



Wellingborough Town Centre Public Realm Strategy Supplementary Planning Document



Regulation 17 Statement of Consultation

March 2009



1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires the community to be involved in the preparation of a draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). Whilst there is no statutory process for involving the community prior to the publication of the draft SPD, the Council must set out details of any pre-consultation activities undertaken in accordance with Regulation 17 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004. The details, which should be published in the form of a 'Consultation Statement', should include:
- the names of any persons whom the authority consulted in connection with the preparation of the draft SPD;
 - how those persons were consulted;
 - a summary of the main issues raised in those consultations; and
 - how those issues have been addressed in the draft SPD.

2. Pre-Consultation Activities

- 2.1 In summer 2008 the Council consulted on the Town Centre Area Action Plan to regenerate the town centre and provide for development to 2021. An independent Inspector is currently undertaking a Public Examination into the Plan. Following receipt of his report, which is expected to be delivered in May 2009, the Council will adopt the Plan. In order to take forward some of the proposals in the Plan, a Public Realm Strategy, a Conservation Area Appraisal and a Shop Front and Advertisement Design Guide are now being produced. This statement relates to the consultation undertaken to date in the preparation of the Public Realm Strategy.
- 2.2 The draft Public Realm Strategy (the Strategy) has been prepared by Matrix Partnership Ltd on behalf of the Borough Council. Part B of the document includes a baseline study which has been undertaken in order to ensure that the Strategy is underpinned by an in-depth review of existing and emerging planning policy as well as research and analysis of the existing public realm. This process has involved:
- consultation with key officers, stakeholder organisations and user groups;
 - site visits to survey and record the current condition of public spaces;
 - historic research into the town centre's heritage and evolution;
 - research into paving materials, construction and best practice; and
 - establishing existing management and maintenance programmes.
- 2.3 To help inform the baseline study, stakeholder workshops were held in October 2008 to discuss the issues with various interested parties and build on the findings of the initial review. A drop-in session, aimed primarily at retailers in the town centre, was held on 1st October 2008 from 5 -7 pm whilst an all day workshop took place on 2nd October 2008 from 10am - 4.30 pm.
- 2.4 The sessions aimed to elicit the views and ideas of key interested parties on key issues relating to the public realm and two other documents that are being prepared – the Conservation Area Appraisal and Shop Front and Advertisement Design Guide. A



summary of the key public realm themes and issues to emerge from the workshops and baseline study is included in section 4, below.

3. Persons Consulted

- 3.1 The drop-in session was advertised around the town centre and was aimed primarily at retailers. Appendix 1 consists of a list of those invited to the workshop held on 2nd October 2008 whilst Appendix 2 includes the names of organisations represented at the workshop and persons attending.

4. Main Issues

- 4.1 The following table lists the range of issues identified through the baseline study and stakeholder workshops and indicates how these have been addressed in the draft SPD.

| | Issue | How has this been addressed in the draft SPD? |
|----------|---|---|
| 1 | The quality of streets is undermined by overly-dominant highway engineering - In places, the geometry of street design and materials prioritises cars over pedestrians and undermines the historic townscape. | Section 12 of the draft Strategy defines a hierarchy of streets and illustrates the width of these streets that should be provided where improvement works are proposed. Areas with potential for junctions to be tightened; carriageways to be narrowed; and footpaths to be widened are identified. Other proposed works along key streets are also indicated in order to encourage pedestrian activity. |
| 2 | The erosion of the centre's traditional fine-grained urban scale - Certain relatively modern buildings are out of scale with their setting, surrounded by ill-defined open space and turn their back on the public realm. | The Town Centre Area Action Plan includes proposals for the regeneration of certain sites including the Tresham Institute tower and Market Square. This will provide opportunities to introduce new buildings of an appropriate scale that front onto the public realm. |
| 3 | The poor quality of the Market Square - What was once the town's principal public space and a focal hub of activities is now a low quality open area, occupied by a struggling market and lined by poorly designed buildings and the rear of properties. There are no opportunities to rest and the overall feel undermines the setting of All Hallows Church. | Policy PS1 of the Town Centre Area Action Plan (TCAAP) includes proposals to put the Market Square at the heart of the town centre. This will require a comprehensive masterplan which will incorporate a 'perimeter block' urban design arrangement. The Public Realm Strategy provides design guidance to enable the implementation of a high quality public realm as part of the regeneration proposals and in section 10 it includes a recommendation to explore the possibility of reconfiguring the Market Square in order to accommodate events. |



