

# WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

## Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**31 January 2024**

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>West Northamptonshire Local Plan</b>
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### Contributors/Checkers/Approvers

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### List of Appendices

#### **Appendix A - Local Plan Communications and Engagement Plan**

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

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To update on the process for preparing the next stage of the West Northamptonshire Local Plan

##### **2. Executive Summary**

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2.1 The West Northamptonshire Local Plan (WNLP) will be a single local plan for West Northamptonshire and guide development in the area up to 2041.

- 2.3 The next stage in the preparation of the WNLP is a draft plan consultation which is expected to be considered at committee in March 2024. Details of the ongoing work supporting the preparation of the plan, needed to inform the next consultation, including those of member engagement are provided in section 5 below.

### **3. Recommendations**

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- 3.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
- a) Considers the process for the preparation of the draft plan for public consultation.

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

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- 4.1 It is a statutory requirement for the Council to produce a development plan for the area. The West Northamptonshire Local Plan will form the development plan for the area alongside the Minerals and Waste Local Plan and made (adopted) Neighbourhood Plans. It is appropriate for the Committee to consider the process for the preparation of the WNLP.

### **5. Report Background**

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- 5.1 On 11 September a report was presented to Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee considering the process for preparing the next stage of the West Northamptonshire Local Plan, specifically in respect of member engagement. This report provides an update on the preparation of the plan and work that has been undertaken since that last committee.
- 5.2 On 25 April 2023 the Council's Planning Policy Committee approved an updated Local Development Scheme (LDS) for West Northamptonshire. This updated LDS sets out a programme for the preparation of a single local plan to be referred to as the West Northamptonshire Local Plan (WNLP). When adopted, the WNLP will replace the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan Part 1 (WNJCS) and the Part 2 Local Plans for the former Daventry District, Northampton Borough, and South Northamptonshire District. It is intended that the WNLP will guide development across West Northamptonshire over a period of at least 15 years from adoption. The plan period is currently expected to extend up to 2041, as agreed by the Planning Policy Committee at its meeting in June 2022.
- 5.3 A central element of the WNLP will be the Council's spatial vision for the area which sets out the ambition for our communities, our environment and economy. It effectively sets out what sort of place we want West Northamptonshire to be at the end of the plan period and will include place-based visions for Northampton, Daventry, Brackley, Towcester and our rural areas. The delivery of the vision will be underpinned by a set of spatial objectives.
- 5.4 We have previously consulted on a draft spatial vision and a set of 16 spatial objectives which reflect the priorities set out in the Council's Corporate Plan. The current draft vision and objectives were considered by the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June.

- 5.5 The next stage in the preparation of the WNLP will be the publication of a draft plan for public consultation. It is expected that in addition to our vision and objectives, the draft plan will include draft planning policies, and draft site allocations to meet the housing and economic needs of the area. In addition work is progressing in consideration of the settlement hierarchy and settlement confines which will also form part of the consultation.
- 5.6 In preparation for the draft plan consultation, we have undertaken a process of member engagement to ensure that members have an appropriate opportunity to give their views and shape the draft policies and proposals prior to its consideration by the Planning Policy Committee and the following public consultation.
- 5.7 Most recently two member workshops were held in the Council Chamber at the Forum, on 19 October and 14 November. At these workshop members were firstly briefed on and asked to consider the Housing and Economic Needs Assessment for the area and the level of growth needed across the plan period, and then in November various potential spatial options for where and how this growth could be accommodated we discussed. The feedback from these workshops has been captured and circulated to all members. Members who were not able to attend were given the opportunity to add their comments to those recorded at the workshop.
- 5.8 Prior to the member workshop we had provided briefings on the new Local Plan for leading members (in January) and all members (in March and May). A member briefing on Housing and Planning was held on 17 May, which included information regarding the new Local Plan.
- 5.9 A series of briefings with members of the cabinet is also being undertaken on a six weekly basis and the members of the Planning Policy Committee have been involved in a series of workshops to discuss and help formulate the plans emerging Development Management policies and strategy.
- 5.10 In addition to this member engagement officers attended a session of the Council's Youth Forum on 13<sup>th</sup> December to discuss their aspirations for the future and vision for the area.
- 5.11 There are a number of pieces of technical work which are nearing completion and are informing the preparation of the draft plan. Firstly, there is an update to the Housing and Economic Needs Assessment (HENA). This update is taking account of the revised plan period, the latest data available from the 2021 census, and recent evidence on the demand for strategic logistics development. Secondly, we are undertaking a high-level sustainability appraisal of broad spatial options. This is looking at the sustainability merits of different spatial approaches to meeting the development needs of the area. Additionally work is being finalised exploring the brownfield opportunities in the districts principal settlements (Brackley, Daventry, Northampton and Towcester), the contribution they can make to meeting the needs identified in the HENA and the role that regeneration has to make in place shaping and delivering the vision and objectives of the plan. Work is also concluding in terms of landscape and transport evidence.
- 5.12 Related to the completion of this technical work we are planning a further member workshop in January to discuss the spatial strategy for the plan.

- 5.13 In addition to this technical work the Planning Policy and Communications Team have been liaising with to develop a communications strategy for the plan (Appendix A).
- 5.14 The strategy sets out the communication and consultation approach for the plan and seeks to engage a broad demographic audience with a clear call to action to encourage responses to and involvement in the consultation to provide the public with opportunities to influence the decisions that will affect them. It should be read in conjunction with the Planning Service ‘Statement of Community Involvement’.
- 5.15 It is anticipated that a revised Statement of Community Involvement and an updated Local Development Scheme setting out the scope and timetable for the Local Plan will be presented to the Council’s Planning Policy Committee at the end of January.

## **6. Issues and Choices**

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- 6.1 The Committee are asked to consider the update on plan progression and the proposals for the plans progression and member engagement in section 5 above.

## **7. Implications (including financial implications)**

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### **7.1 Resources and Financial**

- 7.1.1 It is currently anticipated that the costs of producing the WNLP 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.

### **7.3 Risk**

- 7.3.1 Failure to engage members in the process would put at risk the successful adoption of the plan.

### **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 Climate Impact**

7.5.1 The WNLP will include policies to address climate change that will contribute to the Council's ambitions in this respect.

7.6 **Community Impact**

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

**8. Background Papers**

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None