



Design for the Future

Oundle and Surrounding Areas Discussion Paper

May 2004

Introduction

The Council has to prepare a new development plan, which, subject to new legislation expected in summer 2004 will be called a Local Development Framework. It will replace the adopted Local Plan and set a broad framework for the future of East Northamptonshire and potentially the wider North Northamptonshire area, outlining a strategy for its future development and the conservation of its heritage up to 2021. Initial work is currently underway on the possibility of a joint Local Development Framework with Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough. This discussion paper has been prepared to gauge the community's visions and aims, so key decisions about the future of East Northamptonshire are well informed.

This paper is the fourth in a series of area based discussion papers, concentrating on Oundle and surrounding area. It focuses on the key issues that have arisen out of previous consultation and from changes to Government Policy. Key issues addressed:

- Priorities for Oundle and surrounding areas with implications for planning;
- Social, economic and environmental roles and relationships of Oundle and surrounding areas;
- Where should development be focused;
- What type of development should be permitted;
- Planning Out Crime
- Maintaining and enhancing green spaces and recreational facilities;
- Increasing community involvement;

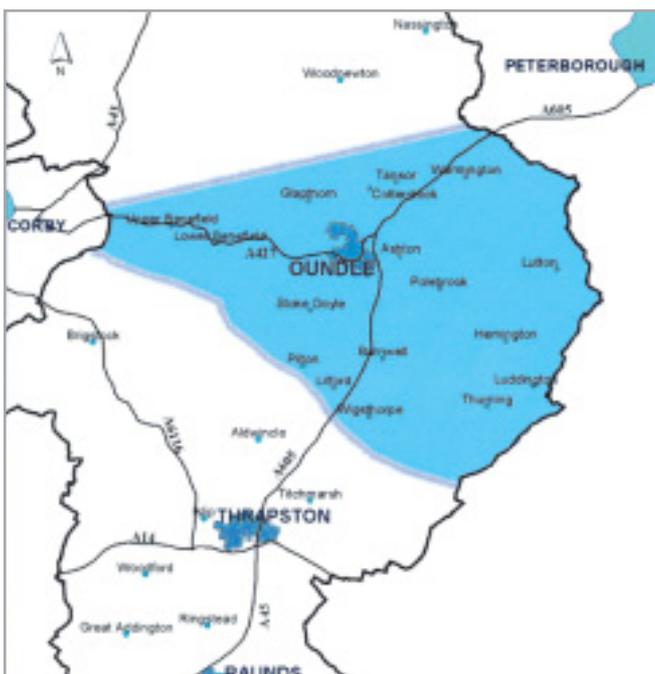
Background

Oundle is the most northerly of the towns in East Northamptonshire. It stands in a loop of the River Nene. The centre of the town is characterised by fine stone buildings, and is also dominated by the Public School, with its buildings spread throughout Oundle. The town has expanded modestly over the last 15 years with residential development to the north and west of the town centre and the development of the Nene Valley Business Park.

The rural area is considered diverse in nature with a range of villages differing in size and service base. Development in the villages has been in relation to their size and role with high levels of growth in Warmington.

For the purposes of this discussion paper the surrounding area is essentially defined as the parishes of Warmington, Tansor, Cotterstock, Glapthorn, Upper Benefield, Lower Benefield, Ashton, Luton, Polebrook, Stoke Doyle, Hemington, Barnwell, Pilton, Lilford-Cum-Wigsthorpe, Luddington, Thurning.

The plan shows the extent of the area covered by this discussion paper.



Some of the key characteristics of the area are:

- The role of Oundle as a service centre;
- The lack of employment opportunity in the town;
- The potential for tourism growth
- There is richness in the character and heritage of the countryside;
- The diverse nature of the villages.

The town of Oundle has seen modest development in recent years, in terms of housing and minimal employment growth. Development in the surrounding villages has generally been in relation to their size and role. Some development has been on sites identified in the Local Plan but significant development has also been on windfall sites, which are defined as sites that are not formally allocated within the Local Plan but still come forward for development, such as conversions, redevelopment and infill development.

The current Local Plan allocates land at Glapthorn Road, Oundle, Chapel Street, Warmington and North of the Village Hall, Hemington for residential development. In addition, there are other sites identified for alternative uses. The table opposite provides an update on the latest position.

