Preferred Options for North Northamptonshire

Towards a Joint Core Spatial Strategy

Your chance to comment on the emerging proposals

November 2005
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As the Chairman of the Joint Planning Committee I am pleased to introduce the Preferred Options for the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy. The Joint Planning Committee has been established to prepare the overall strategic plan for North Northamptonshire. It involves elected members from the Districts and Boroughs of Corby, East Northamptonshire, Kettering, Wellingborough and the County Council, working together in the best interests of the area. Our work complements that of the delivery partnership North Northants Together.

The Preferred Options report is an important consultation document. The response that we receive will help the Joint Planning Committee to decide how best to tackle the challenges, and opportunities, that come with being identified as a Growth Area.

It must be recognised that a lot of decisions have already been made at the regional or national level. For instance the number of new homes to be built in each district is set out in the Regional Spatial Strategy. The task for the Joint Planning Committee, in consultation with the local community, is to ensure that where choices exist we make the right ones to benefit North Northamptonshire as a whole. This will include ensuring that new homes are provided hand in hand with investment in jobs, infrastructure, services and the environment.

The Preferred Options report is not a draft plan. It is a progress report showing how our work is developing and giving an opportunity for you to say whether or not we are heading in the right direction. Please get involved so that we can take your views into account when we prepare the draft plan for North Northamptonshire.

Councillor Bob Seery
Chairman North Northamptonshire Joint Committee
I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 North Northamptonshire is a new name. It relates to the area that is covered by Corby, Kettering, Wellingborough and East Northamptonshire Councils. It is part of the Milton Keynes and South Midlands growth area promoted by the Government through its Sustainable Communities Plan. Included within North Northamptonshire are the main towns of Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough, along with Rushden and a number of other smaller towns and many villages.

1.2 Corby, Kettering, Wellingborough and East Northamptonshire Councils, together with Northamptonshire County Council, are working through a Joint Planning Unit (JPU) to create an overall town planning strategy for the area. This will then form a key part of the Local Development Framework that replaces the current Local Plans of each Council. The town planning strategy will be known formally as the ‘North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy’ but it is referred to in this paper as ‘the North Northamptonshire Plan’ or simply ‘the Plan’.

1.3 The individual Councils, based on the framework provided by this overall Plan, will prepare other more detailed plans for parts of their areas. More detail on the range of new planning documents that are being prepared over the next few years can be found in the Local Development Schemes which programme all of the work. The JPU can provide copies or you can use the following website link: www.nntogether.co.uk

1.4 The Preferred Options report is the first formal stage in production of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Spatial Strategy. It builds upon the Issues and Options document produced for informal consultation in June 2005. Feedback from that consultation process, in conjunction with the results of various technical studies, has been used to draw up a preferred way forward for the area. We want your views on whether this is the right approach.

1.5 The Preferred Options for the Core Spatial Strategy and various supporting policies are outlined in this document, which will give a sound indication of how the final Plan should appear. The formal consultation period for the Preferred Options will close on 27 January 2006. After careful consideration of comments, the full Plan will be finalised and submitted to the Government in Spring 2006. Upon submission of the Plan to the Government, there will be a further six-week period for comment. Following this, an independent Inspector will undertake an examination into the Plan in late 2006. The Plan will finally be adopted in spring 2007.

Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment

1.6 Local development documents must be subject to a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) in order to test how they will aid in the development of sustainable communities. A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Plan is also required. The parallel processes of SA/SEA are being undertaken alongside the production of the Plan, with a ‘Scoping Report’ for this prepared in May 2005. A Sustainability Report has been published alongside this Preferred Options report, which assesses all of the various options considered in arriving at this preferred approach. This appraisal has a bearing on the choices to be made in finalising the approach of the Plan.

Format and Content of this Document

1.7 This Preferred Options document must be read in conjunction with the Sustainability Appraisal Report and the Summary of Consultation Response to the Issues and Options Report. The format is as follows:

- **SECTION 2** sets out the context for the Preferred Options in terms of national and regional policy, existing Local Plans for the area and how the North Northamptonshire Plan will link to local Community Strategies and the plans of other agencies and authorities.

- **SECTION 3** gives an overview of North Northamptonshire characteristics and issues in order to set the scene for the new proposals.
SECTION 4 sets out the proposed strategic direction of the Plan, including the Vision and Objectives and how they will be implemented through the policies in the Plan and the actions of various agencies. It includes a draft Key diagram that illustrates the preferred strategy.

SECTIONS 5 TO 9 deal with the themes that set out the detailed approach to the main aspects of the overall Strategy. An overview of consultation feedback is given and the Preferred Options are set out, along with a brief summary of other options considered. The other options are assessed in more detail in the Sustainability Appraisal Report.

SECTION 10 briefly outlines the role of monitoring and review.

Finally, details are included of how to make responses to the Preferred Options.

2. THE CONTEXT FOR THE PREFERRED OPTIONS:

2.1 The Plan will not begin with a blank sheet of paper, as it has to reflect existing policy frameworks at a number of levels. The key component that underpins policy at all levels is the concept of sustainable development. The goal of sustainable development is to enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life, without compromising the quality of life for future generations. The Plan will fully reflect the Government’s five guiding principles of sustainable development, set out in “Securing the Future – delivering UK sustainable development strategy”:

- Living within Environmental Limits – respecting the limits of the planet’s environment, resources and biodiversity – to improve our environment and ensure that the natural resources needed for life are unimpaired and remain so for future generations.
- Ensuring a Strong, Healthy and Just Society – meeting the diverse needs of all people in existing and future communities, promoting personal well being, social cohesion and inclusion, and creating equal opportunity for all.
- Achieving a Sustainable Economy – building a strong, stable and sustainable economy which provides prosperity and opportunities for all, and in which environmental and social costs fall on those who impose them (polluter pays), and efficient resource use is incentivised.
- Promoting Good Governance – actively promoting effective, participative systems of governance in all levels of society – engaging people’s creativity, energy, and diversity.
- Using Sound Science Responsibly – ensuring policy is developed and implemented on the basis of strong scientific evidence, whilst taking into account scientific uncertainty (through the precautionary principle) as well as public attitudes and values.

2.2 The Government’s Sustainable Communities Plan (Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future), published in February 2003, identified the Milton Keynes South Midlands (MKSM) area as one of four growth areas for the greater south-east. Following this, a Sub-Regional Strategy for the area (which covers Northamptonshire, Milton Keynes, Aylesbury Vale and Bedfordshire) was prepared. It has since been incorporated within the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands, referred to as the ‘Regional Strategy’ in this Preferred Options paper.

2.3 The Government’s short definition of sustainable communities is that they are “places where people want to live and work, now and in the future’. Key points for measuring this are that such communities should be “active, inclusive and safe, well run, environmentally sensitive, well designed and built, well connected, thriving, well served and fair for everyone”.

