

WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLANNING POLICY COMMITTEE

30 January 2024

Report Title	West Northamptonshire Local Plan – Statement of Community Involvement
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Contributors/Checkers/Approvers

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Legal	Theresa Boyd Solicitor	Email received 18.01.2024
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List of Appendices

Appendix A - West Northamptonshire Local Plan – Statement of Community Involvement

Appendix B - Local Plan Communication and Engagement Plan

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To seek Members' approval of the Statement of Community Involvement for the West Northamptonshire Local Plan, following update.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 A Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out how the Council will engage and consult in the undertaking of its Planning functions to ensure that the public, businesses, landowners, developers, adjoining local authorities, government agencies and any other individuals, groups and organisations within and with an interest in, the local authority's area can get involved in the decisions that are made.
- 2.2 All local authorities are required to have in place an up to date SCI.
- 2.3 A number of SCIs are in place for the West Northamptonshire area covering how the Councils engages as it undertakes different aspects of its planning function. These include the West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan SCI which was adopted in September 2021 to guide the development of the emerging Strategic Plan to 2050.
- 2.4 Since the adoption of that SCI the Council has made the decision to produce a single Local Plan for West Northamptonshire in place of the previously proposed strategic and Part 2 Plans. That local plan will cover the period ending in 2041.
- 2.5 In response to those decisions, it is considered appropriate to present an updated SCI for adoption to reflect those and other factual changes that have occurred since 2021. The discussion and proposals contained within the SCI in respect to the nature of consultation and engagement have not changed from that earlier document.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
 - a) Adopts the Statement of Community Involvement (Appendix A.)

4. Reason for Recommendations

- 4.1 There is a legal requirement on Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to undertake public consultation on local plans and the Council will shortly be undertaking a consultation on draft (Regulation 18) local plan.
- 4.2 There is also a requirement to produce a Statement Of Community Involvement and to ensure that these are kept up-to-date to ensure effective community involvement at all stages of the planning process. This will be tested at the local plan examination, it is therefore important that we have an up to date SCI in place.

5. Report Background

- 5.1 In 2021 the council prepared, consulted and adopted a new SCI to cover the preparation of a new strategic plan for West Northamptonshire. The SCI deals solely with the preparation of the WNLP. Other SCIs remain in place and have different scopes relating to matters such a neighbourhood planning and development management.
- 5.2 The SCI describes how the council will ensure that the public, businesses, landowners, developers, adjoining local authorities, government agencies and any other individuals, groups and organisations within and with an interest in, the local authority's area can get involved in the creation of the WNLP aiming at shaping where we live, work and trade.
- 5.3 The latest version of the SCI regarding plan preparation was adopted by Cabinet in September 2021, following consultation. That SCI dealt only with the plan making aspects of the SCI, the other parts of the predecessor councils SCIs regarding, for example, consultation on planning applications remain in place. These will be reviewed in due course. An update to that SCI has been produced to reflect factual changes that have occurred since the adoption including those to the plan period, now ending in 2041, and the fact that the Council is now producing a single local plan not a strategic plan. The discussion and proposals in respect to the nature of consultation and engagement have not changed from that earlier document.
- 5.4 This is in line with the Planning Practice Guidance (Paragraph: 071 Reference ID: 61-071-20190315) which guides that Local planning authorities must review their Statements of Community Involvement every 5 years from the adoption date and that it is important that SCI are kept up-to-date to ensure effective community involvement at all stages of the planning process.
- 5.5 Although it is good practice for authorities to inform the public of their intentions to update this document and of the changes that have been made, there is no requirement in legislation for local planning authorities to consult when reviewing and updating their Statement of Community Involvement (Planning Practice Guidance Paragraph: 078 Reference ID: 61-078-201200513). As such and considering the factual nature of the changes that have been undertaken, and the fact that the existing version has been consulted on, public consultation on the revised version of the SCI is not proposed.

6. Issues and Choices

- 6.1 The Committee could decide not to update the SCI, but this would leave the Council vulnerable to challenge at the examination, that it does not have an up-to-date SCI in place.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 Resources and Financial

- 7.1.1 It is currently anticipated that the costs of producing the WNLP including consultation and engagement can all be met from existing resources. If further funding was required, this would be the subject of a separate report.

7.2 Legal

7.2.1 The preparation of the development plan is a statutory requirement and the process for plan preparation is prescribed by the relevant regulations as is the publication of a Statement of Community Involvement.

7.3 Risk

7.3.1 Not having an up-to-date SCI in place would introduce a risk that the independent examiner of the Local Plan is not satisfied that appropriate processes for engagement were in place.

7.4 Consultation and Communication

7.4.1 The requirements for consultation and communication on the WNLP are set out in the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. A consultation and communication strategy has been prepared, in collaboration with the Communications team, in advance of the next consultation.

7.5 As set out above there is no requirement in legislation for local planning authorities to consult when reviewing and updating their Statement of Community Involvement (Planning Practice Guidance Paragraph: 078 Reference ID: 61-078-201200513). As such and considering the factual nature of the changes that have been undertaken public consultation on the SCI is not proposed.

7.6 Climate Impact

7.6.1 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 SCI and associated consultation and communication strategy will ensure that our communities are given ample opportunity to be involved in the draft plan consultation.

8. Background Papers

None