

Borough Council of Wellingborough
Site Specific Proposals and Wellingborough Town Centre Area Action Plan
Issues and Options Consultation Event
Held at the Tithe Barn, Wellingborough at 7pm on 2nd March 2006

Foreword

The workshop was organised jointly with the Wellingborough Partnership in order to:

- provide a brief explanation of how the area is being planned;
- give an overview of what has already been decided;
- explain the content of the Issues and Options paper and the purpose of the consultation; and
- provide participants with an opportunity to comment on some of the issues and options facing the Borough.

This paper summarises comments made during the workshops.
The comments will assist in the development of the Preferred Options.

Housing

Should the existing Local Plan allocations be reviewed?
Should any other sites within the town be allocated for housing development?

Possible Housing Sites

Land between Redhill Grange and Finedon Rd Industrial Estate.

Redhill Grange is the wrong side of the bypass.

Cox's shoe factory site along Westfield Rd.

Redevelopment of the Wood St/Hill St and Knight's Court areas at a higher density.

Extend the allocation at St John St to include the adjoining tool hire premises.

Land to the rear of the church in West Villa Rd.

Victoria Junior School.

Conversion/redevelopment of factories - old factories are not suitable for modern employment uses. People are in favour of conversions where they are tastefully done - there is a good example at Olney. There can be resistance to conversions in the rural area if the neighbouring population think this will provide small, low cost dwellings.

Open spaces should be retained and not developed for housing. The area of open space at the end of Severn Close is fenced off and can't be used by the public.

There should be an urban extension to the North of Wellingborough. The area to the North of Wellingborough should not be developed for housing.

The Denington Industrial Estate should be more of a mixed-use area.

Need to explore the reasons why existing housing allocations have not come forward.

Housing in the Town Centre

If we are looking to double the amount of retail floor space this needs to be considered as the priority in the town centre rather than infilling gaps with housing. It may be appropriate to consider a retail or employment use with flats above on the St John St site.

Redevelopment of factories should be encouraged.

Need to have more mixed uses in the town centre to maintain its vitality

There should be a mix of uses with flats for young professional workers above retail development.
Flats built in the centre of Milton Keynes have encouraged people to live there.
There needs to be investment in the town centre to encourage people to live there.
The town centre needs people, including flats above shops.
Housing should be provided in the town centre for those who require this for reasons of accessibility.
Housing should be provided in the town centre for the less mobile population.
Residents of the town centre are concerned about parking and security. Undercroft parking should be considered - the costs of this are very high and such schemes are not viable in Wellingborough.
There is insufficient green space in the town centre.
There is a need for a voluntary sector infrastructure building in the town centre –the Abbey central hub in Daventry acts as a one-stop shop.

Housing Types and Density

The density of development should depend upon the location of the site.
The former John Lea school site is noisy (adjacent to the A45) and developed at too high a density.
There is a shortage of housing of the Senwick Drive type.
The dwellings in Senwick Drive only have small gardens and are unsuitable for children.
Victorian/Edwardian terraced housing makes good use of land.
If housing areas are well designed, high density can work.
Some of the more modern housing developments are poorly designed.
The development East of Eastfield Rd will not only provide housing for young professional people but will also provide employment and leisure opportunities.
We must also plan for people who are not young professionals.
The density of development being planned East of Eastfield Rd will cause problems for existing residents unless traffic related issues are fully addressed.
Must consider the need for supported housing as well as support services for the migrant population.

Other Comments

The quality of the local environment and price of housing will attract people from the South East.
We must ensure that jobs of the right quality are provided before the housing.
The entrance to Wellingborough from the south (London Rd) is not very welcoming.
Flooding issues will preclude development in some areas
The cost of AW infrastructure will be greater for development planned to the west of the town
Doubling the amount of retail development will double the number of car journeys into the town centre. Where will they park?
Must improve public transport.

Employment

Which existing industrial estates should be retained for employment purposes?

What measures, if any, need to be taken to ensure that existing employment areas meet market requirements?

Should existing industrial buildings outside industrial estates be retained for employment purposes?

Do existing commitments provide land for office development of sufficient quantity and quality to meet the future needs of the Borough?

Are there any sites that should be allocated for offices?

Are there any sites that should be allocated for storage and distribution?

Need to improve the quality of the Leyland Estate and Finedon Rd Industrial Estate. Denington Estate has poor access and is difficult to get in and out of at peak times - should the area be redeveloped for housing? – if this option is pursued there will be an issue with water/sewerage supply.

All out of town employment areas should be retained in employment use.

Re-use of existing employment land will reduce infrastructure/service costs.

Need to consider community safety issues as part of the regeneration of industrial estates.

Broadholme sewage treatment works will need extending to accommodate additional growth at Wellingborough and Kettering.

Expand Park Farm.

Development to the East of Wellingborough is more sustainable as it offers both road and rail access.

Land to the North West should be developed as a mixed-use urban extension.

Need a high quality business park.

Wellingborough could embrace the green agenda by developing a green business park.

Favour mixed-use developments provided that they do not include sites for heavy industry.

Support live/work units

Need to provide small units

Develop Mill Rd Estate for flexi-build

Provide factories/offices that can later be used for housing.

Provide incubator units at the Embankment.

There should be housing within employment areas.

Need office development to regenerate the town centre

Offices should be provided near the town centre for ease of access.

West Villa Rd area should provide a good mix of retail units both in size and type.

Employment areas need to be accessible by public transport and connected to the town centre.

Need to develop cycleways that people can use to get to work.

A flyover should be provided at the Wilby Way roundabout to relieve traffic congestion at peak times.

Develop employment land where green infrastructure is integrated into the employment area.

Employment areas should have a high quality built and natural environment.

There should be more tree planting on existing estates.

