

Report of the Head of Planning and Local Development

NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT CORE STRATEGY REVIEW

1 Purpose of report

To provide an overview of the pre-submission plan for the Joint Core Strategy review and agree the Council's response at this stage.

This will assist the Council in meeting the PRIDE priorities, most notably 'Promoting high quality growth' and 'Enhancing the environment'.

2 Executive summary

This report sets out a summary of the pre-submission plan for the Joint Core Strategy, which is currently available for public consultation, and suggests a Council's response.

3 Appendices

Appendix 1 – North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy: Pre-submission Plan
Appendix 2 - Suggested comments on the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy

4 Proposed action:

4.1 The Committee is invited to RESOLVE to note the progress made on the Joint Core Strategy review; to continue to support the timely delivery of the plan and to make the comments outlined in Appendix 2.

5 Background

5.1 The first Core Strategy was adopted in 2008 and covers the period to 2021. It is being reviewed to take account of the recession delaying development and infrastructure investment and to plan forward to 2031. The review is also responding to the Government's reforms to the planning system, including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the abolition scrapping of Regional Plans. These give greater scope for the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) to respond to local needs and aspirations, although it must still be based on sound evidence and meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements.

5.2 The review started in 2009. Early work involved a series of stakeholder workshops, followed by wider consultation on issues facing North

Northamptonshire. This consultation and technical work has been vital in developing draft policies and proposals for the new plan. Consultation took place on an 'emerging plan' document between 6 August and 15 October 2012. This document was considered by the Development Committee on 18 September 2012. Further consultation was undertaken between August and October 2013 on a range of issues including the Urban Structure Study and identified Strategic Housing and Employment Sites. These documents were considered by the Development Committee on 29 Oct 2013.

- 5.3 Preparation of the JCS is led by the North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit (JPU) but guided by a Chief Planning Officers Steering Group and supported by a wider team of planning officers from the various planning authorities. Various versions of the draft policies have been considered by the Joint Committee at their meetings on 1 May, 24 July, 4 September, 2 October and 3 November 2014. The draft plan was agreed for consultation subject to there being no significant issues arising from outstanding technical work at the North Northamptonshire Joint Committee of 18 December 2014. The Joint Committee comprises elected representatives from the District and Borough Councils and the County Council. The current borough representatives are Councillors Bell, Scarborough and Allebone.

6 Discussion

- 6.1 The Joint Core Strategy forms part of the 'Local Plan' for the area. The JCS will comprise part 1 of the local plan and the Plan for the Borough of Wellingborough part 2. The National Planning Policy Framework emphasises the importance of having an up-to-date plan in place. Without an up-to-date local plan, development will be guided by national rather than local policies and priorities. It is therefore important to get the JCS in place as soon as possible. This plan sets the strategic context for the part 2 plans, which cannot be prepared without part 1.
- 6.2 The current estimated timetable for the JCS is set out below:

Dates	Details
18 December 2014	Joint Committee agrees the pre-submission plan for consultation
26 January to 9 March 2015	Consultation on pre-submission plan
March 2015	JCS submitted to Planning Inspectorate
April to November 2015	Examination period
December 2015	Joint Committee considers Inspectors Report and adopts JCS

- 6.3 The pre-submission plan is included as Appendix 1 and is on the JPU website at www.nnjpu.org.uk. It is also available for inspection at council offices and libraries throughout North Northamptonshire. The Joint Committee is aiming to consider responses to the consultation at its meeting on 26 March 2015.
- 6.4 Following consideration of any comments received to this consultation the

plan will be submitted to be examined by an independent inspector whose role is to assess whether the plan has been prepared in accordance with the Duty to Cooperate, legal and procedural requirements, and whether it is sound. A local planning authority should submit a plan for examination which it considers is “sound” – namely that it is:

- **Positively prepared** – the plan should be prepared based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements, including unmet requirements from neighbouring authorities where it is reasonable to do so and consistent with achieving sustainable development;
- **Justified** – the plan should be the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate evidence;
- **Effective** – the plan should be deliverable over its period and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic priorities; and
- **Consistent with national policy** – the plan should enable the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the Framework.

6.5 The JPU is seeking feedback from this consultation stage that sets out whether the plan meets the tests of soundness or whether further refinement is required.

