

## MONTHLY NEWS REPORT SEPTEMBER 2021 E Newsletter Issue 4/2021



**Grange Park Summer Fest 4 September 2021**

Contents

<b>NEWS REPORT SEPTEMBER 2021</b> .....	4
<b>PARISH MEETINGS, VISITS AND CASEWORK</b> .....	4
Northamptonshire Historic Churches Trust (NHCT) .....	4
Little Houghton.....	4
Cogenhoe.....	5
Whiston .....	5
Castle Ashby.....	6
Yardley Hastings .....	6
Preston Deanery.....	7
Hartwell.....	7
Judeth Willoughby Charity Fundraiser, Hackleton .....	8
Planning Enforcement, Hackleton .....	8
Grange Park Parish Council and SEGRO .....	9
Surface Dressing, Main Road, Hackleton.....	10
Mud Kitchen Café, Cogenhoe & Whiston Village Hall .....	10
Grange Park Summer Fest .....	10
Horton to Brafield Pothole.....	11
Significant Flow of Water, Brafield-on-the-Green .....	11
Quinton Surface Water Flooding, Further Update.....	11
Yardley Hastings Chase Park Storm Drain .....	12
Yardley Hastings Deformed Pavement, 14 Northampton Road.....	12
Fix My Street Preston Deanery Road .....	12
<b>FINANCE AND TRANSFORMATION</b> .....	13
West Northamptonshire Council Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2022 to 2023 .....	13
Integrating Services .....	13
Stabilisation .....	14
Improvement Opportunities.....	14
Disaggregation / Aggregation.....	14
The Council’s Future Way of Working.....	15
<b>REGULATORY SERVICES</b> .....	15
The Food Safety Service Plan.....	15
<b>PLANNING MATTERS</b> .....	15
Planning Appeals .....	15
Land East of Lower Lane, Milton Malsor Appeal.....	16
West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan, Spatial Options Consultation .....	17
Spatial Option 1e Northampton South-East Residential .....	18
Spatial Option 1f-South of M1 Junction 15-Employment.....	19
My letter to Jonathan Nunn, WNC Leader re Spatial Strategies .....	20
Flood Risk .....	20
Appeal dismissal .....	21
<b>ENVIRONMENT</b> .....	22
Fly-Tipping on Private Land.....	22
Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme .....	22
Recycle Week .....	23
International Tree Foundation (ITF) .....	23
<b>RURAL SERVICES NETWORK (RSN)</b> .....	24

RSN Annual Conference .....	24
<b>HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE</b> .....	<b>25</b>
The State of Care in County and Rural Areas.....	25
COVID-19 update.....	26
<b>EDUCATION</b> .....	<b>26</b>
The Turing Scheme .....	26
Children travelling to and from school from September .....	26
Application for School Places.....	27
Free school meals.....	27
<b>CONSULTATION</b> .....	<b>27</b>
Oxford-Cambridge Arc-Spatial Framework.....	27
Complete your Annual Canvass Form .....	27
Autumn Budget 27 October 2021 .....	28
<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT &amp; GRANT FUNDING</b> .....	<b>28</b>
Northampton Community Foundation .....	28
Social Enterprise Fund .....	29
<b>HOUSING</b> .....	<b>29</b>
Afghan Refugees.....	29
<b>TRANSPORT &amp; HIGHWAYS</b> .....	<b>29</b>
Review of Bus Lane Enforcement Scheme.....	29
Local Cycling and Infrastructure Plans .....	30
Bus Services Consultation .....	31
Councillor Engagement Session, Brixworth.....	32
<b>POLICE FIRE &amp; CRIME COMMISSIONER</b> .....	<b>32</b>
Theft of Power Tools .....	32
<b>CULTURE HERITAGE AND SPORT</b> .....	<b>32</b>
Heritage Open Days .....	32
<b>PLANNING CHANGES</b> .....	<b>33</b>
LGA response to the Planning White Paper proposals .....	33
1. Growth/Renewal/Protect Areas.....	33
2. Streamlining Local Plan development .....	34
3. New Sustainable Development Test.....	35
4. Local Democratic Oversight with shortened Local Plan processes.....	35
5. Incentivising build out of homes.....	36
6. Planning for beautiful and sustainable places.....	36
7. Infrastructure .....	37
8. Resourcing and Skills Strategy .....	37
9. Transitional Arrangements.....	38
10. Permitted Development Rights.....	39

## NEWS REPORT SEPTEMBER 2021

I have great pleasure in presenting my fourth Monthly News Report for the Parish Councils and residents of Hackleton and Grange Park. Each month, more and more of you are using my Facebook: Stephen.Clarke.31924 and responding to my postings on the Community Group pages. Hackleton and Grange Park is a very large area, but by following my daily postings, you will see just how busy I am on your behalf. In my Monthly News Report, I try to cover matters that I have been directly involved in at your behest. That way there should be little overlap with other reports you might receive. All three of your Councillors are working in the best interests of the community and you will deal with us all on different issues from time to time.

There are some great summer traditions across South Northamptonshire, and I have enjoyed getting around Hackleton and Grange Park sampling the various summer events and meeting you all. I received a very warm welcome throughout and I was impressed at the untapped power of enthusiasm emerging after previous events had been postponed due to the pandemic.

For those of you that might wish to better understand the Government's proposed changes to the Planning System then this month's News Report contains a rather lengthy overview of the Local Government Association's views about the potential changes. This is entitled Planning Changes and it is at the end of the report so that you can read when you have more time.

I have also provided an update on West Northamptonshire Council's Spatial Options Consultation as it applies to our area.

## PARISH MEETINGS, VISITS AND CASEWORK

### Northamptonshire Historic Churches Trust (NHCT)

#### Little Houghton



Saturday 11 September was the day that all of Northamptonshire's Historic Churches (NHC) were open for the annual sponsored Ride and Stride. It is a sponsored event for cyclists, joggers, walkers and horse riders. Indeed, any mode of transport can be used if your sponsors are happy. I got around by a combination of car and walking. Half the money raised comes directly to my chosen church and the other half to the NHC Trust to give grants towards the restoration of churches in the County. The event ran from 10am to 6pm. My first stop was at The Church of St Mary the Virgin, Bedford Road, Little Houghton. They were holding a coffee morning and we were able to get our sponsor

forms signed. Ralph signed us in, and we had an enjoyable cup of coffee and chat with several others including Jenny and Vicky.



### Cogenhoe



Our second stop on the NHCT Ride & Stride was at the Church of St Peter, Cogenhoe. They were providing refreshments and the opportunity to get our sponsor



forms signed. We saw the monument to the cross-legged knight believed to be Nicholas de Cogenhoe d.1281.

### Whiston



Our third stop on the NHCT Ride & Stride was at the Church of St Mary the Virgin, Whiston. This church was unmanned, but it did have a register for us to sign as proof of attendance. Access to the church is difficult as there is no road access. You must walk up a steep footpath. Just as we opened the gate to walk up, we bumped into a cyclist who was just about to grab his bike, which was left at the entrance. He asked if we knew that it was a steep path and that he had left his bike at the bottom because he had not wanted to push it up the steep path.



Mind you, he had already been to 7 churches and this was just our third. We were obviously finding too many

opportunities to admire these beautiful churches and to chat at each location.



### Castle Ashby

Our fourth stop on the NHCT Ride & Stride was at the Church of St Mary Magdalen, Castle Ashby. As we arrived, we thought perhaps we were not going to get our sponsorship forms signed. Two men in morning suits were guiding folks to their car parking spots for a wedding that was just about to start. We explained that we were here for the NHCT Ride and Stride and then once through the entrance to the churchyard we discovered there was a lady waiting to register us and to



sign our forms as proof of attendance. Nearby I found Rev. Mona Simpson, standing outside the church waiting for the bride to arrive. Once

inside I had a quick chat with Gerald, Deputy Church Warden. Lots of people were arriving for the wedding and the bells were ringing. We were told that they ring briefly up to the start of the wedding, stopping when the bride reaches the door of the church. As she was fashionably late, we were entertained by the sound of wedding bells as we stood in the sunshine waiting for the bride to arrive.



### Yardley Hastings

Our fifth stop on the NHCT Ride & Stride was at the Church of St Andrew, High Street, Yardley our sponsorship forms signed and we were There were no other visitors there at the time. The organist accompanied us with some fine music as we sat quietly in the beautiful church, which was full of some wonderful flowers.

Hastings. We got offered a drink.



### Preston Deanery

Our sixth stop on the NHCT Ride & Stride was at the Church of St Peter and St Paul, Preston Deanery. We were not able to get our sponsorship forms signed to register our attendance, as the Church was unmanned but open.

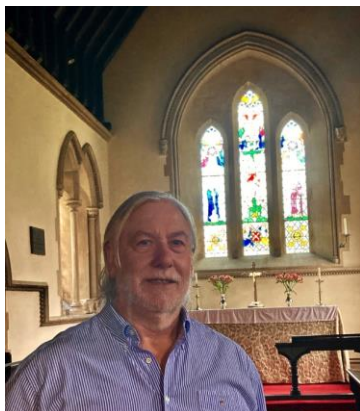


There were no other visitors there at the time. Nothing is known about this church before C12, when it was given to St Andrew's Priory, Northampton, by Gilbert de Preston. I have often passed this church but never been inside. I understand that whilst the Upper Nene Archaeological Society was recording work, they uncovered a decorated horizontal string course of limestone, running from the side walls round the inside of the chancel arch dating from C10 or early C11. Under the paint, when cleaned, the south side revealed the carving of a snake, in a figure of eight, with dots along its body and a protruding tongue. On the north side are two birds with outspread wings and fanned tails, and an indeterminate animal. Each piece also has three criss cross motifs and both have an original chamfered bottom edge and a roughly cut top edge. The motifs are purely Viking in character, of the Mannan style. These pieces of stone may represent fragments of a churchyard cross. In reusing the stone, the Norman builders completed the frieze with further lengths of limestone, shaped to match, and added to the decoration with rows of simple chevrons.

In the reigns of Elizabeth 1 and James 1 the church became very ruinous. The Hartwells (Lords of the Manor) had demolished part of the church as well as the vicarage, sold the lead and bells and turned the chancel into a kennel for greyhounds and the tower into a pigeon house. This explains the reference to greyhounds I saw inside the church. It seems that with the sale of the estate to Sir Clement Edmonds in the early C17 the church was restored. A major restoration took place in 1901 and again after the church was taken into the care of the Churches Conservation Trust in April 1976.



### Hartwell



Our seventh stop on the NHCT Ride & Stride was at the Church of St John the Baptist, Ashton Road, Hartwell. We not only got our sponsorship forms signed to register our attendance, but we also got a well-earned rest and a cup of coffee as we met with a few parishioners sitting outside in the sunshine. It's been a



great day visiting seven of Northamptonshire's Historic Churches. The Northamptonshire Historic Churches Trust (NHCT) was founded in 1955 with the object of raising funds to make grants to churches in Northamptonshire of all denominations for their "preservation, repair and maintenance, improvement, upkeep, beautification and reconstruction".

