

WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL PLANNING POLICY COMMITTEE

25 October 2022

Councillor Rebecca Breese

Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Built Environment and Rural Affairs

Report Title **Northampton Local Plan Part 2:**
Consultation on Further Main Modifications

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List of Appendices

Appendix A – Proposed Further Main Modifications;
Appendix B – Addendum to Sustainability Appraisal;
Appendix C – Addendum to Habitats Regulations Assessment;
Appendix D – Consultation and Engagement Strategy.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The purpose of the report is to seek approval for public consultation on Further Main Modifications to the Northampton Local Plan Part 2.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Northampton Local Plan Part 2 (the plan) was submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination in February 2021. Government-appointed Inspectors conducted hearings about the Plan in November 2021. Following the hearings, proposals for modification to the plan and changes to the policies map were prepared to reflect the outcome of the hearing sessions and a note produced by the Inspectors following the close of the hearings.
- 2.2 The Proposed Main Modifications were necessary to make the plan sound and were released for public consultation in July 2022. Comments received were considered by the Inspectors who have subsequently recommended that consultation be undertaken on Further Main Modifications to the plan.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that Committee:
- a) Approves the Proposed Further Main Modifications to the Northampton Local Plan Part 2 for public consultation.
 - b) Approves the Consultation and Engagement Strategy
 - c) Delegates to the Assistant Director: Planning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Built Environment and Rural Affairs, authority to make minor editorial and presentational changes to the consultation documents in their final published form.

4. Reason for Recommendations (NOTE: this section is mandatory and must be completed)

- To accord with legislation on local plan preparation and to enable the plan to proceed towards adoption.

5. Report Background

INTRODUCTION

- 5.1 In January 2021, Northampton Borough Council approved the submission of the Northampton Local Plan Part 2 (the plan) for independent examination by the Planning Inspectorate. The plan contains policies which will be used to determine planning applications. It also includes site allocations, showing where sites for housing and employment developments are considered acceptable. The plan seeks to supplement and where necessary refine and supersede the strategic policies contained in the adopted West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan Part 1, which was adopted in December 2014. This includes the requirement to deliver around 18,870 dwellings and contribute towards the creation of 28,500 new jobs from 2011 to 2029.

- 5.2 The plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination in February 2021. In March, the Council was informed that two Planning Inspectors had been appointed to conduct the examination into the plan. Part of the examination process includes the hearings, which were conducted in November 2021.
- 5.3 Following the conclusion of the hearings, the Inspectors concluded that the plan could be found legally compliant and sound subject to consultation on Main Modifications to the plan as well as the resolution of some matters highlighted during the hearings. In their post hearings letter, they outlined where modifications to the plan would be necessary to make the plan sound which is a key requirement of the National Planning Policy Framework. These recommendations were taken on board by Officers and developed into Proposed Modifications. The modifications (comprising Main Modifications, Additional Modifications and Proposed Changes to the Policies Map) were subject to public consultation between 7 July and 18 August 2022. The Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment were updated to take into account the modifications and these were also released for consultation.
- 5.4 All responses to the proposed main modifications were considered by the Planning Inspectors. Having reviewed these comments, the Planning Inspectors recommended that consultation be undertaken on further main modifications. The schedule of further main modifications can be found in detail in Appendix A, and they relate specifically to:
- Policy 41 (The Green, Great Houghton): following comments received from Homes England, parts x, xviii (c) and xviii (d) have been modified to provide clearer guidance on matters associated with traffic management and connectivity, and
 - Policy 43 (Ransome Road): Homes England submitted an objection to the previous proposed modification and requested that the capacity be reduced from 500 dwellings to about 230 of which 207 dwellings would be estimated to be completed by 2029. This has consequential changes to the plan's trajectory and the number of homes expected to be built through development plan allocations.
- 5.5 Addenda to the Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment have been produced to take account of these modifications. They will also be subject to consultation and are attached as Appendices B and C to this report.
- 5.6 In addition, the Council's Consultation and Engagement Strategy has been updated for this stage of the consultation (Appendix D).