LOCATION	POLICY	LAND USE	STATUS
Glaphorn Road	OU1	Housing	Site Complete
Milton Road	OU2	Car Parking	No progress
Chapel Street	WA1	Housing	Site Complete
North of Village Hall	HE1	Housing	Site Complete

As a result of intense residential development across the District, the Council has adopted interim policy which essentially restricts residential growth to brownfield land to promote a balance between housing, jobs and services. This approach may be revised in the context of the emerging Milton Keynes

and South Midlands strategy which earmarks Northamptonshire as part of one of four major growth areas for south-east England. However, it is still uncertain how much development will have to be accommodated in East Northamptonshire and a definitive figure is not expected until December 2004.

Priorities for the Area

Local people, groups and visitors to East Northamptonshire have already had a chance to comment on what they thought were the main land use and development issues as a result of a key issues consultation document published in July 2001. The following priorities were raised:

- Strengthening the role of town centres, fostering urban renaissance;
- Stimulating employment opportunities;
- Improving the environmental and visual quality of the area;
- Maintaining balanced communities and in particular supporting affordable housing;
- Avoid town cramming;
- Improving infrastructure;
- Maintaining and enhancing services and facilities; and
- Increasing community involvement.

In addition, the East Northamptonshire Local Strategic Partnership, made up of public, private, voluntary and community organisations

in the District launched a draft Community Strategy in 2003. This is available at www.east-northamptonshire.gov.uk/ppimage/upload/Image7615.PDF and from the Council Offices in Thrapston. The Strategy raises the following community priorities:

- Environment and Infrastructure;
- Health and Housing;
- Education and Lifelong learning;
- Community Safety; and
- Economic Development.

The development and land use implications of these priorities needs to be carried forward through the new Local Development Framework.

1. Do the lists of priorities comprise all the key issues relevant to Oundle and the surrounding areas?

Spatial Roles and Relationships

An important issue that needs to be examined is the roles and relationships of Oundle and hinterland with the wider area.

Oundle as the most northerly of the towns in the district has close links in the first instance with Peterborough, but also Corby and Thrapston. All these settlements have different and complex relationships with each other.

Oundle will potentially have issues from the planned regeneration and growth of Corby and Peterborough over the next 20 years as part of the Government's Growth Area proposals. As these areas develop, it will be crucial that Oundle and the surrounding areas are integrated within the proposals to ensure their roles are maintained and enhanced.

2. What do you see as Oundle's role in the wider region?

3. As Corby and Peterborough develop, what can be done to ensure Oundle maintains and enhances its role?

The villages within the area also have an important spatial role. It is key we determine the links between villages to enable us to plan and implement sustainable communities.



It is considered that the town provides for the main day to day needs of residents in Oundle and the surrounding rural areas listed above.

If the new Local Development Framework is to tackle social, economic and environmental issues in a joined up manner, it is important to identify the roles of Oundle and its linkages to the surrounding villages and the wider area. We need you to tell us where you go to shop, school and work.

4. How far do you travel to use day to day services and facilities, such as shops, schools, post offices, places of worship, public houses, doctors surgeries or medical facilities?

Development Options

Distribution of Development

The strategy for the Milton Keynes and South Midlands sub region identifies Northamptonshire as a growth area which could provide for more homes, jobs and services in a sustainable way.

The main thrust of Government guidance and the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands is that new development should be

directed towards the main towns, which are well supported by services and facilities. Whilst the Local Development Framework will reflect this, it is considered that given the diversity of the District, there is potential and emerging need for some additional development in the rural areas to help sustain local communities, existing community facilities and to meet local housing needs.

One of the Council's key priorities is to achieve sustainable communities. This is considered possible by bringing together housing with jobs, education, health facilities, shopping, other services and access to public transport.

Preliminary work for the Local Development Framework will consider what proportion of new development should be allocated in each town and how much should be directed to other settlements.

The Council has recently commissioned consultants to assess the potential capacity of the district over the next 20 years. The study broadly concluded that the district could accommodate more development. Specifically relating to this area, development could potentially be accommodated North West of Oundle and south of Warmington.

5. What are your feelings about development in these areas? Is new housing supported in these areas and on what conditions?

