

PLANNING POLICY EXECUTIVE ADVISORY PANEL Monday 21 February 2022

Report Title	North Northamptonshire Strategic Plan Scope and Issues
Report Author	Simon James – Policy Manager (Strategic Policy, Design and Delivery) simon.james@northnorthants.gov.uk
Relevant Executive Member	Councillor David Brackenbury – Executive Member for Growth and Regeneration

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Draft Scope and Issues consultation document

Appendix B – Equalities Impact Assessment screening

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. For the Planning Policy Executive Advisory Panel (PPEAP) to provide feedback on the draft Scope and Issues consultation document and the approach to consultation.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The North Northamptonshire Strategic Plan will be a key statutory document for North Northamptonshire Council (NNC). It will cover the whole Council area. The Plan will review and where appropriate replace the policies that address the strategic priorities for the area. The Strategic Plan will be supported by a combination of area-based or topic-based plans, which could include reviews and updates of the Part 2 Local Plans. Consultation on the Scope and Issues represents the formal commencement of the Strategic Plan.
- 2.2. Members of this Executive Advisory Panel noted the draft scope of the North Northamptonshire Strategic Plan at its 9th December 2021 meeting. Officers have drafted a consultation document and considered how the consultation may be undertaken. Feedback from the Panel is sought to inform the consultation document and the approach to consultation.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1. That Members of the Planning Policy Executive Advisory Panel consider and provide feedback on the draft Scope and Issues consultation document and the approach to consultation.

Reason for Recommendation:

- 3.2. To provide Member input into the content of the Scope and Issues document for consultation, and the approach to consultation.

Alternative Options considered:

- 3.3. Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 requires local planning authorities to consult on the scope of a local plan which it proposes to prepare. There is considerable flexibility available at this stage on the type of document that is consulted on. It is considered that consulting on Scope and Issues as the formal commencement of the plan-making process is an effective way of obtaining views on whether we have identified the right issues facing North Northamptonshire and what the plan should cover. The responses to the Scope and Issues consultation document will inform and contribute to the development of detailed planning policies and proposals at later stages of the plan making process.

4. Report Background

- 4.1. The North Northamptonshire Strategic Plan will be a key statutory document for the Council. It will form the strategic Part 1 Local Plan for North Northamptonshire, to be supported by a combination of area-based or topic-based plans, which could include reviews and updates of the Part 2 Local Plans.
- 4.2. The draft scope of the Strategic Plan was reported to this Executive Advisory Panel at its 9th December 2021 meeting. Paras 4.1-4.3 of this report (Item 6) set out the background to the Strategic Plan and are summarised below:
 - To meet the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), at its 25th July 2019 meeting, the former Joint Planning Committee (JPC) considered a report on the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) review. The conclusion of the report was that the JCS did not require an immediate update, but that this should be kept under review. It was agreed that the new plan should be referred to as the North Northamptonshire Strategic Plan and should cover the period 2020- 2041, with the spatial vision potentially extending to 2050 to align with the Arc.
 - At the final meeting of the JPC on 2nd March 2021, a “handover” report provided Members with an update on strategic issues and made recommendations to the Council on how strategic planning should be taken forward. This report discussed the national and sub-regional context,

including the implications of the Arc Spatial Framework, and the scope and timetable of the Strategic Plan. The report also proposed changing the statutory plan period to 2021-2041 from that previously agreed. The JPC endorsed the draft scope of the Strategic Plan and potential timetable and recommended this to the Council for inclusion in the North Northamptonshire Local Development Scheme, which will need to be published to outline the programme of development plan preparation.

- 4.3. At its 9th December 2021 meeting, Members of this Advisory Panel noted the scope of the Strategic Plan and provided feedback through discussion. At the same meeting the Panel recommended that the Draft Local Development Scheme be advanced to the Executive for consideration, which included a revised timetable for the Strategic Plan.

5. Issues and Choices

Scope and Issues consultation document

- 5.1. The Scope and Issues consultation document recognises that the scope of the Strategic Plan will focus on strategic matters which will, as a minimum, meet the requirement set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, to have a plan that addresses the strategic priorities for the area. The plan will help to deliver the priorities set out in other Council plans and strategies. It will take forward the priorities for the Council set out in its Corporate Plan and provide the spatial dimension to it.
- 5.2. The Scope and Issues consultation is the first stage in preparing the new Strategic Plan. Officers have drafted a consultation document provided at [Appendix A](#) which has sought to identify key issues of relevance to the Strategic Plan and questions to obtain feedback on these. It is important to emphasise that no decisions have yet been made on the scale of growth or where that growth should be located.
- 5.3. The document has been informed by Member feedback, including from the final Joint Planning Committee meeting in March 2021 and the December Planning Policy Executive Advisory Panel, existing and emerging evidence, monitoring and the Corporate Plan. It has also been informed by internal consultation with other service areas. It has sought to provide greater emphasis on issues such as the climate emergency, health & wellbeing and respond to other key policy issues including the [Levelling Up White Paper](#)¹. Feedback from the Panel is sought to inform the consultation document in advance of future consultation.
- 5.4. The Oxford-Cambridge Arc provides the sub-regional context for the Strategic Plan, which will respond to the challenges and opportunities presented by the Arc. It will inform and be influenced by the development of the Arc Spatial Framework. The Government's response to the Spatial Framework Vision consultation is anticipated imminently. It will be important to ensure that the Scope and Issues document reflects the latest government thinking on the Arc.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-the-united-kingdom>