6.6 Many aspects of the current Core Strategy will be taken forward, including the emphasis on securing better infrastructure and services. However the review is resulting in a shift in approach on a range of issues. The main changes are summarised below:

- **A more locally distinctive vision** that sets out what the individual parts of North Northamptonshire will contribute to the area. This recognises two distinct functional sub-areas, with the northern area focused on Corby and Kettering and the southern area focused on Wellingborough and the ‘Four Towns’ area of East Northamptonshire.
- **Increased protection for North Northamptonshire’s cultural and environmental assets**, through a set of Core Policies at the start of the plan that seek to protect and enhance assets (policies 1-7)
- **Stronger recognition of the importance of the natural environment and the opportunities it provides**, with new special policy areas for the Nene and Ise Valleys and the Rockingham Forest to supplement the existing approach to ‘Green Infrastructure’ in particular recognising its role in enhancing connectivity between settlements (policies 19-21);
- **Greater emphasis on urban design principles and how places could change for the better**, in particular to enhance design quality and emphasise the importance of connectivity to make it easier for people to get into town centres and out to surrounding countryside and ensure that new developments connect well to existing settlements (policies 8 and 15);
- **Up to date housing targets to meet the objectively assessed needs in North Northamptonshire** and to recognise the strategic

opportunity to accommodate even more growth in Corby in line with the spatial strategy of the plan (policies 28 and 29);

- **A more positive and flexible approach to economic development**, with minimum job targets to deliver at least one job for each additional worker, plus additional growth in the southern area to tackle high levels of out-commuting and a historic jobs/worker imbalance in the Four Towns area. New policies are proposed on rural diversification and logistics (policies 22-25);
- **An enhanced role for Rushden as a Growth Town** in recognition of local ambitions and the potential of the town to deliver new homes and jobs. The Sustainable Urban Extension to the east of the town (policy 33) will play a major role in this, alongside the permitted retail and leisure development at Rushden Lakes;
- **An amended retail strategy** reflecting the role that Rushden Lakes will play in meeting the needs of residents in the southern area, and the need to adapt the offer in the town centres of Wellingborough and Rushden accordingly. The focus of investment in the northern area will be the town centres of Kettering and Corby (policy 12);
- **Identification of Strategic Sites to help deliver new homes, jobs and infrastructure.** The Plan confirms support for strategic housing sites identified in previous plans and identifies the boundary of the Sustainable Urban Extension west of Corby (policy 32) and the broad location of a SUE to the east of Rushden (policy 33). A number of new strategic employment sites are identified and the area around the Rockingham Motor Racing Circuit (referred to as Rockingham Enterprise Area) is identified as having significant potential (policy 27). The plan sets out development principles for these sites to guide their development.
- **Providing a framework for locally-driven plans in the rural areas**, through a simplified settlement hierarchy (policy 11) which provides more flexibility for local and neighbourhood plans to determine how much development is needed in local areas within the context of objectively assessed needs of the Housing Market Area. Strategic housing requirements are provided only for the four largest villages. A new policy (policy 13) outlines when development might be acceptable as an exception to the normal policy of restraint in the countryside and an exceptional opportunity is identified to consider a new village at Deenethorpe Airfield (policy 14).

6.7 A number of key issues for this borough have been the subject of much debate and these are discussed further in more detail;

- Housing targets
- Settlement hierarchy
- Housing distribution
- Retail strategy
- Economic prosperity
- Strategic sites

Housing Targets

- 6.8 The housing targets are a key element of the plan. The JCS will need to establish the appropriate level of housing for the North Northamptonshire Housing Market Area over the period 2011-2031 and the delivery trajectory to achieve this. Notwithstanding the Government's intention that housing requirements should be determined by local aspirations (supported by fiscal incentives) the NPPF requires that this should be informed by a robust evidence base. This is to include evidence of:
- current and future levels of need and demand for all types of housing, taking account of migration and demographic change and other relevant market information such as long term house prices; and
 - realistic assumptions about the availability, suitability and the likely economic viability of land to meet the identified requirement for housing over the plan period;
- 6.9 The JCS needs to set out housing requirements/ targets that meet the objectively assessed housing needs for the area. The targets also need to be at a level that enables the planning authorities to maintain a growth ambition and continue to attract development and investment, but at the same time safeguard communities from having piece-meal developments imposed on them if strategic development opportunities do not come forward as quickly as planned due to external factors such as a weak housing market or delays in infrastructure provision. This problem arises as a result of the requirement to maintain a 5 year supply of deliverable sites (plus a buffer as required by the NPPF) against planned housing requirements.
- 6.10 The housing requirements are based on robust evidence from demographic modelling from the Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research and the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). The requirement for each of the local authorities are set out in policy 28 and replicated below:

Share of objectively assessed needs in the Housing Market Area	Net additional dwellings 2011-21	Net additional dwellings 2021-31	Net additional dwellings 2011-31
Corby Requirement	4,700	4,500	9,200
Corby Strategic Opportunity	(6,100)	(8,100)	(14,200)
East Northamptonshire District	3,400	5,000	8,400
Kettering Borough	4,400	6,000	10,400
Borough of Wellingborough	2,500	4,500	7,000
North Northamptonshire	15,000 (16,400)	20,000 (23,600)	35,000 (40,000)

- 6.11 The figures for this borough are consistent with figures previously agreed by the Council on 31 January 2012. At this meeting the Council supported 'a housing requirement of 310 dwellings per year, against which a 5 year supply would be maintained and that the strategic opportunity for housing growth for

the period of the plan be based on the present consented developments in the borough of approximately 7,600'.

Settlement Hierarchy

- 6.12 The JCS sets out a simplified settlement hierarchy that defines the role that the Urban Areas (Growth Towns and Market Towns) and the Rural Area (Villages and Countryside) will play. It provides the framework for part 2 local plans and neighbourhood plans. The spatial roles are set out below:

Category	Settlements included in the Borough	Role
Growth Towns	Wellingborough	To provide the focus for major co-ordinated regeneration and growth in employment, housing, retail and higher order facilities serving one or more districts.
Market Towns	None	To provide a strong service role for their local community and wider rural hinterland.
Villages	All villages other than settlements of a dispersed form, which may be designated as open countryside outside the formal settlement hierarchy	To provide community infrastructure and services to meet day to day needs of residents and businesses in the rural areas. Focal points for development to meet locally identified needs, unless those needs can be met more sustainably at a nearby larger settlement.
Open Countryside		A living, working countryside providing the green setting for the network of settlements and supporting the area's self-reliance and resilience through food production; leisure and tourism; biodiversity resources; renewable energy; flood risk management and carbon capture.

- 6.13 The rural strategy is for development at villages to be limited to meeting locally arising needs unless meeting those needs would harm the form, character or setting of the village, result in coalescence or could not be served with suitable infrastructure. The JCS says that part 2 local plans may identify a more detailed rural settlement hierarchy based on local evidence. This is one of the issues currently being consulted on for the Plan for the Borough of Wellingborough.
- 6.14 Earlier versions of the emerging JCS identified Earls Barton, Finedon, Irchester and Wollaston together with 14 villages in other districts as Principal

Villages. The issue of Principal Villages has been a contentious one, both in respect of an approach within the settlement hierarchy, but also in relation to the implications for specific villages that are identified as Principal Villages. A number of responses from the development industry supported the identification of Principal Villages and considered that these settlements should be given a more prominent role in the JCS, as sustainable locations for additional development. Kettering Borough Council, this Council and various Parish Councils expressed concerns that identifying villages as Principal Villages could result in these settlements being a focus for development, particularly if development does not come forward at the towns as planned. There was also the implication that Principal Villages may well be expected to meet the needs of other rural areas. The pre-submission plan therefore supports a localism approach in the rural area and does not assign any village the role of meeting more than its own locally arising need for housing.