To assist in the appreciation of the possible development options, the following scenarios help illustrate how the District could

Oundle

Oundle is identified in the existing Local Plan, as one of the main locations for development in East Northamptonshire. Emerging Regional Planning Guidance does not specifically identify the town as a growth centre. However, it is recognised that smaller towns such as Oundle can play an important role as local centres for shopping,



accommodate the development proposed in the draft South Midlands and Milton Keynes Sub Regional Strategy, which may be subject to change.

6. Which of these statements do you agree with most and why?

- a) Most development should be focused on towns;*
- b) The majority of development should be in the towns with some development in the larger villages;*
- c) There should be a more even distribution between the towns and villages.*

employment, community facilities in the future through regeneration and planning as they have capacity to meet the needs of their surrounding areas as well as their own population.

During 2002, the Council undertook a draft urban potential study. This showed that there are sites within Oundle where there is potential for land use change. The study found that 394 homes could be created within Oundle on sites considered 'likely' to be available for development over the next twenty years.

Aspirational Sites

Arising from previous consultation, a number of individual sites were promoted by landowners as potential development sites in and around Oundle and the surrounding areas. These include:

- Land at Ashton Mill, Ashton
- Land at the East of Ashton, Ashton
- Land to the North of the Green, Ashton
- Land at Friars Close Farm, Barnwell
- Land at the Cricket Ground, Church Lane, Barnwell
- Land at Manor Farm, Benefield Road, Glapthorn
- Land to the North of Luddington
- Land to the North of Luddington (2)
- Land adjacent to Ashtree Cottage, Luddington
- Land adjacent to Ashtree Cottage (2), Luddington
- Land to the East of Ashdown House, Main Street, Polebrook
- Land to the East of Hemington Road, Polebrook
- Land to the North East and East of Polebrook
- Land adjacent to the Nursing Home, Polebrook
- Land to the North East of Lutton Road, South East of Orchard House, Polebrook
- Land to the South West of Lutton Road, Polebrook
- Land adjacent to the Old School House, Stoke Doyle
- Land to the East of the road to Fotheringhay, Tansor
- Land at York Farm, Thurning
- Land adjacent to Cedar House, Luddington Road, Thurning
- Land at Lammas Farm, Upper Benefield
- Land to the South of Broadgate Way, to the East of the Cemetery, Warmington
- Land at Eaglesthorpe Farm, Warmington,
- Land at Big Green, Warmington,
- Land East of Chapel Street, Warmington,
- Land to the South West of Broadgate Way, Warmington,
- Land to the North of Big Green, East of Buntings Lane, Warmington
- Land adjacent to Milton Road, Oundle
- Land to the East of Station Road, Oundle
- Land at Ashton Road, Oundle
- Land at Cotterstock Road, Oundle
- Land at Dairy Farm, Stoke Hill, Stoke Doyle Road, Oundle
- Land at Glapthorn Road, off Creed Road, Oundle
- Land at the junction of Station Road and the A605 to the East of Oundle
- Land off Benefield Road, Oundle
- Land off Herne Road/Ashton Road, Oundle
- Land off Stoke Doyle Road, Oundle
- Land to the West of Warren Bridge, Oundle
- Land to the East of East Road, Oundle
- Land to the North of Herne Road, Oundle
- Land to the South East of Station Road, Oundle
- Land to the West of Cotterstock Road, Oundle
- Land at New Field, adjacent to Glapthorn Road, Oundle
- Workshop to the South East of Station Road, Oundle

These sites are mapped and available for inspection at the Council offices in Thrapston and the library in Oundle. The listed sites will be assessed against sustainability and locational criteria over the next few months.

7. As yet we have not identified any new sites to be allocated for development. At this stage, we are asking for your views on the above sites or where (in broad terms) you think additional development should be provided?

A possible site for redevelopment through the production of an Area Action Plan is to the east of East Road. There are no definite proposals for its use at the present time, but a possibility could be a mixed use development incorporating the regeneration of the existing employment units with the creation of new office space, integrated with an element of residential development.

8. Do you think the development of East Road would benefit Oundle? If so, how and what uses would you consider suitable?

A key site located at an important gateway to Oundle is the Riverside Hotel. This site currently has a long standing planning permission for a hotel, however this has yet to move to the construction phase. The Council is keen to see this site regenerated.



9. What would you like to see happen at the Riverside Hotel site? What uses would you consider appropriate for the site?

Settlement Hierarchy

An assessment of the availability of services and transport in the rural area will help to determine the distribution of development between villages. This will inform preparation of the Local Development

Framework to ensure those settlements that are most sustainable to meet the needs and the views of the local community towards future development are identified.