It is worth noting that there is a certain amount of uncertainty over progress with the Arc Spatial Framework, however we wait for further announcements. Should further clarity become available this will be reflected in the consultation document.

- 5.5. Further amendments to the Scope and Issues document prior to consultation, including in response to the issues discussed above, factual updates, including where updated monitoring information is available, formatting, and typographical amendments, will be prepared with the agreement of the Executive Member for Growth and Regeneration, in consultation with the Executive Director for Place and Economy. Officers are liaising with colleagues in consultation and engagement regarding the format of the consultation document and consultation methods to be used.

Sustainability Appraisal Scoping report

- 5.6. The Strategic Plan will be informed by a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) which will consider ways in which the plan can contribute to improvements in environmental, social and economic conditions. The SA will also identify and mitigate any potential adverse effects the plan may have. An initial SA Scoping Report is being prepared and will be available for comment alongside the Scope and Issues document.
- 5.7. The purpose of a Scoping Report is to provide the context for, and determine the scope of, the SA of the Strategic Plan and to set out the assessment framework for undertaking the later stages of the SA.
- 5.8. The SA Scoping Report represents the first stage in the SA/strategic environmental assessment (SEA) process, its purpose being to identify:
 - The relevant plans, policies, programmes and initiatives contained in relevant strategic documents that will inform the SA process and the local plan.
 - The relevant baseline information, covering a number of themes taking into account current social, environmental and economic conditions and issues in North Northamptonshire.
 - Key sustainability issues and problems within these themes.
 - A sustainability appraisal framework, consisting of objectives against which the plan can be considered.
- 5.9. Legislation requires the Council to consult statutory consultees on the SA Scoping Report, and the SA document will be published at the same time as the Scope and Issues consultation document.

Approach to consultation

- 5.10. As the first statutory stage of consultation on the Strategic Plan (often referred to as Regulation 18 consultation)², consultation is required to be undertaken in

² Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

accordance with statutory requirements, including the Statement of Community Involvement³ (SCI). The SCI includes the following measures:

- Consultation on documents for eight weeks where possible.
- Electronic communication and online representations will be used as widely as possible as well as increased usage of social media to inform the public about each stage of the consultation process.
- As much information as possible will be made available on the North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) website.
- Notification of those on the consultation database will form the main basis of communicating consultation information with interested parties in relation to relevant local plans that are being prepared. The Council will also use its website and other measures such as local media to promote engagement and consultation.
- All consultation documents and key supporting material should normally also be made available in hard copy as well as in electronic format. In such instances these hard copies will be made available for viewing at the main and other primary offices of NNC as well as NNC main libraries.

5.11. The SCI recognises that when preparing local plans more extensive consultation may be undertaken than that required by the regulations. Para 2.5 explains that in the case of North Northamptonshire, the use of greater consultation and engagement will depend on the nature, coverage and scope of the respective local plan. Of relevance to the Scope and Issues consultation, para 2.7 sets out that it will be particularly important to keep the public and other stakeholders informed about the initial stages of the local plan process including evidence gathering and survey work. It is proposed that the following additional measures be used as part of the consultation:

- Member workshop to get feedback from all interested Members.
- Drop-in session/s (format to be confirmed).
- Potential preparation of a summary document aimed at the public and to support Town & Parish Council involvement in consultation.

5.12. A wider range of consultation and engagement measures would have advantages in potentially increasing feedback to the consultation and the range of those inputting into the development of the Strategic Plan including from traditionally hard-to-reach groups. There would, however, be resource implications of undertaking these, and it may require additional time before the consultation was launched (for example if a summary leaflet was to be produced, etc). Feedback from Members is sought on whether the Council should use additional consultation and engagement measures than required by the regulations.

