

Aldwinckle Parish Council: Initial response to the North Northamptonshire Local Plan scoping consultation

This document has been prepared in response to the North Northamptonshire Council's (NNC) request for input on the scope and coverage of the Local Plan. Given the short turn-around time of the consultation, which means that it would be impossible to answer all 57 questions asked within the scoping document published by NNC, we have broadly followed the advice of NCALC and focused on outlining what we aspire our village to be like and what challenges we currently face. Where time has permitted, we have also commented on the content on the scoping document for the Local Plan.

Our aspirations for Aldwinckle Parish

We are determined to maintain Aldwinckle as a thriving small rural village that retains its historical character, and where development is incremental (infill) within the settlement boundary. Within this context, any new houses should strongly reflect and fit in with the character of the village and the predominantly traditional street scene. We are determined to retain farming as an integral part of Aldwinckle life, as well as encourage the other small businesses that exist within the village. The village already has a thriving primary school, a village shop, a church and key amenities for residents (village hall, play area, green spaces etc.) and we want to support and enhance these for the benefit of residents and visitors to the village. As part of our response to this Local Plan process, the Parish Council will consider further potential green spaces that would protect the character of the village and also test whether residents would be in favour of creating a Conservation Area to protect the village and its environs. Aldwinckle is the birthplace of John Dryden, has two historic churches, a collection of Listed and ancient buildings and sits next door to the Nene Valley Nature Reserve.

Aldwinckle lies within the beautiful Upper Nene Valley and on the edge of the Upper Nene Valley Special Protection Area. Aldwinckle Parish Council is keen on the protection and enhancement of our beautiful surroundings, where the working countryside and the natural environment and wildlife flourish together. Many people from the village and visitors enjoy Aldwinckle's beautiful surroundings and the Parish Council would like to ensure that people are encouraged, and able, to access the footpaths and lanes, as well as the rivers and lakes that exist within the parish.

Aldwinckle is a self-supporting, vibrant community and this vibrancy is evidenced by the many social events, groups, further education / activity classes, and interest clubs that are to be found in the village. This community spirit is promoted by the strong connections which exist through people meeting together and taking part in organised events, and through media such as the Pink Sheet, internet / WhatsApp etc. The Parish Council seeks to promote these connections and community wherever it can.

Our current concerns and challenges

The concerns of the residents of Aldwinckle tend to naturally focus on the risks to village life that we face now and in the short term, as it is harder to predict longer-term challenges that might arise. Aldwinckle Parish Council recognises the following existing or potential challenges:-

- It is feared that because of potentially unrealistic housing-development targets the revised Local Plan will force overdevelopment in and around the village (more than infill), which is unsustainable and unsympathetic to the historic character of the village, with its many old houses and Listed buildings. Such overdevelopment would also negatively impact the natural environment and particularly on the nearby Upper Nene Valley Special Protection Area.

- Surface water flooding has been an on-going problem in the village for many years. A recent thunderstorm downpour (May 2026) once again emphasised this, by bringing flooding of an old (and inadequate) storm drain system which spilled over into adjacent housing. Whilst we have made good strides towards understanding the issues, and addressing some of them together with NNC Highways, much more needs to be done to mitigate some of the worst impacts. It is of concern that any additional development could have serious flooding implications for the village, especially as weather becomes more extreme and unpredictable as a result of climate change.
- Maintaining a strong rural economy in and around the village is important for its vibrancy. We have lost a number of farms in the village over time, and we are fortunate that one successful farming operation still remains. There are many pressures, generally, to combine and consolidate what until now have been largely family farms and smallholdings into larger commercial operations. The Parish Council has concerns that this pressure will eventually lead to the loss of farming centred within the village completely. Similarly, there are a number of small businesses in the village that have to work hard to survive in the face of strong competition from larger organisations such as supermarkets and online marketeers etc. These small local businesses are an integral part of our community and ways need to be found to support them and level the playing-field somewhat with their larger competitors.
- Aldwinckle is experiencing ever increasing through traffic caused by:-
 - Increased traffic in the local area, which often means that drivers come through Aldwinckle using it as a short-cut to their work, school or other destinations. There is also, of course, an increase in parcel delivery services to villagers.
 - Regular and increasing problems on nearby main roads; A14, A605 and A6116 which results in cars, vans and lorries regularly coming through the village. A situation exacerbated when there is an accident on one of the afore-mentioned roads.
 - The rapid expansion of the numbers of children in Trinity School with likely further expansion, together with the reduction of school bus services for pupils has led to increased numbers of cars in the village and at peak times parking issues along Main Street.

