

**West Northamptonshire Local Plan - 2041**

**(Regulation 18) Consultation Draft April 2024**

## **Chapter 12: Built and Natural Environment**

### **12.1 West Northamptonshire's Historic Environment**

- 12.1.1 The NPPF provides a comprehensive definition of the historic environment and heritage assets. In respect of the latter, these can be designated or non-designated. Examples of types of designated heritage assets found in West Northamptonshire are scheduled monuments, listed buildings, registered parks and gardens, registered battlefields and conservation areas. Non-designated heritage assets (NDHAs) can also be buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes. They have a degree of heritage significance, but not usually a sufficient level to be designated. Footnote 72 of the NPPF clarifies that non-designated heritage assets of archaeological interest which are demonstrably of equivalent significance to scheduled monuments, should be considered subject to the policies for designated heritage assets.
- 12.1.2 Proposals affecting heritage assets and their settings will be considered in accordance with the relevant statutory framework and the guidance set out in the NPPF. Not all assets have equal levels of significance and proposals have difference levels of impact. The NPPF provides a mechanism to apply appropriate weight in decision making according to their significance and level of harm, where harm arises.
- 12.1.3 West Northamptonshire's historic landscape is influenced by the unique combination of natural and man-made features found in the area, which includes the underlying geology, archaeology, biodiversity, agricultural landscapes, buildings, structures and transport connections. The individual and combined contribution of these elements are what make the area distinctive and give it a sense of place. There are multiple benefits to protecting and celebrating heritage: exploring culture, defining sense of place, enhancing local distinctiveness, mitigating climate change, boosting the economy and promoting health and wellbeing.
- 12.1.4 The Council takes a positive approach to the historic environment through its work to identify, understand and protect local heritage and incorporate it into development proposals. This includes a review of conservation areas, preparing guidance and advice notes and identifying non-designated heritage assets, which will enable us to provide enhanced guidance for applicants and decision makers. The Council maintains a West Northamptonshire Local Heritage List, which brings together work completed by the former Councils.

- 12.1.5 The Council encourages owners of heritage assets to engage in early dialogue with officers and relevant stakeholders to positively manage and sustain their significance. This is particularly important for assets on the national heritage at risk register. Seeking pre-application advice is welcomed for all proposals, including alterations to listed buildings, large and complex sites, multiple assets, major alterations or developments impacting on heritage assets and their settings. The sympathetic conservation of historic features and details will be supported where they contribute positively to the objectives of this Plan.
- 12.1.6 Proposals affecting the historic environment should be accompanied by an assessment proportionate to the significance of the asset and the nature and extent of the works proposed. This should set out the significance (heritage statement) and the impact of development on significance (heritage impact assessment). Reference should be made to the Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record (HER) as a minimum, and other relevant up-to-date evidence including but not limited to, the National Heritage List for England, the West Northamptonshire Local Heritage List, heritage at risk registers, heritage impact assessments, conservation area appraisals, conservation plans and any archaeological fieldwork reports. Conservation area appraisals and management plans have been prepared for many of the conservation areas and will in all cases, be a material consideration.
- 12.1.7 Where loss or change to historic buildings, features or archaeological remains is unavoidable and justified, provision should be made for on-site investigation, recording, interpretation and the production of a suitable archive and report in accordance with current national and local standards. The scope of the investigation should be proportionate to the asset's significance and the impact of development on the asset. The information and understanding gained should be made publicly available, as a minimum through the Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record.
- 12.1.8 The Council will support proposals that are heritage led, foster an awareness, appreciation and understanding of the heritage and history of West Northamptonshire and contribute to the local economy and wellbeing in a way that is accessible to all. In doing so, proposals will be expected to demonstrate how they meet the requirements of all relevant heritage policies.

## **Policy BN1 - West Northamptonshire's Historic Environment**

- A. The Council supports proposals that will sustain West Northamptonshire's distinctive historic urban and rural landscapes, buildings, sites, archaeology and features by protecting, conserving and, where appropriate, enhancing the significance of designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings.
- B. Proposals, including change of use, that affect designated and non-designated heritage assets and their setting will be required to submit evidence in line with best practice and relevant national guidance, examining the significance of the asset through a heritage statement, including any contribution made by its setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the asset's significance and sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on the asset's significance.
- C. Where proposals would lead to loss or change to designated and non-designated heritage assets that is unavoidable and justified, provision should be made for proportionate on-site investigation, recording, interpretation and production of a suitable archive and report.