NEXT STEPS

- 5.7 If approved, it is envisaged that the Further Main Modifications consultation, will be released for public consultation from 7 November to 19 December 2022. This will be done in accordance with the Consultation and Engagement Strategy (Appendix D). Following the closure of the consultation, the Inspectors will consider any comments received. Provided there are no outstanding matters to consider for further consultation, the Inspectors will issue their Final Report. Subject to the outcome of the report, the Council would then be in a position to adopt the plan.

6. Issues and Choices

6.1 Option 1: Agree the recommendations

6.2 The plan has been prepared to provide guidance on the implementation of strategic policies contained in the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy, adopted in December 2014 and contains more detailed policies which will be used in the determination of planning applications. Part 2 plans have already been adopted for the Daventry and South Northamptonshire areas.

6.3 Consultation on these further main modifications is required, at the request of the Planning Inspectors, in order for the plan to be considered sound. If Members agree to release the Proposed Further Main Modifications for public consultation, this will ensure that progress continues to be made towards the adoption of the Northampton Local Plan Part 2. The timetabling of this process will need to be in conformity with the West Northamptonshire Local Development Scheme, an updated version of which is set out elsewhere on this agenda.

6.4 Adoption of this plan will ensure that Northampton, alongside Daventry and South Northamptonshire areas, will have an up to date Part 2 plan to deliver the strategy of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy. When the plan is adopted it will become part of the development plan for the Northampton area. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

6.5 Option 2: Not agree with the adoption

6.6 If Members choose not to approve a second round of consultation, progress on the Northampton Local Plan Part 2 will be halted. Northampton will remain as the only area within West Northamptonshire without an updated Part 2 plan. In determining planning applications for the Northampton area, the planning authority would have to continue to rely on policies which are likely to become out of date or national guidance which is generic and not locally specific.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 **Resources and Financial**

7.1.1 The Council's costs will be met from existing budgets associated with the plan preparation process.

7.2 **Legal**

7.2.1 The independent examination part of the local plan preparation process is set out in Section 24 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. Once consultation on the Proposed Further Main Modifications is completed, and relevant comments are taken into account, provided there are no outstanding planning matters to consider for further consultation, the Planning Inspectors will prepare a report. Subject to the outcome of that report, the Council would then be in a position to adopt the plan.

7.3 Risk

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

7.4 Consultation

7.4.1 The plan preparation process has and will continue to be undertaken in compliance with the regulations set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and consultation forms a key element of the process. There are several stages that the plan has been through, namely the Issues stage (spring 2016), the Options stage (autumn 2016) and Proposed Submission stage (summer 2019 and summer 2020). The Proposed Modifications stage took place in July and August 2022. During each of these stages, local organisations and members of the public were consulted. Consultation was also undertaken with colleagues within the authority (including Development Management and Environmental Health), external stakeholders (such as the Environment Agency, Natural England, Historic England and Anglian Water), landowners (such as Network Rail) and developers. A similar exercise will be undertaken for the consultation on the proposed Further Main Modifications. It will also be undertaken in conformity with the Statement of Community Involvement for Northampton.

7.5 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny

7.5.1 Not applicable.

7.6 Climate Impact

7.6.1 Policies in the plan, including those relating to flooding and sustainable construction, should assist in mitigating the effects of climate change.

7.7 Community Impact

7.7.1 The plan will ensure that developments are directed to the right locations and that they are constructed in a manner that meets the required standards. It will ensure that a balance is secured between the built and natural environment, therefore continuing to supply houses and employment for existing and future residents whilst enhancing the quality and quantity of open spaces and protecting the area's heritage assets. All these will have a positive impact on the community.

7.8 Communications

7.8.1 Communications played a key role throughout the local plan preparation process, particularly in publicising and encouraging participation in the consultation stages. The council will continue to keep the public and all other stakeholders informed and engaged throughout the local plan preparation process, in line with planning law, the Statement of Community Involvement for Northampton and the Consultation and Engagement Strategy. The council will continue to use its corporate communications channels including media releases and social media.

8. Background Papers

- 8.1 Northampton Local Plan Part 2 Submission & Examination | Northampton Local Plan Part 2 Submission & Examination | West Northamptonshire Council - Northampton Area
- 8.2 EXAM 40 Inspectors Post Hearings Letter 24012022 | West Northamptonshire Council - Northampton Area
- 8.3 Northampton LPP2 Modifications Consultation - 7 July 2022 – 18 August 2022 | West Northamptonshire Council - Northampton Area