



REPORT FOR DECISION

Item No:- 23/05

Committee:-	Neighbourhood Planning Committee
Date:-	25 th January 2024
Author:-	Martin Hammond, Clerk
Report Title:-	Scoping report – neighbourhood planning for Kettering centre
Wards Affected:-	All, but mostly William Knibb, Northfield, All Saints, St Michaels and Wicksteed, St Peters, and Pipers Hill.

1. Purpose of Report

To start the discussion about the coverage of a new neighbourhood plan for the centre of Kettering

2. Recommendations

Views are requested

3. Information

- 3.1. This report seeks to summarise the current planning policy position within Kettering and generate a discussion about what objectives a second neighbourhood plan would have and what geography it ought to cover.
- 3.2. The process of preparing a neighbourhood plan is lengthy, work intensive and requires both a level of public engagement and a level of planning expertise which do not currently exist. We do have the practical experience of the Headlands Neighbourhood Plan process to draw on however, both to guide what should be repeated and what ought not to be.
- 3.3. It will be necessary to employ someone with the necessary expertise to help develop the plan and to commission resources which in turn can help build the public

engagement necessary and find volunteers. Before we can do both, we need to be clear on what we are trying to achieve; that is, what will be different once a plan is in place. NNC are happy to collaborate and share information and their evidence base, and they will be willing to participate in the thinking process, but their role can only be advisory and to fulfil their statutory responsibilities.

- 3.4. The 2024/5 budget provides £10,000 for the initial work on the plan. That should be enough to start with, to do both the primary tasks above but will require future years' contributions of a currently unknown amount to bring it to fruition.
- 3.5. There are few neighbourhood plans in draft or completed which cover a town the size of Kettering Resources are available however such as the Locality [Neighbourhood Planning Forum](#) which will connect us with advice and experience of people who are undertaking neighbourhood plans and will be facing the same experiences, as well as the experts from the Locality Neighbourhood Planning team and Neighbourhood Planning Champions
- 3.6. Finally, the extension of this committee's remit will necessitate a change in its membership (see the separate report on this agenda)

4. Current planning policy framework

- 4.1. NNC have started to review their strategic planning policies so that they can address changes that have occurred since the publication of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (2016). They are doing this through the preparation of a [North Northamptonshire Local Plan](#) (NNLP) which will extend the plan period to 2041 and include, where appropriate, updates to some non-strategic matters currently set out in the Part 2 Local Plans.
- 4.2. The [Local Development Scheme](#) (LDS) is the project plan that sets out the timetable for the preparation of the NNLP and other planning documents the Council intends to produce. The latest LDS sets out the following – slightly challenging - timetable for the NNLP:
 - Issues/scope Consultation - March 2022 (completed)
 - Draft Plan Consultation - June 2024
 - Publication Plan Consultation - January 2025
 - Submission to the Secretary of State - April 2025
 - Examination - October 2025
 - Inspector's Report - March 2026
 - Adoption - April 2026
- 4.3. The intention is for the Local Plan to remain a high level strategic document, setting out principles and objectives, including for all twelve town centres in North Northamptonshire. The Town Council will obviously be consulted on its progress through various stages and it is suggested that this committee could be the natural place for responding to those consultations.
- 4.4. The intention is that with a Local Plan in place, there would need to be a set of supplementary planning documents which translate the plan into policy detail and

which set out thematic or geographic objectives. A Neighbourhood Plan is one way of doing that and therefore a Plan which started to be designed from 2024, could be sufficiently well developed to be in force shortly after the Local Plan itself is approved.

4.5. The evidence base that NNC need to gather to inform the Local Plan can also be used in developing the neighbourhood plan. NNC will have gathered evidence on retail patterns and pressures, on HMOs, and on a variety of other topics, and, clearly, shared evidence bases, which inform both the strategy and the more detailed policy documents is a benefit. Some of that evidence base can be available relatively soon. I will also save the Town Council time and energy to be able to rely on these.

