

WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Council

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Councillor Rebecca Breese

Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Built Environment & Rural Affairs

Report Title **West Northamptonshire Local Plan – Approval to consult on a draft plan.**

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List of Appendices

Appendix A – West Northamptonshire Local Plan – Regulation 18 draft

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To seek approval to consult on the Regulation 18 Version of the West Northamptonshire Local Plan (WNLP)

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Local Planning Authorities have a legal obligation to prepare a Local Plan and to keep it under review. That local plan must set out the Council's plans for the area including allocating sites for development, identifying areas to be protected from development and setting out policies to be used in the determination of planning applications.
- 2.2 The West Northamptonshire area has an up-to-date local plan in the form of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan Part 1 (WNJCS) and a suite of Part 2 Plans that cover the administrative areas of the former Northampton Borough, Daventry District and South Northamptonshire Council.
- 2.3 The WNJCS was adopted in December 2014 and the Part 2 Plans in 2023, 2020 and 2020 respectively. To be effective plans need to be kept up to date and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that policies in local plan and spatial development strategies should be reviewed to assess whether they need updating at least once every five years and should then be updated as necessary.
- 2.4 Whilst the existing plans are considered up to date, producing a new local plan enables WNC to set out its vision and objectives for the area, its ambitions for new development and commitment to dealing with climate change in a statutory plan; to have consistent policies across the area, and to have a plan with a life span to 2041, replacing the existing plans which only have five years left of their plan periods.
- 2.5 The WNLP will replace the WNJCS and the Part 2 Local Plans which were adopted for the former Daventry, Northampton and South Northamptonshire areas.
- 2.6 Following an Issues Consultation in 2019 and an Options consultation in 2021 a draft plan has now been prepared for consultation.
- 2.7 The draft plan was considered by the Council's Planning Policy Committee at its meeting of 14 March 2024. At that meeting members agreed to recommend to Council that the plan be approved for consultation, subject to two changes. The first change is in regard to carbon net zero development in Policy PL1 and consequent changes to supporting text at 4.4.4. The second change was to include additional supporting text regarding the Supplementary Planning Document for employment sites in the former south area. Additional text has been added immediately prior to each of these five policies (three in the Towcester chapter and two in the Economic growth chapter). These changes have been included in the version of the plan attached at appendix A.

3. Recommendations

3.1 It is recommended that the Council:

- a) Agrees that the draft West Northamptonshire Local Plan (Appendix A) be issued for public consultation in accordance with the requirements set out in the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement.
- b) Agrees that a call for sites to include sites to meet the needs identified in the West Northamptonshire Council Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment (2022-2037) be undertaken as part of the public consultation.
- c) Agrees to delegate to the Head of Planning Policy and Specialist Services authority to make minor editorial and presentational changes to the draft Local Plan and the proposals map prior to the consultation commencing.

4. Reason for Recommendations

4.1 As the local planning authority, West Northamptonshire Council has a legal obligation to prepare a local plan and to keep it under review. This local plan must set out the Council's plans for the area including allocating sites for development, identifying areas to be protected from development and setting out policies to be used in the determination of planning applications.

5. Report Background

- 5.1 To be effective plans need to be kept up to date and the NPPF states that policies in local plan and spatial development strategies should be reviewed to assess whether they need updating at least once every five years and should then be updated as necessary.
- 5.2 West Northamptonshire currently has an up to date Development Plan consisting of the WNJCS the Daventry Settlements and Countryside Local Plan, Northampton Local Plan Part 2, South Northamptonshire Local Plan Part 2, an adopted Minerals and Waste Local Plan and a suite of 'made' neighbourhood development plans. The Council is currently in the process of preparing a new local plan ('the plan') for the area to guide development in the period to 2041.
- 5.3 Work on this emerging plan began with an Issues Consultation and Call for Sites in the summer of 2019 and was followed by an Options Consultation in the Autumn of 2021. At that time it was envisaged that the emerging plan would be a Strategic Plan for the area, i.e. a Part 1 Plan, covering a plan period to 2050.
- 5.4 Following consideration of the responses to the Options Consultation of 2021 members of the Planning Policy Committee (June 2022) agreed that a shorter plan period should be adopted for the plan covering the period 2023-2041 and then at its meeting of April 2023 that the emerging local plan should be a single local plan for the area instead of a strategic plan previously proposed which by its nature would have required a part two plan or plans to be prepared following its adoption. Having a single plan provides a much simpler planning policy environment. This is evidenced by the fact that the Local Plan extends to 96 policies and 299 pages and replaces 217 policies and 935 pages in the existing Part 1 and Part 2 plans combined.
- 5.5 When adopted the new local plan will replace the WNJCS and the adopted Part 2 Plans that cover the Daventry, Northampton and South Northamptonshire Areas and will allocate land for

development, identify areas for protection and enhancement and provide detailed planning guidance to help shape decision making and guide investment decisions in the area.

