

# WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLANNING POLICY COMMITTEE

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<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Response to consultation on proposals to implement the parts of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill which relate to plan-making</b>
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## **Contributors/Checkers/Approvers**

<b>Deputy Monitoring Officer</b>	Sarah Hall	Email sent 04.09.2023
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<b>Communications Lead/Head of Communications</b>	Becky Hutson	Email sent 04.09.2023
<b>Legal</b>	Theresa Boyd	Email received 11.09.2023

## **List of Appendices**

**Appendix 1 – Suggested response to consultation on proposals to implement the parts of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill which relate to plan-making**

### **1. Purpose of Report**

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- 1.1 For members to consider a suggested response to the current consultation on proposals to implement the parts of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill which relate to plan-making

### **2. Executive Summary**

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- 2.1 The report summarises the government’s proposals to implement the parts of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill which relate to plan-making and suggests a response from this Council.

### **3. Recommendations**

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- 3.1 It is recommended that Planning Policy Committee:
- a) Agrees the suggested response to the consultation as set out in Appendix 1.

### **4. Reason for Recommendations**

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- 4.1 To ensure that Government is aware of this Council’s views on proposals to implement the parts of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill which relate to plan-making and in some cases to seek to persuade government to revise its proposed changes.

### **5. Report Background**

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- 5.1 The Government is consulting on proposals to implement the parts of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill which relate to plan-making.
- 5.2 The consultation runs until 18 October 2023 and the draft response to the consultation is attached at Appendix 1. Full details of the consultation can be seen on the [government’s website](#).
- 5.3 The consultation sets out further details on proposals first announced last year in a policy paper presented alongside the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill and outlines how the Government intends to bring these measures forward through regulations, policy and guidance by the autumn of 2024. These include measures based around the governments vision that local plans (and minerals and waste plans) should:
- Be simpler to understand and use, and positively shaped by the views of communities about how their area should evolve.
  - Clearly show what is planned in a local area – so that communities and other users of the plan can engage with them more easily, especially while they are being drawn up.
  - Be prepared more quickly and updated more frequently to ensure more authorities have up-to-date plans that reflect local needs.
  - Make the best use of new digital technology, so that people can get involved and to drive improved productivity and efficiency in the plan-making process.
- 5.4 Set out through 15 Chapters and 266 paragraphs are a number of proposals for how that vision can be delivered. A summary of the consultations main proposals is set out below with the full consultation available on the [government’s website](#). The Councils suggested response to the consultation is presented at Appendix 1 to this report.

## 5.5 Making the role and content of plans clearer

The consultation proposes to make it clearer what the role of plans should be, and what they should or might contain. This, it is considered, will allow them to be simpler, shorter and more visual, showing more clearly what is planned in local areas so that local communities and other users of the plan can engage more easily.

It is proposed rather than planning authorities splitting their local plan across multiple documents, that in the future they will have a single local plan to help make it clear which planning policies will be considered when planning applications are considered. Additionally, minerals and waste plans (which set the planning policy for minerals extraction, waste and recycling facilities and so on) will either sit separately or – depending on which body is responsible for preparing it – could be incorporated into the local plan.

The consultation proposes that policies will focus only on locally important matters and that a set of ‘national development management policies’, will be introduced to cover many of the ‘general’ policies typically found in plans. New plans will therefore not repeat the national development management policies, reducing duplication across the country.

## 5.6 Speeding up the process for preparing a plan

The consultation proposes to set a timeframe of 30 months to prepare and put in place (adopt) a plan. It is proposed that the process will become more standard for planning authorities to follow. Before the timeframe begins, planning authorities will be able to undertake preparation to be in the best position to start their plan, and will be required to announce when the formal plan preparation process will start.