The Trust's funds are raised by donations, subscriptions from friends, and the proceeds of the annual sponsored Ride & Stride, which takes place on the second Saturday in September each year. I have written a comprehensive report on the history of each of the seven churches visited and it is on Facebook.

What would Northamptonshire be without its historic churches?

### **Judeth Willoughby Charity Fundraiser, Hackleton**

On 4 September after the Grange Park Summer Fest, I went along to support the 'Judeth Willoughby Charity' Fundraiser at the Hackleton Village Hall. The aims of the charity are to assist persons living in Hackleton, Horton, Piddington, Preston Deanery and part of Wootton Fields who are under 25 years and need to



purchase books or tools to further their education.

There were some demonstrations by the Northants Guild of Spinners, Dyers and Weavers as well as some stalls and afternoon tea provided by the WI. It was great to meet so many of you from Hackleton, Horton and Piddington. Surprisingly, I won something in the raffle. As a result, I left with a lot of vigour, determination and motivation, which of course was because I was reminded of the advertising slogan by the oil company Esso: "Put a tiger in your tank."

### **Planning Enforcement, Hackleton**

On 19 August, I provided an update about the additional enquiries raised in relation to Land at Lyne Walk, Hackleton. The Development Monitoring Officer visited the site on 23 August, and he reviewed the information obtained. I received a copy of his report, which confirms that no breach of planning control has occurred. During his site visit he made various measurements of the foundations and slabs already constructed including: Plot 18 nearest external walls to boundary fence at the rear of 3 Elm Way measured 10.5m, which is in accordance with the approved plans. Plot 21 to site boundary-measured 8.5m. Plot 1 to site boundary adjacent to 27 Lyne Walk-measured 8.5m. All these distances are in accordance as shown in approved plans. He has therefore concluded that the foundations already constructed are correctly located and are being constructed in accordance with the approved layout plan (SK-03 rev A).



He also considered any potential encroachment onto the Bridleway. As shown in the approved layout plan



and approved boundary enclosures plan (see S/2020/1700/COND) there are to be surfaced car parking spaces and garden fences/walls for each pot; some of these will be on the boundary of the land that the Bridleway runs through. The rear garden fences for plot 18 will be approximately 6m from the site boundary. The developer's security/tree protection fencing that is currently erected at the site lies within this area. The Bridleway is proposed to be finished with rolled stones to a width of 2 m. It is my understanding that a Bridleway is to be clear of obstructions for a width of 3m. The plans show that the narrowest point for the Bridleway is by the fencing relating to Plot 21, which is 4m from the site boundary. Therefore, he further concluded that there had been no breach of planning control. Thank you for bringing these matters to my attention.

In the future, if residents wish to register their concerns then they should complete the on-line planning enforcement complaint form via the WNC website, as follows:

Home > Planning and building control > Planning enforcement > South Northamptonshire > Report a breach of planning control > Begin this form...

If we are to take subsequent action, then it is important that, residents fill in these forms. I will of course continue to work on these issues on your behalf. If any resident has issues with this development, then it is helpful if you attach a photograph or a copy of any logs that you have taken to your planning enforcement complaint form.

### **Grange Park Parish Council and SEGRO**

I met with Kate Bedson and Neil Impiazzi at the SEGRO site on 18 August 2021. As I had not heard back from Kate as promised, I wrote again on 8 September 2021. I reminded her that when we last met, she committed to review the existing S106 Agreements and respond to me regarding item 4 and 5 on



my agenda. During the meeting she agreed to item 5 and promised to let me have a form of words that would set out how Grange Park can bid for future funds on the same terms as the other Parish Councils. The details of items 4 and 5 were as follows:

4. **Next steps for £75k Grant Funded Project for Grange Park.**
  - a. Let's work out what needs to be done to create and agree a project and action plan that results in SEGRO investing in Grange Park. Let's agree a form of words that SEGRO can send to Grange Park Parish Council, which makes this commitment.
5. **Opportunity to bid for future funds on the same terms as other Parish Councils**
  - a. Let's agree a form of words that sets out how Grange Park can bid for future funds on the same terms as the other Parish Councils.

I have still not yet received a response and I intend to contact her again. I will keep you informed as to further developments next month.

### Surface Dressing, Main Road, Hackleton

I received several complaints about the quality of the recent Surface Dressing on Main Road, Hackleton that took place on 13 August 2021. Indeed, I was told by several of you that there were many lumps and bumps in the road making it a very uneven road surface, which was much worse than beforehand. I escalated this to Highways. Subsequently, I attended the Councillor Engagement Session at Northamptonshire Highways, Brixworth Depot, Harborough Road, Northamptonshire, NN6 9BX (See later in the report). I met with John Coomes, KierWSP Contract Manager, who informed me that he had checked the state of the road in Hackleton, and he confirmed that there is a problem and that they intend to sort it out. Thank you for alerting me to the problems.

### Mud Kitchen Café, Cogenhoe & Whiston Village Hall

I was in Cogenhoe on 4 September, and I took



the opportunity to pay another visit to the Mud Kitchen Cafe at the Cogenhoe and Whiston Village Hall, York Avenue, Cogenhoe, NN7 1NB again. It

was good to see Paula and Sean Foster again as they served breakfast, coffee and cake to a steady stream of customers. They were very busy when I arrived serving customers inside and out. It was great to see that things are going well, and I enjoyed my bacon roll and coffee.

### Grange Park Summer Fest



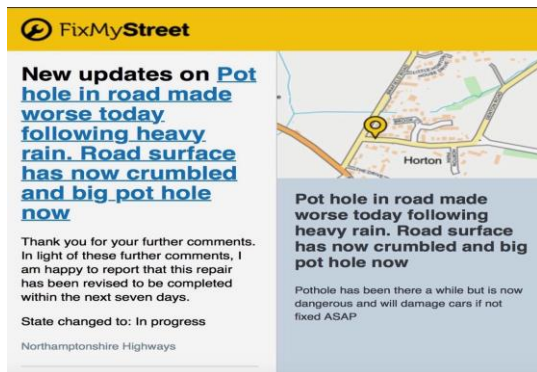
Grange Park held its Summer Fest on 4 September from 13.00-20.00. I promised I would support them, so I



went along early afternoon. I arrived just as others were carrying their picnic chairs, baskets, hampers, totes, coolers, and/or backpacks into Foxfield Country Park. There was a steady stream of folks until about 3 o'clock. The band, Pure Genius, started just after 2 o'clock and promised to play a selection of music from the 70's, 80's and 90's. I managed to get a drink and then proceeded to walk around chatting to some members of the Parish Council and the WNC Waste Partnership. I watched the South Northants Responders demonstrate their life saving skills. Mike Aluko was Master of Ceremonies and I caught up with him and the Chairman Martin Smith, whilst the band was playing.

There were lots of different things to eat and drink, a raffle, things for the kids to do and of course the Fun Run. This event was postponed from last year because of the pandemic and so you could sense the untapped power of enthusiasm.

### Horton to Brafield Pothole



I have escalated this problem on Fix My Street yet again on 15 September. I was advised by a resident that when travelling out of Horton on the road heading to Brafield she was caught by a very nasty pothole/disintegration on the road. She couldn't avoid it due to traffic coming the other way. She was concerned about doing some damage to her car. She asked me to find out what can be done. It seems to me that keeping this pothole on a six-month order was inappropriate. It is clearly a road hazard and needs dealt with now. I asked Highways to email me as soon as possible to let me know their intention. The same day, I received more details of incidents

of car tyre blow outs and so I escalated it again. On 20 September, I heard that following my intervention they fixed the pothole that day. Despite a six-month forecast the job was done in less than 2 weeks with my persistence and intervention. Is this a record?

### Significant Flow of Water, Brafield-on-the-Green

Finally, after this surface water problem had been passed between Northamptonshire Highways and Anglia Water for years, I have now had an acknowledgement that the report has been assessed by Highways and that a repair order has been raised. This was after the thorough investigation carried out by Anglian Water proving that it was a Highways problem. Highways now say that they will carry out a full drainage investigation within the next 6 months. I will remain on the case until it is carried out and let you know what happens next. In the meantime, I have been advised by a resident that the Highways work has been completed and that they have done a good job.

### Quinton Surface Water Flooding, Further Update

On 21 July, Quinton Parish Council made me aware of a 'surface flooding' problem. There are repeated surface water drainage issues with heavy rain. I escalated this problem to WNC, provided details of where the main flooding occurs, which is up School Lane and along Preston Deanery Road. The Parish Council was trying to find out who had responsibility for the drains. Highways and Anglia Water say that it is not their responsibility. Clearly this matter needed to be resolved and I sought assistance with Highways regarding the land ownership. I asked them to investigate and respond to me as quickly as possible as this matter now needed to be addressed urgently. On 29 July I wrote again to my contact at Highways regarding Fix My Street report 2899716. On 13 August I chased them yet again. I have impressed upon them that they need to deal with my request promptly and I promised to update you this month. Finally, on the 18<sup>th</sup> August, I was advised that the land in question was in the ownership of the Grand Union Housing Group. I managed

to get the relevant Land Registry documents along with an extent of highway plan, which I sent to Quinton Parish Council.



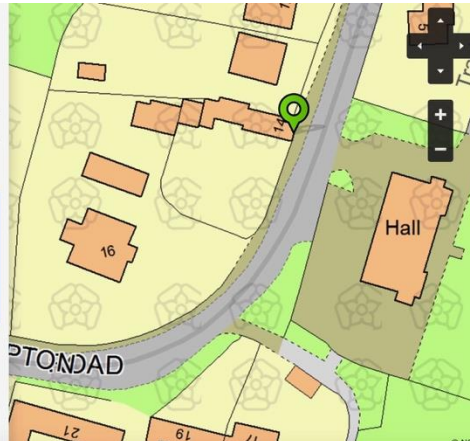
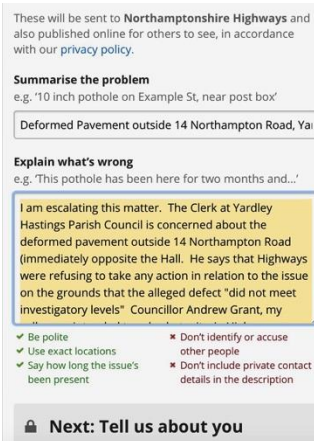
### Yardley Hastings Chase Park Storm Drain

I escalated the Chase Park Storm Drain matter to Fix My Street as I understand that Yardley Hastings Parish Council were very concerned at the lack of attention given to it, despite a categorisation of "Emergency Crew to attend." There is a broken storm drain in Chase Park Road Ref 2520777 and repeated flooding of the carriageway of the main A428 Ref 2801763 and Ref 2392685. I am being told that Highways have refused to engage in any meaningful conversation. I have asked

them to email me with an explanation and an update. I will keep you informed.

