King's Cliffe Parish Council

Response to the North Northamptonshire Local Plan Scoping Consultation

King s Cliffe Parish Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the North Northamptonshire Local Plan Scoping Consultation. The Parish Council supports the preparation of an up-to-date Local Plan that provides a clear, evidence-based framework for growth, infrastructure delivery, environmental protection and community wellbeing.

This response focuses on the matters of greatest significance to King s Cliffe: the proposed settlement hierarchy, the village boundary, infrastructure capacity, cumulative growth, transport, healthcare, wastewater, and the protection of the rural landscape and recreational assets around the village.

1. Proposed Key Village" status

The Parish Council objects to King s Cliffe being identified as a Key Village on the basis of the current evidence. The current classification is not considered justified, effective or consistent with the stated sustainability objectives of the emerging Local Plan. If NNC wishes to continue considering King s Cliffe for this role, it must first publish corrected settlement audit data and a settlement-specific infrastructure capacity assessment.

The Scoping Document proposes a new Key Villages" category, including King s Cliffe, intended to provide a range of services and facilities, limit the need to travel, improve transport choice, and accommodate a limited level of growth at a scale appropriate to character and infrastructure capacity. However, the Settlement Hierarchy Background Paper itself identifies important limitations for King s Cliffe: no inter-urban evening bus service, no existing Greenway route, narrow and twisty roads, a 14 km driving distance to Corby, and only a low level of services and facilities relative to the size of the village.

The Parish Council considers that the Key Village classification places too much weight on the presence of facilities and too little weight on the capacity, accessibility and reliability of those facilities. A settlement should not be promoted for additional growth simply because certain services are listed, particularly where those services are limited, already under pressure, or dependent on car travel.

The evidence should also be corrected to reflect current local circumstances. The Parish Council understands that King s Cliffe does not have the level of day-to-day services implied by the assessment. In particular, the Parish Council asks NNC to review and correct the evidence relating to the availability of a 'post office', the nature and capacity of the GP surgery, the actual availability of bus services, and the extent to which local businesses provide significant local employment.

The GP surgery is a satellite surgery of the Wansford GP practice, with no dedicated parking facilities. Section 5 discusses the healthcare services in more detail.

The postal service available in King s Cliffe is an outreach service operating for approximately two hours on one day per week. The Parish Council does not consider that this should be treated in the settlement audit as equivalent to a permanent 'post office' facility available on regular weekday opening hours.

King s Cliffe is more appropriately treated as a rural village capable of meeting locally arising needs, rather than a Key Village suitable for strategic or plan-led expansion.

On the evidence currently available, the Parish Council does not consider that the proposed Key Village classification for King s Cliffe has been shown to be justified, effective or consistent with the objective of directing growth to sustainable locations. The classification appears to give undue weight to the nominal presence of services, without sufficient assessment of their actual capacity, accessibility, opening arrangements, reliability or ability to support additional population growth over the plan period.

2. Settlement boundary

The Parish Council considers that the existing settlement boundary for King s Cliffe should be retained.

The King s Cliffe Neighbourhood Development Plan already establishes a locally considered settlement boundary. The boundary encompasses the built-up area of the village, including the recent Oak Lane development of 145 houses and the allocated former Middle School site (and all allocated sites as identified in the Neighbourhood Plan). The Neighbourhood Plan explains that the boundary is intended to define the extent and shape of the village and provide a firm edge to avoid sprawl into the surrounding countryside. That approach remains sound and should be carried forward into the emerging Local Plan. The Parish Council does not consider that the Local Plan should extend the settlement boundary to include open countryside or agricultural land.

The Settlement Boundaries Background Paper identifies the purpose of settlement boundaries as defining where the built-up area ends and the countryside begins. King s Cliffe already has a clear, locally derived boundary through the made Neighbourhood Plan, and there is no justified need to redefine it to accommodate further outward growth.

Any future development should first be directed towards existing allocations, appropriate infill opportunities, and sites already identified through the Neighbourhood Plan process.