2.4 The Regional Strategy sets out a long-term spatial Vision for the sub-region towards the year 2031. It also sets out guidance on the scale, location and timing of development and the associated transport, employment and the social infrastructure, and the delivery mechanisms, needed to achieve the Government’s vision for sustainable communities. The provisions of the Regional Strategy limit the choice of options available in drawing up the preferred strategy for North Northamptonshire.
2.5 North Northamptonshire is a key component of the growth area. The Regional Strategy outlines that North Northamptonshire should accommodate 52,100 new dwellings between 2001 and 2021, with 34,100 incorporated at the neighbouring growth towns of Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough. The Regional Strategy sets the goal of achieving 43,800 new jobs over the same period. This growth would increase the population of North Northamptonshire by 90,000 (from 285,000 in 2001 to 376,000 in 2021). The change would be most pronounced in Corby with a 60% increase in population from 53,000 in 2001 to over 90,000 in 2021. The Regional Strategy indicates that North Northamptonshire might accommodate a further 28,000 new dwellings between 2021-2031. It also contains the following objectives:

- To achieve a major increase in the number of new homes provided for the area, meeting needs for affordable housing and a range of types and sizes of market housing;
- To provide for a commensurate level of economic growth and developing skills in the workforce, particularly in the high value, knowledge based sectors;
- To locate development in the main urban areas to support urban renaissance, regeneration of deprived areas, recycling of land and sustainable patterns of travel;
- To ensure that development contributes to an improved environment, by requiring high standards of design and sustainable construction, protecting and enhancing environmental assets (including landscape and biodiversity) and providing green space and related infrastructure (Green Infrastructure);
- To meet existing infrastructure needs and provide for requirements generated by new development, by investing in new and improved infrastructure, by planning to reduce the need to travel and by creating a shift to more sustainable modes of travel; and
- To create sustainable communities by ensuring that economic, environmental, social and cultural infrastructure needs are met in step with growth.

2.6 The existing detailed policy framework for North Northamptonshire is contained in the Northamptonshire County Structure Plan and in the district Local Plans for the four local authorities. Broadly, the existing plans are based on a strategy of urban concentration and rural restraint, with additional development needs planned through a new village west of Kettering (Mawsley) and two proposed strategic development areas, to the east of Wellingborough and at Desborough/Rothwell. A range of policies controlling the location, scale and nature of new development are contained in the Local Plans and Structure Plan, however some of these policies are now out of date compared to more recently produced Government or regional policy.
TOWARDS A JOINT CORE SPATIAL STRATEGY

2.7 The Plan will also take into account the principles and characteristics of other relevant strategies and programmes, including the emerging Northamptonshire Waste Local Plan, the Local Transport Plan, the Catalyst Corby Regeneration Framework and the plans of the education and health authorities. The spatial relationships between North Northamptonshire and adjoining areas will need to be reflected in the Plan proposals. New proposals for Northampton, Peterborough, Bedford, Huntingdonshire and the Welland authorities will need to be acknowledged and in some cases integrated with the North Northamptonshire Plan proposals. Transport linkages and health care provision are particular issues that cross over administrative boundaries.

2.8 A key component guiding preparation of the Plan is the requirement to apply a spatial planning dimension to the Community Strategies that have been prepared by the North Northamptonshire Local Strategic Partnerships. These individual Strategies all contain a Vision and Objectives and deal with key themes such as regeneration, infrastructure provision and protection and enhancement of the environment. The Spatial Vision and Objectives in the Preferred Options reflect the visions, objectives and themes of the various community strategies.

3. PORTRAIT OF NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

Background

3.1 North Northamptonshire has a population of over 290,000, incorporating the boroughs and districts of East Northamptonshire (79,700), Corby (53,100), Kettering (84,300) and Wellingborough (73,000). Altogether North Northamptonshire covers 986km², with East Northamptonshire (510km²) the largest district in the area. North Northamptonshire benefits from its position on the southernmost tip of the East Midlands Region and its unique connections with three other Regions (the South East, the East and the West Midlands). It is also well placed in terms of strategic transport infrastructure. As well as being a key component of the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Growth Area it is also located adjacent to the London-Stansted-Cambridge-Peterborough Growth Area.

3.2 The main settlement pattern in North Northamptonshire is closely inter-linked, forming an urban core related to the north-south corridor of the A6 and the Midland Mainline (MML) railway. This incorporates the larger urban areas of Kettering, Wellingborough, Rushden and Higham Ferrers, as well as a chain of smaller towns with an industrial heritage such as Desborough, Rothwell and Irthlingborough. Corby is closely related to this corridor but has a distinctive character due to its former New Town status and steel heritage. Raunds and Thrapston are located further to the east on the A45. Raunds has similarities to the towns in the main corridor whereas Thrapston has similarities to Oundle in the north-east, a more traditional market town serving a large rural hinterland, with close socio-economic links to the Peterborough area.

3.3 Outside these towns, North Northamptonshire is predominantly a rural area with 109 villages dispersed into attractive countryside, some of which are identified for their special environmental qualities. There is a sharp transition between the countryside and the neighbouring growth towns of Kettering and Corby. Most settlements in the northern part of North Northamptonshire have a high quality of landscape and historic character. Much of the northern half of the area lies within the Rockingham Forest, over 200 square miles of countryside in North Northamptonshire and Peterborough recognised as a distinctive Countryside Character and Natural Area. The northern and southern boundaries of North Northamptonshire are framed by river valleys – the Welland and the Nene. The latter also changes character through the area, from a more urbanised west and a concentration of sand and gravel extraction, to a more tranquil rural north.
Transport Links

3.4 North Northamptonshire benefits from strategic transport infrastructure, with the A14 creating a ‘trans-european route’ providing linkages to the M1 and M6 as well as East Coast Ports. Other roads, including the A6, A605, A45, and A43 provide excellent transport linkages. Programmed new roads such as the Isham bypass and the Corby Link Road, will provide for improved local connections. Kettering and Wellingborough provide main-line rail links to London, Nottingham, Leicester and beyond. The provision of a passenger rail service and station at Corby is considered key to its successful regeneration and growth.

3.5 There are bus connections from North Northamptonshire towns to adjacent areas, however, these are not particularly robust or with frequent services. The exception is the X4 which is a flagship sub-regional service linking Milton Keynes, Northampton, the Growth Towns and Peterborough.

Economy

3.6 The traditional economic base has been located along the north-south corridor and has primarily focused on manufacturing, with strong links to the footwear industry. The neighbouring growth towns of Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough form the focal point for the economy of their districts. Within East Northamptonshire, there is a more dispersed settlement pattern. The population is concentrated into 6 towns, with reliance towards neighbouring growth towns and other centres for employment.

3.7 Although restructuring of the economy has seen a decline in the manufacturing industry and the service base associated with them, manufacturing still plays an important role in North Northamptonshire. Corby’s economy is dominated by it, with over 40% of employees working in this sector. Within North Northamptonshire, jobs in manufacturing have largely been replaced by jobs in the service, public and distribution sectors (incorporating transport), taking advantage of excellent transport infrastructure and the availability of suitable B2 (General Industrial) and B8 (Storage and Distribution) space, of which Corby has the largest provision. This has led to the development of a range of distribution parks across North Northamptonshire.

3.8 The economy is relatively self-contained, both within the component districts and North Northamptonshire as a whole, with a 76% self-containment rate. Localised self-containment is particularly high in Corby, with over 70% of its residents working within the settlement. There are strong relationships between the neighbouring growth towns, particularly between Kettering and Corby. 9.6% of Corby residents work in Kettering, 11.1% of Kettering residents work in Corby.

3.9 Corby is the only net importer of labour, with workplace jobs exceeding working residents by some 5,000. There are, however, several centres adjacent to North Northamptonshire that ‘pull’ workers to them. Wellingborough has strong employment links with Northampton, with 12.3% of residents working there. Milton Keynes also attracts labour, while Market Harborough has linkages with Kettering. Huntingdon and Bedford have links with East-Northamptonshire, which has the highest levels of out-commuting in
North Northamptonshire, with only 42% of its residents working within the District. Peterborough also has strong socio-economic linkages with the north of North Northamptonshire. The Midland Mainline rail links at Wellingborough and Kettering increase the accessibility to London for commuters.