Already, the increased traffic on the small roads in and around the village, which are not designed to handle the number and weight of the vehicles, has led to increasing issues with potholes, damage to property (some HGVs ignore the weight limits on the small bridges between Aldwinckle and Thorpe Waterville) as well as concerns for the safety of pedestrians and cyclists. The proposed development of warehouses on the edge of Thrapston and Titchmarsh, we believe, will certainly exacerbate the traffic issues that Aldwinckle currently faces. The Local Plan must address these issues systematically, by restricting the number of vehicles that need to pass through the village, through provision and enforcement of alternative routes which avoid Aldwinckle and other, similarly blighted, villages in the area, and through the establishment of an enhanced transport provision for pupils attending Trinity School.

- The maintenance of amenities within the village and in the surrounding environment represents an ongoing, and often rising, cost and increasing challenge to maintain, replace or renew assets, such as playing area equipment. To raise money to do some of these tasks means Parish Councils need to turn to residents and seek grant funding from a variety of grant organisations. The revised Local Plan could provide a clearer, and simplified framework, hopefully coordinated by NNC, within which Parish Councils together with NNC can work in partnership to maintain the important assets in our communities.

Extracts & Comments on Local Plan Scoping Document

There has been insufficient time allowed as part of this consultation for a considered review of the large amount of information provided. Nevertheless high level comments have been made where possible. Given the short turn round time these comments are outline only and have not been reviewed in council. They may be enhanced or amended through the process. Comments are organised by topic in the Local Plan Scoping document

5 Spatial Strategy

Settlement Hierarchy

The scoping document proposes a revised classification of Settlements which is used as the basis for other decision making processes. The table below lays this out.

Table 1: Comparison of ENC and proposed NNC Classification of Settlements

East Northants		Proposed NNC	
	Tier Definition Settlement	Category	Definition and Role
		Growth Towns	
		Market Towns	
Large freestanding Villages	Focal points for community infrastructure and services within the locality Local services and facilities may serve a cluster or network of rural settlements	Key Villages	Settlements which provide a range of services and facilities to meet the day to day needs of residents and businesses, limiting the need to travel to larger settlements. To provide a focus for improved transport choice and a limited level of growth at a scale appropriate to the character and infrastructure capacity of the village.
Small freestanding villages	Limited community infrastructure and facilities Emphasis upon smaller scale locally significant development opportunities where these are necessary to fulfil a defined local need.	Villages	Settlements which provide limited services and facilities for their residents. Development should meet locally identified needs through infill, rural exceptions sites or as identified through neighbourhood plans.
Urban outliers	Limited community infrastructure and facilities; Specific character areas – emphasis upon small scale managed infill development within the existing built form		
Restraint villages/ rural outliers (Open Countryside)	Few/ no community infrastructure and facilities; Small groups of properties serving 1-2 rural businesses	Restraint Villages	Settlements with restricted levels of services and facilities and of a sensitive character or conservation interest where development will be strictly managed. Development should normally be restricted to re-use or conversion of suitable buildings. Local needs should be met at sustainable nearby larger
		Open Countryside	Hamlets and scattered groups of dwellings with few or no community infrastructure and facilities. Development will be strictly managed to safeguard the character and beauty of the countryside and maintain separate settlements by preventing coalescence. Opportunities for the re-use or conversion of suitable buildings or to support agricultural or other rural enterprises will be supported.

Commentary

Aldwincle was classified as a Small Freestanding Village in E Northants and is part of Villages in the new proposed classification. The treatment looks broadly the same between the two classifications.

There is a lack of clarity in the document in articulating what a Key Village is vs a Village, though it is inferred in the section "Other Villages". Some villages which were Large freestanding Villages in ENC are Key Villages in the new proposal, whilst others become Villages. Whilst, there is an quantitative approach and qualitative assessment in determining Key Village vs Village the final assignment must be quite a fine judgement.

For Restraint Villages there needs to be a better, and broader definition of which settlements should fall into this category. As currently stated "They are usually predominately covered by a conservation area and have a high proportion of listed buildings and other designated heritage assets." This might be better restated as " They usually have a high proportion of listed buildings and other designated heritage assets and in some of these cases they may be covered by a conservation area. In addition, it is important to broaden the definition of villages that should be assigned to Restraint Villages to reflect the impact that development would have on the surrounding rural setting. For instance, there is an initiative to limit development within 5.7km (it was 2km) of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area.