Any review of the settlement boundary should start from the made Neighbourhood Plan boundary and should only depart from it where NNC can demonstrate a clear, site-specific and evidence-based justification. The Parish Council does not consider that a change in settlement hierarchy terminology, by itself, would justify extending the boundary into open countryside or agricultural land.

3. Infrastructure capacity and deliverability

The Parish Council is concerned that the consultation evidence does not demonstrate that King s Cliffe has the infrastructure capacity to support further significant growth.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires Local Plans to be supported by adequate infrastructure evidence and for infrastructure providers to be engaged in plan preparation. The suggested designation of King's Cliffe as a Key Village is not supported by sufficient evidence that the necessary infrastructure exists or can be delivered.

The Interim Infrastructure Delivery Plan states that the Local Plan must identify the infrastructure required to support growth and that a more comprehensive final IDP will follow once site allocations and further evidence are established. At this stage, the IDP does not appear to provide a King s Cliffe-specific assessment of the transport, healthcare, emergency service, education, wastewater or utility improvements that would be necessary if the village were to accommodate further growth.

King's Cliffe is served by a network of narrow rural roads with limited capacity and few alternative routes. Increased development would place additional pressure on roads that were not designed to accommodate significant growth. Any assessment should consider the cumulative impact on

the wider rural road network.

The Parish Council therefore requests that no additional growth is directed to King s Cliffe unless NNC first demonstrates:

- that the local highway network can safely accommodate the cumulative impact of additional traffic;
- that realistic alternatives to private car use exist or can be delivered;
- that GP, healthcare and emergency service capacity is sufficient;
- that school capacity is confirmed and deliverable over the plan period;
- that wastewater and water infrastructure can accommodate existing commitments and any proposed growth;
- that necessary infrastructure is funded, programmed and deliverable before development takes place; and
- that infrastructure requirements are translated into clear policy wording, site-specific requirements, phasing triggers and developer contribution mechanisms.

Infrastructure should not be assumed, deferred, or left to be resolved after allocations have been made.

4. Transport, accessibility and road safety

King s Cliffe is not a highly accessible settlement. The Neighbourhood Plan describes the village as lying away from main roads and requiring journeys along minor roads with a heavy dependence on cars.

The Settlement Hierarchy Background Paper also recognises that King s Cliffe has no regular inter-urban bus service, limited active travel options, no current Greenway route, and reliance on narrow rural roads.

The only fixed-timetable services serving the village are school-focused services, namely the 180 and 190, operating at limited times on weekdays. These should not be treated as a reliable or comprehensive form of general public transport for the purposes of assessing the sustainability of additional growth. The 4S and 4P services are demand-responsive and must be booked in advance; they are therefore materially different from a frequent, fixed-route inter-urban bus service.

The settlement audit should not score King s Cliffe as having access to a regular inter-urban bus service unless that service is available to the general public at times and frequencies capable of supporting commuting, healthcare, shopping and other day-to-day journeys.

The Local Plan should therefore avoid treating King s Cliffe as a location where additional growth would materially reduce the need to travel. In practice, further growth would be likely to increase car dependency, add pressure to narrow rural roads, worsen parking and congestion within the village, and increase pressure on routes to Stamford, Corby, Oundle and Peterborough.

The Neighbourhood Plan already identifies traffic, parking and road safety as key local issues, including the need for development to address additional traffic, parking and congestion throughout the village and to improve pedestrian and cycle access to local services. These local policies and evidence should be given significant weight in the Local Plan.

5. Healthcare and local services

The Settlement Hierarchy Background Paper records the presence of a GP surgery, primary school and post office, but the Parish Council considers that the assessment should distinguish between the existence of a service and its capacity to serve additional growth.