5.6 Following consultation on the Issues and Options, a significant amount of work has gone into producing an emerging draft (referred to as a Regulation 18 version). This has included collating various pieces of evidence to ensure that the plan is robust and thus justified. All of the evidence base documents will be made available on the Council's website from the start of the consultation period.

5.7 A significant level of engagement with elected members of the Council has also taken place including a series of all member workshops, workshops with the members of the Planning Policy Committee and briefings with members of the Cabinet.

5.8 The result of that work, the evidence base and issue and options consultation is the document attached as Appendix A which covers a range of issues set out in a series of chapters which are summarised below.

5.9 **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This chapter provides an overview of the planning context to the plan, including setting out the current and future composition of the Development Plan for the area and work that has been undertaken to date. It continues to detail that the Plan is still being prepared, that evidence is still being gathered and options are still being considered. It identifies that in most part, the Plan contains fully developed policies which we are inviting comments on but that in some cases, the plan identifies that policies are still being developed or choices being made. Again comments are invited on these parts of the Plan. The introduction also confirms that this stage of the plan making process is referred to as the Regulation 18 stage.

5.10 **Chapter 2: Spatial Portrait, Vision and Objective**

This chapter provides some important context to the West Northamptonshire area. This includes information in respect of the population, housing, economy, transport, arts, culture and sports and the wider built and natural environment. It provides a profile of the areas main settlements and sets out a Spatial Vision for how the Council envisages the area to be in 2041. To ensure that vision is achieved the plan sets out 17 Spatial Objectives which provide specific direction to the policies of the local plan. The objectives have been informed by the Council's Corporate Plan which has six priorities, five of which are directly relevant to the Local Plan. The objectives are grouped under each priority.

5.11 **Chapter 3: Spatial Strategy**

This chapter sets out the over-arching Spatial Strategy which flows from the spatial portrait, vision and objectives set out in chapter 2, and provides a framework for the policies and site allocations in the Local Plan.

The Spatial Strategy outlines the hierarchy of places and the principles for the distribution of development between these places. The key focus of the strategy is on the regeneration of the

urban areas of existing towns maximising the use of previously developed land and vacant or underutilised buildings. To this end the plan will allocate c1,700 additional homes on brownfield land whilst ensuring where necessary sites allocated in previous Local Plans are brought forward across the area. In addition, the Plan includes some relatively limited new allocations for growth on the edge of the Principal Urban Area of Northampton.

5.12 Chapter 4: Placemaking

This chapter sets out key policies that development in West Northamptonshire will need to take account of, to create excellent places. The chapter focuses on four main areas:

1. Climate change and sustainability
2. Creating excellent places
3. Health and wellbeing
4. Community and sports facilities and open spaces

The areas relate to both national policy ambitions as well as this authorities objectives for residents and visitors to West Northamptonshire. A golden thread throughout the chapter, and the plan, is of how it can respond to the impact of climate change through the delivery of sustainable development. In this chapter these ambitions and objectives are delivered through a suite of 13 policies. Starting with that which requires all developments to contribute towards meeting carbon net zero emissions by 2045. This is followed by policies on low carbon and renewable energy, flood risk and air quality.

Placemaking, design and amenity policies set out requirements that all development should be designed to promote and contribute to good placemaking through high quality, innovative, sustainable and beautiful design which encourages the creation of a strong, successful and locally distinctive sense of place. Policies reinforce the Council's commitment to continue working with communities engaged in community led planning activities including neighbourhood plans and village design statements. Health and wellbeing policies include the requirement that major developments need to demonstrate, through a Health Impact Assessment, that they will contribute to creating an age friendly, healthy and equitable living environment. They then discuss through an emerging 'policy still in development' healthy food choices and the potential for exclusion zones and quotas to control the proliferation/ concentration of hot food takeaways.