**WNLP objectives:** 1, 4, 11, 13

### **Policy BN2 - Designated Heritage Assets**

- A. Proposals, including change of use, that affect a designated heritage asset or the setting of a designated heritage asset will be expected to:
  - i. Preserve, enhance or better reveal those elements which contribute to the significance of the asset or its setting; and
  - ii. Respect any features of architectural or historic interest, including where relevant, the historic curtilage or context, its group value or its setting; and
  - iii. Reinforce local significance in terms of siting, size, scale, height, alignment, proportions, design and form, colour palette, materials, methods of construction, detailing, boundary treatments and surfacing, in order to retain the special interest that justifies its designation; and
  - iv. Ensure significant views to, from, through and associated with the asset are preserved or enhanced; and
  - v. In the case of a conservation area, to have regard to elements identified in relevant evidence as contributing positively to spatial and architectural character, as well as design guidance and any opportunities for enhancement.
- B. Proposals that would lead to substantial harm or total loss of significance will be refused unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is outweighed by substantial public benefits and where it can be demonstrated that:
  - i. The nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and

- ii. No viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and
  - iii. Conservation by grant funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
  - iv. The harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.
- C. Proposals that would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that the public benefits will outweigh any harm identified.

**WNLP objectives:** 1, 4, 11, 13

## **12.2 Non-designated Heritage Assets**

- 12.2.1 Non-designated heritage assets are assets which have been identified as having sufficient heritage significance to warrant further consideration through the planning system to sustain that significance. The Council has developed a set of criteria to identify suitable assets and adds assets that meet the criteria to the West Northamptonshire Local Heritage List (referred to here as the Local List) in recognition of their importance.
- 12.2.2 Assets are generally identified through a formal process such as a conservation area character appraisal, however, assets will continue to be identified, for instance through the planning process, public nomination and neighbourhood plans. Any potential non-designated heritage assets should be assessed against the Council's criteria and where they meet the criteria, they will have the equivalent weight as those on the Local List and proposals affecting them will be considered against policy BN3. Assets that do not meet the criteria will not be afforded the same weight, although they will be a material consideration.
- 12.2.3 The impact of planning proposals on non-designated heritage assets should be taken into account proportionately to their heritage significance, or their contribution to the wider historic environment.
- 12.2.4 The Council is committed to supporting communities which engage in community-led planning. All plans which make reference to heritage (whether designated or non-designated) must ensure any strategy or guidance is clear, positive and evidence based. This leads to more robust plans and decision making. The Council will advise on appropriate evidence, including existing conservation area appraisals and management plans, the National Heritage List for England, the Northamptonshire HER and the Local



List. It will also advise on the criteria for identifying non-designated heritage assets.

### **Policy BN3 - Non-designated Heritage Assets**

- A. Proposals for development, including change of use, that affect a non-designated heritage asset or the setting of a non-designated heritage asset will be expected to:
  - i. Have regard to the significance of the asset and its setting; and
  - ii. Retain and re-use the asset in a way that is sympathetic to the local vernacular.
- B. Proposals that would lead to harm or loss of significance of a non-designated asset will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that:
  - i. Through appropriate evidence the asset is not capable of viable repair; or
  - ii. Despite appropriate marketing the asset has no viable use; or
  - iii. A balanced judgment has been made on the scale of the harm or loss and the significance of the asset.

**WNLP objectives:** 1, 4, 11, 13

## **12.3 Archaeology and the Archaeological Record**

- 12.3.1 The terms 'heritage' and 'heritage asset' also includes archaeology. Due to the often unknown extent of below ground remains, the Council encourages pre-application consultation with the Council's Planning Archaeologist for larger proposals and in known sensitive areas, such as next to a scheduled monument, which will inform the need for, nature, scale and timing of an evaluation.
- 12.3.2 The significance of the remains will inform whether preservation in situ or removal is the most appropriate or practical course of action. When an evaluation identifies significant below ground remains, it may be possible to design the proposal so that the remains are protected as part of the site's open space with minimal ground disturbance, or the area excluded.
- 12.3.3 A plan should be put in place to record any remains the investigation yields, and to make the results publicly available, as a minimum on the Northamptonshire HER. Where investigations yield no evidence of archaeological deposits, this should be still recorded in line with best practice and published as "negative evidence" in the HER. This can be beneficial to future investigations to help determine the likelihood of

archaeological deposits on or near to the site and inform the level of investigation that might be required.

- 12.3.4 A Council priority is to increase and enhance biodiversity and natural and semi-natural habitats, however, some activities aimed at improving biodiversity can be damaging to archaeology and need to be carefully assessed, for example, creating scrapes and ponds, tree planting, allowing scrub vegetation to grow on archaeological earthworks and building up ground levels.