3.10 North Northamptonshire is under-represented in some of the service sectors, whilst there has also been growth in the public sector. There are relatively few knowledge-based industries in North Northamptonshire. The area’s medium sized town economy and manufacturing bias has seen a limited demand for offices, upholding the perception that the area is far from being an optimum location for office development.

3.11 Office space throughout North Northamptonshire is limited, primarily located in town centres and serving local needs. Take up has been slow in recent years with little large-scale inward investment. Currently Wellingborough has the largest provision of office floor space in North Northamptonshire (and the second largest in the County) at 79,000 m²; Kettering has 77,000 m² and Corby has 50,000 m². To put this into perspective, Northampton has 445,000 m², which is more than North Northamptonshire’s total office floor space.

3.12 SATRA Innovation (in Kettering) and the establishment of the Wellingborough Innovation Centre illustrate that the knowledge-based sectors are developing in North Northamptonshire. Wellingborough faces the challenge of “clawing back” commuters from London and Milton Keynes. The area has an opportunity in the long-term to take advantage of the overheating effect in Oxford and Cambridge and the consequential requirement for good quality, competitively priced employment space.

3.13 Desborough and Rothwell offer limited employment opportunities and most people leave these towns to find work elsewhere, with particularly strong links to Kettering. In contrast, Burton Latimer has substantial employment provision with Weetabix being a major employer. Rushden, Higham Ferrers and Irthlingborough have a number of local employment opportunities but are still dependent on manufacturing. Raunds requires new employment to stimulate regeneration and investment in the town.

3.14 Thrapston and Oundle serve their rural hinterlands with retail and community services although both have different strengths and opportunities for change. Thrapston town centre is in a better position to benefit from a growing catchment area as housing growth comes forward. It has a weekly street market and a thriving cattle market. Oundle has a strong heritage offer in terms of the built environment; exploiting the niche visitor/public school role as well as continuing to serve the town centre needs of its rural hinterland. Some of the villages in North Northamptonshire also act as local service centres and provide limited employment.

Retail and Leisure Provision

3.15 North Northamptonshire’s unique location, as well as regional and sub-regional linkages, makes it vulnerable to competing retail centres, where investment and expansion are being aggressively targeted. Competitors include Northampton to the west, Bedford and Milton Keynes to the south, Peterborough to the east and Leicester to the north. The size and range of retail offer at these centres greatly exceeds the offer in North Northamptonshire and exerts a significant influence on shopping patterns. These centres also compete for leisure and entertainment sectors. Kettering is the prominent centre and provides the main retail offer with over 800,000 sq feet of retail floor space, (nearly twice the provision of Corby, which has the lowest offer of the three Growth Towns). Kettering has a range of stores in the town centre and some on the edge of town, including the Kettering Venture Park, which is a local focus for services and facilities.
3.16 Wellingborough and Corby presently have a weaker retail offer than Kettering. Corby has experienced a gradual decline in the town centre, with a lot of ‘value retailing’ and poor leisure provision; however, major retail development is currently underway. Although the villages close to Corby have strong employment links to the town, the perception and image of Corby means that residents often travel to alternative destinations such as Stamford for shopping or entertainment. Given the size and relationships between the town centres it is likely that a degree of competition exists at present.

3.17 Out-of-town retail parks are also located in Wellingborough, Corby and Rushden and increase the retail and leisure provision to serve catchment populations. These retail parks can, however, compete with existing town centres in certain instances. Smaller centres in North Northamptonshire have more local roles and predominantly serve local needs. There are differences between centres, with some declining and others buoyant.

3.18 North Northamptonshire’s leisure, community and cultural activities incorporate facilities that serve wider catchments, including a Cinema, Theme Park (Wicksteed Park) and Leisure Village in Kettering, Corby Golf Club and Wellingborough’s Castle Theatre. The area is part of the “Motorsport Valley” and Rockingham Motor Speedway located in both East Northamptonshire and Corby has extended this into Corby. There is also a range of leisure centres, clubs and organisations that serve local needs. There are, however, gaps in the provision of leisure and cultural facilities and tourism remains peripheral to the economy. Corby town centre is notably deficient in terms of restaurants, bars and cafes, and it consequently has no significant evening economy. The existing environmental infrastructure and assets, including high quality landscape, various Country Parks and prominent sites of historic importance such as Rockingham Castle, Boughton House and Deene Park, represent valuable leisure, tourism and cultural resources.

Social Infrastructure Issues

3.19 Affordable housing is an important issue in North Northamptonshire, with the towns of Kettering and Wellingborough having significant affordable housing needs. There is also an identified need in rural areas, particularly in the villages to the north.

3.20 Pockets of deprivation exist in North Northamptonshire, primarily located in and around the neighbouring growth towns. Corby has 12 of the 50 most deprived wards in Northamptonshire, Wellingborough 6 and Kettering 3. Smaller pockets of deprivation do, however, also exist in rural areas where communities encounter difficulties fully participating in the labour market.

3.21 Kettering has the only general hospital in North Northamptonshire, although Wellingborough also has a hospital. The general hospital serves a wide catchment area and is a key facility for the neighbouring growth towns of Wellingborough and Corby - an example of the inter-relationships between these settlements. The larger towns and rural areas close to the main urban areas have good access to health facilities. Villages to the north of North Northamptonshire look increasingly towards Stamford and Peterborough for their health needs.

3.22 There is no University within North Northamptonshire, although University College in Northampton has recently been granted full university status. The Tresham Institute has campuses at Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough, with approximately 16,000 students study at these institutions. Cambridge, Cranfield, De Montfort, Leicester and Nottingham Universities are located within 1 hour’s drive of Corby. The lack of a University within North Northamptonshire contributes to the lack of high-tech and knowledge based industries and also accentuates out-migration to these facilities. Individually some schools are operating at capacity and it is primarily the more rural schools that show the greatest spare capacity.
Figure 1: North Northamptonshire in Context
4. SETTING THE STRATEGIC DIRECTION OF THE PLAN

4.1 In establishing the strategic approach for the Plan, it must be recognised that the Regional Strategy limits the choices that can be made for the distribution of development in particular. Radical alternatives to the approach of concentrating growth at Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough, for instance by wider dispersal of development, or the introduction of a new free-standing settlement, have therefore not been considered as options. Instead the approach has been to look at where there are detailed options for how to build upon the Regional Strategy.

4.2 The Issues and Options paper therefore set out a range of choices, many of which are not mutually exclusive, and as part of this it set out a draft Vision and Objectives. The paper asked whether these were clear enough and whether they included everything necessary to set the scene for planning development in the area.

4.3 The consultation response indicated that most people broadly identified with, and supported, the Vision and its aspirations. It was suggested that it should be shortened and made more specific to North Northamptonshire. In terms of elements missing, it was felt there could be a greater emphasis on the regeneration of Corby with its Urban Regeneration Company and mention of cultural opportunities, built heritage, recognising the finite capacity of the environment and achieving an appropriate mix of housing tenure size and type. It was also felt by some that the Vision restricted the role and future development of the smaller towns and villages.

4.4 The Objectives were again generally supported although it was felt that they could be more ambitious and inspirational. It was felt that there could be a greater emphasis on flood risk and on social and cultural infrastructure, plus the need for investment and funding to achieve the Objectives and the need for infrastructure to lead (or at least coincide with) development.

