SOUTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE LOCAL PLAN

Your chance to make a difference

VILLAGES – THE ISSUES
The South Northamptonshire Local Plan is a framework that will guide decisions made by the local planning authority on a range of issues that affect everyone who lives and works in the district. It will include proposals for housing and other forms of development, including employment and contain policies aimed at improving town centres and the rural economy and other important services and facilities, as well as those aimed at enhancing and protecting our heritage and local environment.

As our urban and rural communities grow and develop, change is inevitable. The Local Plan will help us to manage that change in a positive way, for the benefit of everyone. It will enable us to develop sustainable village communities, build prosperous towns and support a strong and flexible rural economy. At its heart is the desire to create a stronger future for the district, while protecting what we have at the present and preserving what’s special about the past.

The Plan must adhere to criteria contained in a number of national and local planning policies, including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS). The existing Local Plan, which must be reviewed and kept up to date, was adopted in 1997. Shaping the future of the district up to 2029, South Northamptonshire Council (SNC) is working to adopt the new Plan in 2015.
HAVE YOUR SAY
To ensure that the Plan accurately reflects the aspirations and wishes of all, SNC is carrying out a comprehensive consultation with the local community. This is a unique opportunity to have your say about the things that matter most to you. You can influence the outcome of the Plan by responding to the issues set out in the consultation documents and by letting us know if there are any other issues that have not been specifically identified but that you consider to be important. By taking part, you can help to improve the quality of life where you live and work.

KEY STEPS

PHASE 1 – THE ISSUES, WINTER 2013/14
Consultation to establish the scope of the Plan, including the issues to be addressed, the criteria and methodology that should be used in future planning decisions.

PHASE 2 – THE OPTIONS, SUMMER/AUTUMN 2014
SNC will put forward options for how to deal with the issues raised. Based on responses from the community, SNC will set out the preferred options in a draft Plan.

PHASE 3 – EXAMINATION, WINTER 2014/15
The preferred options will be submitted in a final Plan to the Secretary of State.

PHASE 4 – ADOPTED, SUMMER/AUTUMN 2015
The Local Plan will formally be adopted.

Everyone has an opportunity to influence the outcome of the Local Plan.
OUR VILLAGES

The district’s 90 villages and hamlets are home to around 75 per cent of its population. They play an essential role in the local economy by supporting services in our towns and countryside. SNC intends to take a flexible and positive approach that enables villages to seek to meet their own needs for high quality designed housing, employment opportunities and services.

Rural Settlement Hierarchy

The Plan provides an opportunity to create a new hierarchy that ranks villages into categories according to a range of criteria that reflect their level of sustainability and ability to support local needs. The hierarchy will determine how much residential and other development each category of village can and should accommodate. When considering the hierarchy, the Plan can take a ‘cluster’ approach, grouping settlements together that share services and have good access, or it can take a ‘dispersed’ approach, which considers villages on their own merits, based on availability of local services and facilities.
Village Confines

Communities are being asked to consider whether the Local Plan should continue with the current system of village confines, or choose a more general, criteria based approach towards deciding where development should be located. If the confines approach is adopted, communities will have a say in deciding where the boundaries should be drawn. The criteria approach would mean that applications are assessed on their own merits against their impact on a settlement.

The current confines have been in place since 1997 (although there are not currently confines for Old Stratford, Deanshanger and Middleton Cheney). They set a boundary around settlements that limits general development to areas within the boundary and restricts it on ‘open countryside’ land outside. The alternative criteria approach considers individual developments on their own merits. Due to their particular character, or lack of local facilities, some villages may not be sufficiently sustainable locations for new development. Therefore, it may not be appropriate to define confines for these villages, although they would remain subject to the usual strict planning controls that govern development in the open countryside.

Advantages of Confines

- Provide a clear framework for decision making resulting in fewer appeals.
- Help to prevent encroachment into the countryside.
- Help local councils to plan for provision of infrastructure and services.
- Help to prevent the merging of neighbouring villages.

Disadvantages of Confines

- Could lead to a false presumption that development on all land within boundaries is acceptable.
- Might result in intensification of land use such as back garden development.
- Increase pressure on undeveloped land that might be important to the community.
- Time consuming and resource intensive to prepare and revise.
- Could lead to artificially high land values and higher house prices.

Developing sustainable village communities
**Issues to consider when setting village confines**

- Should follow physical boundaries such as roads, waterways and fields.
- Should consider the future developments of the village.
- Should seek to control linear and ribbon development.
- Should consider undeveloped land that is more aligned to the open countryside than to the village.
- Should take account of developments outside but adjoining the boundary that have outstanding planning permissions.
- Should consider developments that are isolated from a village.

**Local Green Space**

In accordance with national guidance, communities will be able to identify for special protection, green areas that are of particular importance to them. Areas can be designated as Local Green Space if they are in reasonably close proximity to the community, where it is demonstrably special to a local community and where it holds a particular local significance. For example, because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including its use as a playing field), tranquility, or richness of wildlife; and where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land. The identification of areas also has to be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in homes, jobs and other essential services.
WHAT NEXT?

The consultation process for The Issues stage is taking place from 28 October 2013 to 24 January 2014.

All responses to the consultation documents must be returned by 24 January at the latest. Responses cannot be accepted after this date.

- Collect a copy of the documents from SNC’s offices at Springfields, Towcester, Northamptonshire NN12 6AE, or telephone 01327 322267.
- Copies are also available from your local parish council clerk.

THE ISSUES

- What factors should be taken into account in defining the hierarchy of rural settlements?
- Should the Plan adopt the cluster approach, or consider villages individually?
- Should confines be retained and where should they be drawn around your village?
- How much development should be allocated to your village?
- What type and size of housing is needed?
- What sort of new development should be permitted (employment, retail, community facilities) and where should it be located?
- How can services be safeguarded to meet the needs of rural communities?
- Should parish councils prepare a list of assets of value to the community?
- Are there areas of green space, verges, or views that need protection due to their beauty, historical importance, recreational value or wildlife?
- How can the Plan improve accessibility to local facilities and larger centres through better public transport?
MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

SNC will be carrying out a number of consultations at key stages during the preparation of the Local Plan. For further information, please contact Andy D’Arcy, or a member of his team at SNC. You can also inform your local parish council of your views as it will be submitting its own response to the Local Plan to SNC. Send all comments in writing to:

Andy D’Arcy,
Lead Officer (Planning Policy),
South Northamptonshire Council,
Springfields, Towcester,
Northamptonshire NN12 6AE

Or by email to:
planning.policy@southnorthants.gov.uk

USEFUL INFORMATION

For further information about relevant national and local planning policy, go to:

The National Planning Policy Framework
www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/nppf

The West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy
www.westnorthamptonshirejpu.org/connect.ti/website/view?objectid=2737424

Brackley Masterplan
http://apps.southnorthants.gov.uk/website/brackleymasterplan.htm

Towcester Masterplan
http://apps.southnorthants.gov.uk/website/towcestermasterplan.htm

South Northants District Tourism
http://www.southnorthants.gov.uk/tourism.htm

South Northants Council Planning Policy
http://www.southnorthants.gov.uk/Servicepage495.htm

South Northants Council Conservation Policy
http://www.southnorthants.gov.uk/688.htm