1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT
1.1. For Members to consider the Roade Masterplan and determine whether they wish to recommend its endorsement, as revised, to Cabinet.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE ROADE MASTERPLAN
2.1. The main reason for producing a masterplan for Roade was to consider the future development of the village in a comprehensive, holistic and sustainable manner to provide developers, the local community and local authorities with clear guidance on the type and form of development that is considered appropriate in the village. There are large areas of brownfield land within and on the edge of the village that are unique in scale to any village in the District. These are being promoted for redevelopment by the development industry.

2.2. Roade is one of the most sustainable villages in South Northamptonshire, using the classification agreed when the Interim Rural Housing Policy was approved. There is strong developer/landowner-led pressure for development. The Masterplan’s primary focus is to consider how these growth pressures might best be planned and shaped for the future benefit of the village, and to seek to establish a co-ordinated and sustainable plan for the village. It is recognised that new development can bring or enable necessary benefits for the community.

2.3. Through extensive work carried out by the Parish Council, a number of aspirations and needs have been identified that, if delivered, would help to secure the village’s future as an attractive place to live and work. The challenge of preparing and agreeing the Masterplan is to ensure a balanced level of growth that proceeds in a controlled and sustainable way which maximises community benefits to meet these locally identified needs and aspirations.

2.4. In summary, the draft Masterplan proposed the following three development options to inform the consultation.
1. **small scale development** – existing planning permissions (83 at Walkerpack Site, plus 39 at The Leys) and an additional approximately 99 dwellings as set out in the IRHP. SNC’s view is that this should be rejected as there is no guarantee that it would prevent additional development being allowed, for example at planning appeal, and it would bring very little community benefit to the village.

2. **major development** for example around 3-5,000 houses. This would potentially allow for the provision of major infrastructure, e.g. An A508 village bypass & significant other community benefits including e.g. New health and education facilities.

This would result in a significantly larger village or small town, and loss of village identity and character, and is a scale of development that cannot be considered by the Masterplan but needs to be within the Local Development Framework Joint Core Strategy. This option does not appear to be supported by the local residents of Roade.

3. **medium scale development** for example of up to 500 dwellings. This would allow for some residential development of selected sites which would enable community benefits to be provided in a coordinated manner.

2.5 The Masterplan considered Option 3 to be the preferred way forward and proposed a number of sites for development as follows:

**Mainly Brownfield Sites**
- Pianoforte Site – Ashton Road: 240 dwellings
- Land off Stratford Road (Chaplin’s Yard) 120 dwellings

**Greenfield Sites outside existing village confines**
- Opposite Cricket Field, Northampton Road 80 dwellings
- Hartwell Road / Fox Covert Drive 60 dwellings

In addition, the former Pianoforte Car Park was proposed for Employment use.

2.6 The Masterplan included a series of benefits that would be sought as part of the development of each site. These included:

- transfer of the ownership of the Cricket Field to the Parish Council
- Land to be provided for an extension to the village Cemetery
- Land to be provided for additional Allotments
- Improvement to right-hand turn from Stratford Road into Roade School Sports College
- Local Highway Improvements
- 40% Affordable Housing on all new developments
- Contributions towards improvements to Roade village centre
Contributions towards the improvement of Health and Educational facilities

3 The Consultation

3.1 The draft Masterplan was published for consultation in October 2010 for a period of six weeks. A total of 88 responses were received from local residents, the development industry, national and local interest groups and organisations, and Roade, Hartwell, Milton Malsor, Quinton and Ashton parish councils.

3.2 There was extensive local publicity and engagement in the consultation process. It is considered that the approach adopted is in line with the Government’s emerging decentralisation and localism legislation. The Parish Council produced a summary leaflet on the draft Masterplan that was circulated to every household within the village. This Council and the Parish Council organised a public meeting was held at Roade School. The Parish Council also provided each household with an opportunity to vote on whether they were in favour of development on two greenfield sites in exchange for the former Cricket Field being gifted to the village. However, in view of the limited time available and the wording of the question set out on the voting form it is unclear as to whether all residents were aware of the full extent of the benefits possible through the development, such as the extension to the cemetery and assistance to local services such as the local library and school. Of the 996 voting slips that were distributed, 285 slips were returned (28%), of which 127 were in favour of the development of the two greenfield sites and 155 objected to their development.