Developing the Strategy and the Preferred Options

4.5 The proposed strategy for the North Northamptonshire Plan builds upon the direction of the Regional Strategy and has taken account of consultation feedback from the Issues and Options stage. Extensive research has been undertaken that is key to the development of the preferred options. Various studies, referenced throughout this document, have informed the consideration of options. Integral to studies affecting the main choices has been a consideration of the sustainability of various options, for instance in assessing the potential directions of growth for urban extensions of the Growth Towns; or in evaluating the performance of strategic options for the town centres and retail development.

4.6 The resulting preferred strategy for North Northamptonshire is one that focuses development on the growth towns of Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough, to benefit the area as a whole, and that assists regeneration of these towns and the smaller towns. Rural needs will be met by focusing growth and infrastructure provision on key service centres. A comprehensive transport network that enhances North Northamptonshire’s sub-regional role and links the growth towns, smaller towns, service centres and villages together will support the development strategy. The Preferred Options focus on a number of key components, dealt with in sections 5 to 9 of this document, which will need to interact to ensure the sustainable growth of settlements in the area. The preferred strategy is illustrated in diagrammatic form on Figure 2.
THE VISION FOR NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE:

North Northamptonshire in 2021 will be a better place. It will be an area where, through sustainable growth, its component parts have worked together to build a modern, outward looking part of the UK.

Through growing, renewing and regenerating the towns of its urban core; creating strong small towns in its rural east; encouraging a vibrant mix of rural communities; and protecting and enhancing its valuable built and natural resources, a distinctive and successful area will have been developed that meets the challenges of the 21st century.

North Northamptonshire will be a safe, healthy, attractive and sustainable area in which to live, work, visit and do business with. It will be an area transformed.

Objectives for Realising the Vision

4.7 There is a need for North Northamptonshire to move forward. Whilst much of North Northamptonshire, particularly the rural areas, will remain unchanged, if the Objectives outlined in this draft Strategy are met and delivered, then North Northamptonshire as a whole will be transformed. This transformation is therefore the lynchpin of the Plan’s Vision.

OBJECTIVE ONE

Ensure the scale and location of growth in North Northamptonshire, particularly of the Growth Towns of Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough, is shaped by the role, function, character and development potential of the area in its national, regional and sub-regional context.

4.8 This will be achieved through the creation of a strong network of towns and other communities, particularly through co-ordinated and complementary growth at Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough. The Growth Towns and Smaller Towns will work together at the heart of North Northamptonshire to generate the investment and wealth that makes the area successful. The preferred option is for the towns individually to move towards greater self-containment, thereby reducing the need to travel for employment and services, but with the overall aim of greater self-containment for North Northamptonshire as a whole, implying the need for complementary growth and development. In the rural areas, the preferred option is to meet locally identified needs primarily through development and infrastructure improvements at the rural and local service centres, with improved connections to their wider hinterlands.

4.9 As growth is taking place in and around North Northamptonshire, it is critical that future relationships are not unbalanced. Growth at Peterborough should not be allowed to detract from growth at Corby and the role of Wellingborough must not be marginalised through growth at Northampton
and Milton Keynes. At the same time, development within North Northamptonshire should not seek to usurp the county town role of Northampton (which is identified in the Regional Strategy as a Principal Urban Area), nor unnecessarily compete with Peterborough, Milton Keynes and Leicester for developments that should rightly be placed in these locations.

4.10 The preferred option is to improve key east-west road corridors; channel road-based freight onto core routes and support the transfer of freight movements to both rail and water; connect Corby to the national rail passenger network; improve the sub-regional bus network; and enhance sub-regional connections, particularly to Northampton and Peterborough. Locally the preferred option is to strengthen links between Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough and their related smaller towns, mainly through an improved bus network; and create a Rural Service Corridor using public transport to link the rural and local service centres and their network villages.

4.11 The North Northamptonshire Plan will be prepared on the assumption that the A14 upgrading, as well as completion of dualling and of grade separation of the A45 throughout North Northamptonshire, will be completed at the earliest opportunity to allow growth to take place; likewise that Corby will again be part of the passenger rail network by 2011 at the latest.

4.12 Links from North Northamptonshire to neighbouring sub-regional locations such as West Northamptonshire, Peterborough and Leicestershire will be by road borne mode (bus and car), except for places along the Midland Main line rail service. The exception is an aspiration to in the longer term have a link north from Corby to Peterborough and the East Coast Main Line utilising the freight/passenger diversionary route across the Welland Valley. The Plan will also contain a criteria based approach for addressing proposals for aviation related development.

OBJECTIVE TWO

Enhance North Northamptonshire’s national, regional, sub-regional and local connections through improvements to public transport and road corridors to meet the future role expected of them.

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OBJECTIVE THREE

Create a sustainable urban-focused development framework for North Northamptonshire, based on maintaining distinctive and separate settlements and on optimising the use of its existing structure of a north-south urban core with rural service centres to the east.

4.13 This will be achieved through the focusing of new homes, jobs and infrastructure at the Growth Towns of Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough, followed by the Smaller Towns of Rushden, Higham Ferrers, Desborough, Rothwell, Burton Latimer and Irthlingborough and the Rural Service Centres of Thrapston, Oundle and Raunds. The Plan will also set the scene for further development post 2021.

4.14 In support of this Objective, the Plan will make proposals for the detailed distribution of growth, its scale, nature and phasing. Whilst the Plan will establish a general presumption that new development will be within or closely associated with settlements, it will not include a detailed definition of what
constitutes ‘within’; this will be set out in the individual Councils’ site specific plans. The preferred option for the Plan is to identify where ‘strategic gaps’ should be maintained between the growth towns and nearby smaller settlements, to prevent coalescence.

**OBJECTIVE FOUR**

*Build a more dynamic, self reliant and wealth creating North Northamptonshire economy, which is not overly dependent on in or out commuting to make it reach its potential, through providing the workplaces, jobs and skills to bring this about.*

4.15 This will be achieved through supporting and growing existing businesses; bringing in new businesses that change people’s perception of North Northamptonshire; facilitating office development in the town centres of Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough in a way that regenerates and rejuvenates these centres; making provision for other commercially attractive sites for higher order employment uses; and encouraging local employment that creates vitality in the rural areas. The preferred option for the Plan is to diversify the area’s economy, combined with continuing to recognise its existing strengths in the distribution sector.

4.16 In support of this Objective, the Plan will include policies seeking to retain suitably located and commercially attractive employment land unless it is no longer necessary to meet employment needs; support the expansion of existing businesses; support rural diversification proposals and a more diverse rural economy; provide for land to meet the needs of existing and new businesses; and provide for increased access to training and skills facilities. In order to maintain a balance between housing growth and job creation, the Plan will propose a mechanism for monitoring the provision of new jobs in relation to housing development and the indicative 43,800 jobs set out in the Regional Strategy.

**OBJECTIVE FIVE**

*Ensure that services and facilities are located in town centres and other areas of focus in North Northamptonshire, making these places more self-contained and real hearts for their communities.*

4.17 This will be achieved through new key retail development at the town centres of Kettering, Corby and Wellingborough; investment in healthcare facilities that are accessible for North Northamptonshire residents; bringing a far greater higher education presence to the area linked to increased skills; and increasing the range and scale of cultural facilities. The preferred option is for a three centres retail and leisure strategy helping to increase retained comparison retail expenditure in North Northamptonshire from a current 50% to a projected 55% by 2031; and consolidating and regenerating the smaller town centres in order to support more self containment and enhance access to local services.