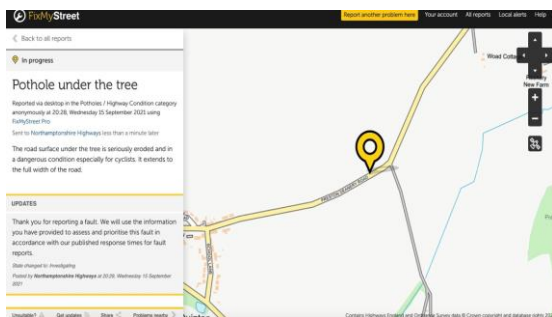
### Yardley Hastings Deformed Pavement, 14 Northampton Road

I escalated the deformed pavement outside 14 Northampton Road to Highways. The Parish Council was



concerned about the deformed pavement immediately opposite the Hall. They said that Highways were refusing to take any action in relation to the issue on the grounds that the alleged defect "did not meet investigatory levels." I asked them for an explanation as to why this repair was not being carried out when clearly there was an outstanding need. On 21 September, I was advised that the repair was now scheduled. On 22 September I received an email from Yardley Hastings

Parish Council and the resident thanking me for my efforts. The resident said "Just to let you know that the Paving Contractors arrived this morning outside my house. An hour and a half later they have laid a new surface to the path!! Quick and effective although it's taken a time to get here."



### Fix My Street Preston Deanery Road

The Preston Deanery Road surface is seriously eroded and in a dangerous condition especially for cyclists. This matter has been escalated to me as it is clearly a health and safety issue. I have contacted Highways asking them to email me with their intentions as soon as possible. I will keep you updated



## FINANCE AND TRANSFORMATION

### West Northamptonshire Council Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2022 to 2023

The Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (sometimes known as Council Tax support) helps people and households on low income pay their Council Tax bill.



COUNCIL TAX

West Northamptonshire Council has recently reviewed the scheme and is proposing two changes for the 2022 to 2023 financial year.

The first proposal would change the rules for working-age people who receive a war widows or war disablement pension. They are currently eligible for a Council Tax discount of up to 80%, but this would be increased to 100% under the new proposal. The second proposal would make it easier for young people who are leaving care to seek financial support. Currently, West Northamptonshire residents aged 18 to 25 who were formerly children in the care of the Council can apply for several different awards and discounts to reduce their Council Tax bill. It is now proposed to include this support as part of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme, meaning they would be eligible for a discount of up to 100% on

their Council Tax bill while only having to complete a single application process. The proposed changes will impact those of working age. Those of pensioner age are protected by the prescribed regulations set out by central government. We are seeking views on our proposals for the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2022 to 2023. West Northamptonshire Council's Cabinet when making their final decision on the proposals on 9 November will consider feedback from the consultation. This consultation closes at midnight on Sunday 17 October 2021.

### Integrating Services



On 14 September 2021, Cabinet approved plans to continue with the work to bring together all services and staff from the previous four councils since the new council replaced them on 1 April this year. Future transformation plans are now taking shape, with current projects including progressing plans for a new integrated care system for health and social care, streamlining the process for home to school transport and restructuring and improving the revenues and benefits service across West Northamptonshire. With WNC currently sharing several services with North

Northamptonshire Council, an initial focus for the transformation work will be around making sure both councils are well placed to deliver for their communities. Bringing together four councils, during a global pandemic, to form our new council safely and legally on 1 April was a big achievement, but we always knew that there would be much more work to be done during the next phase. From the outset, we've continued to work behind the scenes to integrate, align and stabilise the services we've taken over from the previous councils and, less than six months into our new council, we've made steady progress.

At the same Cabinet meeting, Members were updated on the Council's finances, including how it is performing against the budget set for its first year plus details on the financial position it inherited from the four previous authorities.

At the Council meeting on 23 September, the Leader will set out the WNC Transformation plan to deliver better and more cost-effective services. With the team in place, including the Head of Transformation

Delivery, and Design Team Manager, a central projects register has been created using a digital platform, Monday.com, and this has resulted in increased consistency in approach and better structured management information to support and monitor the delivery of such a varied and complex portfolio of change and productivity initiatives.

A Transformation Board has been established which met for the first time in June and continues to meet on a monthly basis, chaired by the Chief Executive, with responsibility for monitoring the delivery of transformation projects.

There are four main areas of transformation:

### **Stabilisation**

The team continues to work to complete projects that began ahead of the council coming into being on 1st April, to ensure the stability of service delivery, examples being:

- Inter Authority Agreements (IAA) finalisation continues at pace as WNC works with colleagues in the North to define suitable metrics.
- Projects across the directorates continue to be driven forward, and many are nearing completion against expected deadlines.

### **Improvement Opportunities**

Opportunities and potential threats to service delivery have been examined and refined and the Transformation service has been supporting these to progress them. Examples of things that are currently happening include:

- Each Assistant Director has been engaged in order to develop opportunities, which could have a financial benefit. A number of those now have resources allocated to them to develop business cases.
- Exploratory work coordinated with Procurement colleagues has begun in the directorates in order to get the best out of re-commissioning opportunities, whilst seeking positive improvement.
- The Transformation team is supporting all the directorates to engage fully with the forthcoming Star Chamber process, which will involve careful examination of all budget lines to both ensure that improvements are found, but that essential services are adequately funded.

### **Disaggregation / Aggregation**

Work to disaggregate the services between WNC and NNC is ongoing, along with work on the pipeline of service aggregation, bringing together and harmonising services from across the legacy councils. A change request process has been agreed, which is required to give approval to any changes sought to services or timescales compared to the original task and finish group timeline and blueprint. Examples of things currently happening include:

- Planning those services which are disaggregating this year, including impact assessments
- Lead services (where NNC or WNC currently take the lead) are being reviewed for detailed separation requirements
- Plans are being created to ensure all crucial service and service user data will be available for the receiver council upon disaggregation

Recently completed work in this area includes:

- Joint Officer Board and Joint Member Committees are in place for formal assessment and approval of change requests.
- Regular enabler sessions are progressing to assess and monitor disaggregation proposals and methods.



## The Council's Future Way of Working

The Transformation team is supporting the development of a plan for how council staff will work, post-covid, which we refer to as our target operating model. This work currently includes:

- The Future Ways of Working group is currently working on floor plans for the four main sites showing the teams zones to consider future requirements as more staff consider returning to buildings.
- Managers have selected work styles for all job types and this evidence is now being considered and consolidated before a full consultation is launched with staff.
- A full guidance document on returning to the buildings is in progress and will be published by the end of September, supported by sessions at all our four main sites conducted by the Corporate Services Director.

## REGULATORY SERVICES

### The Food Safety Service Plan

Cabinet approved the Food Safety Service plan on 14 September 2021. It outlines how West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) Regulatory Services intend to deliver and improve their food safety services from 1 April 2021 through to 31 March 2022. It is the inaugural Food Safety Service Plan for the council and has been designed in order to enable effective performance monitoring of the service and to facilitate continuous improvement. An inevitable delay in the planning process has arisen from the necessary COVID-19 response. Regulatory Services sit within the Place, Economy and Environment Directorate and deliver services in the following areas: Trading Standards, Building Control, Occupational Health and Safety, Licensing, Primary Authority and Business Support, Environmental Protection and Environmental Crime. It also provides oversight of the Emergency Planning and Traveller Unit services hosted by North Northamptonshire Council. The plan covers Food Safety as required by the Food Standards Agency.

The food safety service is actively involved in harmonization throughout the council transition process. Although adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, the service is progressing well with COVID recovery to fully restore its services and adapting to new ways of working.

There are 23 EC approved premises that can export food beyond the EC as shown in the table above.

Regulatory Services Statutory Regulatory Services Statutory Plans 2021-22 – Appendix A  
 Page 002 of 22

List of approved food premises and type of establishments approved by West Northamptonshire Council

Reference	Trading Name	Postcode	Scale	Risk
SK 002	Blisworth Foods	NN2 3PD	Processing Plant (Meat)	Essential
SK 003	OTIS Foods Ltd	NN2 3NS	Cold Store Meat Preparation	Essential
SK 004	The Clifton Egg Company	LE10BT	Packing Centre (Eggs)	Essential
SK 006	314 Cargo Logistics Ltd	NN2 3SE	Cold Store	Essential
NM 002	Classic Lardie	NN2 6BT	Meat Preparation Establishment	Northampton
NM 003	Irington Farms	NN2 3JX	Processing Plant (Meat)	Northampton
NM 007	NM Foods Ltd	NN2 3JG	Meat Preparation Establishment	Northampton
NM 014	Unleash Meat Company Ltd	NN2 3BU	Processing Plant (Meat)	Northampton
NM 015	Unleash Foods Ltd			
NM 016	CC Foods Limited			
NM 018	316 Foodstuffs (1)			
NM 020	Greenacre Nurseries			
NM 021	Collins Fresh Foods			
NM 022	Alicia Catering Ltd			
NM 023	Pudge Foods Ltd			
TW 001	Alston Confectionery			
TW 007	Ethics Foods Ltd			
TW 009	Fulwell Foods Ltd			
TW 010	Appleton Products			
TW 013	College Farm (Mk 1)			
TW 014	Claydon Farm Ltd			
TW 015	Line Tree Farming			
TW 016	Smiths & Day Ltd			

Regulatory Services Statutory Regulatory Services Statutory Plans 2021-22 – Appendix A



### Food Safety Service Plan 2021-22



West Northamptonshire Council

## PLANNING MATTERS

### Planning Appeals

Since my appointment, I have kept you informed as to the progress of the inquiries/hearings in South Northamptonshire. The update for this month is as follows:

- Hartwell, land North of Ashton Road-Dismissed
- Blisworth, land South of Station Road-Dismissed
- Bakesley Hill, Greens Norton- Awaiting decision
- Greens Norton, Land off Mill Lane-Withdrawn
- Milton Malsor, land East of Lower Lane-Dismissed
- Blisworth, land off Northampton Road -Hearing scheduled for 21 September 2021.

### Land East of Lower Lane, Milton Malsor Appeal

I received confirmation on 21 September 2021 that the Appeal concerning the development at Land East of Lower Road, Milton Malsor has been dismissed. The Inspector said that there were three main issues:

1. Whether the scale and location of development would be acceptable for housing development, having regard to the spatial strategy in the development plan.
2. The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.
3. Whether the Council can demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply.

In relation to the three main Issues the Inspector stated:

1. That there was agreement between the parties that the location of the site outside of the settlement confines and the absence of compliance with any of the identified exceptions means that there is conflict with the development plan strategy and the strategy that underpins it. The proposal would conflict with Policies R1 and S1 of the JCS and Policies SS1 and LH1 of LPP2.
2. Irrespective of the differing opinions and dispute between the parties regarding what was said in cross examination, based on the evidence before the Inspector and his observations on my site visit, he was of the view that the scheme would harm the character and appearance of the area. It would therefore conflict with Policy R1 of the JCS, which among other things requires residential development in rural areas to not affect open land that is of particular significance to the form and character of the village. It would also conflict with Policy SS2 of the LPP2, which requires new development to maintain the individual identity of villages and their distinct parts and does not result in the unacceptable loss of undeveloped land and locally important views of particular significance to the form and character of a settlement. There would also be conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which recognises the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and seeks to ensure development contributes to and enhances the natural environment.
3. Conclusion on 5-year Housing Land Supply

When adding the housing supply figure to the Council's suggested windfall allocation this generates a supply figure of 2,062. Based on a requirement of 1,739 this creates a housing land supply figure of 5.65 years. Accordingly, paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF is not engaged.