Settlement service and facilities (as at July 2003)

Services and facilities	Villages							
	Convenience store	Post office	Community hall	Doctors/ dentists	Primary school	Rural business	Public house	Hourly bus
Armston						✓		
Ashton			✓			✓	✓	
Barnwell	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	
Upper Benefield						✓	✓	✓
Lower Benefield			✓			✓		✓
Cotterstock			✓			✓		
Glaphorn			✓		✓	✓		
Hemington	✓							
Luddington								
Lutton			✓			✓		
Lilford						✓		
Pilton						✓		
Polebrook			✓		✓	✓	✓	
Stoke Doyle						✓	✓	
Tansor			✓					
Thurning			✓			✓		
Warmington	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Wigsthorpe						✓		

It is considered many of the settlements listed above are lacking in key community facilities and services, such as a daily public transport service, a shop or a post office. The villages of Warmington and Barnwell although not having a large service base, do play a role of serving neighbouring villages because they have some key local services and a reasonable level of access.

facilities means that people need to travel, often considerable distances by car for even basic day to day services.

12. Are settlements with low service provision unsustainable for even the most limited of new development, or would steering development elsewhere have adverse consequences for some aspects of village life and local services?

10. Do other villages in the area look to Warmington and Barnwell as local service centres?

11. Are there any other settlements in the area which could be recognised as local service centres?

Current Local Plan policies allow for a small amount of infill housing within the existing built up area of the villages. Allowing new housing in places where there are few if any services and



Settlement Boundaries

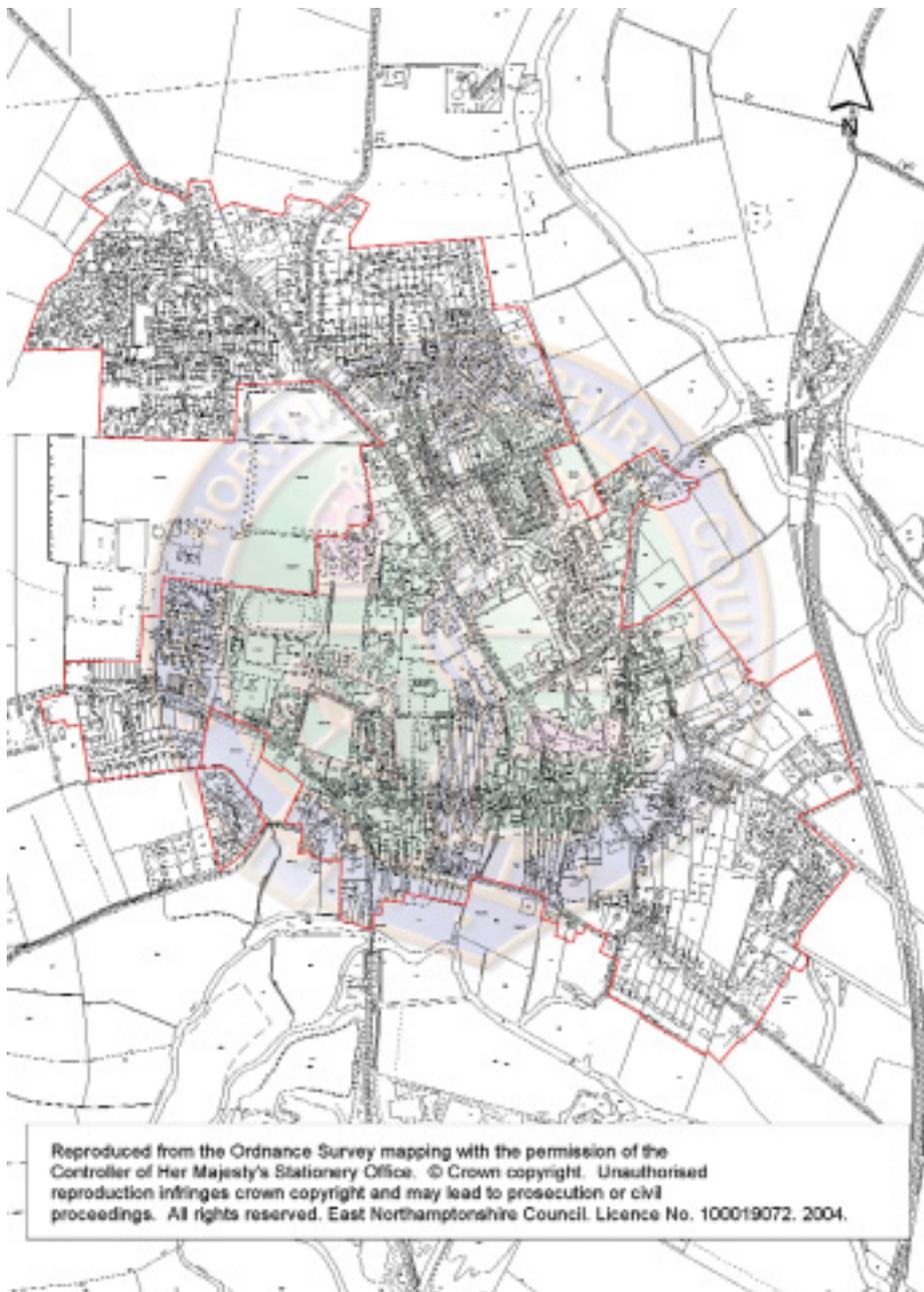
The main purpose of an urban boundary is to ensure that development proposals outside the boundary are considered lower in locational priority than sites within the boundary. Outside the urban area, development would be strictly limited to agricultural buildings and other uses appropriate to the countryside. The current Local Plan does not define an urban boundary for Oundle. The Council published a draft urban potential study in 2002, which defined the study area as the main built up part of the town. The boundary