The chapter concludes by providing policy and guidance in respect of community and sports facilities, open spaces and allotments with the Council firstly seeking to protect such existing facilities and supporting those that are proposed. In a further 'policy in development' the requirement for all developments of 10 dwellings or more to meet open space standards is set out. The final requirements of that policy will be informed by an open space assessment which is currently being undertaken but which will not have concluded by the time of the proposed consultation. The chapters final policy sets out how proposals should be considered in respect of sites designated as Local Green Space with the Plan at Appendix A identifying existing Local Green Spaces with the intention that proposals for further nominations can be made by communities as part of the upcoming consultation.

5.13 Chapter 5: Making Great Places – Northampton

This chapter sets out the over-arching spatial strategy for Northampton which focuses on some key spatial principles to ensure a sustainable pattern of development. The chapter identifies Northampton as the Principal Urban Area in West Northamptonshire and states that role will be supported and enhanced through growth and regeneration, creating strong, sustainable, cohesive and inclusive mixed-use communities, regeneration schemes, making the most effective use of previously developed land, and enabling the maximum number of people to access employment, services and facilities locally. The chapter sets out that the Council will support proposals which contribute to, and result in, the regeneration of Northampton, and its infrastructure, particularly where they capitalise on the brownfield sites located in the town centre and the Central Area, for a range of uses including housing, employment and main town centre uses, as well as mixed use schemes.

In accordance with the spatial strategy which prioritises regeneration and the use of brown field sites, the plan builds on evidence base work that has been undertaken to identify opportunities within the central area of Northampton. This work, the Central Areas Assessment, has considered known as well as new sites and in some cases identified capacity to sites that were allocated in the Northampton Part 2 Plan along with new opportunities for development in the Central Area. These include:

35-45 Abington Street	Residential
Cattlemarket Road	Residential/
FOUR Waterside	Residential/hotel
Greyfriars Development Area	Residential
Marefair Heritage Park and Castle House	Residential/ leisure/ culture
Horizon House, St Peter's Way	Offices
Market Walk	Leisure
Northampton Railway Station	Residential/Car Park/hotel
Northampton Railfreight	Residential
St Edmund's Hospital	Residential
Ransome Road	Residential

In addition to considering and allocating brownfield land for development the chapter also makes a number of residential allocations on the periphery of the town. A number of these represent allocations made in the current development plan and are recognised in the emerging plan although it is expected that a number of these will gain planning permission before the plan is adopted and will not need reallocation.

In this context it is anticipated that the majority of Northampton's new housing in the plan period will be met by planning permissions and sites already allocated in the current development plan both on sites within the main urban area and as Sustainable Urban Extensions.

Because of their limited scale, it is not the intention to re-allocate any of the sites currently within the Northampton Part 2 Local Plan that is allocated with a capacity of less than 50 units.

Therefore any sites that have not come forward after this plan is adopted would be judged against the relevant policies in this plan. Sites of more than 50 units are re-allocated in the emerging plan to provide certainty.

Not all of the housing requirement for the plan period can be met through existing commitments and the regeneration sites. Further opportunities have been identified for peripheral growth and the chapter sets these out as two residential allocations, one to the east of Wootton Fields and the other to the west of the A43 to the north of Northampton that between them will provide for 4,100 dwellings. It is envisaged that development on parts of these allocations would extend beyond the end of the plan period.

In summary the chapter makes the following residential or residential led development which includes re-allocation of some previously allocated sites, some of which have had their capacity changed.

N6(i)	35 - 45 Abington Street	300
N6(ii)	Cattlemarket Road	141
N6(iii)	Four Waterside (part of mixed use)	211
N6(iv)	Greyfriars (part of mixed use)	700
N6(v)	Marefair Heritage Park and Castle House)	66
N6(vi)	Northampton Railway Station car park	280
N6(vii)	Northampton Railfreight	362
N6 (viii)	Former Abington Mill Farm (NLPP2)	125
N6(ix)	Ransome Road	230
N6(x)	Ryland Soans garage	62
N6(xi)	Land west of Northampton South SUE	361
N6(xii)	Land north of Milton Ham (NLPP2)	224
N6(xiii)	Hill Farm Rise (NLPP2)	80
N6(xiv)	Land east of Wootton Fields	2,100
N6(xv)	Pineham (NLPP2)	80
N6(xvi)	Land west of A43	2,000
N6(xvii)	The Green, Great Houghton (NLPP2)	800
N6(xviii)	Watering Lane (NLPP2)	265
N6(xix)	Wootton Fields (NLPP2)	74
N6(xx)	The Farm (NLPP2)	55
N6(xxi)	Former Lings Upper School	60

The chapter continues to set out that the Council will work to ensure that the ambitions for The Enterprise Zone will be met and that the role and contribution of Northampton University will be supported through the safeguarding of the site for education and ancillary uses.