3.3 The main issues emerging from the written responses to the consultation are:

- A majority opposed to the development of the greenfield sites
- No local support for major growth to fund bypass and / or railway station
- A general acceptance that if development is needed this should be restricted to brownfield sites only
- Preference for lower density family housing with adequate off street car parking designed to fit with a village locality
- Concern over the impact of new development on the road network
- Provision should be made for some future local employment opportunities on the existing Pianoforte and Chaplins Yard sites
- Other sites promoted for inclusion in the Masterplan (The George, land adjacent to Roade School, Land North of Roade, Roade Ex Serviceman’s Club Site, Former Garden of 33 Hartwell Road and land adjacent to Chaplins Yard)
- Development of residential development on the Car Park would be preferable to employment.
- Concern over the need for 40% affordable housing
- Little support for suggested road improvements, in particular traffic lights at High Street and roundabout at Northampton Road
- Redevelopment of Primary School and Roade Sports College for housing with a new school on the Pianoforte Site
- No additional need for allotment land
- General support for the provision of additional cemetery space
Concern over possible loss of existing community facilities such as the Bowls Club
Further consultation should take place on a revised Masterplan prior to adoption, to reflect the emerging localism agenda.

3.4 As noted above, a public meeting was held on 1 November 2010 in Roade School. This was attended by approximately 220 local residents. The main conclusions of this meeting reflected those received in the written representations above, as follows:

- Brownfield sites should be redeveloped first
- Allotments are not required as the existing are under subscribed
- The Taylor Wimpey site and the approvals already given should be enough development
- Employment should be retained on existing commercial sites
- Developer profits should not be used to reduce the benefits to the village
- Senior and Primary schools to relocate as the existing sites are out of date
- Doctors will need to move as the existing facility has poor access and is not big enough
- 40% affordably housing should only go to people with local connections and 40% should only be given if there is the local need.
- Private housing needs to include bungalows and sheltered accommodation
- Design Code 3 and above should be requested from Developers,
- Taylor Wimpey site is an urban development in a village and should not have had housing so close to the A508 but copy the other side with large front gardens
- Site B in the draft master plan will need some flood defences as it tends to flood in winter
- Existing surge and water drains need to be looked at as some are still un-adopted and some will not take any additions without upgrading
- The Pianoforte car park on Ashton Road is not the right site for employment as traffic would have an impact on an already busy high street
- Chaplin’s site should be for B1/B2 employment not housing
- A weight restriction should be placed on the railway bridge this would help with through freight
- Concern over the roundabout at the junction of Northampton Road and the A508.
- Need for a youth facility, a purpose built building

4 Issues arising after the Consultation

4.1 Since the Masterplan was prepared and consulted upon, the County Council has proposed potentially significant changes that could – if implemented – affect the sustainability of Roade. These proposals are the possible closure of the public library (although this threat has now been replaced by an announcement to review all 36 library services to consider new models for delivering library services in partnership with local communities) and removal of subsidies for public transport. In addition, the County Council has serious concerns about the long-term viability of the village secondary school.
4.2 With regard to public transport subsidies, it is understood that the County Council is considering cancelling all existing supported bus services, in a cut of £1.4 million to rural buses. If approved all supported bus services will be phased out from Northamptonshire. Some of this budget would be used to help other rural transport schemes. Cuts to quiet, but ‘lifeline’, socially necessary routes would impact disproportionately on the personal mobility of under-18s and the elderly. Although precise details of the routes affected are not yet known it is likely that this would result in a poorer quality service for Roade and surrounding villages.