4.18 In support of this Objective, the Plan will identify the amount of new retail development to be provided in the Growth Towns and include policies on the retention of community facilities; the retention of shopping uses within defined town centres and the accessibility criteria for locating new services and facilities. The identification of town centre areas and any defined frontages within these will be a matter for the individual Councils’ site-specific plans.
Objective Six

Strengthen the quality of life throughout North Northamptonshire by supporting initiatives that build stable, safe and strong communities; providing for the housing needs of the existing and new population; promoting well being and good health; ensuring development is of local character; and supporting area based renewal.

4.19 This will be achieved through involving existing and new communities in planning the creation of sustainable and inclusive places. The Plan will seek to improve the community mix and social balance in areas such as Corby; address deprivation through regeneration and redevelopment; create a sense of place in areas of new development; improve the public realm through enhancements to the townscape and streetscape; and support local services and accessibility to them through developing local transport networks.

4.20 In support of this Objective, the Plan will include policies on the design and density of new development, including issues such as planning out crime, energy efficiency, landscape character, townscape character and local distinctiveness (local character); the type, mix and affordability of new housing, including catering for specific groups such as Gypsies and Travellers; and the provision of leisure and cultural opportunities, sports facilities, open space and walking routes as part of new development.

Objective Seven

Ensure the regeneration of Corby and the other areas of North Northamptonshire that need it, through maximising the use of brownfield land for new development, providing the necessary supporting infrastructure and inspiring community confidence in the need for positive change.

4.21 This will be achieved by building on the progress achieved by Catalyst Corby and working closely with other agencies to ensure the integration of programmes for delivering new local services, environmental improvements and housing renewal. Communities will contribute to drawing up the detailed plans for their individual areas.

4.22 In support of this Objective, the Plan will include proposals to phase new development in order to make the best use of previously developed land. Policies will also ensure that new greenfield development contributes to the renewal of existing communities and supports new services accessible to existing residents.
OBJECTIVE EIGHT

Enhance and manage the built and natural resources of North Northamptonshire in a sustainable and integrated manner and in the context of major growth. To bring about a step change in biodiversity management and a net gain in Green Infrastructure; retaining and enhancing landscape character and distinctiveness, through the opportunities afforded by development and investment.

4.23 This will be achieved through promoting sustainable resource management (including waste, minerals, water and energy) in new development and the provision of a varied network of accessible and multi-functional green spaces, parks, river and other corridors within and around settlements that connect them to the Rivers Nene, Welland and Ise, the Rockingham Forest and the wider countryside.

4.24 In support of this Objective, the Plan will include policies to ensure the protection of water resources; the prevention of flooding; best use of renewable energy resources; the protection and enhancement of the landscape; the protection of biodiversity and heritage; and the provision of open space, cultural, sports and leisure facilities. Proposals for the use of developer contributions will assist in providing the net gain in Green Infrastructure across North Northamptonshire. The Plan will adopt environmental standards that all development will be expected to achieve as a minimum. These will be based on clear benchmarks, such as the widely used BREEAM/EcoHomes standard and will take account of best practice in other parts of the country, such as the London Renewables Toolkit. The Plan will propose that all new sustainable urban extensions should be designed to be ‘carbon neutral’, in that measures will be put in place to ensure that there is no net additional impact on climate change.

OBJECTIVE NINE

Secure provision of the services and facilities needed to sustain and enhance existing communities and support the development of North Northamptonshire, including establishing the priorities for future public and private investment and collaboration, to build confidence in North Northamptonshire for investors and others.

4.25 Investor confidence will be achieved through the delivery of the mechanisms, funding frameworks and resources that will ensure infrastructure, jobs and services are provided and in a timely manner. The new local delivery vehicle for North Northamptonshire will prepare a Business Plan aimed at achieving this, in support of North Northamptonshire’s growth and regeneration and the building of more sustainable communities.

4.26 The priority will be to ensure the provision of the infrastructure, jobs and services needed to support North Northamptonshire’s growth and associated with building sustainable communities. The rate of growth anticipated in the Plan requires major investment support to secure infrastructure, jobs and services alongside housing growth. The amount and timing of development across North Northamptonshire will be related to this investment. For instance the pace of development may be held back until the A14 is improved.

4.27 In support of this Objective, the Plan will include policies on the use of developer contributions and the phasing of major infrastructure improvements. The preferred option is to adopt a strategic approach to using planning obligations, through a locally developed tariff.
How Do We Make New Development a Success?

4.28 The Objectives above set out the overall approach to planning development in North Northamptonshire and cover many varied issues. The Issues and Options paper included a section on the guidelines for new development, which will contribute to making more sustainable communities in North Northamptonshire. This section is updated and repeated here, in order to provide an overview of the detailed issues to be integrated within the Plan, including within a small number of basic policies covering key implementation issues:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Creating development that is in harmony with its location and neighbouring uses, and is well integrated with existing settlement patterns and the landscape.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development Linkages</td>
<td>Creating development that will best link to local facilities and networks (such as shops and footpaths). Creating development that is accessible and integrated into the Green Infrastructure framework.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layout</td>
<td>Ensuring that the layout of the development will enhance local distinctiveness and character of the area, and follow the principles of good planning and design.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design Quality</td>
<td>Promoting good and high quality design that respects the character of its surroundings, and creates new places with quality and distinctiveness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Design</td>
<td>Ensuring that new development promotes the principles of sustainability and makes the most efficient use of resources, through good land, water, air and waste management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amenity</td>
<td>Ensuring development improves local amenity or, for some essential proposals, does not harm it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscape</td>
<td>Ensuring new development responds to and reinforces landscape character and protects or enhances the area’s local distinctiveness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biodiversity</td>
<td>Ensuring that development minimises impact on biodiversity and that opportunities are grasped to enhance what is already there through good environmental management and habitat creation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage</td>
<td>Ensuring new development responds to and reinforces historic landscape character and protects the area’s historic and archaeological features.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viability and Vitality</td>
<td>Encouraging a community feel generally, with a more vibrant mix and feel at particular locations such as town centres. Ensuring economic vibrancy and good transport access to local jobs and services. Also preventing development that would lead to the loss of key services from particular locations (eg village shops.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on Services and Infrastructure</td>
<td>Ensuring that new development is accompanied by improved services and infrastructure, in order to make it acceptable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety and Security</td>
<td>Ensuring that developments, both buildings and infrastructure, are designed to promote communities which are and feel safe from crime, accidents and disorder.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2: The Preferred Strategy
5. ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS

5.1 The Plan will make proposals for the distribution of infrastructure, jobs and services, based upon the role identified for individual towns and the rural areas as well as an understanding of the relationships between places.

5.2 A question about areas with strong spatial relationships was included at page 10 of the Issues and Options paper and the idea was illustrated in Figure 2 of that document.

5.3 Consultation response identified that people generally agree such relationships exist. However, it was felt that they are considerably more complex than Figure 2 implied. For example, Raunds did not seem to have strong relationships with any place in particular, while it was also felt that there are reasonably strong links between Kettering and Wellingborough.

5.4 Spatial planning of the area should take account of the local relationships that exist when considering employment needs, better transport links and the delivery of infrastructure (including Green Infrastructure).

5.5 There are two completed studies that have informed the development of options for roles and relationships. The first of these, the recently completed Town Centre Roles and Relationships study, is referred to in the section below about town centre development. Whilst the study includes forecasts of retail expenditure and gives guidance on overall floor space requirements for North Northamptonshire up to 2031, it also evaluates a number of strategic options for the growth of centres.