has been updated and is shown below. It generally follows property lines and excludes open areas of land and peripheral buildings and structures.

13. *Do you think that the main built up area of the town should be defined as the urban boundary, if not, how should it be defined?*

14. *What uses do you consider are appropriate outside the urban boundary?*

Map showing the main built up area of Oundle



In terms of villages, the current Local Plan uses a written definition of village boundaries to decide where open countryside policies apply and where policies relating to the built up area are applicable.

Previous consultation has shown strong support for the inclusion of village boundaries in the new replacement plan, with some respondents requesting tight boundaries and others flexible.

The Council has prepared a consultation document that illustrates the existing built up

area of villages as defined in the extant Local Plan. This document is intended to operate as an interim measure until rural settlements are reassessed as part of the preparation of the Local Development Framework, taking into account the future needs and aspirations of the local communities.

15. If you live in any of the villages listed above, please tell us what you consider are the needs and aspirations of your village and how this should be reflected in the definition of village boundaries over the next twenty years?

Type of Development

Not only is location an important factor in delivering sustainable development but also the type of development and services.

Infrastructure

Oundle as a town has seen modest growth over recent years, unfortunately even these levels of growth have not been matched with sufficient infrastructure provision. For example, there is a

shortage of school places and doctors surgeries are at capacity.

This is also the case for physical infrastructure in and around Oundle in that there is a general need for upgrades of the utilities supply network and many roads serving Oundle and the surrounding area require improvement.

16. What do you think the problems are with the social and physical infrastructure in the area?

Employment

One of the roles of the Local Development Framework is to ensure that there is an adequate supply of land in suitable locations to meet the future needs of new or expanded businesses. It is thought Oundle is lacking in employment opportunities for its residents and that of the surrounding rural area. It is a fact that Oundle has few large employers with many people living in and around the town commuting out to the likes of Peterborough to work. This is seen as an ongoing problem reinforced by the fact that there is limited land available for such employment development.



17. Do you consider the lack of employment opportunities a major issue for Oundle? What can be done to rectify it?

18. If more employment land is needed, where should it be?

The current Local Plan allows the conversion of employment buildings for residential use. This may not be very sustainable in the long run, as opportunities for local jobs are lost. To prevent their loss to other uses, we may

need to take specific measures to protect them.

19. Should priority be given to the re-use of existing buildings for employment use?

Housing

Over the recent years, Oundle has seen 310 completions over the past 8 years, with currently, 90 outstanding planning permissions.

20. In terms of housing, how would you like to see Oundle develop, over the next 20 years?

Furthermore, the current Local Plan generally promotes the development of infill sites within most villages and to a certain extent Oundle. Many respondents to previous consultation expressed concern that such development has undermined the character and appearance of areas and introduced an excessive number of new access points in previously quiet residential roads.