There is a general dislike of the Pro Logis development– landscaping needs to be provided along the A45 to screen the site. Need to discourage too much distribution as it takes up large amounts of employment land; places a strain on the road network and doesn't provide enough jobs. Should discourage too much distribution by imposing a minimum density for jobs/hectare.

Need to attract high calibre jobs. Theoretically, the right type of housing will attract people with the right skills to the town. Companies will only move here if all the facilities/infrastructure are in place. What incentives will be given to companies to relocate to Wellingborough?

Need to improve the provision of healthcare, education and skills.

Employment sites in the villages should be used for new types of employment.

Old village factories are not suitable for employment.

The conversion of factories for housing results in a reduction in daytime activity in many villages. Many villages are becoming dormitory settlements as shops and factories close.

Employment in villages should employ local people.

In Bozeat many people work from home. Very small units are wanted – there are examples at Fardish and Strixton.

Environment

Environmentally Important Open Space and Important Amenity Areas

The Local Plan protects some areas of open space as either Environmentally Important Open Space (EIOS) (Policy G19) or an Important Amenity Area (IAA) (Policy L5). EIOS consists of land that is important to the visual or physical character and structure of a settlement and should not be lost to development. IAAs are recreational sites such as sports grounds, playing fields, town parks, pocket parks, allotments, informal open space and children's play areas. At present, these can only be developed if no longer needed or if alternative provision is to be made elsewhere. Many sites are allocated in the Local Plan as both EIOS and IAA

Is this distinction between EIOS and IAA still relevant?

Should there be a criteria based policy for open space that distinguishes, for example, between different types of open space and allows such sites to be developed in certain circumstances?

Should the potential loss of open space be related to accessibility catchments?

How does this relate to green infrastructure – should the links between open spaces be important (see Appendix 1 of the Issues and Options paper)?

Should all open space be protected for the life of the plan?

If the distinction between EIOS and IAA remains valid, have any sites been misclassified?

Are there any parts of the town that need more open space and, if so, can sites be identified on the plan?

Is there any other green infrastructure that should be protected? (see list of examples on page 33 of the Issues and Options paper)?

Are there any sites currently identified as EIOS or IAA that could/should be developed for other uses?

All IAA and EIOS are valuable.

EIOS green corridors should be protected. Need to look at other spaces.

Need to maintain the character of the town with a network of green spaces separating estates and softening the urban area.

Maintain/develop green lungs to stop housing estates coalescing and to separate industry from housing.

Plant more trees and woodland.

Unused IAAs should be put to another green use, e.g. wildlife

School playing fields should be available for public use.

Instead of developing areas of open space why not encourage people to use them - possibly as another type of open space.

Open spaces are not promoted enough – they need to be celebrated and managed accordingly.

Need to keep allotments as new housing will have smaller or no gardens

Can't lump together according to function i.e. one policy is not acceptable

Should not create/retain new open space that will not be used e.g. area between Redhill Farm and Finedon Industrial Estate.

Need to take a long-term view – i.e. whilst an area of open space may not be utilised at present, it may be needed as the population increases.

Some areas of open space are not accessible e.g. land at the end of Severn Close has been fenced off.

North of Hemmingwell is untidy as the Council pays insufficient attention to maintenance. Reducing the amount of open space is, however, not the solution to this problem.

Open spaces need to be clean and free of rubbish

Older areas of the town have relatively little open space. WEAST will, however, improve access to open space for nearby residents. Could properties be replaced with open space?

Burrows Bush/Castle Fields should be linked to WEAST

Residents need to be involved in management – pocket park.

Residents become attached to small areas of open space close to where they live – they should be consulted on how such open space should be used.

Open space links to other aspects such as health. Green Gyms, for example, enable people to walk through linked green spaces and come across a piece of equipment that they can use to exercise.

Need to improve existing areas of open space to design out crime.

The cycle network should be finished and extended out to rural areas. Cycle routes should link to all areas in order to reduce car use.

Open spaces should be related to cycleways

Green infrastructure and cycle routes should link to the urban extensions

The swimming pool in Croyland Rd should be redeveloped for a community use or as open space rather than housing.

Need to consider how open space links to areas beyond the town.

A circle of green infrastructure should be identified around the town.

Strategic Gaps

The Preferred Options document for the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy indicates that the Proposals Maps prepared by the individual authorities should identify Strategic Gaps in order to protect the setting and separate identity of

settlements; avoid coalescence; and maintain the openness of land between settlements. The emerging Core Spatial Strategy indicates that such gaps should be identified between: Kettering and Isham; Northampton and Ecton/Earls Barton; Wellingborough and Ecton/Earls Barton; Wellingborough, the Harrowdens and Finedon; Wellingborough and Irthlingborough; and Wellingborough and Rushden/Higham

Are the draft areas shown on the map in Appendix 2 of the Issues and Options paper appropriate?

What should a policy about these areas say?

Should it prevent/encourage certain types of development?

Need a gap between Finedon and WEAST.

Need to prevent Northampton expanding eastwards into the Borough.

Need to protect the Ise Valley

Site large buildings carefully

Identify vertical sight lines to maintain the impression of variety.

The Strategic Gaps are too small.

Today's strategic gaps could be tomorrow's green infrastructure. There is a danger that development could leap frog.

Important to have an area designated around every settlement to retain its character.

Strategic gaps should be areas of environmental opportunity for recreation and to improve biodiversity

Developers should provide green infrastructure and provide monies to improve the Strategic Gaps.

The gaps should be used as farmland and woodland. Some people, however, do not want woodland as it spoils expansive views whilst others consider a more diverse function than farmland to be appropriate.

Recognise the importance of the Nene Valley as a Nature Conservation SSSI.

Need to enhance existing wildlife sites by creating links, including links to areas beyond the Borough boundary.