In addition to housing provision the chapter also sets out policies for job creation including the recognition that jobs will be created through the allocated regeneration sites and on other sites allocated for employment use. These sites were previously allocated in the Northampton Part 2 Local Plan and are re-allocated in the Northampton chapter as:

N7i Sixfields East

N7ii Crow Lane
N7iii Martin's Yard Extension
N7iv Land at Waterside Way

In addition the chapter makes an allocation for a new 68ha strategic employment site located south of Junction 15 of the M1 on the A508 on the edge of the urban area.

In addition to making housing and employment allocations the chapter provides policy in respect of neighbourhood centres and makes allocations of land for burial spaces at on land adjoining Kingsthorpe cemetery, Dallington cemetery and the Towcester Road cemetery.

5.14 **Chapter 6: Making Great Places – Daventry**

This chapter sets out the over-arching spatial strategy for Daventry which focuses on some key spatial principles to ensure a sustainable pattern of development. This includes supporting and enhancing the town's role as a Sub-Regional centre, enhancing the vitality and viability of the town centre including through the redevelopment of the former council offices at Lodge Road for mixed/residential uses and the allocation of land to the north and west of town centre for mixed use development. The plan also supports new employment opportunities in the town centre, at land off Newnham Drive (Policy D7), Daventry South East Gateway (Policy D8), and land North West of Nasmyth Road allocated in the Settlements and Countryside Local Plan and local employment opportunities at Daventry North East.

The chapter sets out that new homes will be provided within the town confines and through the remaining development at Daventry South West, Monksmoor and Micklewell Park; the site allocated at Daventry North East in the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy; and the Micklewell Park Extension and Middlemore allocated in the Settlements and Countryside Local Plan which are re-allocated in the local plan.

In detail the allocations in the Daventry chapter provide for the following:

- Daventry, Micklewell Park Extension – approximately 310 dwellings
- Daventry, Land at Middlemore – at least 120 dwellings
- Daventry, Land to the north and west of the Town Centre – mixed use development including residential
- Daventry, Former Council Offices, Lodge Road – proposals to utilise the former council offices will be encouraged
- Daventry, Land off Newham Drive – E(g), B2 or B8 uses.
- Daventry, South East Gateway – E(g), B2 or B8 uses.

Proposals for developing a green infrastructure network for the town including the canal corridor, Daventry Country Park and Borough Hill and new greenspace associated with major development sites are also set out.

5.15 **Chapter 7: Making Great Places – Brackley**

This chapter sets out the over-arching spatial strategy for Brackley which focuses on some key spatial principles to ensure a sustainable pattern of development. This includes supporting and enhancing Brackley's role as a Rural Service Centre, enhancing the vitality and viability of the town centre supporting economic investment and regeneration in employment areas including the Brackley Business District. The chapter sets out that new homes will be provided within the town confines and the remaining development at the Brackley East SUE as allocated in the WNJCS.

In detail allocations in the Brackley chapter provide for the following:

- Land at Brackley East – at least 350 dwellings

5.16 **Chapter 8: Making Great Places – Towcester**

This chapter sets out the over-arching spatial strategy for Towcester which focuses on some key spatial principles to ensure a sustainable pattern of development. This includes supporting and enhancing Towcester's role as a Rural Service Centre, enhancing the vitality and viability of the town centre providing leisure, tourism and exhibition facilities at Towcester Racecourse and developing and enhancing the green infrastructure network in the town that links with existing green infrastructure at Watermeadows, Silverstone Brook, Racecourse and new greenspace associated with major development sites. The chapter sets out that new homes will be provided within the settlement confines and the remaining development at the Towcester South SUE as allocated in the WNJCS with employment opportunities coming through the remaining development at Towcester South in addition to the three employment allocations made in the South Northamptonshire Local Plan Part 2 at Bell Plantation, Woolgrowers Field and Tiffield Lane. Site specific policies are presented for those three allocations.

In detail, allocations in the Towcester chapter provide for the following:

- Towcester, Land at Bell Plantation - 35ha of mixed employment generating development together with 6ha of land for the creation of a Towcester Town Football Club
- Towcester, Land at Woolgrowers Field – 4.5ha of mixed employment generating development.
- Towcester, Land at Tiffield Lane - 21ha of mixed employment generating development.

