



East Northamptonshire Council

Rushden Neighbourhood Plan

General Statement about the Planning System and Neighbourhood Development Plans

Introduction

On **Thursday 24 May 2018** there will be a referendum for residents of the parish of Rushden, to approve the “making” (adoption) of the Rushden Neighbourhood Plan, covering the period 2011-2031. This Statement explains more about the referendum taking place and how you can take part. It also gives you information about the Town and Country Planning System and the position of Neighbourhood Development Plans (or ‘Neighbourhood Plans’) within this.

The Referendum

The referendum will ask you to vote “Yes” or “No” to a question. For this referendum, you will receive a ballot paper with this question:

Do you want East Northamptonshire Council to use the Neighbourhood Development Plan for Rushden to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?

The referendum area (the parish area of Rushden) is shown on a map attached to the Information Statement for the Rushden Neighbourhood Plan.

How do I vote in the referendum?

You show your choice by putting a cross (X) in the “Yes” or “No” box on your ballot paper. Put a cross in only ONE box or your vote will not be counted.

If residents vote in favour of the Neighbourhood Development Plan, it will be adopted. If it is rejected, the Plan will not be adopted. If adopted, the Neighbourhood Development Plan will become part of the statutory Development Plan covering the parish of Rushden.

The Town and Country Planning System

The planning system in the UK manages the use and development of land and buildings.

The planning system has two main parts to it:

- Plan making – setting out a plan for how an area will develop over time as a guide to future development.
- Managing development – when development is agreed through planning permission.

East Northamptonshire Council is responsible for deciding the majority of development proposals within its administrative area.

Decisions on planning applications are based on national planning policy (“National Planning Policy Framework”), the Local Plan (the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2011-2031, adopted July 2016 and other Development Plan Documents), any relevant Neighbourhood Development Plan, Supplementary Planning Documents and/ or any other relevant non-statutory policies, evidence or guidance (termed “material considerations”).

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework was published on 27th March 2012. The Government (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) is currently consulting upon a revision to the framework (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/draft-revised-national-planning-policy-framework>). The consultation for this closes on 10 May 2018.

The current framework (and its draft update) gives guidance to local councils in drawing up local plans and on making decisions on planning applications. It includes a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Local Plans

Local Plans are prepared by the local planning authority. These must be prepared with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. They must be positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and the National Planning Policy Framework.

The adopted plan for East Northamptonshire covering the parish of Rushden consists of:

- North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2011-2031 (Local Plan Part 1), adopted July 2016; and

- A small number of saved policies from East Northamptonshire District Local Plan (Local Plan Part 2), adopted November 1996.

Policies set out in these development plan documents will be used for decision making purposes (together with national planning policy and any relevant Neighbourhood Development Plans).

Neighbourhood Planning

Neighbourhood planning was introduced under the Localism Act 2011 to give members of the community a more “hands on” role in the planning of their neighbourhoods.

Town Councils or Neighbourhood Forums (community groups that are designated to take forward Neighbourhood Planning in areas without parishes) can now use Neighbourhood Planning powers to establish general planning policies for the development and use of land through the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan (referred to legally as ‘neighbourhood development plans’). The plan must be prepared through a process of consultation with local residents before an independent Examiner reviews the plan.

The legislation, however, sets out that Neighbourhood Development Plans have to meet a number of ‘Basic Conditions’ to ensure they are legally compliant and take account of wider policy considerations.

The Basic Conditions are that the Plan must:

- Have regard to national planning policy and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State (e.g. National Planning Policy Framework);
- Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- Be in general conformity with strategic policies in the development plan for the local area;
- Be compatible with EU obligations and human rights requirements

The independent Examiner will need to be satisfied that a Neighbourhood Development Plan meets these conditions before it can be voted on in a local referendum. This is to make sure that referendums only take place when proposals are workable and of a decent quality.

If more than half of those voting in a referendum have voted in favour of the Neighbourhood Development Plan, the local planning authority must “make” (adopt) it part of the statutory development plan and use it when making decisions on planning applications in the Plan Area (in this case, the parish of Rushden).

The Rushden Neighbourhood Plan

The Rushden Neighbourhood Plan (covering the period 2011-2031) has been produced by Rushden Town Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. The Neighbourhood Development Plan contains a vision of how Rushden and its surrounding rural hinterland will be by 2031, together with defined Plan objectives and a set of policies.

The Neighbourhood Development Plan has been produced in accordance with the statutory requirements and following extensive public consultation with residents and key stakeholders since 2014, and a recent independent examination. The Plan has, subject to minor modifications made by the Examiner in order to fulfil the 'basic conditions', been recommended to proceed to referendum.

Where can I see a copy of the Rushden Neighbourhood Plan?

A copy of the Rushden Neighbourhood Plan is available to download through East Northamptonshire Council's Neighbourhood Development Planning web page (<http://www.east-northamptonshire.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplanning>) and Rushden Town Council's Neighbourhood Plan web page (<http://www.rushdentowncouncil.gov.uk/rushden-neighbourhood-plan.html>). Locations where you can view hard copies of the document are set out in the Information Statement.