5.6 The Market Towns and Rural Regeneration Study undertaken in 2004 recommended that the Plan should focus new rural development and accessibility improvements on identified service centres. It recognised that ‘smaller towns’ may also function as service centres. It also recommended that further consideration should be given to identifying King’s Cliffe and Wollaston as local service centres and that a ‘rural service spine’ should be planned for in the north-east of the area, in which service centre accessibility by non-car modes should be improved for wider rural communities. In the west and south, close to the ‘urban core’, the Plan should place emphasis on regenerating existing centres and maximising accessibility to them by non-car modes from smaller settlements. A more detailed study of part of the rural north (“An Integrated Approach to Sustainable Rural Planning in East Northamptonshire”) is nearing completion.

Options for the Growth Towns, Smaller Towns and Rural Areas

5.7 The Options for Growth Towns set out in the Issues and Options Paper were:

A  more self-containment for each
B  one becomes ‘main town’
C  different focus for each to enable complementary roles

CONSULTATION RESPONSE

5.8 Overall there was significant support for option A, that of more self-containment. There was also support for the ideal of complementary roles, although no consensus about what level this should operate and how it could be effectively delivered.
PREFERRED OPTION: GROWTH TOWNS

5.9 In light of the research findings and the consultation response, the Preferred Option is a hybrid of A and C. The Plan will promote more self-containment, reducing the need to travel and ensuring that priority is given to identifying and delivering the quantity of new retail floor space that will be required as a result of growth. However, the move towards greater self-containment for the individual Growth Towns will also be within the context of greater self containment for North Northamptonshire as a whole and the three towns must develop on a complementary basis in order to achieve the necessary growth in floor space and retained expenditure for the wider area. The Town Centres study referred to earlier evaluates an option for a three centres strategy against sustainability criteria and deliverability. This option received the highest overall score. Therefore, whilst the Plan will recognise that Kettering will continue to lead in North Northamptonshire in terms of comparison market share, it will identify major renewal and growth for Corby and Wellingborough, to ensure that these centres better meet the needs of their local communities, and to promote healthy competition, ensure diversification and encourage regeneration.

5.10 Looking beyond retail and leisure development, it should be recognised that there are obvious existing specialisations at individual towns. For example, the only general hospital is at Kettering. In respect of strategic infrastructure provision, there may be a need for a ‘critical mass’ in order to achieve facilities for North Northamptonshire as a whole. On this level, the concept of complementary roles may be useful to give guidance on locations or locational criteria that would be in the wider interests of North Northamptonshire.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.11 Option B (one main town) would lead to a focusing of most retail and town centre development in one town to an extent that is likely to be detrimental to other centres. In light of Kettering’s current position it would be the most likely candidate for becoming the main town and this would have an impact upon the regeneration of Corby town centre in particular. Also, a single town focus would be likely to lead to increased levels of commuting and congestion, since it would reinforce the need for residents from all parts of North Northamptonshire to travel to that town for retail and other services. The Town Centres study referred to earlier evaluates options for a single town focus (individually for Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough) and these options received overall poor or moderate scores.

5.12 The Options for Smaller Towns set out in the Issues and Options Paper were:

- **A** increased self-containment
- **B** encourage linkages between smaller towns and adjoining Growth Towns
- **C** specialisation leading to complementary roles

CONSULTATION RESPONSE:

5.13 No overwhelming preference was identified in the consultation responses but local Councils tended towards option A. There was also recognition of existing relationships between towns and their growth neighbours so an element of support for both options B and C.
PREFERRED OPTION: SMALLER TOWNS

5.14 In light of the research findings and the consultation response, the Preferred Option is a hybrid of A and B. The Plan will be based around a strategy of more self-containment in terms of the local service base, including convenience shopping, local leisure and small-scale office development, for instance. However, better linkages between the smaller towns and the growth towns will also need to be planned for in recognition that the smaller towns will not be able to compete in terms of comparison retail growth and development. The Plan will recognise Rushden’s pre-eminence over the other smaller towns and that it does offer more scope for comparison retail and leisure growth, albeit of a less significant scale than in Corby, Kettering or Wellingborough.

5.15 The Plan will aim to build upon the individual strengths of towns, and will allow for specialist roles to develop if wanted and if deliverable through local partnership and business development. Examples of such specialisms may include tourism, specialist shopping and eating out.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.16 A strategy based strongly on option C was not felt to be achievable through strategic planning. Meaningful specialisation cannot be enforced through land use planning but relies on local partnerships and shared local visions. As the Plan needs to make proposals that are realistic and deliverable, it was felt that this option did not offer enough certainty upon which to proceed.

5.17 The Options for Rural Areas set out in the Issues and Options Paper were:

- **A** hierarchical approach
- **B** plan individually for ‘local needs’
- **C** plan for ‘networks and improved accessibility to local services’

CONSULTATION RESPONSE:

5.18 There was support for all options, with A particularly supported by the development industry but a combination of B and C supported by local councils and community representatives. Option C was the most widely supported overall, although there was some question as to how it would work in practice.
PREFERRED OPTION: RURAL AREAS

5.19 In light of the research findings and the consultation response, the Preferred Option is a hybrid of B and C. The Plan will adopt a strategy based around local needs identified by the community, with detail being added over time through area based plans and revisions to them. As part of a strategy of urban concentration and rural restraint overall, the Plan will set out how a network of settlements can operate, with better linked villages using the nearest service centre, small town or large town (including those outside North Northamptonshire).

5.20 This allows for a flexible approach to determining scale of development, based on consensus and evidence coming through from Parish Plans and local needs assessments. It does, however, offer a framework for the Plan to identify the broad location for infrastructure improvements and the scale of growth anticipated overall. In the rural north-east of the area, this network will largely revolve around rural service centres (Oundle, Thrapston, Raunds) and a local service centre (King’s Cliffe). As part of transport planning and infrastructure delivery, better accessibility between these centres and with their smaller dependent villages will be promoted and reinforced.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.21 Option A (planning within a hierarchy based on the level of development expected (with urban areas, villages and restraint villages) has in the past led to an approach based on reacting to development proposals on an individual basis. This has no reference to how individual places actually function. This option is not favoured because it gives no guidance on how best to plan for local services and access to them. Retaining and improving access to services is a key part of planning for sustainable communities.

Proposed Roles of Settlements

5.22 The Regional Strategy categorises the main settlements as Growth Towns, Smaller Towns or Rural Service Centres. The roles of the remaining settlements are not identified. Table 1 below therefore sets out a wider categorisation based on the Regional Strategy and on further studies referred to earlier in this section. The detailed plans prepared by the districts may identify further categories within the network villages, based on local evidence of relationships and service use, or on local form and character.
**Table 1: Preferred Categorisation of Settlements in North Northamptonshire**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>SETTLEMENTS INCLUDED</th>
<th>COMMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Growth Towns</td>
<td>Corby, Kettering, Wellingborough</td>
<td>Major growth and intensification. Three centre retail and leisure strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smaller Towns</td>
<td>Rushden, Higham Ferrers, Irthlingborough, Burton Latimer, Desborough, Rothwell</td>
<td>Rushden ahead in retail hierarchy. Others to take secondary role in terms of retail but regeneration and diversification to bolster local service role.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Service Centres</td>
<td>Raunds, Thrapston, Oundle</td>
<td>Secondary role in terms of retail but regeneration and diversification to bolster service role for wider rural hinterlands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Service Centres</td>
<td>King's Cliffe</td>
<td>Preferred focus for meeting locally identified rural needs and supporting existing services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network Villages</td>
<td>All others</td>
<td>Dependent on the identified service centres or the Growth Towns for services. Overall policy of development restraint, supporting existing services and providing improved transport links to the service centres. Meeting locally identified needs on a small scale. Development in some of these villages could provide for the needs of a wider group of villages.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6. TRANSPORT AND ACCESSIBILITY

6.1 Investment in transport is crucial to the future success of North Northamptonshire and its ability to attract and accommodate growth. Even though the Plan will be based on a strategy of increased self-containment for the area, with a corresponding reduction in the need to travel by car, it should be recognised that a certain amount of investment in road transport will be necessary to help relieve existing congestion and resolve local highway issues related to the large scale of growth that is being planned. Strategic transport hubs and links where further investment needs to be focused include improvements to the A14, A43, A45 and A605 routes and some key junctions, the main bus and rail stations and services (particularly those serving Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough) and reinstating rail passenger services to Corby.