And finally, on Planning Balance, he states:



1. I have found that the Council can demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply. I also consider that the proposal would conflict with Policies R1 and S1 of the JCS and Policies SS1, LH1 and SS2 of the LPP2 which bring the scheme into conflict with the development plan. The appeal should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

2. The proposal would deliver 33 affordable homes. It is agreed between the parties that the most up to date Housing Needs Survey, dated 2011 is out of date. Whilst the appellant has attempted to provide a more up to date assessment it is not a local housing needs survey. The



weight attached to the evidence is reduced by the absence of primary data and the age of the secondary data it relies upon. The indicative model used by the appellant is also not based on local data.

3. The most up to date credible evidence for the purpose of considering the proposal is that provided by the Council's Housing Officer, accepting the fact that the housing register from which the evidence is taken does not reflect all tenures. The evidence identifies 34 people in affordable housing need willing to live in Milton Malsor, 3 of which have a local connection.
4. Factoring in the limitations of the evidence before me, but mindful of the shortfall in the delivery of affordable housing across South Northamptonshire, I give the provision of affordable housing significant weight in the planning balance.
5. I have found that the Council can demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply but am mindful that this does not mean a cap on development. Whilst reference has been made to the appreciable weight given to the delivery of market housing in the Middleton Cheney appeals referred to by the appellant, I consider the circumstances to be different in the case before me. This is because Middleton Cheney sits higher in the settlement hierarchy as a primary service village. For the reasons identified above I do not place as much weight as the appellant on the SRFI as a very significant site-specific consideration. Overall, I give the delivery of market housing through the scheme moderate weight in the planning balance.
6. There would be economic benefits during construction and afterwards from spend by occupants within the local economy. There would also be the potential for additional patronage at the local primary school. However, as the specific benefits have not been quantified the weight given to this is limited.
7. The appellant cites off site highway improvements at the junction of Towcester Road and Lower Road as a benefit of the scheme, giving it significant weight. However, I give this moderate weight given there is little substantive evidence to indicate that it would go beyond mitigating the impacts of the scheme. Whilst the appellant says for example that it will reduce traffic speeds on Lower Road there is no evidence to suggest that this is currently an issue.
8. The development would generate biodiversity gain of around 25.5% through increased landscaping on the site. I give this moderate weight. I also give moderate weight to the increase the provision of public open space by around 2.6ha based on the indicative layout.
9. I am of the view that the benefits outlined are not sufficient in this case to outweigh the harm I have identified and the conflict with the development plan.

#### Conclusion

For the reasons identified I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

#### **West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan, Spatial Options Consultation**

On 14 September WNC Cabinet approved the following:

1. West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan: Spatial Options Consultation Paper, Appendix A for the purposes of public consultation.
2. West Northamptonshire Local Development Scheme, Appendix B which would have effect upon expiry of the call-in period for Cabinet decisions.
3. The adoption of the Statement of Community Involvement with the amendments set out in Appendix C.
4. The Delegation to the Assistant Director: Growth, Climate and Regeneration, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Built Environment and Rural Affairs, authority to make minor editorial and presentational changes to the above documents in their final published form.

The purpose of the consultation is to seek the views of the community and stakeholders and ensure that they play a key role in determining the preferred spatial strategy. Respondents to the consultation will be able to suggest alternative options and a further opportunity will be provided to submit new site proposals through a reopened 'call for sites'.

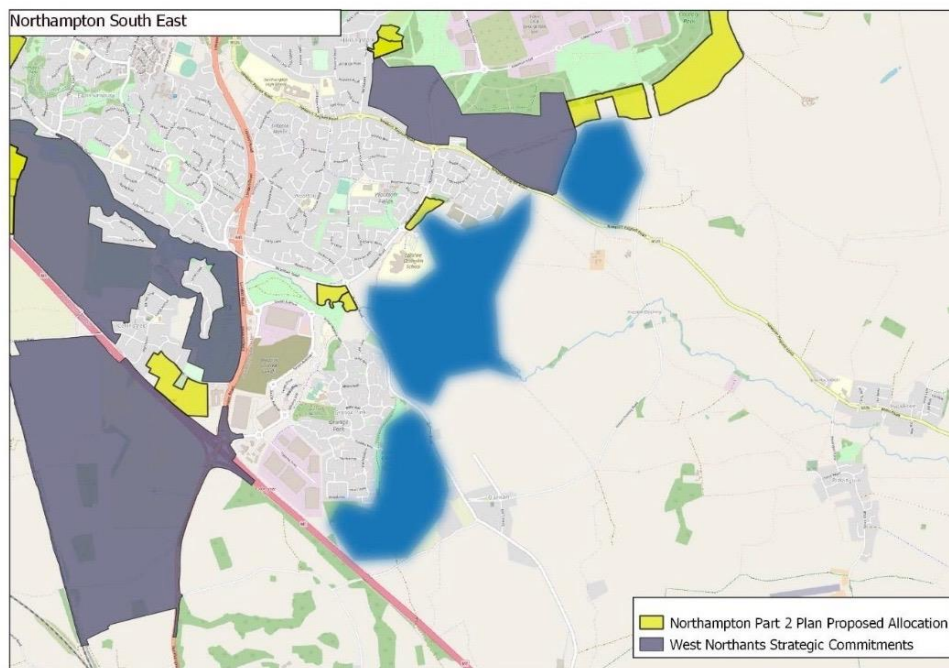
Subject to Cabinet approval, the spatial options consultation paper will be published for an eight-week consultation period starting in October. The final details of the consultation strategy are being agreed with the corporate consultation and communication teams.

***It is important that you respond to this consultation.***

### **Spatial Option 1e Northampton South-East Residential**

I have set out below Spatial option 1e which is an area situated to the south-east of the existing Northampton urban area adjoining Grange Park and Wootton with the potential to deliver approximately 3,000 dwellings. Key access points for this option would be from the Newport Pagnell Road for the northern and central area, and from the Wootton Road for the central and southern area. The southern area of the option could also gain access from the Quinton Road.

#### **Spatial Option 1e - Northampton South-East - Residential**



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. West Northamptonshire Council Licence number 100063706 2021.

The Spatial Options Consultation outlines the following strengths and weaknesses:

#### **Strengths**

The area is located adjacent to principal urban area of Northampton with the potential to connect new communities to the established services and facilities in Northampton and would be of a scale to provide local facilities on site to meet the needs of future residents. The area is well located in relation to employment opportunities at Brackmills, Grange Park and the consented Northampton Gateway strategic rail freight interchange.

The option presents opportunities to deliver net biodiversity gain and through an appropriate landscape framework present a more sensitive edge to the countryside in this part of Northampton. Development would need to retain and enhance existing open spaces such as Foxfield country park.

There are no overriding physical or environmental constraints that would prevent development. The option is being actively promoted by landowners and developers and would be deliverable in the plan period.

**Weaknesses**

Parts of the option fall within flood zones 2 and 3 which would constrain the extent of the area to be developed and appropriate flood risk management measures would be required. The design of development would also need to acknowledge the presence of 2 high pressure gas pipelines which cross the area.

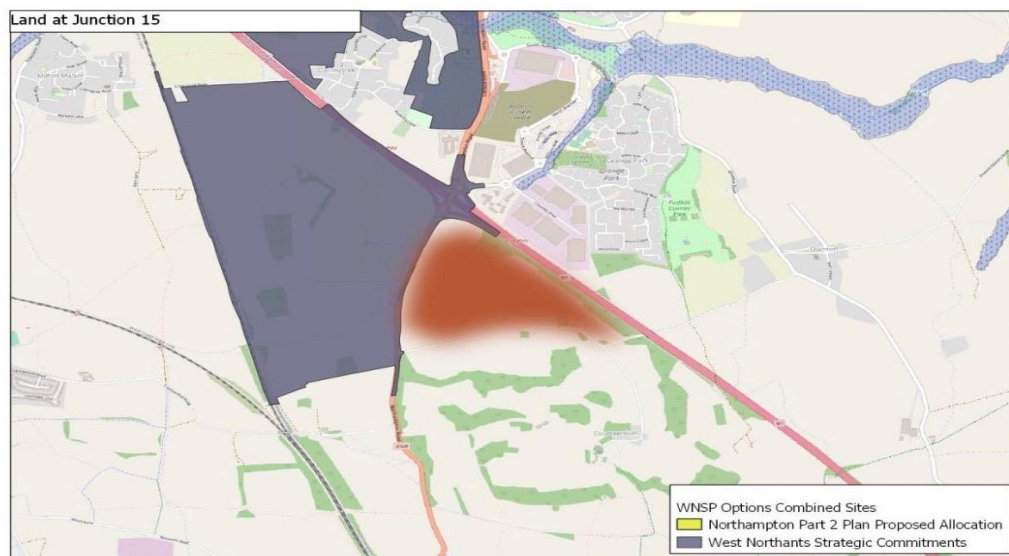
Further consideration will be required on the impacts of development on the capacity of both the local road network and the strategic road network especially the A45.

As with all options at Northampton further consideration will be required regarding the potential impacts of development on the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA, including potential mitigation of the loss of functionally linked land.

**Spatial Option 1f-South of M1 Junction 15-Employment**

Spatial option 1f is an employment area in close proximity to the existing employment site at Grange Park to the north of the M1 and adjoins the consented Northampton Gateway strategic rail freight interchange immediately to the west.

**Spatial Option 1f - South of M1 Junction 15 - Employment**



It is an area situated to the south of Junction 15 of the M1 and Grange Park on the southern edge of the Northampton urban area. The area could come forward for employment use across an area of approximately 68ha. Access could be gained from the A508 to the west of the site taking advantage of the highway improvements related to the adjoining Northampton Gateway development.

The Spatial Options Consultation outlines the following strengths and weaknesses:

**Strengths**



The area benefits from access to the M1 at Junction 15 and is in a strategically significant position for logistics with connectivity to the UK's motorway network.

Development of this area could be a logical expansion of existing and proposed employment development in this area.

The option is close to the Northampton Related Development Area including planned residential development at the Northampton South and Northampton South of Brackmills SUEs and therefore has ready access to a potential labour market.

### **Weaknesses**

The option is close to the grade II listed Courteenhall historic park & garden which lies to the south, and the impact of large-scale employment development on the setting of this important heritage asset would require careful consideration.

A portion of the area (approx. 10%) falls within flood zone 2 and parts of the site may also be affected by surface water flooding. This could reduce the capacity of the site and would need to be thoroughly assessed and effective flood risk management measures will be required. Public rights of way that cross the area will need to be retained (diverted) and the impact on them mitigated.