4.6. The Kettering Town Centre Area Action Plan (2011) is identified as an existing development plan document in the LDS but is now somewhat dated – these are its objectives and it can be seen that 2 and 5 will need to be overhauled

Objective 1: Create a zoned, vibrant town centre which makes best use of available land and existing buildings and maximises potential for regeneration

Objective 2: To implement a step change in quality retail offer incorporating 20,500sqm

Objective 3: To deliver a new residential community and utilise residential uses to support and complement the quarters

Objective 4: To create a town centre characterised by the high quality of urban design, architecture and public realm and respect for heritage

Objective 5: To create a significant increase in office employment space, along with further regeneration opportunities

Objective 6: To make a safe, welcoming, walkable and well connected town centre

Objective 7: To deliver a green town centre with an emphasis on provision of green infrastructure, renewable energy initiatives and environmentally efficient buildings to encourage green living

4.7. A Neighbourhood Plan can be a vehicle for replacing the AAP. Some of the evidence gathering done by NNC to date on the condition of town centres shows that Kettering is actually doing relatively well – it has investment in the public realm and in the private realm of late. The opportunity to engage with NNC on economic development objectives will exist alongside consultation on planning principles.

5. Objectives

5.1. We need to identify what problems we are trying to fix with a neighbourhood plan, or which unsatisfactory trends we are trying to counter.

5.2. It might be worth a discussion with the planning committee membership, as they will have practical experience of looking at over 100 applications a year. Some trends obvious to the clerk are

- Poor quality conversions of buildings into flats and HMOs from retail, leisure and office uses, often without amenities, outside space or parking, and with low space standards, in noisy parts of town
- Sub division of residential properties into small units or HMOs which are often not high quality
- Lack of a practical application of sustainable technologies to developments

5.3. Members may wish to consider whether the objectives in the Town Centre Area Action plan need to be replaced, removed or reinforced. At the time, it sought to protect retail premises from conversion into other uses, but economic trends have been hard to resist and show no signs of abatement. A vision of what the town centre is for is, again, essential to the neighbourhood plan but needs to be developed in conjunction not just with local stakeholders but with the planning authority.

6. Geography

6.1. The attached plans (Appendix one) show several potential options for the coverage of a plan, but the discussion above will be the main driver of what a plan looks like and so any variation on these options are possible.

- A) **Town centre** and abutting the Headlands area plan (yellow block) - this would have a population of about 3000 people. A plan for this geography would predominately be a town centre plan, and it would be harder to engage sufficient local residents in such a plan because of the more transient nature of the population.
- B) **Wider town centre** (yellow plus purple blocks) incorporating all main shopping and entertainment areas, and residential streets within a few minutes walk of them – basically, this is the Kettering Central ward as scheduled to come into being in May 2025 for both NNC and the Town Council. This has a population of about 9000 people (8153 electors in 2022). If this or option c were adopted, then the plan would be looking to do two things
- C) **A Core Kettering** plan – including areas within a 15-20 minute walk of the centre but excluding the Headlands Plan area; this would probably have about 18000 residents. (yellow, purple and grey blocks)

The existing Headlands plan is shown in blue.

6.2. There is separately the concept of “fifteen minute neighbourhoods” which is a relatively new planning term and one which has been misinterpreted by some

commentators. The original concept of a 15 minute neighbourhood was that residents of any urban area should be able to access most of their needs within a short walk or bike ride from their home, thereby ultimately reducing car use and encouraging active travel. However, it is more appropriate for city environments than market towns and their objectives – around active travel, greener neighbourhoods, diverse communities and self sustaining economies – can be achieved via a neighbourhood plan without adopting the particular label.

7. Consultation and Engagement

A core principle of how we progress a plan will be the community engagement that takes place and helps shape it.

When the Council's budget was being consulted on in November 2023, there was one response on the coverage of the neighbourhood plan, requesting that it cover Field St and Bayes St in Northfield ward.

8. Climate change implications

Climate change objectives should be an integral part of any neighbourhood plan and the Council now has a statutory duty to consider the climate change implications of its policies and activities and to have a rolling plan of action. usually prioritises

9. Policy Implications

The council's objectives are to develop a second neighbourhood plan for at least the centre of Kettering as well as monitor and review the existing Headlands plan.

Background Papers

Boundary Commission maps

Headlands Plan map

Description of 15 minute neighbourhoods

APPENDIX ONE – POTENTIAL AREAS FOR A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN



