

**North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Committee 1<sup>st</sup> March 2018**  
**Item 5 Appendix 1: Previous NNJPDU officer response to the draft Bedford Local Plan**

Hi Carolyn,

**RE: Local Plan 2035 Consultation**

Apologies for the delay in responding to the above consultation (we did leave email and phone correspondence to this effect). Please see below our officer-level feedback to the proposals:

**1. General comments**

In accordance with the Duty to Cooperate, the North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit has responded to previous Bedford Local Plan consultations since its launch (2014) as well as meeting officers from BBC on a number of occasions. We note that the Local Plan proposes a new spatial strategy that is different to the Bedford-Kempston focused strategy in the current (2008) Core Strategy.

Through the proposed replacement spatial strategy we note that this involves delivering over 50% of the current housing requirement at one or two entirely new settlements:

- Three potential sites are identified in the vicinity of Sharnbrook and the A6 Bedford/ Rushden/ Kettering corridor (Lee Farm (around 5-7 miles from North Northamptonshire and of most relevance to the JPU), Thurleigh and Twinwoods);
- One site at Wyboston, in the vicinity of St Neots and the A1 Great North corridor.

**2. Transport Modelling**

In the case of the three potential A6 corridor sites any transport/ infrastructure modelling should take account of the significant development commitments which already exist along the A6 corridor in North Northamptonshire (and the cumulative impact of this growth on the local transport network). Notably, these include the urban extensions at Rushden East (2,500 dwellings capacity of which 1,450 are due to be built by 2031), Irthlingborough West (700 dwellings), Wellingborough East (a.k.a. Stanton Cross – 3,750 of which 3,000 are due to be built by 2031) and Hanwood Park (a.k.a. Kettering East - 5,500 dwellings capacity of which c. 4,000 are due to be built by 2031). It is important that the proposed changes to the current spatial strategy can be justified at examination, taking account of the growth proposed in the North Northamptonshire area and the potential impact of residents travelling to the growth town of Rushden to use services and facilities, the impact of which is likely to be greatest from development at Lee Farm as the proposal closest to North Northamptonshire. This modelling should ensure that potential impacts have been robustly tested to ensure that these can be mitigated through the Local Plan and subsequent development proposals.

**3. Green Infrastructure**

Alongside infrastructure provision, opportunities to enhance Green Infrastructure should be maximised within whichever proposal is progressed. Policy 19 of the Joint Core Strategy for North Northamptonshire identifies sub-regional and local GI corridors which cross local authority boundaries, with the Rushden-Souldrop corridor of particular relevance here. The JPU acknowledges that the consultation paper and associated topic paper highlight infrastructure and access to the A6 from Lee Farm as a high priority for the local authority to consider should the proposal be taken forward in the Local Plan and also references the importance of Green Infrastructure. The JPU supports these references accordingly.

#### **4. Lee Farm**

Of the three sites along the A6, the Lee Farm site would, in practice, represent an extension to the established village of Sharnbrook (designated a rural service centre in the current Local Plan/ Core Strategy). As a consequence Sharnbrook would effectively become part of a new town, situated mid-way between Bedford and Rushden. We note that East Northamptonshire Council has provided you with concerns raised by local residents.

#### **5. Sustainability Appraisal**

Given the change of direction to the spatial development strategy that is being proposed for the new Local Plan, it is also important to ensure that the Sustainability Appraisal is extremely robust in terms of objectively measuring the relative merits of all reasonable alternatives. Whilst we do not object to the revised spatial strategy in principle, we emphasise the importance of being able to justify this change at the submission/ examination stage through ensuring that potential impacts have been robustly tested to ensure that these can be mitigated through the Local Plan and subsequent development.

I hope this is of use. I am aware of DTC meeting happening this week so maybe these issues can be unpicked more then? If any issues do not hesitate to contact me/Simon James (copied in).

Best regards,  
Paul