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| 4 | <p>The sense of arrival – Although the railway station facilities are adequate in many ways, there is little to direct the visitor to the town centre. The experience arriving at Church Street by bus could be further improved, as could the welcome and way-finding for drivers at key junctions and car parks.</p> | <p>The draft Strategy (section 12), provides guidance on a range of measures that can be used to improve wayfinding and legibility. These include landmark buildings, uplighting selected buildings, signage, public art and changes in the materials palette in order to distinguish areas.</p> |
| 5 | <p>Access for people with special needs - More could be done to ease movement across the town, which is not helped by the steep topography of the town centre.</p> | <p>The draft Strategy, as part of section 12, outlines a set of guiding principles to improve access for people with special needs.</p> |
| 6 | <p>- -</p> | <p>Proposals for the enhancement of the cycling network are set out in the Town Centre Area Action Plan. Section 12 of the draft Strategy defines principal and secondary routes with the former prioritised and designed to a higher standard in terms of space, signage, lighting and surface treatment. Whilst dedicated cycle lanes would not be provided along secondary routes, measures could be taken to encourage lower vehicle speeds along these routes.</p> |
| 7 | <p>The pedestrian experience - High quality facilities are concentrated on Market Street, which has the greatest intensity of use. Elsewhere, the quality of footways is mixed and in places highway design prioritises cars over pedestrians.</p> | <p>See response to issue 1</p> |
| 8 | <p>Building frontages and their influence on quality, activity and safety - Some of the principal streets have dull and unattractive ground floors and in places the backs of properties are exposed to the public realm. This undermines the townscape, projects no street life and has been identified by the police as generating safety and security concerns.</p> | <p>Redevelopment of sites identified in the Town Centre Area Action Plan will provide opportunities to provide ‘active edges’ to ensure passive surveillance of public spaces and pedestrian routes. Section 10 of the draft Strategy includes guidance for improved lighting and the design of CCTV surveillance measures.</p> |
| 9 | <p>The quality of surfaces is variable and a wide variety of materials is used - The widespread use of orange paviors serves to deaden the historic streets. High quality, natural materials are patchy and do not join up. Maintenance standards noticeably deteriorate on the outskirts of the core town centre area.</p> | <p>Section 16 of the draft Strategy includes guidance to inform the selection of a new materials palette including surface materials, lighting and street furniture. Zones indicating the level of priority and subsequent investment and maintenance considered appropriate in different parts of the town centre are also identified.</p> |



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| 10 | <p>Access to the brook side is limited - Swanspool Brook is somewhat unexploited, both in terms of its landscape potential and accessibility.</p> | <p>Section 14 of the draft Strategy includes proposals to open-up accessibility to the brook side and introduce a range of landscape measures geared to transform it into an asset for the town in terms of ecology, leisure and learning.</p> |
| 11 | <p>The experience after dark - A significant proportion of the public realm is either poorly lit or almost entirely dark in the evening and at night. The police have raised concerns, particularly in relation to Market Square, All Hallows churchyard and some of the alleyways nearby. Most surprising is The Castle theatre which is dislocated from the centre, dark and anonymous in the evening.</p> | <p>Design considerations for lighting are included in section 16 of the draft Strategy and will be incorporated into the public realm at the point where appropriate opportunities arise.</p> |
| 12 | <p>Lack of greenery in the centre and few opportunities for play - There is a variety of green spaces on the periphery of the town centre, but little greenery within the core area. Evidence of neglect exists. There is a significant deficiency of play facilities.</p> | <p>Section 13 of the draft Strategy identifies proposed improvements to existing green spaces and key principles for new open space identified in the Town Centre Area Action Plan. A new play space is proposed in Croyland Gardens linked by landscape improvements to Sheep St/Market St and beyond. Section 17 focuses on 5 areas, including Croyland Gardens, in order to illustrate how the key principles and guidance described in the draft Strategy could potentially be applied to specific locations.</p> |
| 13 | <p>Street furniture and resting places - There is a wide variety of street furniture. The adequacy of provision needs to be re-considered in the light of development proposals, as does the reliance on mock Victorian styles. Proposals should also seek to reduce clutter across the town centre.</p> | <p>In order to develop a cohesive image for the town centre the Strategy includes general principles for the introduction of a consistent street furniture palette (see section 16) and proposes the gradual reduction of street clutter. Figure 16.4 of the Strategy defines an historically sensitive zone and a contemporary zone with each having its own family of street furniture.</p> |
| 14 | <p>Events - The need for multi-functional space, which can allow a variety of events, planned or impromptu.</p> | <p>Regeneration of the Market Square area is proposed in the Town Centre Area Action Plan. The draft Strategy (see section 10) includes a recommendation to explore the possibility of reconfiguring this space as a location for events. A second possible location is the proposed new plaza at The Castle.</p> |