21. Should the new Local Development Framework seek to prohibit or limit infill development in villages and Oundle?

Over provision of car parking spaces in housing developments encourages use of the motor car and leaves less space for buildings and landscaping, which can make development appear cramped and overdeveloped. Government guidance seeks to ensure an average residential car parking provision of no more than 1.5 spaces per dwelling. There are opportunities to apply exceptions. Examples may include remote rural areas where public transport is limited and where there is little alternative to the car. The Council is aware of some support for greater flexibility towards parking provision in rural areas.

22. Do you consider that parking standards should be applied differently in rural areas compared to the towns, if so, how?



Maintaining balanced communities and in particular supporting affordable housing was identified as a priority through previous consultation. Planning has an important role in negotiating affordable housing provided that clear evidence of a need is demonstrated. A housing needs survey commissioned and adopted by the Council in 1999 showed a need for affordable housing units in Oundle and surrounding areas. The Council has commissioned Outside Research to update this study, however, it is probable that a similar level of need will be identified.

23. How best can affordable housing be provided? Ideas for possible innovation are sought?

In the villages, the current Local Plan requires housing developments of more than 10 dwellings or residential sites of more than 0.4 hectares to provide 30% of the total number of dwellings as affordable housing. However, most housing developments in the rural area are on smaller sites than 10 dwellings. An alternative approach suggested



“...there is no reason why, in small villages if there is evidence of need and subject to financial viability, they should not seek to match every new market house with an affordable home.”

The proposed changes to national planning guidance on housing indicate that, in rural areas, sites could be allocated solely for affordable housing.

through previous consultation is that there should be an affordable housing requirement of at least 20% on sites of more than 4 units, rising to 30% for more than 10 dwellings.

The Government has stated, as part of the Rural White Paper published in 2000, that:

24. What percentage of affordable housing on rural sites is an achievable target?

25. Should the provision of new housing in some villages be restricted to that required for affordable housing, and if so, to which villages should this apply?

Tourism

Oundle town centre is seen as unique in this area with its mix of heritage, culture and diverse retail base. With this thriving local centre it is considered there is potential to place a greater emphasis on the promotion of tourism within the town.

26. Do you think encouraging wider tourism potential would be a benefit to Oundle? If so, how can it be achieved?

27. Do you think there are any weaknesses with Oundle's town centre which could undermine growth in tourism?

Tourism is also a key factor in the villages around Oundle with their heritage and attractive surroundings, they provide an important link to the striking rural setting and open countryside which makes this area so special.

An area considered as having further potential for tourism activities is Oundle



Marina. Its location is ideal being opposite Barnwell Country Park and having the River Nene on its southern and eastern boundary.

28. Could anything be done to make more use of the Marina for tourism purposes?

29. Should we be encouraging more tourism activity in the rural areas? If so, what should it be?

Planning Out Crime

A safe community is the key to quality of life, but fear of crime and disorder makes life miserable for many people. The Council has produced a Crime and Disorder Strategy to help by working in a partnership approach to reduce the level and impact of crime and disorder. A copy is available at <http://www.east-northamptonshire.gov.uk/ppimageupload/Im age7510.PDF> or from the Council Offices in Thrapston.

The Council considers that planning out crime and designing in community safety

should be a core principle in planning any new development. Planning and design for the safety and security of people and properties should be realised and optimised as an element of sustainable communities.

30. Do you think there are any crime hotspots in your area? If so, where?

31. How do you think we can plan out crime in new and existing developments?

Green Spaces and Recreational Facilities

Green spaces in the District are important in terms of providing local residents with places to sit, walk and take part in numerous recreational activities. Responses to previous consultation expressed concern that directing development towards the towns will threaten valuable green spaces and lead to town cramming. The Council is undertaking a district wide study to assess open space provision and needs. The results of this study will feed into the Local Development Framework process. They will help to provide justification for seeking open space provision as part of new housing developments, and for the protection of existing open spaces.



