

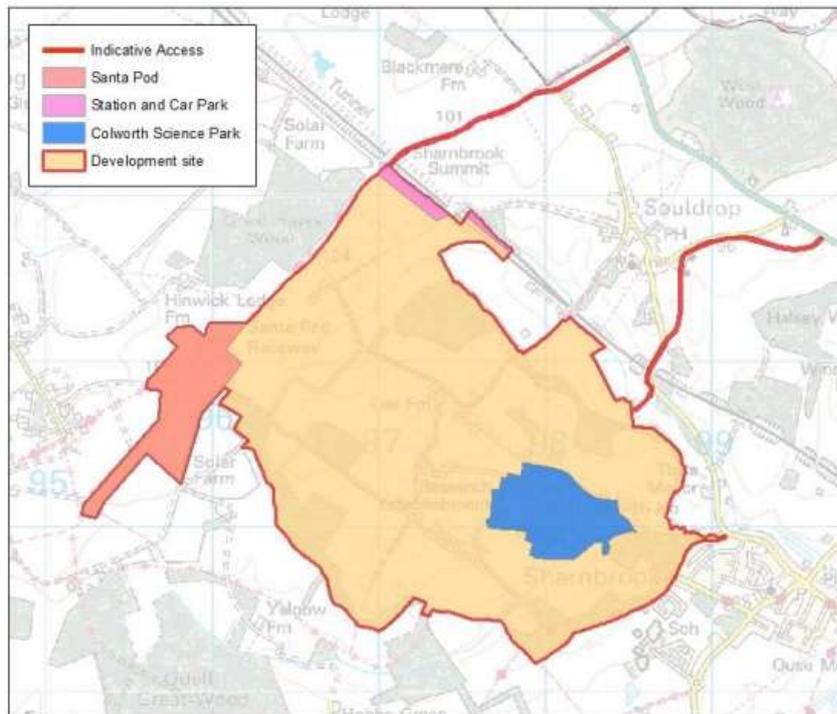
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Date	1ST MARCH 2018		
Report Originator	JPDU PLANNING POLICY MANAGER		
Title	BEDFORD BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN 2035: PLAN FOR SUBMISSION CONSULTATION		

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 For the Joint Planning Committee to agree the proposed response to the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2035: Plan for Submission consultation.

2. INTRODUCTION:

- 2.1 Bedford Borough Council (BBC) has prepared the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2035 for submission and is consulting on the soundness of the plan. The consultation commenced on 22nd January and will end on 29th March 2018. The full plan can be read through this [link](#).
- 2.2 The proposed Bedford Local Plan has potentially significant implications for North Northamptonshire (particularly East Northamptonshire and Wellingborough). The proposed spatial strategy represents a fundamental change from that of the previous (2008) Core Strategy in that BBC are seeking to provide a significant amount of future growth through new settlements.
- 2.3 Between April and June 2017 BBC consulted on the draft Local Plan, outlining where future growth might be located, along with a series of site options to accommodate that growth. The Plan proposed four potential sites for one or more new settlements within the Borough, three of which would be accessed via the A6 corridor. The sites were:
- Lee Farm Sharnbrook (Colworth Garden Village) - A6 corridor;
 - Thurleigh Airfield - A6 corridor;
 - Land at Twinwoods - A6 corridor;
 - Wyboston Garden Village – A1 corridor, near to St Neots.
- 2.4 The previous officer response to the draft Local Plan ([Appendix 1](#)), noted that any of the three potential sites along the A6 corridor could have implications for North Northamptonshire, but that Lee Farm was of most relevance. BBC has now proposed that this site, now known as Colworth Garden Village is the preferred site for a Garden Village, to include 4,500 dwellings (2,500 by 2035) and associated infrastructure (Policy 27, paras 7.47-7.50). Of particular significance is the provision of a Parkway Station to serve the development. A map of the proposed site is provided overleaf.



2.5 Para 7.42 of the Plan summarises the rationale for the allocation of Colworth Garden Village:

“From the assessment work, Colworth Garden Village emerged as the preferred location for a new Garden Village due to a combination of factors including the employment opportunities offered by the existing Colworth Science Park; its location to the north of Bedford meaning that it has a less direct and immediate impact on the A6 at its junctions within Bedford and the added opportunity to deliver a new Parkway station serving the development. The provision of a Parkway station in close proximity to the Garden Village presents a genuine and timely opportunity for a sustainable housing and transport hub with connections into Bedford, local and regional destinations including London. The Parkway station will also have the added benefit of easing capacity on the A6 by displacing car based journeys which otherwise would have travelled into Bedford to connect with the rail network. In taking full advantage of this important transport link, connectivity by public transport, walking and cycling will be a key theme in the development of the Garden Village in line with garden city principles.”