### **My letter to Jonathan Nunn, WNC Leader re Spatial Strategies**

I thought you might like to see the content of the letter that I sent to WNC Cabinet on 13 September before they considered the Spatial Strategies Item 11 on the Agenda. I asked Jonathan Nunn to ensure that my concerns were brought to the attention of the Cabinet. He confirmed that my letter would be considered as part of the consultation.

"I have two primary concerns relating to Item 11, West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan: Spatial Options Consultation-Appendix A-Spatial Options 1e and 1f.

#### **Flood Risk**

On Tuesday 20 July 2021, the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, and (MHCLG) released an updated version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and on the same day the Environment Agency released an update to climate change allowances for Flood Risk Assessments. The impact of these changes on individual projects is yet to be determined. However, the main change to the NPPF within the Flood Risk and Coastal Change context is related to the scope of study and the requirements for the Sequential Test. The updated text in the NPPF states that:

***"All plans should apply a sequential, risk-based approach to the location of development – taking into account all sources of flood risk and the current and future impacts of climate change – so as to avoid, where possible, flood risk to people and property."*** [Paragraph 161, NPPF 2021]

The inclusion of all sources means that the need for a Sequential Test may be triggered if a site is in an area at high risk of surface water or groundwater flooding. However, the guidance on the process for applying the Sequential Test has not yet been updated and still only refers to the Flood Zones (fluvial and tidal flood risk).

#### **Potential Impact**

For sites, which are currently subject to a Sequential Test, the scope of the study may need to be increased to consider the flood risk posed by surface water, groundwater, and other flood sources.

For sites, which are not currently subject to a Sequential Test, the Local Planning Authority may require that this be undertaken so that the risk from all sources of flooding can be Sequentially Tested.

The NPPF states that for sites allocated through local plans, then provided a Sequential Test was undertaken at the plan making stage, it is not necessary to undertake a Sequential Test.

There are several changes introduced by the latest guidance from the Environment Agency relating to which climate change allowances are relevant in which area and clarification on which allowance to use. The Surface Water and Tidal allowances remain the same as previously provided. However, the river flow allowances have significantly changed.

Where previously England had been split into ten River Basin Districts, the new approach divides these ten River Basin Districts into 92 smaller Catchment Management areas, each of which has its own climate change allowance value.

Therefore, as we are at the plan making stage it seems premature that West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) is consulting on the above spatial options both of which lie within flood zones without completing the sequential tests now required.

As a result, I am seeking assurance that none of the Spatial Options including 1e and 1f will be chosen to go forward in the Spatial Strategy without the appropriate Flood Risk Assessment.

### **Appeal dismissal**

The Manor Oak Homes outline application for up to 300 dwellings and land for a new school (up to two forms-of-entry) along with open space, drainage, footpath improvements, new off-site footpath links, vehicular access and all matters reserved other than access at Land South of Grange Park Quinton Road Northampton was dismissed by the Planning Inspector on 19 February 2020.

The main issues in this appeal were the effects of the proposed development on the need to travel and whether the proposal would offer a genuine choice of transport modes.

The Planning Inspector states "The appellant's comparisons with the permitted development at Wootton Fields Phase 3 are not very helpful in determining the current appeal. It was apparent from my site visit how beneficial it is for that 110 dwelling scheme to have direct road access into the NRDA in terms of minimising the length of journeys that could not be undertaken by walking, cycling or public transport and so were made by car. That contrasts starkly with the circuitous vehicular routes into the NRDA from the appeal site."

He then goes on to say: "The National Design Guide (NDG) introduces 10 characteristics to illustrate the Government's priorities for well-designed places, which include "Movement - accessible and easy to move around". The NDG states that a well-designed movement network provides a genuine choice of sustainable transport modes and limits the impact of cars by prioritising and encouraging walking, cycling and public transport. The proposed development would conflict with the NDG, which seeks to reduce reliance upon the private car and to move away from car use for short journeys. Connectivity for the appeal scheme would fall far short of the aims of the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan, which seeks to ensure that all developments are well connected by public transport and walking, cycling and motor vehicle routes to allow ease of movement between the development and existing built-up areas and provide access to employment and key services."

The Planning Inspector took all the above into account and his rounded judgment was that the appeal scheme would have poor connectivity with the Northampton urban area and that the appellant had understated the likely impact of the proposal on the need to travel by car, and underestimated the resultant harm given the distance these vehicles would be likely to travel, and the type of roads used. The scheme would be harmful because it would increase car dependency, with implications for greenhouse gas emissions, congestion on local roads, and social exclusion. "This is a consideration that weighs heavily against the proposed development" he said.

Whilst there were several other considerations where this appeal failed, I would like some assurance that this matter has been addressed before these sites are even considered for consultation, otherwise we just repeat the previous outcome at great cost to all concerned. Indeed, when considering the new Transportation Plan, I would also expect WNC to consider 'Active Travel' routes.

I trust that you will be happy to present this letter to your colleagues as requested and I look forward to the outcome in due course."

## ENVIRONMENT

### Fly-Tipping on Private Land



A pilot scheme to support landowners with the cost of removing fly-tipping from their land and securing it against future incidents is being rolled out across the county. Earlier this year, Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Stephen Mold set up a scheme to help farmers and landowners, with a view to intervening early to prevent crime and to assist in tracking down people who are fly tipping. The pilot scheme was run in conjunction with the former East Northamptonshire District and Daventry District Councils and the Commissioner's Office will now take it forward in conjunction with the two successor authorities, West Northamptonshire Council and North Northamptonshire Council. Local authorities do not remove fly-tipped waste

on private land, which is the responsibility of the landowner to clear. Under this new scheme, farmers and private landowners can apply for a grant towards the cost of having the fly-tipped waste cleared away and to support them in putting prevention measures in place that will make the land less vulnerable to fly-tippers in the future. Grants of up to £1,500 are available and the scheme is now open to landowners in Northamptonshire who can apply by contacting their relevant local authority. During the pilot scheme, five people received sums ranging from £500 to the maximum £1,500 to help them tackle fly-tipping on their land. This included the proper disposal of the fly-tipped waste and the installation of gates and other measures to make the affected land less vulnerable. For more information and an application pack, please email:

[environmentalimprovement.ddc@westnorthants.gov.uk](mailto:environmentalimprovement.ddc@westnorthants.gov.uk).

### Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme

On 14 September, West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) Cabinet:



Noted the work to date on securing £6.2m of Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme grant allocation for West Northamptonshire and North Northamptonshire, and the next steps required to progress the project.

Approved the use of the ring-fenced Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme grant funding of £6.2m to deliver innovative flood resilience measures across the two catchments, one in each of West Northamptonshire and North Northamptonshire, as set out in the report. The government-funded scheme is for the areas

around Wootton Brook in Northampton and Harpers Brook between Corby and Thrapston.



This Project is funded by central government and came with the caveat that it could not be used to supplement existing work, or fund capital schemes which would otherwise be funded by 'grant in aid'. Northamptonshire County Council originally bid for £6.2 million for Wootton Brook and Harpers Brook through the Environment Agency's £200 million Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Project. Of 358 reports of flooding across the two areas since detailed records started in 2012, 237 were for the Wootton Brook area, which includes Collingtree, Wootton, East and West Hunsbury, Hunsbury Meadows and Hackleton. WNC will manage the project, on behalf of North Northamptonshire Council, which will engage with landowners and residents to implement a series of measures and assess their effectiveness.

## Recycle Week



A roadshow in Northampton's Market Square will give people a chance to pick up some top tips on recycling.

The event, on Wednesday 22 September, is a chance for residents to learn more about recycling services in the county and get hints and tips on how to waste less and save money. It is being run by our waste education officers in support of Recycle Week, which is taking place nationally from 20 to 26 September.

The focus of this year's campaign is the climate crisis and the things that we can all do to tackle it. As well as hosting the roadshow, the council has also chosen

Recycle Week to launch a new pilot scheme which will see a recycling bin installed in Thornton Park, Kingsthorpe. Our social media channels will also support the campaign, sharing key messages about recycling throughout the week. Follow WNC on Twitter and Facebook @westnorthants.

## International Tree Foundation (ITF)

Are you looking to start your own UK project? ITF can help!

They are now accepting applications for the 2021-22 planting season. The deadline for applications is 16 December 2021.

ITF can provide funding and consultation for projects that meet the following criteria:

- Up to 5000 trees
- Native UK species
- On publicly accessible land

ITF's UK Community Tree Planting Programme supports grassroots community engagement in tree planting. The programme has supported more than 50 small-scale projects over the last 20 years, from community orchards to native woodland planting.



ITF is now seeking to continue and expand this work with a new round of UK tree-planting projects in 2021, focused on community-led initiatives across the UK. They award grants up to £6000 to local community projects.

ITF's UK Community Tree Planting Programme (UKCTPP) represents an excellent way of contributing to the much-needed reforestation of the UK. At just 13%, the UK has one of the

lowest tree covers in Europe (average 35% in the EU). This programme aims to unlock many benefits brought about by tree planting. ITF believes local communities know what project is appropriate for their area and landscape. By encouraging communities to design their own projects, we hope to encourage individuals and communities to connect with their environment, while empowering them to research, experiment and engage with their local landscape and flora.

Unlike many of the larger tree planting and reforestation initiatives in the UK, ITF's UKCTP programme is unusual in supporting numerous small-scale projects. They find that multiple benefits are produced from community-owned projects, including not least the increased tree cover, but also increased positive well-being, good education opportunities for local schools and youth groups. This creates a greater sense of connection with nature for those involved. It gives a feeling of local ownership and is essential for the sustainability of the project. For this reason, all ITF's projects take place on land in which the general public can visit.

There are two tiers of funding available:

- Grants of up to £1,000 for projects of up to one year in duration.
- Grants of up to £6,000 for large scale projects planting between 1,000 and 5,000 trees. This would be most suitable for community woodland or hedging projects.

## RURAL SERVICES NETWORK (RSN)

### RSN Annual Conference

I attended the Annual Conference 2021 (on-line) week commencing 13-17 September. It was entitled 'Levelling up to Revitalise Rural.' The RSN conference is the rural event of the year for those delivering services in rural areas and supporting the wellbeing of our rural businesses and communities. There were several expert speakers sharing their experiences with delegates and stimulating lively debate.

After years of underfunding and policy implementation designed for urban areas rather than targeted at rural needs, it is vital that rural areas are finally given the opportunity to level up and realise their full potential. This conference is only available to members of the Rural Services Network.