5.13. The Scope and Issues consultation document represents the first stage in the Strategic Plan process. It is important to clarify that at this stage no views have been formed on the scale of growth, which sites and locations should be allocated for new development, how existing policies should be updated or

³ Draft North Northamptonshire Statement of Community Involvement, December 2021

whether there should be any additional policies. As the plan is developed consultation methods will be tailored accordingly with emphasis on the right consultation with the right people at the right time.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1. Further amendments to the Scope and Issues document prior to consultation, will be prepared with the agreement of the Executive Member for Growth and Regeneration, in consultation with the Executive Director for Place and Economy.
- 6.2. As set out in the [emerging Local Development Scheme](#), consultation on Scope and Issues is proposed to commence in March for 8 weeks (dates to be confirmed). The SA Scoping Report will also be consulted on at the same time. Consultation will be undertaken using the measures discussed in section 5.
- 6.3. The responses to the Scope and Issues consultation document will inform and contribute to the development of detailed planning policies and proposals at later stages of the plan making process. The next stage in the preparation of the Strategic Plan will be to develop a range of potential spatial options to meet the level of growth being planned for across North Northamptonshire. It is anticipated in the Local Development Scheme that consultation on Options will be later this year and all responses made to this consultation will help us to develop these.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1. Resources and Financial

- 7.1.1. Sufficient resources will be needed to progress the Strategic Plan. An interim staffing structure is currently in place to commence work on the plan. A permanent structure is under review, the outcome of this could affect the timetable of the plan. The current anticipated budget necessary to commence work is allocated within the Council's budget.
- 7.1.2. The evidence base required to support the drafting of the plan will require a number of studies, some of which will require external consultancy and specialist legal advice. The plan itself will also require the Council to enter into a contract with the Planning Inspectorate to examine the plan. Whilst it is difficult to anticipate the full costs of producing a plan, a work programme will continue to be developed to forecast charges, particularly around the time of the Examination.

7.2. Legal and Governance

- 7.2.1. The Strategic Plan will review and where appropriate replace the policies that address the strategic priorities for the area. When formally adopted, the Strategic Plan will form part of the Development Plan for North Northamptonshire to guide development alongside Part 2 Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans.

7.2.2. The preparation of the Strategic Plan will need to comply with legal and regulation requirements set out in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

7.3. **Relevant Policies and Plans**

7.3.1. The Strategic Plan will take forward the key commitments for the Council set out in the Corporate Plan and provide the spatial dimension to it. The draft Scope and Issues consultation document extensively cross-references the relevant sections of the Corporate Plan to demonstrate how this will be taken forward.

7.4. **Risk**

7.4.1. There are no significant risks arising from the proposed recommendations in this report. The main risks in preparing the Strategic Plan are:

- Maintaining progress to ensure that key stages are met to enable the plan to proceed as efficiently as possible to Examination and adoption.
- Ensuring the availability of resources to allow the preparation process to proceed in line with the Local Development Scheme.
- Significant changes to national policy and sub-regional guidance.
- Ensure that the Strategic Plan satisfies the tests of soundness, namely that that the plan has been positively prepared is justified, effective and is consistent with national policy

7.4.2. To help monitor ongoing progress, and to help inform decision making a comprehensive risk register and project plan will be prepared and maintained as part of this project

7.5. **Consultation**

7.5.1. Consultation will be undertaken on the Scope and Issues and other key stages of the Strategic Plan in accordance with statutory requirements, including the Statement of Community Involvement.

7.6. **Consideration by Scrutiny**

7.6.1. The draft Scope and Issues document will be used to gain feedback from Members of this Executive Advisory Panel. It is proposed that a member workshop be held as part of the consultation. There is no identified need for wider consideration by scrutiny although should members of the scrutiny commission request it to go into the work programme, they can do so.

7.7. Equality Implications

- 7.7.1. An Equalities Impact Assessment screening has been completed in consultation with the Council's Equalities team and is provided at Appendix B.

7.8. Climate Impact

- 7.8.1. The Council, having declared a climate change emergency in June 2021, is committed to reducing its climate impact both within its own Council buildings and in working with businesses and the wider community to achieve net zero energy emissions. The approach to climate change will be fundamental to the development of the Strategic Plan and is set out within the draft Scope and Issues consultation document.

7.9. Community Impact

- 7.9.1. The consultation document seeks to ensure that existing and new communities in North Northamptonshire see real benefits from development. Consultation on the Strategic Plan as it progresses, and the evidence base to inform it, will inform the approach and how benefits can be maximised.

7.10. Crime and Disorder Impact

- 7.10.1. The Strategic Plan will set out policies to ensure safe communities and development. The draft Scope and Issues consultation document provides further guidance on this, including within the key Principles for Place-making and Sustainable Communities. Consultation feedback will inform the approach to these elements as the plan is developed.

8. Background Papers

- 8.1. [Emerging North Northamptonshire Local Development Scheme](#)
8.2. [Minutes of EAP Planning Policy 9th December 2021](#)
8.3. EAP Planning Policy 9th December 2021 [Report on Scope of the North Northamptonshire Strategic Plan](#) (Item 6)
8.4. [North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2011-2031](#), adopted July 2016