5.17 **Chapter 9: Making Great Places – Rural**

Whilst many of the chapters of this plan include policies that address the districts rural areas the rural chapter sets out a specific rural context and provides a standalone open countryside policy addressing how the intrinsic character, beauty and tranquillity of the open countryside will be recognised and setting out the type of developments that will only be supported in the countryside.

The chapter also discusses the role of and proposals for a settlement hierarchy to help plan for the areas nearly 190 settlements and the role of settlement confines in the delivery of sustainable development.

A consultation is currently underway with Parish Councils and Meetings across West Northamptonshire to help inform the development of this section of the plan in the Submission Version (Regulation 19).

5.18 **Chapter 10: Homes**

This chapter initially sets out the scale of new housing that this plan needs to provide for; identifying that much of that need is already met by existing permissions and allocations in existing plans and therefore should be able to be delivered more quickly than if it were being allocated for the first time.

The chapter builds on the direction set out in the Chapter 3 (Spatial Strategy) confirming that that the plan's strategy aims to meet the need for new homes in a way that maximises the opportunities to renew and regenerate existing towns, minimises the need for development on greenfield land and sustains existing communities.

It confirms that when using the standard methodology for assessing housing need that there is a requirement to deliver, on average, 2,173 dwellings per annum in West Northamptonshire and that figure is a similar to the number of completions on average over the last seven years. Policy HO1 then sets out that provision will be made for about 39,150 new homes to be built in West Northamptonshire over the plan period 2023-2041. The policy advises that that provision will be achieved by allocations made in the plan, existing commitments and allocations in Neighbourhood Development Plans.

The chapter continues by identifying sites allocated for housing or housing led development and confirms that most of these are already allocated in the WNJCS or part 2 plans and that in recognising those sites in the plan confirms that they make a very significant contribution to the housing requirement of the plan and provide certainty that the Council continues to support housing or housing led development on these site.

Further to the allocations, the chapter includes policies on affordable housing, residential canal moorings, self-build and custom-build housing, houses in multiple occupation, rural workers dwellings and housing type and mix. This policy provides clear guidance on the mix of house types that should be provided, based on up to date evidence, and also the requirement to provide houses which meet the national space standard, enhanced accessibility and water efficiency. The chapter then sets out expectations for new housing, including tenure, size and standards.

In respect of the self-build and custom-build housing policy (Policy HO8) this sets out that on sites of more than 100 dwellings, 5% of the total number of plots should be provided as serviced plots for self and custom build to contribute towards meeting the evidenced demand for self-build and custom build housing in the area. The chapter does not contain an exception style policy for self-build and custom-build as is currently found in the South Northamptonshire Local Plan (Policy LH5), instead proposals for self-build and custom-build housing outside of settlement confines would need to come forward under policy HO5 of the plan. HO5 is a 'policy still in development' and considers residential development outside of settlement confines where that development would clearly meet a local housing need identified through an up-to-date housing needs survey or housing needs assessment.

In addition to HO5 the chapter contains a further 'policy still in development' in relation to affordable housing Exception Sites. As with the Local needs sites the policy recognises that there may be scope for additional new homes in prescribed circumstances in the more sustainable settlements where the proposal would meet a demonstrated local housing need as evidenced through a housing needs assessment.

Policy HO11 sets out the requirements for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople and is a criteria based policy identifying that provision will be made to meet the needs identified in the most recent Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople needs assessment subject to certain development management criteria. The current need identified in the latest evidence base for the local plan (the West Northamptonshire Council Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment (GTANA) 2022-2037) shows that for the period 2022-2037 between 38 pitches and 53 pitches are required. In terms of the need for Travelling Showpeople plots, GTANA identifies the need over the period 2022-2037 to be 11 plots.

5.19 Chapter 11: Employment

This chapter commences by setting out the economic context and profile of the area before identifying that the Housing and Economic Needs Assessment (HENA) that underpins the plan recommends that it sets an employment target of 38,451 jobs in West Northamptonshire from 2022 to 2041. This includes supporting notable increases in manufacturing, transport and storage and professional services as well as those expected in Northampton Gateway and DIRFT.

It continues by confirming that the plan area already has a considerable amount of employment floorspace in the planning pipeline, including those already consented through planning applications and those allocated in the part 2 local plans with the HENA concluding that there is a sufficient supply of employment land for both B and E(g) Classes to meet local growth demand as long as the current supply pipeline is safeguarded.