4.3 Roade Parish Council has formally objected to the proposed closure of Roade Library. In particular the facility serves not just Roade, but also neighbouring communities; many (particularly the older and less mobile) residents of Roade and surrounding communities will not be able to travel to another library. The planned and potential future growth of the village means that such a facility is a key element in meeting the needs of the growing community. One option that could be considered, were the library to close, is for a replacement community run facility to be established. This could benefit from contributions from developments within the village. It may be the case that the development of previously developed sites alone would not be sufficient to meet the needs of the local community.

4.4 A third factor that is important to the consideration of the Masterplan is the falling school roll at Roade School. It is understood that there is an urgent need to increase the numbers at the secondary school to secure its viable future, and that this issue has been the subject of discussions between the Parish Council and Roade School since the consultation period ended.

4.5 Since the consultation period ended the concept of Neighbourhood Planning has been introduced in the Government’s Localism and Decentralisation Bill, which was published on 13th December 2010. It is the Government’s intention that Neighbourhood Plans will be produced by communities (in parished areas this is likely to be led by the Parish or Town Council) to set out their vision for how they would like their neighbourhood to develop. Communities will be supported in this process by the local authority.

4.6 The Neighbourhood Plan will need to ‘conform’ with the ‘local plan’ for the district but can expand on it, for example by identifying further areas for development. In this sense a Neighbourhood Plan will be a form of community-led plan (in the same way as a Parish Plan, for example), although its focus will be on issues relating to development in the local area.

4.7 The process for developing a Neighbourhood Plan will require an independent examination (by an inspector appointed by the local authority) and a local referendum, which illustrates local support for the Plan. If found to be suitable, and if supported by the community, the Plan will then become part of the statutory local planning system, together with the local plan produced by the District Council.
4.8 Both the Parish Council and developers are willing to work together in order to provide community benefits as part of the development of brownfield and greenfield sites. This in itself is a good basis for any future Neighbourhood Plan.

5 The alternative approaches

5.1 There are four alternative options open to the Council in its consideration of the Masterplan.

(i) Adopt the Roade Masterplan as revised

5.2 The draft Plan could be revised to take account of the responses received during the consultation as set out in section 3 of this report. This option would reflect the majority view expressed at the time of consultation, although the number of responses represents a minority of the whole local community. In addition this alternative would not take into account the issues that have arisen since the end of consultation as set out in Section 4 of this report. It is not known whether these issues would result in a different consultation outcome, but their significance is such that their implications ought to be tested further.

5.3 If adopted in its revised form the main changes to the Plan would be as follows:

- Remove both Foxcovet Drive and Northampton Road greenfield sites
- Retain Chaplins Yard and Pianoforte sites as shown in the Draft Plan. Both sites to include 0.5 ha. of employment development
- Car Park site to be allocated for residential development
- Amend design principles to require an average of 2 off street car parking places per dwelling and densities between 20 and 30 dwellings per hectare.
- Remove references to the need to provide additional allotment land
- Remove references to the transfer of the Cricket Pitch to the Parish Council
- Remove references to the provision of additional land for cemetery space
- Revise wording of Plan to reflect SNC comments on Affordable Housing
- Revise wording of Plan to reflect SNC comments in respect of Air Quality
- Include wording supporting the imposition of weight restrictions on the A508 and across the railway bridge
- Remove specific road improvements from the Plan. Each development proposal will require a full traffic impact assessment and to implement any required mitigation measures
- Identify existing important community uses (cricket pitch and bowls club) and seek to resist change of use or redevelopment

(ii) Adopt the Roade Masterplan as originally drafted

5.4 The Council prepared, approved and published the draft Masterplan that it considered represented the best interests of the village as a whole for the next 15 years. This included the promotion of two greenfield sites that together would secure identified benefits for the local community including the cricket field and additional cemetery space.
5.5 This draft plan does not carry the support of the majority of respondents, whether formal respondents or those who participated in the vote carried out by the Parish Council. In considering the significance of this, it should be noted that the numbers of formal responses received represents only a small proportion of the whole community while the vote produced only a small majority from less than a third of those eligible to vote. The potential loss of services and the benefits possible with the development of the greenfield sites to minimise the impact of this loss is now more relevant.