3. IMPLICATIONS FOR NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE AND PROPOSED RESPONSE

3.1 The JPDU has reviewed the Plan for Submission and has identified a number of issues which should be raised in representations to BBC. It is understood that both East Northamptonshire Council and Borough Council of Wellingborough are making representations to the consultation and therefore this response focuses on strategic/cross-boundary issues.

3.2 The JPDU does not object to the principle of allocating a Garden Village, which is consistent with Government objectives. It is, however, important that the JPDU and partner Councils can be satisfied that the allocation of Colworth

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Garden Village is underpinned by a robust evidence base and does not have significant negative impacts on North Northamptonshire.

- 3.3 The JPDU has engaged positively with BBC through the preparation of the JCS and the Bedford Borough Local Plan. A number of Duty to Cooperate meetings have been held with the JPDU, BBC, East Northamptonshire Council, Borough Council of Wellingborough and Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) Highways to discuss cross-boundary issues. Despite these meetings there are concerns relating to the adequacy of the transport modelling work undertaken to assess the implications of the proposed Garden Village on the A6 in North Northamptonshire.
- 3.4 Discussions with NCC Highways have identified apparent inadequacies in the transport modelling work, which can be summarised as follows:
- The model on which the published outputs are based does not extend into Northamptonshire and therefore does not accurately reflect trips north on the A6;
 - The implications of not factoring in this work are exacerbated by the future delivery of the Rushden East Sustainable Urban Extension to the east of Rushden (which includes 2,500 new homes and employment provision) which in turn could affect trips south along the A6;
 - Trip levels indicated in the modelling appear low, especially in the p.m. period;
 - The modelling does not appear to have included the trips generated by the additional 7.25 ha employment provision at Colworth Garden Village;
- 3.5 NCC Highways has raised concerns over the potential impact of these issues and has through Duty to Cooperate meetings agreed to work with BBC on the transport modelling.
- 3.6 It may be possible to address these concerns by updating the model, including undertaking additional data collection to ensure the impacts on relevant routes in North Northamptonshire are understood and that negative impacts can be mitigated. However, without this information the outcomes and potential mitigation measures remain unclear. Therefore, until this position is resolved to the satisfaction of NCC Highways, it is necessary to raise an objection in relation to the transport modelling.
- 3.7 In addition to the above, it is considered necessary to make representations in relation to other elements of the Plan that could represent opportunities for North Northamptonshire, but to also ensure that cross-boundary impacts are mitigated.
- 3.8 The Colworth Garden Village proposal (Policy 27) should recognise opportunities in relation to green infrastructure and local connectivity. Policy 19 of the Joint Core Strategy for North Northamptonshire identifies sub-regional and local Green Infrastructure corridors which cross local authority boundaries, with the Rushden-Souldrop Local GI corridor of particular relevance.

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Opportunities also exist to link into the Green Infrastructure planned for Rushden East (such as the Greenway). There is potential for cross-boundary public transport provision (including links between Rushden East, Rushden Lakes and the future Parkway rail station which forms part of the Colworth Garden Village proposal). In the light of our concerns about the transport modelling, enhanced public transport links could potentially mitigate the impact of the proposal on the A6 and other relevant routes and should be investigated further.

- 3.9 Clarification is necessary regarding current progress and the status of the proposed Colworth/Sharnbrook Parkway Station as a specific transport infrastructure project supporting the delivery of the Garden Village. It is noted that the Parkway Station is a key element supporting the allocation of the Garden Village and Policy 27 xii sets out that the Station will be operational before the first dwelling occupation. The Station represents a significant opportunity to benefit residents of North Northamptonshire, but it will be important that it does not negatively impact on rail services from North Northamptonshire and that transport impacts are fully understood.
- 3.10 The Plan for Submission consultation requires representations to be made with reference to the Tests of Soundness. The proposed response set out at Appendix 2 has been prepared using BBC's Local Plan 2035 template and it is necessary to consider the content of the response while recognising the parameters of the current consultation i.e. the Tests of Soundness.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The JPDU has had ongoing, positive dialogue with BBC through the preparation of the Local Plan. It is, however, necessary to make representations to the Local Plan covering the issues raised in section 3 of this report and set out in Appendix 2. The proposed response raises objections to the transport modelling undertaken and identifies issues that if addressed should ensure that impacts on North Northamptonshire are mitigated and that wider benefits of the proposals can be achieved. The JPDU would welcome the opportunity to work with BBC in seeking to resolve issues raised in the representations prior to the Examination. Members will be kept informed of progress. It is recommended that this work be delegated to officers.

5. RECOMMENDATION

5.1 The Planning Policy Manager recommends that:

- 1. The Joint Planning Committee agrees the proposed response to the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2035 Plan for Submission set out in Appendix 2; and**
- 2. Work to seek to resolve the issues raised in the response be delegated to officers.**

Contact Officers: Simon James tel. 01832 742361; Paul Woods 01832 742360