6.2 The Local Transport Plan (LTP) prepared by Northamptonshire County Council is the strategic plan for transport investment across the County, covering all types of transport. The second LTP covering the 2006/07 to 2010/11 period has just been the subject of public consultation and will be finalised in early 2006. It is important that the proposals of the LTP and the Plan for North Northamptonshire support each other in setting the priorities and the strategies for dealing with growth and delivering sustainable communities. Having identified the location, mix and amount of development associated with the growth proposals, Northamptonshire County Council has commissioned an independent modelling assessment of the transport impacts associated with the preferred development option outlined in the next section. This assessment will inform the production of three separate strategies identifying improvements required for highway infrastructure improvements, public transport improvements and non-motorised transport improvements.

6.3 The roles and relationships outlined in the previous section will need to be supported by a comprehensive transport strategy. The linkages between the Growth Towns, the Smaller Towns, Rural and Local Service Centres and their associated Network villages are key to the successful functioning of North Northamptonshire as a whole. The Plan will therefore need to look at transport issues on several different levels:
1. How the strategic national and regional connections of North Northamptonshire should be enhanced;

2. How the connections between key places in North Northamptonshire, for example the Growth Towns and their neighbouring Smaller Towns, should be enhanced;

3. How the more local connections, such as those from the villages into nearby towns and those from a local neighbourhood into its town centre, can be improved; and

4. How patterns of local movement and accessibility to local services can best be built into new developments.

CONSULTATION RESPONSE

6.4 The issues and options paper generated substantial agreement on transport issues. Improving public transport is seen as essential for ensuring sustainable growth. Considerable investment will be needed to improve services and to direct new housing development to locations that are well served, in order to shift journeys from private cars onto public transport. Developer contributions are suggested as a means of ensuring funding. It was also felt that it was important not merely to enhance services between the three main towns but also to develop effective networks within the catchments of individual towns.

6.5 Strengthening rail links within North Northamptonshire and with surrounding areas is supported, particularly the provision of a passenger rail link and station to Corby, which is considered fundamental to the regeneration and growth of the town.

6.6 Major concerns were raised about the strategic road network and its capacity to accommodate additional traffic without significant upgrades. Improvements to the A14 in particular are seen as a priority to ensure the effective delivery of growth. Other urgent route improvements are suggested for a range of roads, including both the A43 and A45.

6.7 There is support for freight being transported by rail rather than road. Another point made is that road freight should be better channelled and restricted to the primary road network, or dedicated freight transport routes. This should be combined with restrictions on Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) movements through town centres.

PREFERRED OPTION: STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS

6.8 The strategic connections within the area need to reflect the existing relationships with surrounding areas. The Regional Strategy points out that these are vital for the cohesion of the wider sub region and that transport connections are important components in terms of delivering the scale of housing growth proposed. Although emphasis is placed on improving road linkages, to support growth and attract economic investment, this is part of a wider strategy aimed in the longer term at providing for increased transport choice, both domestic and freight related. The preferred policy approach for strategic connections is therefore to:

A. Support essential road infrastructure improvements to accommodate development as well as growth in existing traffic on the key road routes through North Northamptonshire - priorities are proposed to be the A14, A45, A43 and A605 corridors;

B. Support the transfer of freight movements to both rail and water, particularly improvements to the rail freight network to link with east coast ports, and the channelling of road based freight onto the core routes identified in the LTP (examples include the A14, A45, A6116 and A43);

C. Emphasise that it is fundamental to Corby’s planned greater role that the town should be linked to the national rail passenger network as a priority;
PREFERRED OPTIONS FOR NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

D Set out the requirement for a bus network to effectively and efficiently connect those areas not to be served by rail to adjoining areas; and

E Support key infrastructure outside North Northamptonshire that is required to address North Northamptonshire’s strategic connectivity.

6.9 There is an issue over how the A14 around Kettering is to be upgraded. The Highways Agency has commissioned consultants to investigate options, which are likely to include on-line and off-line improvements. This work, due to report to Ministers in Summer 2006, will have an important bearing on future growth potential in North Northamptonshire and in Kettering in particular.

6.10 The preferred policy approach sees the A14, A45, A43 and A605 as the key strategic road corridors within North Northamptonshire, and where upgrading is required to enable them to fulfil the role now expected of them. The first two strategic corridors are trunk roads where there is an intention to upgrade, although the Plan will seek for these improvements to be given a higher national priority and brought forward.

6.11 The A605 has had its role transformed over the past twenty years and although there are currently no commitments to upgrade it, this is an option (along with trunking). Identifying the A605 route in the Plan will ensure it gains a higher priority for improvement. The A6116 bypasses all of the communities along its route but has a junction with the A14 that may require significant improvement. The A43 north, a strategic connection to the A1, will need improving and dualling of the Corby link road should form part of these improvements.

6.12 The links to Northampton need to be considered in the light of the growth also taking place there. The A509 between Kettering and Wellingborough is gradually being upgraded, through the Isham bypass and proposed southern link to the North Western edge of Wellingborough. This could be extended eventually to provide a dualled route linking Corby and Kettering to Northampton, via the A45. The A43 from Kettering to Northampton is another link that will require upgrading through gradual dualling over the period to 2031.

6.13 The LTP identifies the importance of freight movements to the county’s economy, linked to the number of jobs in distribution. Effective freight movements depend on congestion free core road routes or good rail provision. There is a national and regional emphasis on transferring freight to non road based transport, mainly rail but with some scope also for water based movements as well. The Plan will identify whether there are any requirements for new or improved facilities to support this transfer.

6.14 One of the key expectations of the Plan is for the re-opening of the passenger rail service for Corby. The Plan is also likely to contain an aspiration to, in the longer term, have a link north from Corby to Peterborough and the East Coast Main Line, using the freight/passerger diversionary route across the Welland Valley.

6.15 North Northamptonshire requires an enhanced sub-regional bus network, building on the success of the X4 (Milton Keynes to Peterborough) service, to effectively and efficiently connect it to its sub-regional neighbours and provide for good transport choice. The components of this network will be set out in the Plan.