These proposals will demand a systematic reassessment of which category to assign the villages in NNC

Settlement Boundaries

Proposed: The Council's proposed approach at this stage in the plan-making process, is a 'combined' one, i.e., a combination of both defined settlement boundary lines and a criterion-based approach, as follows:-

- Settlement boundary lines will be drawn for the **Growth Towns, Market Towns** and potentially **Key Villages** as defined within the Settlement Hierarchy, as it is considered that this will offer greater clarity in respect of the future direction of growth (that will include specific site allocations) in these locations and assist in avoiding coalescence between the settlements themselves and any 'outliers'.¹¹ | North Northamptonshire Council – Settlement Boundaries Background Paper
- A criteria-based approach will be adopted for the remaining Villages. These settlements will see more modest growth within the plan period and the 'flexibility' offered by the criteria-based approach is considered the best policy mechanism for achieving this.
- **Restraint Villages** will be treated as open countryside where land within the built form will be 'safeguarded' (draft NPPF Policy S5) and will not have settlement boundaries, nor a criteria-based approach applied. However, development might be directed to them if in accordance with draft NPPF Policy HO10 (Exception Sites) or via the Neighbourhood Planning process.
- **Open Countryside** - Hamlets and scattered groups of dwellings with few or no community infrastructure and facilities. Development will be strictly managed to safeguard the character and beauty of the countryside and maintain separate settlements by preventing coalescence. Opportunities for the re-use or conversion of suitable buildings or to support agricultural or other rural enterprises will be supported.

Commentary

The NNC Local Plan documentation presents the pros and cons for using settlement boundaries vs a criteria based approach to control development around settlements. Interestingly, ENC had already adopted this criteria based approach in 2023.

The paper proposes a hybrid approach to the application of the settlement boundaries and criteria based approach (see above).

The report appears to lean more in favour of the criteria based approach for Villages and the argument for this, and the pros and cons presented of each approach needs to be enhanced and sharpened to improve clarity and balance. In particular the disadvantages of the Criteria Base approach needs significant revision - e.g. the settlement boundary is “undefined” and this means there is a lack of shared clarity between planners, parish councils, developers and residents.

Potentially, the best outcome is to agree a new set of settlement boundaries between planners and parish councils using the “definition for policy writing” presented in the document (see below) and / or adapted from ENC Local Plan 2023)

“The built form of a Village is defined as the closely grouped and visually well related buildings of the main part of the settlement and land closely associated with them. The built form excludes:

- individual buildings or groups of dispersed buildings which are clearly detached from the continuous built-up area of the settlement,
- gardens, paddocks and other undeveloped land within the curtilage of buildings on the edge of the settlement where land relates more to the surrounding countryside than to the built-up area of the settlement,
- agricultural buildings and associated land on the edge of the settlement, and,
- outdoor sports and recreation facilities and other formal open spaces on the edge of the settlement.”

6 Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change

This is what NNC propose to do

“In line with NPPF Policy CC1: Planning for Climate Change, the Local Plan will take a proactive and integrated approach to both mitigating and adapting to climate change. Climate change will not sit in isolation. The Local Plan will ensure climate mitigation and adaptation are embedded across all policy areas (such as design, energy, health and wellbeing, land use, natural environment and transport).

While proposed changes to the NPPF would prevent the Council from setting local building-level energy or carbon standards that exceed Building Regulations, the Plan can still strongly influence emissions by shaping patterns of development, embedding whole-system approaches to net zero, promoting adaptation, and requiring climate-positive design. Climate considerations will run throughout the plan, supported by the evidence in the Climate Change Strategy [2025], the Local Area Energy Plan [2026], and carbon budget commitments.”

It then goes on to ask “What specific steps could the Local Plan take to reduce the impacts of climate change and mitigate its effects?”

Commentary

NNC is best placed to develop specific steps (proposals) across its policy area and this should be presented as part of the Local Planning process which then will allow consultees to give guidance on priorities.

7 Developer Contributions (no review undertaken yet)

8 Delivering a sufficient supply of homes (no review undertaken yet)

9 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation (no review undertaken yet)

10 Building a strong effective economy

What NNC propose to do is made up of 9 points, the first 6 of which is focussed on logistics and the provision of sites to support this. Starting with:-

“Based on the evidence, the plan should set a target of a net minimum growth of 35,468 jobs over the period 2024-2045. To help achieve this, it is proposed that the plan allocates sufficient land to meet the identified needs for strategic logistics, office, and R&D. The North Northamptonshire Strategic Logistics Study considers where would be appropriate broad locations for new strategic logistics. It advises that Kettering, Rushden, and Wellingborough would be suitable for proposals in the order of 50ha (or greater), whilst Thrapston and Raunds would be secondary locations for proposals of 25-50ha, and Desborough and Rothwell would be ‘fall-back’ locations only after the secondary locations have been exhausted.....