(iii) Defer adoption for further consultation within the village in conjunction with work on the Rural Settlements DPD and emerging Localism Bill

5.4 The Council is committed to begin work on the South Northamptonshire Rural Settlements DPD in Spring 2011, to complement the emerging Joint Core Strategy. In addition the new Localism Bill places greater emphasis on neighbourhood planning as set out in Section 4 of this report, which will of necessity be an important element in the way the Rural Areas DPD is prepared (even if, at this stage, we cannot be clear how that will be done). In light of these factors, the limitations of the consultation exercise outlined above, the lack of a distinct majority view on complex issues although very strong feelings arose for differing viewpoints, and the impact of the issues relating to community facilities and services which have arisen since the consultation ended, some respondents have requested that the Council consider further public consultation. Further consultation would also permit proper consideration of sites that were promoted for inclusion in the Plan through the consultation. The purpose of further consultation would be to ensure that a revised version of the plan has the genuine support of the village and accurately represents a full range of local views.

(iv) Adopt the Roade Masterplan as revised and undertake additional consultation on the Greenfield sites

5.5 The majority view of the responses received objected to the inclusion of the two greenfield sites in the Draft Masterplan. There was very little support for large scale development set out in Option 2 (see paragraph 2.4) although there remains developer lead support for this scale of development. There was however a general acceptance of the proposed development of the brownfield sites, namely Pianoforte and associated car park and Chaplins Yard. There was also general agreement to retain some local employment opportunities in the village.

5.6 As has previously been stated some important issues have arisen since the consultation ended and some concern raised as to the understanding within the local community as to the extent of potential benefits that could be delivered from the proposed developments. There is a serious concern that due to viability issues, the development of brownfield sites alone will not deliver these identified benefits identified by the Parish Council and that there will be no opportunity to give further consideration to the more recently identified issues as set out in paragraph 5.4.
5.7 It is considered important to recognise and acknowledge where areas of consensus have been reached through the consultation. By adopting the Masterplan as proposed to be amended in paragraph 5.2 and 5.3 the Council and local community will have something in place to strengthen the planning position in case applications come in and would be a valuable tool in guiding the form of development on these brownfield sites because for example it would set out the need for an element of employment land to be provided, set some principles in respect of affordable housing and design and density and assist in resisting applications for Greenfield development.

5.8 On balance it is therefore concluded that the most appropriate way forward is adopt an amended Masterplan based on the consensus items to strengthen the planning position in case applications come in and to have a further debate on the areas of contention to try to reach a community consensus and following that and if appropriate revise the plan further with additional information and policy. The most appropriate way forward in terms of this further community engagement is yet to be agreed but could be either through the Rural Areas Development Plan Document, a form of Parish Lead Neighbourhood Plan or District Council lead consultation.

6 LINKS TO CORPORATE PRIORITIES AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

6.1 This report is relevant to the Council’s corporate priorities, in particular:
- Priority 2: to preserve what is special in South Northamptonshire (Objective 1: to ensure the Local Development Framework respects out local communities and the character of our villages and countryside); and
- Priority 5: to be known as a Council that protects the vulnerable (Objective 1: to provide high quality local housing appropriate to the needs of all groups and supporting the needs of key workers.)

7 RECOMMENDATION

7.1 That Cabinet be recommended to adopt the Roade Masterplan as revised under paragraph 5.3 of this Report and instigate further consultation as set out in paragraphs 5.5 – 5.8.

8 APPENDICES ATTACHED TO THE REPORT

8.1 Roade Masterplan: adoption Draft and Schedule of responses to the consultation.

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Date 10th February 2011

Background Papers: Roade Masterplan: adoption Draft and Schedule of responses to the consultation.

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