The conference session took place over the course of the week, with each day focusing on a few different topics critical for rural areas. The details were as follows:

- Rural Digital Connectivity

- Rural Economy
- Rural Health & Care
- Rural Affordable Housing
- Rural Transport and Decarbonisation

I have covered the discussion about the State of Care in County and Rural Areas under Health and Social Care below. I will be distributing a separate report about the RSN Annual conference 2021.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### The State of Care in County and Rural Areas



I attended the RSN, National Rural Conference 2021 (on-line) week commencing 13-17 September. On 15 September, Councillor Martin Tett, CCN Spokesperson for Adult Social Care and Leader of Buckinghamshire Council gave us a presentation of the State of Care in County and Rural Unitary Areas. The CCN report was made available on 16 September. He spoke about the unique issues facing rural areas including resources, workforce recruitment and retention, sparsity,

self-funders, proportion of residential care homes and demographics of aging population and rural market dynamics. After considering all the issues he then gave us a summary of his six recommendations to Government.

1. Increase Funding in the Spending Review to meet the rising costs and the unmet need in the system before reductions in services will be required in County and Rural Unitary Areas.
2. The impact of extending commissioning duties to self-funders to enable them to have their care arranged by councils, and access local authority contracts and fee levels, must be consulted on, and risk assessed, with appropriate funding and policy mitigation to prevent unsustainable financial costs and risks to councils and providers.
3. Enshrine in law that the Social Care Levy comes back from Health to Social Care at the end of the three years.
4. There are 112,000 care workforce vacancies in County and Rural Unitary Areas. This may require specific policies and resources to address this.
5. Ensure fair funding and equality of Social Care Service across the County and Rural Unitary Areas.
6. Help to support and manage the transition from residential to domiciliary care.

I received several other interesting and informative presentations on Health and Care on 15 September and I will include them in my report of the conference in due course.



## COVID-19 update

As of 12 September 2021, 2,486 Northamptonshire residents have tested positive for coronavirus, and there have been 3 deaths in West Northamptonshire within 28 days of positive test. Further information on the data is available here: <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>



# Northamptonshire COVID-19 Weekly Surveillance Report

- **2,486** Northamptonshire residents have tested positive for COVID-19 in the last week - a **decrease of 14%** in the previous seven day period
- The largest number of positive tests in the last week was found in **10 to 19 year olds**, followed by **20 to 29 year olds**
- The national average infection rate is **322.9 per 100,000 population**. In Northamptonshire the rate is **372.2**. The highest rates locally are **Corby at 746.4 per 100,000 and Kettering, 440.2 per 100,000**. **Case rates in Corby are among the highest in the country.**
- All residents are advised to take free **twice weekly rapid lateral flow tests** and **behave COVID-safely** to reduce onward transmission
- COVID-19 **vaccinations** are now available to **everyone aged 18 years and over** and both doses are required to give the best possible protection

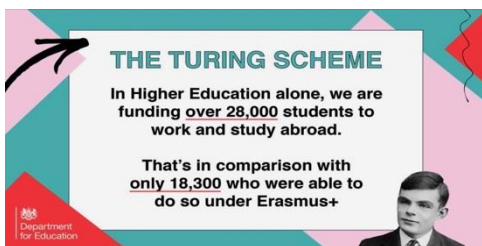
Data up to 12 September 2021



## EDUCATION

### The Turing Scheme

From September, over 40,000 students will be able to study and work abroad thanks to the new Turing Scheme. The Government is awarding grants to 120 universities, as well as school and colleges across the UK, with 48% of places going to those from disadvantaged backgrounds. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to work and learn in another country- from Canada and Japan to Germany and France and will broaden minds and sharpen skills. Until now, this has been an opportunity disproportionately enjoyed by those from the most privileged backgrounds. The Turing Scheme has welcomed a breadth of successful applications from schools and colleges across the country, reflecting our determination that the benefits will be shared by all.



### Children travelling to and from school from September



From September, children travelling to and from school on public transport across Northamptonshire will no longer need to socially distance, in line with the most recent Department for Education guidance (DfE). Masks will still be required by bus drivers by transport staff and students aged 11 and over, except for those who are medically exempt, whilst the prevalence of COVID-19 remains high. WNC will

continue to ensure that operators maintain a strict cleaning regime and that vehicles are well ventilated whilst transporting students. In the event of a significant outbreak WNC will work with schools to support their contingency plans and, where appropriate, reintroduce measures to limit the spread of the virus.

### Application for School Places

Parents and carers can now apply for school places – to start in September 2022. All applications, whether postal or online, must be received by the deadline to be considered on time. Find out more here <https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/school-admissions>

The deadline for applying for a place at a Secondary school for September 2022 is:

**5pm on Sunday 31 October 2021.**

Closing date for Primary applications is:

**5 p.m. on 15th January 2022.**

### Free school meals

Free meals are automatically available to all Key Stage 1 (reception, year 1 and year 2) children under the Universal Infant School Meals Scheme.

You can apply for free school meals for older children in full-time education up to the age of 18 if you are in receipt of certain benefits. Find out more here

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/school-information-parents/free-school-meals>

## CONSULTATION

### Oxford-Cambridge Arc-Spatial Framework

A new plan aims to enhance the infrastructure, environment and new developments in the counties of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire. This public consultation is the first of three that will guide a new Spatial Framework over the next two years. Comments received in the consultation will help create the vision for the area to 2050 and guide local planning and

The Government has launched a consultation on future development across the Oxford Cambridge Arc which includes Northamptonshire.

investment decisions in four areas: The environment, The economy, Connectivity and infrastructure and Place-making.

For more information or if you have any questions or enquiries about the consultation, please contact:

[oxford-cambridgearc@communities.gov.uk](mailto:oxford-cambridgearc@communities.gov.uk)

about the Oxford-Cambridge Arc Spatial Framework and how to have your say. The consultation will run from Tuesday 20 July to Tuesday 12 October 2021.



### Complete your Annual Canvass Form

Canvass forms have been sent to households across West Northamptonshire so that residents can check their voter details are up to date. The annual canvass, which must be carried out by law, allows West Northamptonshire Council to ensure that information on the electoral



register is current and accurate. Adults must be on the register in order to vote in elections and referendums, while it is also used for jury service selection and to provide credit checks, such as when applying for a mortgage. People are asked to take a moment to look at their form and respond if required. Not every household will need to respond, but those that do are encouraged to as soon as possible, to ensure the process runs smoothly and to remove the need for reminders and any further contact. Each household is required by law to make sure that the details on the form are correct. Those who need to make changes or who have been asked to respond can do so via one of the options below:

Visit [www.householdresponse.com/westnorthants](http://www.householdresponse.com/westnorthants) and login using the two-part security code on your form

Text NO CHANGE (if you have no changes) to 80212 followed by the two-part security code on your form

Call (if you have no changes) 0800 197 9871

Complete the paper form and return it using the address provided

It's important that people keep an eye out for their canvass form and check the details we hold for them. It only takes a couple of minutes to respond, and saves you being contacted by our team who will be in touch by text, email or in person if you don't reply. If you're not currently registered to vote you can easily register online or you can call 0300 126 7000.

### Autumn Budget 27 October 2021



The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak

The Treasury has an Autumn Budget and Spending Review representations portal, which is now open. The representations portal for Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021 is now open. HM Treasury will gratefully accept submissions until 5pm on 30 September 2021. It will not be possible for HM Treasury to consider submissions received after this deadline.

[Guidance for submitting your Budget or Spending Review representation - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/submitting-your-budget-or-spending-review-representation)

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & GRANT FUNDING



### Northampton Community Foundation

Northamptonshire Community Foundation is pleased to be awarding the Made by Sport – Clubs in Crisis fund, which can help support young people as they start to recover from the effects of the latest lockdown. They will be administering the fund on behalf of Made by Sport and awarding grants of up to £2,021 to clubs who match the criteria. The fund is looking for applications from clubs and community organisations using sport to improve young people's lives through one or more of the following means:

- Developing life skills
- Building strong communities
- Improving mental health
- Developing employability skills
- Reducing crime and anti-social behaviour



## Social Enterprise Fund



Northamptonshire Community Foundation has launched a new fund to support social enterprise initiatives that will help with the economic recovery from the pandemic. Social enterprises based in the county can apply for up to £5,000 to help support decent work and economic growth within local communities. The activities must benefit residents, especially those that may be disadvantaged and vulnerable. Groups can apply via [www.ncf.uk.com](http://www.ncf.uk.com) with a closing date for applications of Friday 15 October.

## HOUSING

### Afghan Refugees

Since the news broke that West Northamptonshire would be doing its part to provide support for those leaving Afghanistan, our communities have been showing their desire to do as much as they can. WNC is working closely with the Home Office to coordinate the response locally and is already looking at the medium and long-term support of these families from housing to school transport. WNC has offers of support that have been received directly, alongside community Facebook groups organising grass root efforts to gather and deliver donations of money, clothes, toys and all the other things families need to start a new life.



WNC partners at Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire are leading the collection of donations locally with a Go Fund Me page. WNC is encouraging you to show your support via the collection and to share the link to with your communities. More information on: [westnorthants.gov.uk](http://westnorthants.gov.uk)

## TRANSPORT & HIGHWAYS

### Review of Bus Lane Enforcement Scheme

I have been advised that residents will be able to have their say this autumn on how bus lane rules should operate and be enforced to help keep Northampton's public transport moving. West Northamptonshire Council will shortly be seeking people's views on its Bus Lane Enforcement Scheme as part of a forthcoming review of the arrangements. Bus priority measures in the town include traffic lanes or sections of the street solely for use by buses, taxis or bicycles to help cut congestion and improve journey times. Enforcement of the bus lane rules has been in place since February last year, when the previous county council installed number-plate recognition cameras at the Weedon Road/St James' Road bus lane and at the

Drapery, a bus-only street. The bus lanes are in operation 24/7 with motorists facing a fine of up to £60 if they break the rules.

Although proving effective in some areas for public transport, the scheme has also prompted concerns from residents who have spoken and written to me.

As you know, I have been keen for WNC to review the arrangements and WNC would now like to hear people's views ahead of their further discussions. A public consultation is due to be launched later this month when residents will be able to take part in a survey to give their feedback and suggestions for the future. Arrangements for the consultation are currently being finalised and more details will be released shortly and publicised widely by the council to encourage participation.



The 24-hour bus lane could be changed back to its previous operating times

WNC took on these arrangements in April this year and is aware of significant concerns around the Weedon Road/St James camera, while The Drapery cameras appear to be doing the job effectively without controversy. WNC has now agreed to review the cameras and ask people what they think.

WNC will be providing more details shortly on how residents can give their views and I would encourage you to look out for these and get involved.

### Local Cycling and Infrastructure Plans

I am still trying to gain traction on local cycling and active travel, and I was disappointed this month to hear that the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure plans have been very urban focussed, particularly as several of you have asked me to help implement a cycleway which links the local villages to Wootton and then on to Northampton.

Like you, I am keen to address the inter urban/rural cycling improvements and I would still like to progress my enquiries into whether West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) intends to access other funds to improve inter urban/rural connectivity. WNC had indicated that they thought that converting old train lines that criss cross Northamptonshire into cycle paths was an interesting idea. I suggested that Olney could be linked to Northampton providing links for Hackleton, Horton, Brafield and other locations on the way. As the old line goes directly to Northampton station it might mean that commuters could safely cycle rather than drive. Indeed, I suggested that we could work on this together with Sustrans.