**Appendix 1 –
List of organisations and persons invited to the workshop held on 2nd October 2008**

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| Ability Northants | Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service |
| Age Concern Wellingborough | Northamptonshire Health Authority |
| Alan Baxter Associates | Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Trust |
| All Saints CE Primary School | Northamptonshire Heartlands Primary Care Trust |
| All Saints, Earls Barton | Northamptonshire Learning & Skills Council |
| Alternative Health Centre | Northamptonshire Learning Partnership |
| Anglian Water Services Ltd | Northamptonshire Libraries & Information Services |
| Bassetts Close Community Association | Northamptonshire Police |
| Bowden Land | Northamptonshire County Council |
| CABE | Northern Trust Co Ltd |
| Camlin Lonsdale Landscape Architects | Nortoft Partnerships Limited |
| Campaign for Dark Skies | Nucabs |
| Capita Lovejoy | Pravasi Mandal |
| Castle Residents Association | Ram Sports |
| Castlefield Investments Ltd | Redwell Junior School |
| Churches Together in Wellingborough | Redwell Medical Centre |
| Co - Op | Rowlatt & Sons |
| Connexions | Savills Commericals Ltd |
| CPRE | Saxby Bros Ltd |
| Croyland Community Association | Sir Christopher Hatton School |
| Croyland Community Centre | Stagecoach in Northants |
| De Pol Associates | Steer Davies Gleave |
| DEGW | Swansgate Centre |
| Dentistry Association | Taxi Drivers Association |
| Derek Lovejoy Partnership Ltd | The Castle |
| Development Trust Association | The Finest Caribbean Cuisine |
| Drivers Jonas | The Miracle Church of God in Christ |
| Duston Community Centre | The Natural Step |
| East Midlands Development Agency | The Prince's Foundation |
| East Northamptonshire Council | The Wildlife Trust for Northamptonshire |
| Finedon Parish Council | Tradewinds |
| Forum for the Future | Tresham Institute of Further and Higher Education |
| FPD Savills | Two Shires Ambulance NHS Trust |
| Friends of the Earth | Underwoods |
| GOEM | University College Northampton |
| Gold Street Medical Centre | Victoria Business Park |
| Hallam Land Management Ltd | Wellingborough Black Consortium |
| Hankinson Duckett Associates | Wellingborough Afro-Caribbean Association |
| Harwoods | Wellingborough Archaeological & Histroical Society |
| Heartland Primary Care Trust | Wellingborough Black Consortium |
| Highways Agency | Wellingborough Chamber of Commerce |
| Hindu Association | Wellingborough Civic Society |
| Hope Centre Hemmingwell | Wellingborough District Hindu Association |
| Housing Corporation | Wellingborough District Scout Council |
| ING Real Estate | Wellingborough Heritage Centre |
| Irchester Parish Council | Wellingborough Library |
| Kettering General Hospital NHS Trust | Wellingborough Partnership |
| King West | Wellingborough School |
| Kingsway Methodist Church | Wellingborough Taxi Drivers Association |
| Lambert Smith Hampton | Wellingborough Town Centre Partnership |



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| Lovell's | Wellingborough Volunteer Bureau |
| Matrix Partnership Limited | William Davis Ltd |
| Midland Mainline | Wollaston School |
| MLM | Wrenn School |
| NAACBA | Youth Forum |
| Natural England | Peter Bone MP |
| Nene Valley PCG (Rushden & Irtlingborough) | Bruce Thomas |
| Network Rail | P Cass |
| North Northamptonshire Development Company | Lesley Chalmers |
| North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit | Mr Charles |
| Northamptonshire Business Link | Jenny Dixon |
| Northamptonshire Churches | P A Jones |
| Northamptonshire County Council including: | Mr J Barraclough & Ms L Craven |
| Education, Land Use and Transportation, | John Martin |
| Community Development, Regeneration. | Tim Pharoah |
| | Anne Toms |

Appendix 2

List of attendees at the all day workshop held on 2nd October 2008

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| Mrs P Cass | Northamptonshire County Council |
| Mr M Chislett | Redhill Grange Community Association |
| Mr D Cross | Wellingborough Chamber of Commerce |
| Mr S Toseland | Chair of the Town Centre Partnership |
| Mrs J Thompson | Wellingborough Civic Society |
| Mrs J Dixon | Wellingborough Partnership |
| Mr D Shears | |
| Mr T Hughes | North Northamptonshire Development Company |
| Mr H Liffen | Taxi Drivers Association |
| Ms K McDermott | Northamptonshire Police |
| Mrs A Toms | |
| Mr D Brooks | Wellingborough Library |
| Mr R Wilson | Northamptonshire Police |
| Mrs K Payne | Mears Ashby Parish Council |
| Mrs M Barker | Mears Ashby Parish Council |
| Mr G Simmons | Wollaston Parish Council |
| Miss A Burbidge | North Northants Joint Planning Unit |
| Mr C Hole | Tresham Institute of Further and Higher Education |
| Mr L Morgan | Northamptonshire County Council |

In addition, the workshop was attended by a number of Councillors and officers from the Borough Council.