The GP facility in King s Cliffe is a satellite surgery of the Wansford GP practice and is limited in scale and capacity. The Parish Council accepts that residents may be able to register with the Wansford GP Practice. However, this is materially different from having full primary care capacity available within King s Cliffe itself. The King s Cliffe facility operates as a satellite surgery and does not provide the same level of access, appointment availability or supporting infrastructure as a full village-based GP surgery. The settlement hierarchy assessment should therefore distinguish between nominal presence of a healthcare facility and the actual availability of appointments, premises capacity, parking provision and non-car accessibility.

There is no direct bus service from King s Cliffe to Wansford for access to the GP surgery. The available daily service is a school bus, operating term time only in the morning and evening, placing further emphasis on car journeys to access the full range of services. This does not provide for a sustainable transport link for full GP access.

The Local Plan should not assume that the presence of a surgery means that healthcare needs arising from additional development can be met.

The Parish Council requests that NNC obtains and publishes specific evidence from the relevant NHS bodies, including the Integrated Care Board and primary care provider, confirming the current and projected capacity of healthcare provision serving King s Cliffe. This should include the ability of the King s Cliffe satellite facility and the Wansford practice to accommodate committed and proposed growth, the accessibility of those services by non-car modes, and any infrastructure, staffing or premises improvements required.

The same principle applies to other local services. The Parish Council asks NNC to review the factual service audit and update it to reflect the actual availability, scale, opening arrangements and capacity of local facilities.

6. Wastewater and water infrastructure

The Local Plan should include a specific assessment of wastewater treatment and sewer network capacity for King s Cliffe before identifying the village for any further growth.

The IDP recognises that infrastructure providers, including Anglian Water, have been engaged in the preparation of the interim evidence base. However, the Parish Council considers that the evidence should go further and demonstrate, specifically for King s Cliffe, whether the Wastewater Recycling Centre and associated network have sufficient headroom to accommodate completed development, extant permissions, Neighbourhood Plan allocations and any further proposed growth.

It is understood that King's Cliffe Wastewater Recycling Centre (WRC) has limited remaining treatment capacity. This concern is reinforced by Anglian Water's Pre-Planning Assessment (dated 19 June 2026) prepared in relation to application NE/22/0266/FUL (Rockingham Forest Holiday Park), which states: "Previously identified headroom may no longer be available."

This indicates that previously assumed capacity cannot safely be relied upon for plan-making purposes without updated confirmation from Anglian Water covering committed development, extant permissions, Neighbourhood Plan allocations and any additional growth proposed through the Local Plan.

The Parish Council requests that NNC confirms:

- the current capacity of King s Cliffe wastewater infrastructure;
- whether upgrades are required;
- whether those upgrades are funded and programmed;
- whether the cumulative impact of all existing and proposed development has been assessed; and
- that no development will proceed ahead of the infrastructure needed to support it.

7. Cumulative growth

King s Cliffe has already experienced significant growth since 2011, estimated locally at approximately 30%, including the Oak Lane development referred to in the Neighbourhood Plan, which was described as causing the village population to expand substantially. There are currently another 15-16 dwellings being built in the village with further site allocations identified in the Neighbourhood Plan.

The emerging Local Plan should verify the full dwelling increase since 2011, including completed development, extant permissions and Neighbourhood Plan allocations before considering any further allocations.

The Parish Council asks NNC to provide a comparative assessment showing:

- the percentage increase in dwellings in King s Cliffe since 2011;
- how that compares with other proposed Key Villages;
- what infrastructure improvements have accompanied that growth; and
- why further growth would be justified if existing infrastructure has not kept pace.

Without such an assessment, the proposed Key Village designation is not sufficiently justified.

8. Rural character, landscape and recreation

The King s Cliffe Neighbourhood Plan vision is for the village to retain its distinctive character as a beautiful, rural and tranquil village, with change designed to enhance that character and quality of life. The Parish Council considers that this vision remains highly relevant and should be reflected in the Local Plan.

King s Cliffe is set within a sensitive rural landscape with important green infrastructure, woodland, public rights of way, local green spaces, biodiversity assets and recreational routes. The IDP identifies the expansion of King s Cliffe Local Nature Reserve as a green infrastructure project associated with development in King s Cliffe. The Local Plan should build on these assets by protecting the rural setting of the village, improving access to green infrastructure, and supporting biodiversity recovery, rather than encouraging unnecessary outward expansion.

