South Northamptonshire Council

Planning Policy and Regeneration Strategy Committee

23 March 2016

South Northamptonshire Local Plan (Part 2A)
Options Consultation – Final Drafts

Report of Head of Strategic Planning and the Economy

This report is public

Purpose of report

For Members to consider the draft South Northamptonshire Local Plan (Part 2A) options consultation documents and determine whether they wish to recommend them for formal consultation.

1.0  Recommendation

The meeting is recommended:

1.1  To approve the publication of the draft South Northamptonshire Local Plan (Part 2A) options consultation documents for a 10 week public consultation between 4 April and 10 June 2016.

2.0  Introduction

2.1  Following the recommendations at 20 January 2016 Planning Policy and Regeneration Committee regarding presentational improvements of the Local Plan Part 2A documents; officers have made a number of changes to the documents. This report outlines the main changes that have been made.

3.0  Report details

3.1  The key elements are:
- Plan area for the Local Plan Part 2A has been amended
- Amalgamation of the Local Plan Part 2A consultation documents
- Minor changes to the text and scale of housing figures
- Proposal to exclude village plans from this initial consultation
- An update on the provisions of the Housing and Planning Bill

3.2  Each of these elements will now be explained in more details
The Plan area

3.3 At the first consultation stage (The Issues) in 2013/14 the Plan area included the whole District excluding the Northampton Related Development Area (NRDA), which was identified in the Joint Core Strategy to specifically meet the housing needs of Northampton.

3.4 At that time it was considered that any additional policies for this area would have been included in the Northampton Related Development Area Allocations and Development Management Policies Local Plan as well as associated master plans.

3.5 However it has now been agreed that the Northampton Related Development Area Allocations and Development Management Policies Local Plan will not be prepared and in its place Northampton Borough Council is to prepare a Part 2 Local Plan that will cover its own administrative area.

3.6 At the meeting of the Planning Policy and Regeneration Committee held on the 20th January, the consultation papers for the Options stage of the plan were approved. These included reference to the Plan area as continuing to exclude land within the NRDA.

3.7 The areas within the NRDA within South Northamptonshire are as follows:

- The proposed development at Norwood Farm
- The proposed development as Northampton West
- The proposed development South of Brackmills
- Grange Park
- Wootton Fields (the Poppyridge estate and extension)

3.8 Although the Part 2A Local Plan will not propose any changes to the proposals set out in the WNJCS for the sites within the NRDA it is considered important that the areas are included in the Part 2A Plan area.

3.9 The reasons for this are as follows:

- The area is no longer included within the Northampton Related Development Area Allocations and Development Management Policies Local Plan and as such would not be covered by any Part 2 Local Plans.

- Inclusion would ensure complete coverage of land within Part 2 Plans as Daventry District is including land within the Daventry part of the NRDA within its part 2 Local Plan.

- Together with Grange Park and Poppyridge, once the allocated sites are developed there will be a need for there to be some detailed development Management policies to guide applications that may then come forward in the areas. For example, this could include garden or back land development. If excluded from the Plan area the only policies that could be applied are the more strategic ones set out in the WNJCS.
3.10 At its meeting held on March 1st 2016 Full Council resolved to include the whole of South Northamptonshire District as the Plan area for the Part 2A Local Plan.

**Local Plan 2A consultation documents**

3.11 The 20 January Planning Policy and Regeneration Committee was presented with 4 separate documents for consultation:

- Local Plan Part 2A options consultation
- Scale of development
- Settlement hierarchy
- Local Green Space designation and methodology

3.12 Following resolutions made at the committee on 20 January with regards to presentational improvements, the newly drafted consultation documents have amalgamated the Local Plan Part 2A options consultation, scale of development and the Settlement hierarchy paper.

3.13 It is now proposed that 3 papers will be published for consultation:

- South Northamptonshire Local Plan Part 2A: Options Consultation Document and Questions;
- South Northamptonshire Local Plan Part 2A: Options Consultation Background Document;
- Local Green Space designation and methodology background paper

**Changes to text and scale of housing**

3.14 There have been minor changes to the text throughout the document, this is predominantly to ensure that the amalgamated draft documents flow and read as one document.

3.15 In terms of changes to the scale of housing; this includes:
Option 1 was initially known as “residual apportionment” however it was felt that this term needed to be simplified, therefore it is now called “Straight Distribution”
Option 3 is Growth based on past development rates (Natural Growth) has been changed and no longer includes as part of the calculation sites allowed at appeal.