Housing Distribution

- 6.15 The JCS strategy remains one of urban oriented growth, focussing development at the Growth Towns, followed by the Market Towns with development to meet local needs in the rural area. The distribution between settlements in this borough is set out below:

Housing Requirements (2011-31)		
Growth Town	Wellingborough	5,750
Villages	Earls Barton	250
	Finedon	150
	Irchester	150
	Wollaston	160
Rural housing (outside the four named villages)		540
Wellingborough Total		7,000

- 6.16 Given that the JCS is a strategic plan, the view is that the JCS should only identify housing requirements for villages where these are likely to be of strategic significance (in this case in excess of 100 dwellings over the plan period). It is only the four largest villages in North Northamptonshire of Earls Barton, Finedon, Irchester and Wollaston, where this will be the case. These figures have been identified using local evidence including the Local Housing Needs Assessments prepared by this Council with the relevant Parish Councils. Inclusion of these figures in the JCS should provide increased certainty for those villages preparing Neighbourhood Plans. The figure for the remaining rural area is derived from a continuation of past 'windfall' development rates such as housing on infill sites and the conversion of rural buildings.

Retail Strategy

- 6.17 The town centres in North Northamptonshire remain the focus of retail, leisure and cultural facilities and provide significant employment. They do however

face pressures from out of town shopping and online retailing and will need to diversify if they are to remain the hearts of the communities they serve.

- 6.18 It is expected that the Rushden Lakes development will account for most, if not all, of the forecast additional comparison goods spending in the southern area and will also divert some trade from existing shopping locations. The Inspector considering the planning application for Rushden Lakes accepted that the greatest impact will be on Wellingborough town centre, which is forecast to lose around 12% of its comparison shopping turnover. In view of the scale of the consented Rushden Lakes scheme the JCS (policy 12) does not identify a specific comparison retail floor space requirement for Rushden or Wellingborough town centres. The retail capacity update study indicates that growth in spending on comparison goods could support some additional floor space after 2026, but that is dependent on the performance of the Rushden Lakes scheme. The need for additional floor space will therefore be monitored and reviewed when Rushden Lakes has become established. In the meantime the emphasis will be on consolidating and developing a retail, leisure/cultural and housing offer that allows Rushden and Wellingborough town centres to operate successfully alongside Rushden Lakes. These changes for Wellingborough will be led through the Plan for the Borough of Wellingborough.

Economic prosperity

- 6.19 The plan aims to make North Northamptonshire more self-reliant by achieving a sustainable balance between local jobs and workers and a more prosperous and diverse economy. It does this by planning for enough jobs to match the forecast growth in labour force plus an additional number in the southern area to reduce reliance on out-commuting. The JCS also supports the diversification of the rural economy. The creation of new jobs will be a significant challenge when compared to the recent economic performance of the area, particularly in Wellingborough and Corby, which have lost jobs, particularly in the manufacturing sector. Achieving these jobs will require partnership working between public and private sectors and close working with Northamptonshire Enterprise Partnership (NEP) and the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP) to ensure that priorities are aligned and that barriers to delivery and measures to resolve these are identified and removed.

- 6.20 Policy 23 sets the following job creation targets:

	Minimum net job growth (in all sectors) 2011-31
Corby	9,700
East Northamptonshire	7,200
Kettering	8,100
Wellingborough	6,100
North Northamptonshire	31,100

Strategic Sites

- 6.21 The JCS allocates land of a strategic scale for housing and employment purposes in order to increase the certainty of the delivery of the strategic objectives of the plan over the period from 2011 – 2013. A background paper has been prepared to provide a clear audit trail to how these sites have been identified. For the purposes of this assessment strategic sites are defined as sites of more than 500 dwellings or more than 5ha of employment land.
- 6.22 The key diagram identifies the following strategic sites within this borough which either have planning permission, or have been previously allocated:
- Wellingborough East SUE
 - Wellingborough North SUE
 - Park Farm Way, Wellingborough – Residential
 - Appleby Lodge, Wellingborough – Employment
- 6.23 No further strategic sites within the borough are proposed. These strategic sites, together with other committed sites provide enough land to meet the housing requirement figure (7,000) and the minimum job targets (6,100) identified.
- 6.24 Part C of the JCS identifies development principles for the following strategic sites:
- West Corby SUE (policy 32)
 - Rushden East SUE (policy 33)
 - Cockerell Road, Corby (policy 34)
 - Nene Valley Farm, Rushden (policy 35)
 - Kettering North (policy 36)
 - Kettering South (policy 37)
- 6.25 Kettering South is land south of junction 9 of the A14. An area of land to the east of the existing A509 and the proposed Isham Bypass extends down to this borough boundary and is proposed for employment uses. It is a larger site than previously identified, but it has been considered that the enlarged site allows for significant green infrastructure as part of flood mitigation measures to support the landscaping and screening of the site, thus reducing its impact on Isham.