The chapter sets policy in respect of safeguarding existing and allocating new employment sites to help create jobs and to support a vibrant, successful and developing local economy. It confirms that alternative uses or redevelopment which will result in the net loss of employment activity will only be supported in specific circumstances.

The chapter continues that provision will be made for at least 38,450 net new jobs in West Northamptonshire in the plan period, which will be achieved by employment allocations made in this plan, existing commitments and allocations in Neighbourhood Development Plans and makes a number of allocations in relation to this over and above those made through the 'Making Great Places' chapters.

As with the allocations in those chapters where they represent allocations made in the current development plan they are recognised in the emerging plan, although it is expected that a number will gain planning permission before the plan is adopted and will not need reallocation at this stage, however this will be kept under review.

Specifically, the chapter allocates as follows:

- Land at Shacks Barn, Whittlebury - allocated for 10ha of mixed employment generating development.
- Land at Former Furtho Pit, Old Stratford/Cosgrove - allocated for 16ha of mixed employment generating development.

The chapter sets out policies on the visitor economy and the rural economy setting out that proposals that sustain and enhance the rural economy by creating or safeguarding jobs and businesses will be supported and outlines types of development that will be considered acceptable in rural areas.

It continues by providing a policy on the retail hierarchy and retail impact assessments and the role of primary shopping areas which have been redrawn for Brackley, Daventry, Northampton and Towcester in the plan. The policy concludes by setting out that proposals outside of town centres for the change of use to retail and other main town centre uses which are 280 sq.m gross or more, will need to undertake a retail impact assessment.

The chapter concludes by providing a series of site-specific policies starting with that on supporting the relocation of vehicle recycling facilities currently at Daventry to assist with the regeneration of the South East Gateway followed by those for development at Daventry International Rail Freight Terminal; Northampton Gateway and Silverstone Circuit. The latter setting out the Council's continued support for Silverstone in its role as an international venue for motorsport as well as providing education, business opportunities and research and development.

5.20 Chapter 12: Built and Natural Environment

This chapter sets out policies to protect and enhance the districts built and natural environment. It starts with built environment policies that support proposals that will sustain West Northamptonshire's distinctive historic urban and rural landscapes, buildings, sites, archaeology and features by protecting, conserving and, where appropriate, enhancing the significance of designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings. The chapter then considers the landscape of the District, which includes a policy covering landscape in general and a further policy that seeks to take forward the Special Landscape Areas. This is based on existing policies in the Daventry and South Northamptonshire Part 2 Plans with the supporting landscape evidence concluding that the designation remains valid and the landscapes important.

This section also includes a policy which recognises the need to protect the character of 'fringe' areas around the edges of the area main urban areas and growth locations through a Green Wedge policy, which also includes reference to avoiding settlement coalescence.

The second half of the chapter provides a range of policies covering the natural environment including proposals in respect of Green and Blue Infrastructure, nature conservation and the mitigation hierarchy and those that reiterate support for Biodiversity Net Gain and its links to

the delivery of the priorities outlined in the Council's emerging Nature Recovery Strategy for the area. More specifically the chapter includes a policy on the Upper Nene Gravel Pits Special Protection Area (SPA) and a new requirement for applications comprising a net gain in residential units within 5.9km of the SPA to make an Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) contribution and / or provide bespoke mitigation in order to mitigate recreational impact (direct or indirect). The chapter concludes with policies on the Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area and the River Nene Strategic River Corridor.

5.21 **Chapter 13: Transport**

This chapter sets out the plans approach to transport, identifying that in order to support the level of growth set out in existing plans, a range of transport schemes have already been identified by the council and its partners and that those schemes are referenced in the West Northamptonshire Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP).

An initial 'Phase 1' review of the IDP was undertaken in May 2023. This updated the current IDP and associated infrastructure schedules needed to support extant growth in the WNJCS and the Part 2 plans. A 'Phase 2' review of the IDP will be undertaken once comments have been received from stakeholders and partners through the consultation on this plan.

The chapter also identifies that the next version of the plan will be informed by the emerging West Northamptonshire Local Transport Plan (LTP) which will set out the transport plan and policies for West Northamptonshire and how they are intended to be implemented. In some cases, this plan will help to implement the objectives of the LTP, such as those relating to highway safety and supporting a switch to more sustainable modes. It also confirms that work began on a new Strategic Transport Model (STM) for Northamptonshire in the summer of 2023. The strategy contained within the emerging plan has been tested through the existing Northamptonshire STM and, where necessary, schemes have been identified to support growth in the IDP. The submission version of the WNLP will be tested through the new model.

