

2nd December 2021

Planning Policy

The consultation exercise on the Strategic Plan concludes on 6th December. During the consultation exercise a briefing was held for WNC members and two briefings held for parish councils followed by three briefings for the public. All of the briefings consisted of a presentation on the main elements of the consultation followed by a question and answer session. A series of exhibitions have been held at seven locations across the west Northants area. As a result of the interest and that many people are also involved in the examination of the Northampton Plan we have decided that for this stage it is possible to extend the consultation until the 23rd December.

The hearings part of the examination on the Northampton Part 2 local plan took place over the last three weeks in the Guildhall. Inspectors are now considering all that they have read and heard on the plan and will prepare their report. This will be presented to members in due course.

Three Neighbourhood Plans are at a referendum today (Overstone, Clipston and Hackleton).

Responses have been made to consultations on the Vision for the Oxford/Cambridge Arc and an options consultation for a new plan for Cherwell.

At the meeting of Cabinet on 9th November, Cabinet agreed to the adoption of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area Supplementary Planning Document by the Council and also to endorse for public consultation a draft Mitigation Strategy addendum to the Supplementary Planning Document. The mitigation strategy will help to protect birds such as the golden plover and lapwing, which are protected by national and international legislation, and which over winter in the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA.

Development Management and Enforcement

The Local Enforcement Plan for WNC was endorsed by Cabinet in October. This sets out the WNC approach to dealing with Planning Enforcement. Its purpose is to provide a consistent approach to Planning Enforcement across West Northants and is written in a style that easy is for the public to read and understand. Previously residents received different guidance based on which local area website they accessed. The plan identifies clear targets and timeframes for dealing with Planning Enforcement cases.

The Plan sets out what a breach of planning control is; how we investigate breaches; how we assess harm; what powers the council can use; the priority cases are given and the timescales we aim to achieve in investigating cases.

The Plan is now live on WNC website. All the previous enforcement pages on the legacy council websites have been removed and all enforcement information is now in one place. In addition to the Plan are helpful guides to those wanting to report a breach and those who may be the subject of a complaint. Breaches can now also be reported online, asking the right questions to bring forward and streamline the registration and investigation of cases. As such we request anyone wishing to report a breach of planning control, residents, councillors, and parish councillors etc to report a breach online.

The website can be found here: <https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/planning-applications-and-enforcement/planning-enforcement>

Planning application and Enforcement caseloads continue to be very high, and we are taking steps to recruit to vacant posts and also bringing in agency staff to reduce the backlog of work.

I am also working with management to ensure that the planning service continues to move forward therefore, we are looking at and will share very shortly, steps that include development of a single IT system, an improved structure of working and increased resources in key areas. This plan will also be clear on the demonstrable improvements to our customers, whether applicants or consultees, we will be delivering.

Councillor Rebecca Breese

Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Built Environment & Rural Affairs