South Northamptonshire Council

Development Control Committee

22 September 2016

West Northampton Strategic Development Framework (SDF)

Report of Head of Development Management

This report is public

Purpose of report

This report will provide an overview of the West Northamptonshire Strategic Development Framework (SDF) including its context, purpose and status.

1.0 Recommendations

The meeting is recommended:

1.1 To endorse the Strategic Development Framework.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 Northamptonshire is subject to significant growth, with a large proportion of future housing allocations located on the western edge of Northampton, comprising three Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUE’s). This will provide an important part of the future growth of Northampton and new communities for west Northamptonshire, bringing with it a significant opportunity to provide positive, attractive and sustainable development within the region.

2.2 The West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS) sets out the importance of ‘strategic planning’, emphasising that development should not be the result of un-coordinated, planning application led development. The JCS is the Statutory Development Plan for west Northamptonshire and contains policies to ensure that places are shaped and made in a way which meets the needs of the people of today, whilst ensuring the needs of future generations are safeguarded.

2.3 In recognition of the large scale of development coming forward and in order to avoid piecemeal, disjointed development as seen in other parts of the county, a document known as the Strategic Development Framework (SDF) for West Northampton Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUE’s) has been produced as a technical guide/evidence base to inform the master planning process and/or as a tool to guide and co-ordinate this future development in the west of Northampton.
This contains information that officers would have routinely sought as part of the pre-application/application determination process and has merely drawn it together in one document to help ensure a coordinated approach for all the SUEs given the cross-boundary nature of the sites. It does not constitute planning policy, but it is consistent with and amplifies the JCS strategic policy framework of providing a 'plan-led' approach to guide development of the SUE's. The SDF does not therefore in any way alter or add to JCS policies and whilst it will constitute a material planning consideration when assessing planning applications, it has limited weight and will play a limited role in the formal application determination process. It has been prepared by South Northamptonshire Council (SNC), Northampton Borough Council (NBC) and Daventry District Council (DDC) in consultation with Northamptonshire County Council (NCC). In drafting the document, there has been liaison with Harpole, Kislingbury, Duston and Harlestone Parish Councils, Harpole Action Team, Bloor Homes, the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA), Barwoods and David Wilson Homes.

3.0 Report Details

3.1. The three SUE’s located to the west of Northampton will provide approximately 7,000 future homes for the region. The policy context and vision for these allocations is set out in the JCS. SUE allocations include:

- Northampton Upton Park SUE (JCS Policy N9) (Granted outline permission in 2015 by NBC):

- Northampton Norwood Farm/ Upton Lodge SUE (JCS Policy N9a) (part in SNC and part in NBC):

- Northampton West SUE (JCS Policy N4) (part in SNC and part in DDC).

3.2. Comprehensive development within the JCS allocations (above) will deliver a significant proportion of housing supply and growth for Northampton to its western edge. It will also deliver strategic green infrastructure for the town with a new Country Park, major transport infrastructure and delivery of the Sandy Lane Relief Road link, new primary (and potentially secondary) education, key sports and community facilities.

3.3. Varying levels of assessment and planning have been carried out (by the JPU) for this area, largely at high level, establishing broad principles in relation to site specific allocations in the JCS. This has demonstrated the need for a strategic and co-ordinated design approach and the use of an appropriate technical document/evidence base to assist, guide and inform the future development of the SUE’s. A Strategic Development Framework is considered to be the most useful and appropriate technical document/evidence base to inform the spatial planning, development and delivery of West Northampton SUE’s, in that it clarifies the connections, relationships and needs between the collective sites, and set out themes and development drivers to assist the planning application process.

3.4. Officers from South Northamptonshire Council, Daventry District Council and Northampton Borough Council took the decision to produce the SDF in 2015. It is a technical document/evidence base setting out constraints, opportunities, challenges and solutions that will be used to inform master-planning at a strategic level across
the SUEs. It does not alter or add anything to the JCS and does not constitute formal planning policy, but it will constitute a material planning consideration when assessing planning applications.

3.5. The SDF process has involved data and mapping collation for the wider SUE area via liaison with Northamptonshire County Council (Highways and Education), ‘visioning workshops’ (with key stakeholders identified in paragraph 2.3 above), and focused design meetings with developers and their design teams to identify key parameters and drivers for the development of the SUE’s. The SDF product was a collation of this information with its narrative intended to present a high level evidence base of development and design principles.

3.6. The SDF document has been designed to:

- operate planning and decision making across boundaries (through partnership and co-ordination):
- be a live ‘tool’ for discussion with stakeholders and landowners:
- operate at a large spatial scale to help plan strategic infrastructure and strengthen links between town and neighbouring centres:
- protect and enhance important natural, cultural or heritage assets:
- provide an opportunity to enhance lacking facilities and services in the vicinity (i.e. sports pitches provision, community facilities, health care provision etc.).

3.7. The document has taken account of the Northampton Landscape Sensitivity and Green Infrastructure Study 2009 and includes a policy context, details of Neighbourhood Plans and the key drivers for development. Also included is the existing physical site information together with a review and analysis of the existing character and context (from both desk-based study and field analysis) which has been combined to provide an overview of the sites opportunities and constraints. The information and analysis has been grouped as follows:

- Landscape, Biodiversity and Heritage:
- Movement and Connectivity:
- Existing Services and Facilities:
- Opportunities and Constraints.

3.8. The strategic framework for West Northampton SUE’s is presented as a schematic ‘framework diagram’ (not a masterplan) for the SUEs relating to Policies N9a and N4 within the wider context of Duston, Upton, Upton Lodge (which relates to Policy N9) and the surrounding villages/urban area.

