local Development Scheme which sets out a timetable for local plan preparation.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Local Planning Authorities are required to produce, and keep up to date, a Local Development Scheme (LDS) which sets out and timetables the local plans they will prepare to plan for development in their area.
- 2.2 Members may recall that the West Northamptonshire LDS was updated in November 2022. Members are now being asked to consider a proposed change to the title and scope of the West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan (WNSP) which would necessitate a further update to the LDS.
- 2.3 The WNSP was originally conceived as a strategic (Part 1 Local Plan) which would review and replace policies in the adopted West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (WNJCS). It is now proposed that a single local plan should be prepared for West Northamptonshire, to be referred to as the West Northamptonshire Local Plan (WNLP). When adopted, the WNLP would replace the WNJCS and the Part 2 Local Plans for Daventry District, Northampton and South Northamptonshire.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
 - a) Approves the updated West Northamptonshire Local Development Scheme (Appendix A) which is to be brought into effect upon the expiry of the call-in period for Planning Policy Committee decisions.
 - b) Delegates to the Assistant Director: Planning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Built Environment and Rural Affairs, authority to make minor editorial and presentational changes to the Local Development Scheme in its final published form.

4. Reason for Recommendations (NOTE: this section is mandatory and must be completed)

- 4.1 It is a statutory requirement for the Council to produce an LDS setting out the Local Plan(s) which, when prepared, will comprise part of the development plan for the area. The LDS must be made available to the public and kept up to date. For West Northamptonshire, a new LDS is needed to set out a revised scope and timetable for the West Northamptonshire Local Plan.

5. Report Background

- 5.1 The current LDS sets out the Council's timetable for the preparation of the Northampton Local Plan Part 2 (NLPP2) and the West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan. As the NLPP2 was adopted by Council on 23 March, the LDS no longer needs to include a forward programme for this plan. In respect of the WNSP it is now suggested that the scope and the title of this plan should be changed so that a single local plan would be produced for the West Northamptonshire area. This single local plan would be referred to as the West Northamptonshire Local Plan (WNLP). When adopted, the WNLP would replace the WNJCS and the Part 2 Local Plans for Daventry District, Northampton and South Northamptonshire. The Local Development Scheme needs to be updated if the revised scope and title of the plan is agreed. Some revision is also required to the

timetable to reflect the additional work involved in scoping and drafting the policy content of a single local plan.

- 5.2 Preparation of a single local plan, as opposed to the continuation of the current two part local plans which exist, will in the short term take a little longer than the current timetable. In the longer term however, this is likely to be most efficient way of providing comprehensive and up to date local plan coverage for the Council. Members will be aware that the adoption of the Part 2 Local Plans has taken a considerable time following the adoption of the WNJCS. The updated LDS attached at Appendix A sets out the anticipated timetable for the preparation of the WNLP envisages that the next stage of consultation on a draft plan would take place in October 2023 as opposed to June 2023. This has a knock-on effect for the remaining stages with submission for examination expected in November 2024 and adoption in March 2026.
- 5.3 The revised timetable will also enable further engagement with members to take place prior to the next stage of consultation. This will include the provision of member workshops the first of which is planned for early May.
- 5.4 The Planning Advisory Service (PAS) has recently been engaged to provide support in respect of project management and the evidence base for the Local Plan. This should help ensure that robust project management measures are in place and that the evidence required to support the plan is proportionate and will meet the tests of soundness.
- 5.5 The Council is required to specify the date that the LDS will be brought into effect. It is suggested that this should be upon the expiry of the call-in period for Planning Policy Committee decisions.

6. Issues and Choices

- 6.1 The updated LDS presented at Appendix A sets out a reasonable timetable for the preparation of the WNLP based on the resources currently available. It is a statutory requirement for the Council to publish an LDS and ensure that it is up to date. As such, failing to approve an LDS is not an option.
- 6.2 The Committee could decide to continue the two-part approach to local plan preparation. This would mean continuing to prepare the Strategic Plan as a Part 1 Local Plan followed by a more detailed Part 2 Local Plan(s). As indicated above the preparation of a single local plan is likely to be the most time efficient and cost-effective way of providing comprehensive and up to date local plan coverage. It will also be simpler for our communities and customers providing all relevant local plan policies in one document.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 Resources and Financial

- 7.1.1 The costs of producing the updated LDS can all be met from existing resources.

7.2 Legal

7.2.1 Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act sets out the statutory requirement for local planning authorities to publish a Local Development Scheme and ensure that it is kept up to date.

7.3 Risk

7.3.1 Failure to maintain an up-to-date LDS could result in the WNLP failing legal tests.

7.4 Consultation and Communication

7.4.1 Although there is no requirement for formally consult on the LDS and timetable for local plan preparation, the document itself is key to future consultation and engagement activities by ensuring that local communities, businesses, developers, service and infrastructure providers know when they will be able to participate in the process. The Council will continue to communicate to the public the objectives and outcomes of the LDS as and when required at each of the future stages.

7.5 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny

7.5.1 Not applicable.

7.6 Climate Impact

7.6.1 The approval of the LDS does not have any direct implications for climate change. However, the WNLP will include policies to address climate change that will contribute to the Council's ambitions in this respect.

7.7 Community Impact

7.7.1 The LDS provides information to the community on the timetable for the preparation of the WNLP and opportunities to be involved.

8. Background Papers

None