The 7th point is about impact of logistics on communities the 8th and 9th talks about High Value jobs and Existing Employment Sites, respectively

Commentary

There appears to be an, extreme over - focus on provision for logistics, which while important, risks an over reliance on logistics for employment which demands a narrower set of skills to support. More creative thought needs to be applied to what other employment growth opportunities there might be and plan for these too; e.g. AI enabled industries, data centres and their construction, equipping and maintenance etc. (these are just a couple of examples). It may be helpful to set a limit on the number of jobs planned from logistics to force the plan to think wider and deeper

11 Ensuring the vitality of town centres (no review undertaken yet)

Commentary

Whilst this section has not been reviewed in detail, it is clear that the town centre retail businesses are suffering from online competition and out of town shopping, where national retailers are located. It would be good to see more creative thought from NNC on what focussed support for town centres could look like, which might include, but would not be limited to:-

For small businesses (reduction / removal of business rates, reduced rents (where NNC ownership, etc.)

Support for repurposing of in-town retail premises for other purposes, where appropriate
Free car parking in town centres
Regeneration of buildings and surroundings to create a nice environment where people want to be
Ongoing cleaning, maintenance and improvement of facilities.

12 Achieving well-designed places (No review undertaken yet)

13 Making effective use of land (No review undertaken yet)

14 Promoting sustainable transport (No review undertaken yet)

15 Promoting healthy communities

Commentary

There is a definite need through the Local Plan process to engage with the Villages individually to get a shared understanding of what is possible within the scope this item. There are definitely some additional areas around Aldwinckle that might be considered as Local Green Spaces, but we would need to engage with Planning to explore this further

16 Securing clean energy and water

What NNC propose to do

16.19 The Council will continue to engage with utility providers, regulators and network operators, via the IDP, WCS, SFRA and other processes, to ensure there is a clear understanding of energy supply and network capacity, water supply, drainage and wastewater capacity, and associated requirements for additional infrastructure provision.

16.20 The Local Plan will make provision for development which is required for new or enhanced renewable and low carbon energy development, electricity network infrastructure, water supply, drainage and wastewater infrastructure. The NNLP will also set out any measures to avoid constraints on the operation or future expansion of renewable and low carbon energy development and electricity network infrastructure and water supply and wastewater infrastructure and as required under the provisions of NPPF Policy W1. We will take on board the recommendations of the Water Cycle Study and use this to formulate the next stage of the plan, including standards on water efficiency.

16.21 The Council remains committed to driving renewable energy generation across the area. To tackle long-term energy issues, the Council will collaborate closely with the National Grid Electricity Distribution (NGED) to accelerate the construction of a new Grendon Grid Supply Point (GSP) and encourage the upgrade the existing Active Network Management (ANM) system. These upgrades are essential to alleviate congestion and support large-scale renewable energy projects whilst removing a barrier to achieving Net Zero targets

Commentary

It would be good to see a focus on promoting renewable energy production on brown field sites and development areas, be that commercial or residential. Investigating the relaxation of interpretations that might currently restrict the sensitive deployment of renewables on or associated with Listed Buildings, might be a small but valuable win.

17 Managing flood risk

What NNC propose to do

17.14 The NPPF is prescriptive in terms of what the Council should be doing to manage flood risk across the plan area. In accordance with the provisions of the NPPF, the Local Plan will, as a minimum:

- Be informed by an up-to-date strategic flood risk assessment which considers current and future flood risk from all sources, including cumulative impacts in, or affecting, areas susceptible to flooding;

- Take account of advice from the Environment Agency and other relevant flood risk management authorities and internal drainage boards, about levels of risk, options for mitigation, and the implications for development in the plan area,

- Apply the sequential test in NPPF Policy F5 and, where relevant, Policy F6. This will inform selection of specific sites for allocation;

- Look to safeguard land that is, or is likely to be, required for current or future flood management,

- Be using opportunities provided by new development and improvements in green and other infrastructure to reduce the causes and impacts of flooding (making as much use as possible of natural flood management techniques and nature based solutions as part of an integrated approach to flood risk management), and,

- Be seeking opportunities to locate development, including housing, to more sustainable locations where climate change is expected to increase flood risk.