When producing a plan, it is expected that planning authorities will do the following:

- define the scope of the plan and prepare a programme for how they are going to develop the local plan (through the Project Initiation Document) including when they will consult with the public
- through close working with local communities and stakeholders, prepare a vision for how the area could change and develop, and how progress towards meeting this vision will be delivered and monitored, giving communities a genuine opportunity to shape, from the earliest stages, how their area meets its needs and evolves over time
- prepare the right amount of evidence to test and underpin the proposals in the plan, so that there is transparency and confidence in the plan
- invite early participation and hold different stages of consultation with local communities, stakeholders and statutory bodies along the process, to make sure the plan takes account of a wide range of views
- ensure that the plan is maximising opportunities to protect the environment and human health, and deliver on the government’s environmental targets and commitments, informed by relevant environmental policy including strategies for water, flood risk management, air quality and landscapes, and Local Nature

- Recovery Strategies, as well as the processes of Strategic Environmental Assessment, and its eventual replacement Environmental Outcomes Reports
- have the plan assessed by a Planning Inspector at public examination, which should take no longer than 6 months (plus an additional three months if further consultation is needed)

The consultation proposes the introduction of three new ‘gateway’ assessments – around the beginning, middle and end of the process for preparing a plan, with the final assessment taking place just before the examination. It is intended that these will support the preparation of plans by providing advice to the planning authority and identifying difficult issues earlier in the process.

So that it is clear what stage the planning authority has reached in preparing their plan, it is proposed to build upon the requirement for planning authorities to prepare and maintain a local plan timetable or a minerals and waste plan timetable, and introduce a requirement for that timetable to be updated at least every 6 months and made available to the public.

Finally, a requirement for planning authorities to start updating their plans every 5 years is proposed.

## **5.7 Ensuring local communities are engaged**

As part of the 30 month timeframe a requirement for planning authorities to undertake two periods of public consultation is set out. Outside of this, proposals to introduce a new requirement for planning authorities to “notify” and “invite” early participation on matters that might shape the direction of the plan is proposed.

## **5.8 Dealing with complexity**

Throughout the consultation document there are references to policy, guidance and templates. It is intended to remove ambiguity and uncertainty, so that all participants in the plan making process are clear about what is expected at every stage, reducing the need for additional work that is not necessary to get a plan in place.

## **5.9 Making the most of digital technology**

The consultation considers that a significant way to speed up the production of plans and make the process simpler and more accessible is by making best use of digital technology. It identifies how it can support authorities in plan-making and considers that it will improve accessibility, when used alongside more traditional methods of engagement.

The consultation outlines that digital transformation could mean plans are presented as interactive maps rather than static documents to show how an area could develop and change over time. It also identifies that making standardised planning and environmental data openly available and accessible would make it easier to prepare planning applications and give communities the information they need to provide feedback on proposals for their area. The government outlines that it will work closely with the planning sector to introduce changes incrementally, testing and learning as they go, including consideration of how digital will impact the different needs of communities. It is felt that new digital tools and better use and availability

of standardised data in the plan-making process will improve the way that plans are prepared. Making it faster to produce a plan and easier for communities to get involved.

### 5.10 Other proposals

This consultation proposes details for a new type of plan called a “supplementary plan”. Supplementary plans are intended to help planning authorities react quickly to changes in their areas (for example, an unexpected regeneration opportunity) by producing a plan that has the same ‘weight’ (in other words, status) as local plans or minerals and waste plans and will also be subject to consultation and independent examination. They can also be used to set authority-wide design policies.

It also proposes to pilot “Community Land Auctions”, which are a new way of identifying land for development in a local plan in a way which seeks to maximise the benefits to the local community.

### 5.11 Bringing in the new plans system

The consultation document proposed arrangements for how the government will move from the current plans system to the new one. It confirms the intention to have in place the regulations, policy and guidance by autumn 2024 to enable the preparation of the first new-style local plans and minerals and waste plans.

## 6. Issues and Choices

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- 6.1 The purpose of this report is to suggest a response from this Council to the Government on proposals to implement the parts of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill which relate to plan-making. Members could decide to submit an amended response.
- 6.2 An alternative approach would be to not respond to the consultation.

## 7. Implications (including financial implications)

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### 7.1 Resources and Financial

- 7.1.1 There are no financial implications arising specifically from this report.

### 7.2 Legal

- 7.2.1 There are no legal implications arising specifically from this report.

### 7.3 Risk

There are no risks arising from the recommendations in this report.

### 7.4 Consultation

7.4.1 Not applicable.

7.5 **Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny**

7.5.1 Not applicable

7.6 **Climate Impact**

7.6.1 There are no climate change impacts arising specifically from this report.

7.7 **Community Impact**

7.7.1 There are no community impacts arising specifically from this report.

7.8 **Communications**

7.8.1 None directly arising from this report.

**8. Background Papers**

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None