3.9. It is consistent with JCS policy requirements and the NPPF for sustainable development and high quality design – and is focussed on high level priorities to ensure that area is developed as a comprehensive piece of townscape through appropriate strategic infrastructure, land use disposition and a cohesive urban structure. The SDF narrative is then explained using three high level themes which form structuring elements and influences for the overall SDF diagram:
Context

- A new residential district that is well integrated with the surrounding built and natural context, making a positive response to the natural landscape setting, topography and key views whilst protecting the rural character of surrounding villages:

- Development that respects the 115m contour/ridge line with a sensitive landscaped / development edge:

- The incorporation of Sandy Lane (old and new) to define the new development edge that promotes a soft/rural edge response to new development fronting open space/countryside where possible:

- New residential development areas that follow a robust layout and promote active frontages and well-overlooked streets and spaces.

Accessibility

- A key north-south route to connect the Cross Valley Link Road (south of the A4500) with new development aligned to the North-West bypass route (future):

- A key primary route to and through the development via completion of the Sandy Lane Relief Road (SLRR) – accommodating the proposed SLRR re-alignment (Option B) which could support a design for lower traffic speeds as an ‘urban boulevard’:

- An integrated local ‘network’ of open spaces, green streets and parkland linking N-S, E-W through the development and to existing settlements – supporting good movement and permeability whilst minimising additional traffic pressure on Glassthorpe Lane, Larkhill Lane and Port Road:

- A key north-south link to widen Northampton’s Strategic Green Infrastructure Network via a new country park linking the River Nene, Upton Valley Park to Harlestone Firs and Brampton Valley Way.

Land use Distribution

- The optimum location for mixed uses/local centre where key facilities, services, provisional school sites can be co-located along primary routes in highly visible and accessible locations. Three indicative locations have been proposed in each of the allocations which are located outside an 800m radius and are independent from the other;- Norwood farm (N9a), Upton Lodge (N9a) and Northampton West (N4):

- Land for primary and secondary school provision located on visible and accessible locations along the primary movement network. These are:
  - N9a (Upton Lodge); one 2FE primary:
  - N9a (Upton Lodge); one secondary school (provision made if required):
- N9a (Norwood Farm): one 2FE to 3FE primary school:
- N4 (Northampton West): one 3FE – 4FE primary school:

- The potential to develop key anchors and destinations (such as a leisure/recreation focus, primary parks and open spaces and community/education hubs, mixed uses for enjoyment and benefit of the local and wider community) that are both visible and accessible through land-use disposition and the movement network:

- Land for playing pitches/sports provision and open space as per JCS requirements.

3.10. The SDF document provides a strategic and co-ordinated design approach across the West Northampton Sustainable Urban Extensions, to assist and inform the completion of the master planning of the SUE’s and to aid the consideration of planning applications as they are submitted. It sets out strategic priorities, needs, relationships and development drivers for the sites collectively and deals with themes and principles rather than being prescriptive about outputs, which will be established later in the planning application process.

4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

4.1. The SDF constitutes a useful technical tool/evidence base and has established a process for wider engagement and consultation between the various authorities and developers, helping to prioritise key elements for the growth of West Northampton in terms of wider area connections, key infrastructure and relationships between the various SUE allocations. It amplifies the policies contained within the JCS, but does not alter or add any policy to it and will be used to inform the masterplanning of these key strategic sites to enable the delivery of high quality developments and the creation of successful places for new communities.

4.2. In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, SNC, DDC and NBC are taking a positive and proactive approach to important major development and the current 3-way collaborative working arrangement provides a holistic approach to development and place-making of these important strategic sites and the delivery of the benefits associated with them.

5.0 Consultation

5.1. Because the SDF is a technical tool/evidence base and not a policy document, no formal consultation has taken place. However, liaison has taken place with Northamptonshire County Council to establish the educational and transport context and with Harpole, Kislingbury, Duston and Harlestone Parish Councils to establish an appropriate vision and local context. There has also been liaison with developers who have an interest in the sites such as Barwoods, Bloor Homes, HCA and David Wilson Homes. In the event that the document is endorsed, Harpole and Kislingbury Parish Council’s will be provided with a copy for information purposes.

6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

6.1. Not to endorse the SDF
7.0 Implications

Financial and Resource Implications

7.1 There have been no direct costs to the Council as a result of the development of the SDF and has been undertaken from within the Council’s existing resources. Funding for the SDF has been met by the West Northants Joint Planning Unit.

Comments checked by: Kate Crussell, Principal Accountant, 01327 322188, Kate.Crussell@Cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk

Legal Implications

7.2 The SDF will not be adopted as policy but merely a tool for development management. It will be a material consideration when determining any applications for the West Northampton SUEs.

Comments checked by: Nigel Bell, Team Leader Planning and Litigation, 01295 221687. Nigel.bell@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk

8.0 Decision Information

Financial Threshold Met: No

Community Impact Threshold Met: No

Wards Affected

Harpole and Grange

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

The Council’s 2016/17 Business Plan strategic priority of Protect the District, via the key objectives of; (1) ensuring the character of the district is preserved; (2) protect the built heritage; (3) preserve the environmental quality of the District.

NPPF

JCS Policies N4, N9a

Lead Councillor

Councillor Roger Clarke (Portfolio Holder for Planning and Environment)
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<tr>
<td>Report Author</td>
<td>Tracey Hill - Development Management Team Leader (Major Projects Team)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Information</td>
<td>01327 322253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:Tracey.hill@southnorthants.gov.uk">Tracey.hill@southnorthants.gov.uk</a></td>
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