32. Are there any parts of Oundle and the villages that you consider do not have enough areas of public open space?

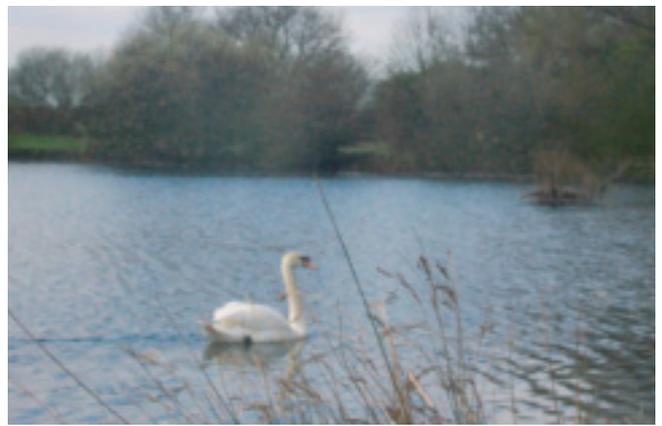
The current Local Plan requires developers of large residential schemes of over 15 dwellings to provide recreational open space, or make a financial contribution towards the upgrading of an existing recreational area nearby. Government thinking now suggests that the planning system could be changed so that smaller developments and other developments such as offices could make a contribution.

33. What existing recreational facilities need improving and what improvements would you like to see?

34. Should the Council seek a financial contribution from all housing developments, not just from those of 15 dwellings or more?

35. Would you like to see the Council seeking contributions from other forms of development, if so, which types?

It is vital that local people are able to visit the countryside, a good example is Barnwell Country Park. The Council seeks to ensure that residents are able to enjoy the health benefits associated with access to green-space in the countryside. The current Local Plan affords strict controls over development in the countryside.



36. Can you suggest any areas which could provide access to the wider open countryside?

The Council places great importance on providing a mix of leisure and recreational facilities in accessible locations for the residents of the district. This is reinforced by the fact that the Council currently has a Leisure Strategy out for consultation a copy is available at www.east-northamptonshire.gov.uk/ppimageupload/Image7884.DOC or a hard copy from the Council Offices.

Leisure services are not statutory services, but the Government places leisure high on the national agenda as a tool for helping to create a joined up approach to our complex social problems.

37. Does Oundle and the surrounding area have sufficient leisure and recreational facilities? If not, what is missing?

Increased Community Involvement

Effective public participation will be at the heart of preparing the new Local Development Framework for East Northamptonshire. Consultation with the public and interested parties will be carried out at key stages in preparing the new plan to ensure that public participation is promoted. The Council is obliged to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement to set out how we intend to engage the local community.

Through the Statement of Community Involvement, we need to consider innovative ideas for public consultation to ensure that all sections of the community participate in the planning of the District.

At the local level, the local planning process could be informed by Parish Plans and Village Design Statements prepared by parish councils and local communities. Warmington has completed a Village Design Statement which is available at www.warmington.org/council/vds/index.htm or from the Council Offices in Thrapston. The Parish Plan concept was recently introduced as part a Countryside Agency initiative, which the Agency provides funding assistance. Further information is available at www.countryside.gov.uk Parish plans are community led plans which enable local people to identify the social, economic and environmental issues affecting their quality of life and determine how it could be improved.

38. Can you suggest methods of public participation that would help wider community involvement in the planning process, particularly harder to reach groups such as young people, ethnic minorities, the elderly and mobility impaired groups?

39. Views are sought from interested parties who would consider producing Parish Plans for their area or village?

Your View

We would like to hear your views on the questions posed. You can send comments by FREEPOST to:

Strategy and Policy Directorate
Planning Policy
FREEPOST NH2352
East Northamptonshire Council
East Northamptonshire House
Cedar Drive
Thrapston
Northamptonshire
NN14 4LZ

Alternatively you can e-mail to localplan@east-northamptonshire.gov.uk

You can also visit a chat room facility to stimulate debate and exchange views at www.east-northamptonshire.gov.uk/forum/

You should note that all responses will be made available to the public. The comments

and details of all respondents will be recorded on the Councils Local Development Framework database.

Your comments and views are not required by any formal date but it would be helpful if your comments could reach us by October 2004 in order to inform the preparation of Local Development Documents expected to be published during 2005.

Over the next few months the Council will be publishing further discussion papers on other areas within the District. A discussion paper on Raunds and the surrounding area is to follow in June, and the towns and surrounding areas of Rushden and Thrapston in the coming months.

If you require any assistance or would like to discuss any issues raised in this document, please feel free to speak to one of our Planners within the Planning Policy Section on (01832) 742142 or 742134 or 742221.