Since then, I have heard further from Hackleton Parish Council who had already progressed the idea of a new off road shared footway/cycleway linking their villages to amenities at Wootton and beyond. This proposal is included in the Hackleton Neighbourhood Plan, which is currently with the external examiner prior to a referendum Policy HNPD11-Traffic Management and Transport Improvements. Highways has provided them

with a rough order of magnitude of cost. I am looking at how best to commission a feasibility study, which will involve consideration of both travel routes followed by a project that delivers both solutions.

There are lots of examples of Community Action projects that have emerged post lockdown, which create active travel routes improving access for all. These projects present significant opportunities to invest in and promote active sustainable travel, which connects rural communities and inspires people to reduce car use for everyday journeys. Active travel can bring enormous benefit to people's wellbeing and the environment. The goal is that people of all ages and abilities should be able to enjoy themselves cycling and walking.

By creating a project team involving the Parishes impacted by such a proposal we could aim to complete the feasibility study and route options by the end of Q1,2022, and then hope to complete the build of the shared paths by Q1 2023. We could seek Government/Sustrans Funding and any other sources of funding.

I will keep you informed as I continue to progress this project.

## Bus Services Consultation



Improvements could be made to bus services. (File picture).

Partnership schemes with bus operators in their respective areas in order to facilitate the improvement of bus services for residents.

The partnerships will enable access to Government funding, which will be made available to support the implementation of the National Bus Strategy: "Bus Back Better". People can give their views by completing a short survey, which is available now until 10 October.

I would encourage all of you that have spoken and written to me about the lack of bus services to participate in this survey and have your say to help shape the future of bus travel in your area. This consultation will be open for three weeks and if you have time and are keen to get more involved in shaping the future bus improvement strategy of your local area, please take part in this survey.

<https://westnorthants.citizenspace.com/.../bus-service.../>

Residents, parish councils, businesses and groups in Northamptonshire are being invited to share their views on the improvements they would like to see in bus services across the county.

West and North Northamptonshire Councils are consulting on the formation of Enhanced

The screenshot shows the West Northamptonshire Council website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Home, Find activities, We asked, you said, we did, Partner consultations, and Get involved. Below this is a search bar. The main content area features the council's logo and the text 'In partnership with' followed by logos for West Northamptonshire Council and North Northamptonshire Council. The title of the consultation is 'Bus back better: How can we improve bus services across North and West Northamptonshire?'. Underneath, there is an 'Overview' section stating that the councils have committed to a Bus Service Improvement Plan and an Enhanced Partnership with local bus operators. It also includes a 'Contact' section with an email address: [transport@westnorthants.gov.uk](mailto:transport@westnorthants.gov.uk). On the right side, it indicates the consultation 'Closes 10 Oct 2021' and 'Opened 17 Sep 2021'.



### Councillor Engagement Session, Brixworth

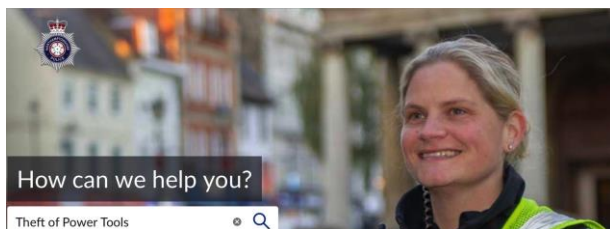


On 25 August 2021, I attended the Councillor Engagement Session at Northamptonshire Highways, Brixworth Depot. It gave me the opportunity to see demonstrations of our Highway Repairs treatments and associated works. The Facilitators were Rebecca Miller, Head of Customer and Communications, Andy Leighton, Customer Engagement Manager and Barclay Quarton, Customer Excellence Officer. It was good to meet the individuals that I have spent so much time communicating with on your behalf over the last three months. We had several practical demonstrations including Thermal Road Repairs, traditional/Roadmaster and Gully Combi. I now have a better understanding of how the various repairs are carried out and more importantly, I have met the key individuals at Northamptonshire Highways.

## POLICE FIRE & CRIME COMMISSIONER

### Theft of Power Tools

Officers are appealing for anyone who may have had power tools stolen from the Northampton area and not yet reported it to the police to come forward. Responding to a report of an attempted break-in of a black Peugeot 108 in the car park in Albion Road, in the early hours of Thursday, August 19, officers attempted to stop two men. One of the men discarded multiple power tools in Cheyne Walk and Scholars Court as he ran off from officers. The second man was arrested at the scene on suspicion of theft. The 35-year-old from Northampton has since been released on police bail pending further investigations.



As part of their ongoing investigations, officers would like to speak to anyone who believes they may have been the victim of such a theft, in a bid to reunite the rightful owners with their property. Anyone who may

have any information which could assist with this investigation, is asked to call Northamptonshire Police on 101 or alternatively, call Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

Incident number: 210004661

## CULTURE HERITAGE AND SPORT



### Heritage Open Days

West Northamptonshire has a long and varied history spanning thousands of years and has played a key part in shaping England, as we know it today. Some of the places, which form part of our story,

will be open to the public for free during Heritage Open Days, taking place this year between 10 and 19 September. The heritage buses are back! As in past years, vintage buses will transport visitors between several of the venues, and the bus rides alone are a real treat for young and old alike.

Some of the attractions:

You'll be able to find out about the 1460 Battle of Northampton – part of the Wars of the Roses – and the significance of Hardingstone's Eleanor Cross. You can also learn some of the secrets of Delapre Abbey's Walled Garden, and the abbey itself is offering free entry for a day, alongside a trip down memory lane with some classic cars. If historic transport is of interest to you, consider Abington Park Museum's Transport Day, or take a relaxing cruise along the Grand Union Canal from Blisworth with Crusader Community Boating. Daventry Museum is taking part with a range of displays including a focus on 'Edible England', this year's Heritage Open Days theme. For art and culture, you can visit the Charles Rennie Mackintosh house at 78 Derngate, The Old Savoy, or Royal and Derngate. For more information visit the Heritage Open Days website.

## PLANNING CHANGES

### LGA response to the Planning White Paper proposals

The Local Government Association (LGA) has stated that the current proposals for the changes to the planning system lack the detail needed for full debate and comment. This has led to wide-ranging concerns about how the proposals would work in practice. Whilst the LGA recognises the Government's aspiration to improve the current system, without addressing many of the detailed issues, there is a significant risk that proposed changes could have a detrimental effect on the planning system.

As a result, the LGA is calling for the Government to bring the Planning Bill forward in draft form to enable consultation and pre-legislative scrutiny. Then we would have an opportunity to take the time needed to make improvements to the planning system. Conversely, if we get this wrong, the impacts will last generations, and some will be irreversible.

The Planning White Paper has 24 individual proposals across several themes, some with multiple options: Planning for Development; Planning for Beautiful and Sustainable Places; Planning for Infrastructure and Connected Places; Delivering Change. The following section outlines the key proposals across these themes followed by the LGA's view on their practical implementation.

### 1. Growth/Renewal/Protect Areas

The White Paper proposes that the role of land use plans is simplified. To do this, Local Plans would identify three types of land:

- Growth areas – suitable for substantial development which will receive outline planning permission ***with no need for planning committee***
- Renewal areas – suitable for development, presumption will be in favour of development
- Protected areas – will require full planning permission, and include land such as Green Belt, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Conservation Areas, etc.

The new Growth/Renewal/Protect areas are still very unclear, and a shift from a discretionary to rule-based system. Alternative proposals are also set out for binary models such as combining Growth and Renewal areas, which would extend permission in principle to all land within this area, based on the uses and forms of

development specified for each sub-area within it. A second alternative approach would be to limit automatic permission in principle to land identified for substantial development in Local Plans (Growth areas).

### ***LGA view***

The 'areas' approach is based on international zonal planning systems. The White Paper suggests that contrary to England, countries where zonal planning systems are used to provide greater certainty up front. However, the White Paper fails to recognise that these examples exist within different planning systems such as a spatial planning system whereby decisions are made at the national regional and local levels and land-use planning is a key spatial planning tool; and/or legislative or governmental systems with a highly devolved system of government. These models therefore may not easily work when superimposed onto the existing English context.

The proposed 'area' categories are too restrictive and do not reflect the complexity of the areas that Local Plans need to plan for, for example, complex urban areas. There are also concerns that the proposals will make it more difficult to develop communities that have the right mix of homes, jobs, and other social and physical infrastructure. Currently, there are few details on how the system would work in practice.

Local planning authorities are already required to set out the vision and framework for the future development of their local areas through a Local Plan, so it is unclear what problem the new proposed areas are trying to solve. It is also unclear how the new areas will work in detail. The proposed 'area' categories are too restrictive and do not reflect the complexity of the areas that Local Plans need to plan for. It is also unclear how the uses within a sub-area would come forward for uses such as schools or open space. Communities and councillors will need the ability to be involved at a later stage on the proposed sub-areas before applications are given approval, due to their more localised impacts.

## **2. Streamlining Local Plan development**

### ***Rules based Local Plans***

Local Plans would be required to set clear rules rather than general policies for development. General Development Management policies would now be set nationally in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), with a more focused role for Local Plans in identifying site and 'area'-specific requirements, alongside locally produced design codes. Local Plans would need to be significantly shorter, visual and map-based, based on the latest digital technology and standardised using a new template of no more than 50 pages.

Development Management policies contained in a Local Plan would be restricted to clear and necessary site or 'area-specific' requirements, including broad height limits, scale and/or density limits for land included in areas categorised as Growth or Renewal. The NPPF would become the primary source of policies for Development Management, replacing general 'policies' with specific development standards.

### ***Shortened timeframes***

Every 'area' would be required to have a Local Plan developed through a streamlined process whereby councils would need to have an up-to-date plan within 30 months of the legislation being brought into force. There would be sanctions for failing to meet this deadline. Local planning authorities that have adopted a Local Plan within the previous three years or where a Local Plan has been submitted to the Secretary of State for examination would have 42 months from when the legislation is brought into force, or upon adoption of the most recent plan, whichever is later.



### ***LGA view***

Genuinely constructive public engagement will take longer than the proposed timeframes for completing Local Plans. We acknowledge that the Local Plan system does need to be simplified and tightened up to reduce the scope for appeals. But without the detail, the White Paper provides little evidence that the proposed changes would support the ambition for a more efficient, simplified, and democratic system that would achieve better planning outcomes.

Councils need to retain the ability to set local Development Management policies to meet the specific requirements of their community. Development Management plays a key role in local authorities' ability to achieve their local planning vision and policies and long-term strategic outcomes. Centralising the process would remove the ability for councils to address local challenges and future needs with appropriate policies.

We support measures to enhance public participation by using digital technology rather than out-of-date notices in local newspapers. A more digital service will make the planning system more accessible and efficient, alongside other forms of engagement to ensure that all residents can engage in the planning process.