Commentary

This is an area of key importance to Aldwinkle. It is important that the strategic flood risk assessment includes an analysis of where, specifically, there have been floods reported across time, rather than developing a more general overview. This comprehensive understanding of where flooding events could occur, why and what drainage systems and other measures could eliminate and mitigate the events is essential. To manage surface water flooding, in particular a systematic mapping of the surface water drainage systems in the towns and villages is essential. Doing so will enable us to understand if these systems are adequate to handle large volumes of surface water and where necessary to plan for the upgrade of these systems so that they can.

18 Pollution, public protection, and security (No review undertaken yet)

19 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment (only partial review)

One item of NNC propose to do:

19.9 A long-term strategic approach is required to address the impacts that arise from development which could affect the integrity of the SPA. The Local Plan and its policies will be key to the delivery of this. Residential development in proximity to the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA (most recently considered to be 5.9 kilometres) requires mitigation for recreational impacts which a new guidance document is addressing. The Council is

considering the responses received on this new guidance and mitigation strategy and once adopted it will be used to support new policies in the emerging Local Plan.

Commentary

It would be good if the Villages that are within the 5.9 km curtilage of the SPA were involved on understanding the proposal with respect to the SPA and integral to the shared development of the policy document. We, as a Parish Council, have not seen the guidance!

20 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment (only partial review)

One of two proposals from NNS states:

20.7 In the case of historic buildings, the risks of neglect and decay are best addressed by ensuring that they remain in active use. Ensuring such heritage assets remain used and valued may require sympathetic changes to be made. Therefore, a balanced approach is needed between protection and allowing a viable use of a historic building. New builds should be sympathetic and complementary to the surrounding historic environment by virtue of their design, form, materials, and scale. Any design codes produced or masterplans prepared will draw on the contribution which the historic environment can make to the character and quality of development. Existing conservation areas will be kept under periodic review, and should this necessitate a change to an area a conservation appraisal and management plan will accompany and justify that change.

Commentary

The focus in the proposal is on neglected and decayed historic buildings plus the impact of new builds near historic buildings. There is scope to take a more balanced approach for well maintained historic buildings to promote sympathetic modernisation for e.g. energy efficiency, use of renewables etc.

21 Policies to address particular local issues (No review undertaken)

22 Consultation and engagement strategy for the Local Plan

How we will consult you on the Local Plan (and commentary)

22.5 It is anticipated that a variety of consultation and engagement techniques will be used when preparing the Local Plan. It is considered that the approaches set out in the SCI remain broadly appropriate for the development of the Local Plan and the relevant measures are set out within this consultation and engagement strategy. The consultation and engagement strategy will be further refined considering consultation feedback.

22.6 A key aim of consultation and engagement is to attempt to build consensus on the way forward in relation to development. Whilst it is accepted that full consensus may not be possible, greater understanding may help minimise conflict in the plan preparation.

22.7 The most appropriate method of consultation will be used for different stages of the plan-making process, recognising the emphasis on 'digital first' and ensuring plans are easily navigable and accessible to different users. Electronic communication and online responses will be used as widely as possible as well as increased use of social media to inform the public about each stage of the consultation process. *(Digital first should not be used as a reason for no (in person) engagement with stakeholders. This should be embedded as part of the process to improve input through the development process)*

22.8 It will be important to engage positively with the public and other stakeholders informed about the initial stages of the Local Plan process, including developing the evidence base and 'baselining' work. As much information as possible will be made available on the Council's website, including seeking to publish documents forming part of the evidence base when they are completed rather than waiting for specific consultation stages. *(Again, a personal relationship with stakeholders needs to be developed to allow the development of good quality outcomes. This is a key to a shared ownership of the final product)*

22.9 The Local Plan timetable will be prepared and updated as required by government and is also published on the Council website. It is recognised that 'hard to reach' groups may not have access to a computer; in such cases the timetable can be accessed on computers at libraries or council hubs with trained staff available to support the user. Hard copies of the timetable will be available at the principal Council offices. Where appropriate, press releases will be issued to seek local publicity.

22.10 Where the plan directly affects a particular community, planning officers may attend meetings of the relevant town and parish councils. Due to limited resources, forums and combined meetings will be preferred, including where a number of communities are affected. *(Surely planning officers must attend meetings of affected town and parish councils. Given the 4 year time frame for this plan, the resources available should be sufficient to ensure all stakeholders feel that engagement has been sufficient and that their views have been reflected in proposals, or if not fully justified why)*