**Proposal to exclude village plans from this initial consultation**

3.16 At the January Planning Policy and Regeneration committee it was proposed that the consultation documents would include a set of individual village plans indicating the sites that have been suggested to us as being suitable for development through previous call for sites and the Strategic Housing Land Availability Study (SHLAA).

3.17 It is important that these maps are accurate and include all sites known to the Council. This work is taking longer than expected. It is therefore proposed that the maps will not be published as part of the options consultation.

3.18 The sites that have been suggested to the Council so far, will still be available to view on the Councils website and West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit website. The consultation documents will provide clear links as to where this information is held.
Preparing a new SHLAA/SHELAA

3.19 The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) is a technical study that all local planning authorities are required to prepare (para 159 &161 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit commenced production of a SHLAA in mid-2008. A draft SHLAA was published in 2009 and a further “call for sites” took place late 2009/early 2010. The draft SHLAA was updated and a final version was published in 2012.

3.20 The primary role of the SHLAA is to proactively identify and assess sites that have the potential to deliver residential development. It is considered that the current SHLAA is now becoming out-dated; in addition further “call for sites” exercises have taken place over the last 2 years which have identified more potential sites.

3.21 The NPPF sets out that an assessment of land that has potential to deliver economic development should also be made. During the options consultation, officers will work on combining the SHLAA sites, call for sites and any other sites that may come forward during the options consultation and will review the availability, suitability and the likely economic viability of sites to help inform work on the new Local Plan. This time this work will also encompass an assessment of land for economic purposes as well as housing. This work will culminate in the publication of a draft strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) in Summer 2016 for consultation.

3.22 The new SHELAA will provide maps, photos and known constraints of each site. It is considered that this will be a more robust approach and will give consultees a greater level of information when considering options for scale and delivery and suitable sites that could be considered for future delivery. This approach will also not result to further delays in the Plan making process.

3.23 It should be noted that inclusion of a site in the SHELAA does not mean that a site will be allocated for development in the Local Plan Part 2A. Further detailed site assessment work will be undertaken and sites allocated in accordance with the Local Plan Part 2A growth strategy and site selection methodology. Similarly inclusion should not be taken to imply that planning permission would be granted.

Housing and Planning Bill update

3.24 In November 2015, officers reported on the main provisions outlined set out in the Housing and Planning Bill.

3.25 The provisions that impact on the Local Plan are:
- Duty on LAs to compile a register of brownfield land brownfield sites, which is suitable for housing development;
- Enabling planning bodies to grant permission in principle for housing development on sites allocated in plans or identified on brownfield registers, and allowing small builders to apply directly for permission in principle for minor development;
- Duties on LAs to keep and have regard to, registers of people seeking land for self build and custom house building;
- Speeding up and simplifying neighbourhood planning and giving more powers to neighbourhood forums;
Introducing criteria to inform decision on intervention to deliver our commitment to get local plans in place;

Promoting the development of Starter homes, available to qualifying first-time buyers at a discount of at least 20% less than the market value;

Councils will have a specific duty to promote the supply of Starter homes, including the preparation of local plans;

Improvements to the compulsory purchase processes to make the system clearer, fairer and faster.

3.26 Since November, the Government have published two consultation documents outlining further detail to the provisions including:

- Consultation on proposed changes to national planning policy (December 2015)
- Technical consultation on implementation of planning changes (February 2016)

3.27 Officers are considering both of these consultation documents. The Housing and Planning Bill is currently being heard in the House of Lords (Committee stage was 8 March 2016). As changes to planning and housing policies evolve they will be included in the Plan as appropriate.

4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

4.1 The Local Plan Part 2A will build on, and provide detail to, the framework for growth by the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (WNJCS). The options consultation stage will help the Council to test options and subsequently narrow down policies and land allocations that should be identified in the “preferred options” which will be the next stage in the process.

5.0 Consultation

5.1 As the report will form part of a Development Plan document, it will be subject to formal public consultation as set out in Town and Country (Local Planning) Regulations 2012 part 6.

6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

6.1 The Council could chose not to approve the documents for public consultation; however this is not recommended as it would delay for preparation of the Local Plans.

7.0 Implications

7.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Comments checked by:
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7.2 Legal Implications

The consultation is a legal requirement. Following consultation on the options the results will inform and guide the South Northants Local Plan Part 2A, which will then form part of the development plan for the Council’s District.

Comments checked by:
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8.0 Decision Information

Wards Affected

All

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

- Strategic Priority: Preserve what’s special
- Strategic Priority: Protect our quality of life
- Strategic Priority: Secure a prosperous and sustainable future
- Strategic Priority: Enhance the council’s performance

Lead Councillor

Cllr Rebecca Breese - Portfolio holder for Planning and Environment

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Background Papers

None

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