The planning process is iterative and should be based on agreed principles with the flexibility to balance the needs of developers against those of communities. Flexibility needs to be built into the system, allowing local authorities to respond to changing circumstances. The sector will want to work with Government on the details to ensure that they are workable locally, with flexibility built into the system allowing local authorities to respond to complexity and to changing circumstances.

### **3. New Sustainable Development Test**

The current Sustainability Appraisal system would be replaced with a single statutory "sustainable development" test. This would consider whether a Local Plan contributes to achieving sustainable development in accordance with policy issued by the Secretary of State. There would no longer be a requirement to consider viability or a 'Duty to Cooperate', although further consideration will be given to strategic cross-boundary issues, such as major infrastructure or strategic sites.

### ***LGA view***

We have concerns regarding proposals to replace the existing approach for environmental assessments with a quicker, simpler framework simply to speed up the process. Whilst we support greater efficiency in the planning system, the White Paper has not provided evidence that a "simpler test" and "slimmed down" approach will support achieving greater sustainability.

### **4. Local Democratic Oversight with shortened Local Plan processes**

The White Paper proposes early enhanced engagement with neighbourhoods and communities at the Local Plan stage. There is no detail on the engagement process, nor does it recognise the importance of community engagement with developers prior to making their application. Far fewer individual applications will go through planning committees and councillors will not be able to represent their communities where there are local concerns about individual applications. The council and councillors' role in other areas where communities need support such as enforcement is not detailed. The White Paper does not explain how the new process will help improve better engagement or reach a wider local audience, at the plan making stage; this is particularly problematic when this may be a community's only opportunity.

Local authorities and the Planning Inspectorate will be required through legislation to meet a statutory timetable for key stages of the process. The Government will consider what sanctions there would be for

those who fail to do so. Under the Government's proposals for a shortened 30-month timeframe, councils will need to radically and profoundly reinvent the ambition, depth, and breadth with which they engage with communities as they consult on Local Plans.

#### ***LGA view***

Local democratic oversight and community engagement are critical factors in ensuring trust and transparency in planning decisions and all aspects of the planning system. The narrative throughout the White Paper is about increasing public engagement in the planning process. However, the proposals appear to limit rather than enhance engagement. Genuine public engagement will leave a community with an agreed understanding about how, where, and what type of increased capacity will meet their future needs.

The future focus of local engagement in planning will be at the Local Plan making stage. Communities will not be able to influence individual applications as they do now. Councils have noted how difficult it is to get communities to engage in developments that might not take place for a decade. The proposals will lead to a loss of local democracy, with councillors and communities being cut out of the process and a reduced ability to have a say on individual planning applications. Local planning authorities will need the resources to carry out the meaningful community engagement critical to achieving good planning outcomes with this new approach. We want to work with the Government and the sector to ensure that the system does not lose its important local democratic scrutiny.

### **5. Incentivising build out of homes**

The White Paper commits to exploring further options to support faster build out. This is not the first time this commitment has been made, but any tangible powers are yet to be brought forward.

#### ***LGA view***

The sector wants to work with Government on proposals including: a 'stalled sites' council tax premium (like the existing empty homes premium); a streamlined compulsory purchase process to acquire (at pre-uplift value) stalled sites or sites where developers do not build out to agreed rates and powers to direct diversification of housing products on sites. Councils are committed to getting homes built where they are needed but do not have the powers to ensure it happens once planning permission has been granted or when a site has been allocated in a Local Plan.

2,782,300 homes have been granted planning permission by councils since 2010/11 but over the same period only 1,627,730 have been built. There are also more than a million homes allocated in Local Plans that have not yet come forward for planning permission. The LGA's report *Speeding up delivery: Learning from Councils enabling timely build out of high-quality housing* shows that planning can only influence certain parts of the housing delivery chain which are impacted by a range of issues.

### **6. Planning for beautiful and sustainable places**

Proposals regarding creating beautiful places are largely influenced by the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission's report *Living with Beauty*. To do this the NPPF has been to include reference to the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code and the use of area-, neighbourhood- and site-specific design guides. Further changes support 'beautiful and safe places', giving schemes which comply with local design guides, codes and masterplans a positive advantage. Other changes to the NPPF requires new developments to have tree-lined streets, the designation of Local Green Space, a requirement to look further ahead than the plan period (at least 30 years) to consider the timescale for delivery, and support for more building on brownfield land.

### ***LGA view***

Whilst the White Paper talks about protecting and promoting the stewardship and improvement of the countryside and environment there is little detail and no mention of farming, agriculture, or ecosystem services. We support an increased focus on design, we are concerned that because beauty is subjective, striving for, or allowing 'beautiful' development to be fast-tracked may not lead to the quality homes and places communities want and need. Councils need tools that will empower them to create great quality homes and places and stop poor development, rather than supporting those deemed to be 'beautiful'.

Any changes to the planning system need to have sustainability at the heart and must consider the improvements and strategic interventions necessary to support our shift to a carbon neutral future. We welcome an expanded definition of sustainable development which now includes the 17 UN Global Goals for Sustainable Development. Local government plays a vital role in leading the way to address climate change, reduce carbon emissions, and create the sustainable places we need. Many councils have ambitious climate targets and plans in place to achieve net zero carbon before the Government's 2050 target. Councils need the tools to become exemplars for using new smart technologies and sustainable construction methods supported by appropriate investment.

## **7. Infrastructure**

The White Paper proposes a new Infrastructure Levy to replace the existing developer contributions system of Section 106 and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The levy would be charged as a fixed proportion of the development value above a threshold, with a mandatory nationally set rate or rates. The current system of planning obligations will be abolished. Revenues would continue to be collected and spent locally.

In areas where land value uplift is insufficient to support significant levels of land value capture, some or all the value generated by the development would be below the threshold, and not subject to the Infrastructure Levy. In higher value areas, a much greater proportion of the development value would be above the exempt amount, and subject to the Infrastructure Levy. To better support the timely delivery of infrastructure, local authorities would be allowed to borrow against Infrastructure Levy revenues so that they could forward fund infrastructure. It is unclear what impact these reforms would have on the overall level of developer contributions and their distribution, or on the number of on-site affordable houses provided.

### ***LGA view***

The LGA welcomes the recent confirmation by the Secretary of State that any future levy will be set locally rather than nationally. The sector will want to work with the Government on how the levy is determined. It is very unlikely that the new levy will provide an area's infrastructure needs and it will be important for the planning reforms to be seen within the context of the broader national infrastructure needs and how these can be financed. Whilst we have yet to see further detail since last year's consultations, we have had indications from Government that this is an area where they want to work with us help design the policy.

## **8. Resourcing and Skills Strategy**

This final section of the White Paper identifies measures required to transition from our current planning system to the new system, and the role of local planning authorities and the Planning Inspectorate in that transition. As new skills will be required in urban design, master planning and community engagement, a Skills Strategy for the planning sector is proposed to support the implementation of the reforms. Local authorities will also be subject to a new performance framework, as well as being required to place more emphasis on the enforcement of planning standards and decisions. Local authorities will be required through



Neighbourhood Plans, to produce design guides and codes, and appoint a Chief Officer for design and place-making.

In the White Paper and subsequent NPPF and new National Model Design Code consultation, the Government has committed to developing a resourcing and skills framework which works for all authorities across the country, by working with local planning authorities, professional bodies and the wider planning sector to ensure views about implementation are considered.

Planning fees would continue to be set on a national basis and cover at least the full cost of processing the application type based on clear national benchmarking.

#### ***LGA view***

We welcome more information regarding how a reformed planning system will be resourced. There is considerable concern from councils about their already stretched capacity, notwithstanding the need to respond to numerous relevant consultations. Planning affects other areas of council business, and any changes to the system will have impacts well beyond planning departments and across all council operations.

Planning fees do not cover the true cost of processing planning applications. Taxpayers currently subsidise the cost at a rate of £180 million a year. This is most apparent with smaller applications. Councils need the ability to recover the costs of processing applications, and therefore should be able to charge an appropriate fee. The LGA has therefore lobbied for councils to have the ability to set fees locally to ensure they can recover the true cost of processing applications

Local planning authorities will need resources to carry out the meaningful community engagement critical to achieving good planning and will need to be properly resourced for any additional burdens due to any changes to the planning system going forward.

Councils will also need the necessary resources to upskill or hire new planning officers to undertake the transition process locally and then implement the new planning regime alongside developing a new design guide. According to Public Practice, to upskill and produce and deliver local Design Codes at scale local planning authorities will need forward funding. They also estimated that adopting a Design Code for an area of approximately 1000 homes will cost £139,000.

### **9. Transitional Arrangements**

The White Paper states that the Government will consider the arrangements for implementing any changes to minimise disruption to existing plans and development proposals and ensure a smooth transition. This includes making sure that recently approved plans, existing permissions and any associated planning obligations can continue to be implemented as intended; and that there are clear transitional arrangements for bringing forward new plans and development proposals as the new system begins to be implemented.

#### ***LGA view***

We are pleased that the Government is considering arrangements for a smooth transition. We have continued to urge the Government to publish a timetable to provide certainty about the proposed fuller consultation on the NPPF, further upcoming planning consultations, and the overall progress with the Planning White Paper response. This will help councils already struggling with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic to undertake the transition process with as little disruption as possible.

## **10. Permitted Development Rights**

As part of the wider planning reforms, the Government consulted on, and subsequently extended Permitted Development Rights (PDR). This would allow premises in the new Commercial, Business and Service Use Class (Use Class E), as well as a new PDR and a faster planning application process for the extension of major public service developments such as schools, hospitals, and prisons.

### ***LGA view***

Extending PDR undermines councils' ability to make decisions that reflect local need and could undermine councils' plans for local recovery in the wake of the pandemic. The new PDR does not support the Government's aspirations outlined in the Planning White Paper which the LGA shares, such as including greater democratic accountability and transparency, tackling climate change, protecting our heritage, planning for beautiful and sustainable places, and developing the necessary and high-quality infrastructure and affordable homes we need. Councils and their communities have already been left with a long-term legacy of negative impacts resulting from some of the 19 amendments to the General Permitted Development Order since 2015.

Whilst we support an increased focus on design, we continue to have concerns that proposals for fast-tracking development deemed 'beautiful' may not lead to high quality homes and places communities. Allowing major public service infrastructure developments to be fast tracked may also delay other existing plans, thereby placing an additional burden on councils. Councils will likely require additional resources to fast-track these applications, which will put significant pressure on councils with already stretched resources.

We reiterated these concerns in our evidence to the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee's (HCLG) recent inquiry into the Government's proposals to extend PDR. The HCLG echoed our concerns that the Government has not explained how its PDR regime fits within the wider planning system or its proposed reforms in the planning White Paper, and that recent extensions to PDR appear to contradict the increased focus on plan-led development and local democratic involvement, undermining the role of local authorities in place-making. The Committee also agreed with our recommendations that the Government should pause any further extensions of PDR for change of use to residential; allow local authorities to increase fees accordingly to recover the full cost of prior approval and other planning applications; and give local authorities the ability to prevent the siting of homes in inappropriate locations, such as business and industrial parks.