The Parish Council considers that the Willow Brook Valley, the wider Rockingham Forest landscape, Fineshade, the Jurassic Way and the network of walking, cycling and riding routes form an important recreational and environmental asset. The Local Plan should protect these assets and support improvements to green infrastructure and sustainable recreation, rather than using them as a justification for outward housing expansion.

9. Requested changes to the Local Plan approach

King s Cliffe Parish Council requests that NNC:

9.1 Corrects the factual service audit for King s Cliffe;

9.2 Removes King s Cliffe from the proposed Key Village category, or at minimum suspends that classification until the evidence base has been corrected and infrastructure capacity has been properly assessed;

9.3 Publishes a revised settlement hierarchy audit for King s Cliffe before relying on any Key Village classification in the next stage of the Local Plan.

9.4 Prepares a King s Cliffe-specific infrastructure capacity assessment covering highways, public transport, healthcare, education, emergency services, water and wastewater;

9.5 Retains the existing Neighbourhood Plan settlement boundary;

9.6 Does not allocate additional greenfield or agricultural land around King s Cliffe unless a clear local need and infrastructure solution are demonstrated;

9.7 Assesses cumulative growth since 2011 before considering any further allocations;

9.8 Ensures that any future policy approach for King s Cliffe limits development to genuinely proportionate, locally justified growth, including appropriate infill, brownfield opportunities and sites supported through the Neighbourhood Plan process, rather than strategic outward expansion.

9.9 Maintains King s Cliffe's classification as a village suitable only for proportionate growth to meet locally identified needs;

9.10 Continues direct engagement with the Parish Council as the Local Plan progresses.

10. Inconsistencies in NNC documentation

10.1 Settlement Hierarchy Background Paper

10.1.1 Under the Land Availability section an area designated 292-Land east of Home Farm, Pytchley has been indicated. This is a factual or mapping error and should be removed from the King s Cliffe assessment unless NNC can explain its relevance to King s Cliffe. Reliance on this entry would undermine the accuracy of the settlement evidence base.

10.1.2 Appendix 2. Audit of services and facilities in first filter of settlements lists two convenience shops for the village. There is actually only one convenience shop now. The Parish Council does not consider that a single convenience shop provides the range, resilience or capacity of local retail provision implied by the audit.

10.1.3 The Parish Council notes that the HELAA / Call for Sites information for Site 28 appears to describe the land as vacant. The Parish Council understands that this land is currently in agricultural use. This should be corrected, as agricultural land should not be treated as vacant or previously developed land.

11. Closing statement

King s Cliffe Parish Council supports a Local Plan that directs growth to the most sustainable locations, protects rural communities from disproportionate development, and ensures that infrastructure is delivered before growth takes place.

King s Cliffe has an important role as a rural village with a strong community, valued landscape setting, local services, employment areas, recreational assets and a made Neighbourhood Plan. That role should be supported through proportionate, locally led growth, not through a Key Village designation that risks creating pressure for additional development without adequate evidence of infrastructure capacity or sustainability.

For the reasons set out above, King s Cliffe Parish Council considers that the proposed Key Village classification is not currently justified by the evidence base and should not be carried forward into the next stage of the Local Plan without substantial correction, further assessment and direct engagement with the Parish Council. In particular, NNC should not rely on a simple audit of the presence of services where those services are limited, inaccessible, capacity-constrained or dependent on private car travel. The emerging Local Plan should recognise King s Cliffe as a rural village with a made Neighbourhood Plan, a defined settlement boundary, significant recent growth, infrastructure constraints and a sensitive rural setting. Future growth should therefore be proportionate, locally justified, infrastructure-led and consistent with the existing Neighbourhood Plan strategy, rather than driven by a settlement hierarchy designation that has not yet been adequately evidenced.