The transport chapter contains six policies and sets out that development proposals should prioritise pedestrian, wheeler, cyclist and public transport users ahead of car users and retain and enhance West Northamptonshire's strategic connections for economic advantage with the Council working in partnership with relevant transport providers to deliver a number of initiatives.

Future transport schemes are also considered with policies identifying land to be safeguarded and schemes that may be investigated for future transport use. These include the safeguarding of land South of the Towcester (A5) Southern Relief Road.

The Former Northampton to Market Harborough railway line is identified as a route that may be investigated for future transport use and is considered in the plan with the policy requiring that should any such scheme come forward that compensatory provision would need to be made for any loss of habitat. In addition the policy requires that a parallel opportunity for a cycling, walking and wheeling will need to be provided in addition to any future railway line.

The policy continues that the former Northampton to Brackmills railway line may also be investigated for future transport use and concludes by confirming that consideration will also be given to the provision of a Northampton Northern Orbital Road. The chapter concludes by setting out policies for canals and lorry parks.

5.22 **Chapter 14: Infrastructure**

This chapter reiterates that in order to support the level of economic growth and growth in population as a result of the new housing to be delivered through the plan, infrastructure will need to be delivered alongside homes and jobs in a timely manner. As such the chapter confirms that the Council will work in partnership with developers, neighbouring authorities, central government, England's Economic Heartlands and other stakeholders to deliver this infrastructure.

5.23 **Chapter 15: Implementation**

The plan's final chapter identifies that in order to determine the effectiveness of the overall plan and to take into account the changing circumstances nationally and locally, a monitoring framework is required to measure how the West Northamptonshire Local Plan is delivering its objectives. If found necessary, such monitoring will allow actions or interventions to be put in place to mitigate against any potential adverse impacts. This chapter will be fully developed when the policies are in a settled form for the Submission version of the plan.

The Five Year Housing Land supply is currently calculated for three policy areas as set out in the WNJCS. Once this plan is adopted the Five Year Land Supply will be calculated as a single figure for the whole of West Northamptonshire.

5.24 **Appendices**

The plan is also supported by a series of appendices;

- A glossary of terms
- Local Green Space designations (existing)
- List of strategic policies of this plan
- Criteria for defining settlement confines

The Submission version of the plan will also include a housing trajectory. This will be included in a Housing Background Paper to accompany this version of the plan.

In addition to the appendices a series of Inset Maps will support the plan.

5.25 **Policies Map**

A policies map identifying where various policies apply has also been produced – this includes the new allocations for housing and strategic warehousing at Northampton. The policies map will be further developed for the Regulation 19 version of the plan, and will at that stage be

accompanied by Inset Maps which will show village confines and a confines for Northampton. The policies map forms part of this report.

5.26 Evidence base

The plan is also supported by a series of evidence base documents which will be published alongside the public consultation in April. A number of these are already available to view on the Councils but will be added to prior to the consultation commencing. A list of all existing and emerging evidence base is set out below.

Currently published	Forthcoming as part of the Reg 18 consultation
Strategic Land Availability Assessment	Strategic Land Availability Assessment (update)
Housing and Economic Needs Assessment	Housing and Economic Needs Assessment (update)
Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area – Visitor Access Study	Transport Evidence
Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area – Bird Disturbance Survey	Landscape Evidence
Climate Change and Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Evidence	Site Selection Methodology
Green Infrastructure and Natural Capital Evidence	Central Areas Assessment
Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment	
Landscape Character Assessments	
Retail and Town Centres Uses Study 2022	
South East Midlands Warehousing and Logistics Study	

5.27 Sustainability Appraisal

In addition to the evidence outlined above the plan will be supported by a Sustainability Appraisal. This will be published as part of the consultation and will appraise the social, environmental and economic effects of a plan and in doing so it will help ensure that decisions are made that contribute to achieving sustainable development. The sustainability appraisal is integral to the plan making process and the draft plan and its policies along with the sites that are allocated for development and all other sites that have been considered through the plan making process have been subject to ongoing sustainability appraisal. This has helped to inform the decisions that have been made and the content of the emerging plan.

5.28 **Consultation arrangements**

The plan will be consulted upon in accordance with the Councils adopted Local Plan Statement of Community Involvement (2024) and the Local Plan Consultation and Engagement Plan both of which were considered at the January meeting of the Council's Planning Policy Committee. This will include an eight week period of public consultation.

Alongside the consultation on the plan, a Call for Sites will be re-opened, this will include a call for sites that can be used for gypsies and travellers accommodation.