#### **Policy BN4 - Interpretation of Archaeology**

- A. Developers of major proposals and those in areas that are known to be sensitive should engage in pre-application discussion with the Planning Archaeologist to consider the need for, nature and timing of an evaluation.
- B. Where archaeological remains are known or found to exist within a development site, information about the significance and current state of preservation of the archaeological material should be sought and the impact on their significance assessed. This will enable informed decision taking about the retention of remains within/below developments and possible mitigation options. Preservation in situ is preferred for significant remains that are of demonstrably equivalent significance to scheduled monuments, where it is appropriate and practical, and will be subject to an agreed preservation strategy.
- C. Where visible or buried archaeological remains are preserved within a development, provision, where appropriate, should be made for their on-going management to ensure their long-term conservation, public enjoyment and contribution to a sense of place through on-site interpretation. Activities that would have a damaging impact on both visible and buried archaeological remains, for example tree planting or creation of new paths, should be avoided.

**WNLP objectives:** 1, 4, 11, 13

#### **12.4 Heritage Led Regeneration**

- 12.4.1 Historic buildings and spaces are found across the district in our towns and rural areas, each with their own inherent character, which comes from an interplay between buildings, streets, public spaces, views and green and blue infrastructure that have developed over time. Some, but not all of these assets will be designated, however, in combination they contribute to

- B. Where a development will introduce sensitive receptors into an area of poor air quality, an air quality assessment will need to be undertaken to establish the impact on the sensitive receptors and how this impact can be mitigated through development design.
- C. For industrial processes and the use of biomass, an air quality assessment shall be undertaken that demonstrates that the development will be air quality neutral.
- D. Consideration shall be given to reducing construction/demolition dust, reducing transport and plant emissions both in the operational and development phase, low emission travel and using low emission heating and cooling systems.

**WNLP objectives: 1, 7**

### **Low carbon energy and renewable energy**

- 4.4.19 The NPPF is clear that the planning system should support a transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate. This can partly be achieved by encouraging the use of renewable energy either in large-scale developments such as solar and wind farms but also at the local level on individual housing and employment buildings.
- 4.4.20 Policy for renewable energy also needs to take into consideration local environmental issues such as landscape and visual impacts, as well as cumulative impacts of renewables including wind turbines. Landscapes will have different levels of sensitivities and consideration should be given to policy BN6 Landscapes and supporting evidence on landscape sensitivity.
- 4.4.21 The NPPF requires plans to identify opportunities for development to draw its energy from decentralised, renewable or low-carbon energy supply systems. Consequently, other renewable energy solutions that are appropriate include combined heat and power (CHP), heat source pumps, photovoltaics and other emerging technologies. These types of energy will be supported over the use of fossil fuels with the Council seeking to achieve exemplar developments.
- 4.4.22 Although biomass is a renewable energy source it can have a significant impact on local air quality and residential amenity. The use of biomass will only be supported where an air quality assessment has been undertaken that demonstrates that the development will be air quality neutral.
- 4.4.23 The Council already has some adopted supplementary planning documents (SPDs) and guidance on renewable energy including:



- Daventry Energy and Development SPD (2007)
- South Northamptonshire Energy and Development SPD (2007)
- South Northamptonshire Energy Efficiency SPD (2013)
- South Northamptonshire Low Carbon and Renewable Energy SPD (2013)

4.4.24 These policies reflect the Council's commitment to tackling climate change by reducing energy consumption and thus carbon emissions through the application of sustainable development principles in design and the encouragement of the use of low carbon energies such as CHP on major development proposals and use of active solar technology on any development.

4.4.25 Policy PL3 sets out the criteria to appropriately assess the likely impact of proposals for renewable energy to help ensure that the right technology is accommodated in the right location with minimal impact on the natural and built and environment and heritage assets.

### **Policy PL3 – Low Carbon and Renewable Energy Schemes**

Proposals for large-scale renewable energy development will be supported where, with appropriate mitigation, they do not have an adverse impact on any of the following:

- i. Form, character and setting of an existing settlement;
- ii. Heritage assets including their setting;
- iii. Biodiversity and ecology;
- iv. The landscape including the cumulative impact with existing or approved renewable energy development;
- v. Residential amenity including noise, air quality and shadow flicker; or
- vi. The enjoyment of the open countryside including public rights of way.

### **WNLP objectives: 1**

### **Policy PL4 - Low Carbon and Renewable Energy for New Development**

- A. Where appropriate and viable, new development should utilise the availability of any local energy network, such as combined heat and power (CHP) system or generate their own energy from low carbon technology. Where district heating schemes are proposed, and it is reasonably practical, all properties will be expected to be connected to them.
- B. Commercial developments should, where practical, incorporate renewable energy into their proposal including the provision of on-site renewable energy, and low carbon technologies such as solar panels or ground source heat pumps.