Conclusion

- 6.26 Significant progress has made on the preparation of the Joint Core Strategy which will form part of this borough's local plan. The plan has been prepared in a collaborative manner. Officers have been and will continue to work closely with the JPU through both the Steering Group and Wider Team to ensure that it progresses as quickly as possible and addresses matters of relevance and concern to this borough. Revision of the housing targets in particular is critical to all boroughs.

- 6.27 Some suggested comments on matters of detail are included in Appendix 2, unless members have any other significant concerns it is recommended that the JCS review is broadly supported.

7 Legal powers

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act Parts 2 and 3 as amended and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (Statutory Instrument 2012 No. 767).

8 Financial and value for money implications

None arising directly from this report

9 Risk analysis

Nature of risk	Consequences if realised	Likelihood of occurrence	Control measures
Not commenting on the pre-submission JCS	The Council's stance would not be clear	low	Support the approach of the JPU, the CPO Steering Group and wider team

10 Implications for resources

In order to report the consultation response to the JPC on 26 March (before the start of the election timetable), extra staff input from the constituent districts is required to process and analyse responses. This will inevitably have some knock on effect to the progress on the Plan for the Borough of Wellingborough which is being consulted on at the same time. The scale of the impact is uncertain as it will depend on the level of responses received that relate to this borough. Prioritising the part 1 local plan is however essential as it sets the context for the part 2 local plan. This can be met from the existing agreed budget.

11 Implications for stronger and safer communities

Health improvement, community cohesion, and community safety matters are all important elements of sustainable development which are addressed in the core policies in section A of the JCS.

12 Implications for equalities

The sustainability appraisal that accompanies the JCS includes an assessment of the social effects of the plan. No elements of the plan have been identified as potentially discriminatory to any section of society.

13 Author and contact officer

Sue Bateman, Senior Planning Officer.

14 Consultees

Julie Thomas, Head of Planning and Local Development.

Liz Elliott, Head of Finance

Bridget Laurence, Head of Resources

Victoria Phillipson, Principal Planning Policy and Regeneration Manager

Maxine Simmons, Principal Planning Policy and Regeneration Manager

Mike Kilpin, Principal Planning and Building Control Manager

Ola Duyile, Assistant Principal Development Management Officer

Tracey Cave, Service Accountant.

15 Background papers

None

North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2011-2031

Pre-submission Plan

An electronic version (pdf) of the plan is available on the website with the committee papers. Members of the Services Committee will be provided with a paper copy in advance of the meeting.

**Suggested comments on the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy
2011-2031 Pre-Submission Plan**

1. The Borough Council supports the Joint Core Strategy. It has been prepared in a collaborative manner with the authorities in North Northamptonshire which has gone above and beyond the requirements of the Duty to Cooperate. It is considered that the plan is sound, in that it is positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy. It sets the strategic context in which part 2 local plans and Neighbourhood Plans can be prepared. It also provides a consistent approach across North Northamptonshire to ensure the protection and enhancement of assets; ensuring high quality development and securing infrastructure and services.

The following comments relate to matters of detail and do not affect the soundness of the plan:

2. A key element of the plan is the need to reinforce the special urban-rural character of the area, by enhancing the network of countryside and Green Infrastructure and maintaining the separate and distinct character and identities of settlements by preventing coalescence. This is set out in paragraph 2.50 of the plan. Due to the particular characteristics of this borough, maintaining the distinct character of settlements and preventing coalescence is of particular concern. Policy 3 (d) ensures that development takes account of these issues. In view of its significance however, it is considered that it would be helpful, if this matter were more explicitly set out in the vision for the plan. It is suggested that the second sentence of the vision is amended to read:

The special mixed urban-rural character of North Northamptonshire will have been maintained through urban-focused growth supporting a strong network of vibrant and regenerated settlements which each maintain their separate and distinct character within an enhanced green framework of living working countryside.

3. The figure of 26,747 sqm net retail sales area in policy 12 (d) relating to Rushden Lakes should be updated to reflect the recent variation approved by East Northamptonshire Council (14/01938/VAR) which permitted an increase in floor space.