5.29 **Subsequent Stages**

Following this consultation, any responses will be carefully analysed and an assessment will be made as to whether or not the draft policies should be changed. Further evidence will also be gathered, and this will result in new/revised policies being drafted.

A further report will then be presented to Members for their consideration at Planning Policy Committee and then Council. This is planned for December 2024. At that stage members will be asked to agree to the submission of the plan for Examination.

Recent changes to the planning system mean that the plan has to be submitted no later than June 2025.

5.29 **Examination Stage**

At the Examination, which is undertaken by the Planning Inspectorate, the plan will be tested for compliance with legal and procedural requirements and soundness. Plans are considered sound if they are positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy. More information on this is provided in paragraph 35 of the NPPF.

5.30 **Weight to be attached to Emerging Policies**

Policies in the emerging plan are capable of being a material planning consideration. The NPPF sets out, in paragraph 48, three tests that should be applied to determine how much weight should be attached to emerging policies. In short these are: the stage reached in plan making, the extent of unresolved objections and the degree of consistency with the NPPF.

5.31 **Housing Land Supply**

The revised version of the NPPF (published in December 2023) states that local authorities who publish a regulation 18 plan within two years of the revised NPPF being published, which includes a policies map and proposed allocations towards meeting housing need, only have to demonstrate a four year housing land supply for development management purposes..

It would appear that this provision would apply to West Northamptonshire, however this is a very recently issued revision to national guidance and some aspects still remain unclear.

The system has also been changed such that once the plan is adopted, that demonstrates a five year housing land supply, there is no need to produce annual five year land supply reports for the following five years.

6. **Issues and Choices**

- 6.1 As the local planning authority, West Northamptonshire Council has a legal obligation to prepare a local plan and to keep it under review. This local plan must set out the Council's plans for the area including allocating sites for development, identifying areas to be protected from development and setting out policies to be used in the determination of planning applications.
- 6.2 The West Northamptonshire Local Plan (Regulation 18 draft) has been prepared following Issues and Options consultations in 2019 and 2021 and following the collation and review of a number of evidence base documents in addition to continued member engagement.
- 6.3 Council could recommend further changes to address any considered deficiencies in the plan. This could be through the inclusion of new policies, deletion of policies or amendments. Dependent on the nature and extent of the changes additional evidence may be required and the plan would need to be brought back before Council and need to be subject to further sustainability appraisal work.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 Resources and Financial

- 7.1.1 It is currently expected that the costs of producing the West Northamptonshire Local Plan can be met from existing resources. If it is found that further funding is required this will be subject to a separate report to members.

7.2 Legal

- 7.2.1 Section 19 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act sets out the statutory requirement for local planning authorities to set out the strategic priorities for the development and use of land in the authorities area and to set those priorities out in development plan documents.
- 7.2.2 The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 build on the statutory framework in the 2004 Act in relation to the preparation and adoption by local planning authorities of development plan documents (which are called 'local plans' in the Regulations). Consultation on a draft as part of Regulation 18 of the 2012 Local Planning Regulations is considered to be good practice and consultation on this document in addition to the Issues and Options consultation helps to further fulfil this requirement.

7.3 Risk

- 7.3.1 Failure to maintain an up-to-date development plan could leave the authority at risk to challenge and unplanned speculative development and unwarranted decisions.

7.4 Consultation and Communication

- 7.4.1 Two formal public consultations on the local plan (previously the Strategic Plan) were undertaken in 2019 and 2021. These have informed the content of the draft West Northamptonshire Local Plan (Appendix A). The plan will be consulted upon in accordance with the Councils adopted Local

Plan Statement of Community Involvement (2024) and the Local Plan Consultation and Engagement Plan both of which were considered at the January meeting of the Council's Planning Policy Committee. This will include an eight week period of public consultation launching in April 2024. The consultation will be publicised to members of the local community and key partners via online and offline channels, including the Council's corporate channels.

7.5 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny

7.5.1 Progress on the preparation on the Local Plan and proposals to consult on it have been considered at meetings of the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee at meetings held in June 2023, September 2023 and January 2024.

7.6 Climate Impact

7.6.1 The West Northamptonshire Local Plan 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 West Northamptonshire Local Plan includes policies that will help shape the future of the area and could impact on its communities. The plan and its supporting documents including the recently adopted Statement of Community Involvement and Local Development Scheme sets out how the community can get involved in the preparation of the local plan.

8. Background Papers

None