- 13.2.3 The policies within this Plan have been prepared in liaison with the Council's transport service and other partners such as National Highways and England's Economic Heartland as required by the NPPF. Where appropriate, these policies include recognition of schemes/routes that may come forward in the future which could unlock further growth.
- 13.2.4 When considering transport, the NPPF also requires policies to provide for large scale transport facilities (such as interchanges for rail freight and roadside services). Plans should also recognise the importance of providing adequate overnight lorry parking facilities and lorry parking.

### **Planning Practice Guidance**

- 13.2.5 Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) contains further detail on the consideration transport should be given in the plan making process. It discusses the evidence base needed to support local plans and what assessments should establish.
- 13.2.6 A key piece of evidence required for local plans is an assessment of the impact of growth on the road network and on other transport modes. This is being undertaken for this Plan and full conclusions have not yet been made. However, detailed assessment of the growth within the WNJCS and the Part 2 Local Plans has been undertaken and the related schemes are contained within the Phase 1 IDP.

### **West Northamptonshire Council Corporate Plan**

- 13.2.7 The Corporate Plan for West Northamptonshire identifies six priority areas:
- a. Green and clean
  - b. Improved life chances
  - c. Connected communities
  - d. Thriving villages and towns
  - e. Economic development
  - f. Robust resource management
- 13.2.8 Of these, 'Connected communities' deals specifically with transport and connectivity. Objectives include:

Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs). The LTP will consider all transport modes across West Northamptonshire and identify schemes that can be delivered alongside development. The LCWIPs will assess existing walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure to identify where upgrades are needed or need to be put in place. Together, the WNLP, the LTP and the LWCIPs will seek to achieve these changes in modal shift.

- 13.4.3 The Regulation 19 version of this Plan will contain specific modal shift targets and provide a framework for.
- 13.4.4 England's Economic Heartland's 'Active Travel Strategy – The Opportunity' (July 2023) uses the Propensity to Cycle tool which looks at people's propensity to cycle to that seen in the Netherlands. Northampton (along with Peterborough and Luton) shows the largest potential increase in demand for cycling using this tool.
- 13.4.5 As such, all travel interventions should be designed to achieve the highest modal shift possible, with some new developments (SUEs) aspiring to achieve a modal split of no more than 40% of trips being made by car.
- 13.4.6 In addition to improvements to sustainable transport infrastructure, provision of measures such as through ticketing, real time information and promotion of public transport will play an essential part of the strategy. The Council will work with partners to help achieve these step changes.
- 13.4.7 Policies within this section should be read in conjunction within the entire plan and especially alongside policies within the Placemaking chapter. The Placemaking chapter sets out how applicants should approach the design of their developments in the round; including consideration of the transport hierarchy and how movement within and around the development can help achieve other objectives such as better health and design.

## **TR1 – Sustainable transport**

- A. Development proposals should demonstrate and achieve the following sustainable travel principles:

- i. Prioritise pedestrian, wheeler, cyclist and public transport users ahead of car users;
  - ii. Ensure new development is located close to or along existing strategic transport public transport corridors that can be promoted a strengthened;
  - iii. Ensure new development is designed to encourage walking, wheeling and cycling to everyday services and facilities such as schools, community facilities, open spaces and shops; and
  - iv. Promote and support improvements to the transport network which increases safety, improves air quality and encourages sustainable modes of transport.
- B. Applications for developments will need to be accompanied by either a Transport Assessment or Transport Statement which assesses the impact of development on the transport network.
- C. Applications for major development will need to be accompanied by a Travel Plan that sets out how the proposal meets sustainable travel principles both on-site and how it links to external sustainable travel routes such as cycleways, Public Rights of Ways and bridleways.

**WNLP objectives:** 1,7,8,9,10

## **13.5 Strategic connections**

- 13.5.1 West Northamptonshire's strategic rail and road connections make the area economically attractive for distribution, logistics and other industries which rely on national and international connections. However, these connections (M1, A45 and A43) are also attractive for local trips which increases congestion around junctions and on the strategic road network, with freight and passengers causing congestion on the rail network (West Coast Main Line). England Economic Heartland's 'Rail Strategic Objectives' (October 2023) sets out the priorities for railway transport for West Northamptonshire.
- 13.5.2 To ensure that the road network remains efficient and can serve the strategic demand, it will be important to make improvements to carefully manage more local movements to enhance capacity. At the strategic level 'Smart Motorways' which include use of former hard shoulders have been introduced on some sections of the national motorway network. Locally, this includes the M1 between J13 and J19. England Economic Heartland's Peterborough – Northampton – Oxford Connectivity Study (December 2022) and the Oxford – Milton Keynes Connectivity Study (December 2022) set out the priorities for road transport for West Northamptonshire.