
Potterspurry Parish Council

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13 December 2021

Anna Earnshaw
Chief Executive
West Northamptonshire Council
One Angel Square
Northampton NN1 1ED

By email: anna.earnshaw@westnorthants.gov.uk

Dear Ms Earnshaw

West Northants Strategic Plan: Spatial Options Consultation

The A5 Alliance is formed of the parishes of Old Stratford, Cosgrove, Potterspurry, Yardley Gobion, Deanshanger and Wicken who are immediately adjacent to one of the proposed “new settlements” contained in the Spatial Options Consultation paper of the West Northants Strategic Plan. We are very concerned with the basis on which the consultation is taking place and the timing of the consultation. We consider both are flawed and call for the process to be paused.

We believe that the Spatial Options paper fails to properly address some key issues that relate to all the new proposals. It lacks the necessary vision to meet the needs of local residents because its methodology of assessing suitable sites is mired in historic methods of working which are no longer fit for purpose. Furthermore, we understand that your council commissioned a planning consultancy to do some work on new settlements, but the work is not complete or published.

The emergence of the pandemic has demonstrated that there is an irreversible move toward changing patterns of working across the country and this plan fails to consider it. Creating new communities that lack any infrastructure to support them will force an increase in carbon emissions through greater use of private vehicles to travel to work, shop, and for education. We believe that infrastructure must be in place before proceeding with housing expansion and that the ability of developers to adapt a proposal based on viability at a later stage should be withdrawn, at Parliamentary level if necessary.

The urgent need to address climate change should require any Council to embed every decision step to prove that it does not commit further harm. We believe that any spatial options plan must be re-written to demonstrate precise steps as to how each proposed site will ensure the Council reaches net-zero carbon emissions by 2030. There has to be a measurable plan to which the Council can be held accountable.

The paper also does not discuss or evaluate the use of brownfield sites within West Northants nor does it consider the needs of Northampton to grow substantially “upwards” rather than “outwards” to help achieve its goal to become a city. Greenfield locations at the scale proposed by some of these sites should be the last resort not the first easy option.

The West Northants Spatial Plan will report before the Oxford-Cambridge Arc plan has been published for consultation. There is a significant risk that at public examination a plan founded on this premature consultation will face a challenge on the basis that it is not sound because it did not take into account current national policy. As that sits at a higher level in the hierarchy, it will take precedence.

We reject the housing projection derived from the speculative population growth on two bases.

1. Housing need is inflated using a weighting applied to provide affordability based on market conditions. We find this reasoning unconvincing. Stipulating that a higher percentage of affordable housing, say 70%, is required for any applications of developments would be a more acceptable approach.
2. The Spatial Plan will report before the Oxford-Cambridge Arc plan has been published for consultation. The figures the plan provides on population growth may well differ markedly from those in the Arc. The public would find it difficult to support a plan based on data that is out of step.

The undersigned Parish Councils request that the Spatial Options paper be withdrawn with immediate effect to await the outcome of other studies. It should then be re-written to reflect precise climate change commitments and re-selection of sites that are in close proximity to employment opportunities and that can be accessed by walking, cycling or carbon-neutral public transport.

Your sincerely



Cllr Steve Parkin
Chair of Potterspury Parish Council on behalf of the A5 Alliance of
Parish Councils – Cosgrove, Deanshanger, Old Stratford, Potterspury,
Wicken and Yardley Gobion.