6.16 North Northamptonshire is dependent on investment beyond its boundaries to improve its links with surrounding areas. Investment that is key to making those connections will be supported within the Plan so that those making investment decisions in North Northamptonshire can see the bigger picture of strategic investment. For example, the Plan will support the early implementation of the M1 Junction 19A improvement and the comprehensive upgrading of the A14 between Huntingdon and Cambridge (including the new Huntingdon Southern bypass) as part of the strengthening of the A14 as a trans-European network route that serves North Northamptonshire.
OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

6.17 An alternative approach would be not to support strategic road improvements as they encourage road-borne traffic and increase long distance commuting. However, this is not considered a realistic option as there are already capacity issues, such as on the A14 and A45, which the level of growth will make worse. This will have a detrimental effect on the quality of life for existing residents (in terms of congestion, pollution and accessibility to services) and it is important that such considerations are balanced against the potential for increased out-commuting. North Northamptonshire is on a number of strategic road corridors and they therefore need to be of a standard appropriate to their role. The longer term strategy of providing for increased transport choice and planning for a balance of jobs, services and houses locally, is expected to minimise unnecessary journeys away from North Northamptonshire in the future.

6.18 Equally, it could be decided not to offer support for re-opening Corby rail station. Corby needs its station however, as part of its renewal and improvement, and without it the fundamental change intended for the town will be stalled. The Plan therefore has to work on the basis that the station will open and that this will be by the middle of the Plan period.

6.19 The Plan could include a general policy in support of bus use, without providing further specific detail. However, as the Plan will also act as an investment framework, it is considered that outlining a priority bus corridor network will give clarity to how public transport will connect North Northamptonshire to the sub-regions around it, and also identify where investment in bus infrastructure should be concentrated. This will also give certainty to residents, workers and investors that there will be a strong element of permanency to the network.

6.20 Equally, the Plan could discount reference to schemes outside its borders. However, where investment beyond North Northamptonshire is required to implement the Plan, then it should be highlighted even if it is outside the Plan area.

PREFERRED OPTION: KEY LOCAL CONNECTIONS

6.21 In view of the preferred approach to settlement roles and relationships, the preferred policy approach for the key local connections is to:

A Set out the requirement for a North Northamptonshire bus network and highlight what the key routes of this should be;

B As part of the above, specifically plan for improved public transport linkages between the rural service centres of Raunds, Oundle and Thrapston and the local service centre of King’s Cliffe, and to facilitate links between these centres and their Network Villages; and

C Take a long-term view of the potential for re-opening local rail stations in the area, to increase transport choice in the north-south urban core.

6.22 The Plan will support and identify high frequency bus corridor connections that will link the north-south urban core of North Northamptonshire and provide links to towns to the east. Investment in terms of infrastructure (such as waiting and interchange facilities and real time information) for these corridors will make them more attractive to use so that they can become a genuine alternative to the private car. Improved public transport linkages along the
Nene Valley will improve the travel choices in the area and help to boost use of the service centres by people living in surrounding villages. This approach would help to fill key gaps in the transport network that were identified in the consultation response.

6.23 The provision of mainline services to rail stations at smaller towns such as Desborough can be considered at a later date once the priority of securing a passenger rail service at Corby has been achieved. Rail operators are currently opposed to additional stations on the Midland Mainline due to delays to long distance services.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

6.24 The Plan could take a much more visionary approach to improving local transport choice and local connections. For example, it could propose that rapid transit systems and further rail stations are an essential part of the planning of new urban extensions, without which they should not proceed. However, it is felt that there are too many uncertainties about new and alternative transport systems and how they could work to connect the Growth Towns and the Smaller Towns around them. The high costs of planning and providing such services alongside development would have a dramatic impact on the timing, practicality and success of regeneration and growth. This is not to say that such concepts and initiatives have been ruled out and it is expected that further investigation of them could lead to firmer proposals in future reviews of the Plan. For example, the provision of further rail lines alongside the existing ones could offer the potential for a metro type service in the north-south urban core. This idea needs investigation to determine whether it has benefits over and above those offered by the proposed high frequency bus services mentioned above.

PREFERRED OPTION: LOCAL MOVEMENT AND ACCESSIBILITY

6.25 Building on national policy, the Regional Strategy and the Local Transport Plan, the preferred policy approach for local movement and accessibility is to:

A  Build in accessibility and patterns of local movement as part of new development;
B  Focus new development so that it best links to existing and proposed networks and facilities;
C  Create and maintain transport hubs that are accessible; and
D  Focus town-wide services and facilities at town centres.

6.26 The approach outlined above would best support the overall direction of the Preferred Options to develop an accessible and inclusive transport network across North Northamptonshire. New development would be required to contribute to (and enhance) the ease of movement around and within the towns. This would enable better access to local facilities for both existing and new residents and increase the scope for walking and cycling to services.
OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

6.27 The alternative approach would be to not pursue the above aims. This would imply not developing a more comprehensive local transport network across North Northamptonshire and not ensuring that new developments enhance this, in terms of developer contributions, for example. This approach will not fill the gaps in the transport network and would be likely to increase reliance on the private car. This would conflict with Government policy and is unsustainable. It would also restrict the potential benefits of growth at Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough.

7. THE DISTRIBUTION OF DEVELOPMENT

7.1 The options for distributing different types of development are limited by the need to conform to the Regional Strategy. In accordance with the vision and objectives, and the preferred roles for the various settlements, the preferred strategy for the broad scale and location of housing, employment and town centre (retail and leisure) uses is outlined below.

Housing

7.2 The Plan will identify the broad scale of housing development appropriate for the main settlements up to and beyond 2021. New housing has been built in all settlements since 2001 and additional housing is already committed in the form of planning permissions. There are also existing local plan allocations that do not yet have planning permission and although these have previously been subject to consultation they will be re-assessed by the district planning authorities in the light of the current context and the sustainability appraisal objectives. On top of this, urban capacity studies have identified potential for housing development on previously developed land and buildings (brownfield sites) and estimated the continuing supply from infilling, conversions etc. This identified supply of potential housing land limits the scale of greenfield allocations that need to be newly identified in the Plan for each settlement for the period up to 2021.

7.3 All options must start from the Regional Strategy which, as well as giving housing figures for each district, sets out an approach of:

- Focusing growth on the ‘Growth Towns’ of Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough as the sustainable locations for development, including improved services and strong town centres. For 2001 to 2021 the Regional Strategy requires a minimum 34,100 new homes at Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough. This figure is consistent in all the options tested;

- Allowing modest growth at the ‘Smaller Towns’ and ‘Rural Service Centres’ to help to meet local needs and maintain and strengthen existing services such as local schools and shops. Some villages may be identified as ‘Local Service Centres’ where some growth could be justified to meet the local needs of a wider rural area. The preferred settlement hierarchy based on local studies suggests that only Kings Cliffe falls into this category; and

- Limiting growth in the remaining villages and rural areas to small-scale infilling, conversion of buildings, or affordable housing to meet local needs.
The Distribution of Housing

7.4 The distribution of growth between the three Growth Towns is therefore constrained by what is already in the Regional Strategy. The Issues and Options Paper set out the following Options for distributing housing development elsewhere in North Northamptonshire:

**IN THE RURAL AREAS**

A. plan for past rates of development to continue  
B. accept that there will be less development in the future

**IN THE SMALLER TOWNS**

A. limit growth to current plans  
B. plan for these towns to play a greater role

In East Northamptonshire specifically (where there is no urban/rural split in the Regional Strategy) –

A. spread development thinly across the area  
B. target development at key settlements that are already or could become more sustainable

**CONSULTATION RESPONSE**

7.5 The majority of responses to the Issues and Options recognise that there should be less housing development in the rural settlements than in the past but stress importance of meeting local needs and preventing villages becoming dormitories.

7.6 For the smaller towns in Kettering Borough there is support for taking forward the Strategic Development Area proposals for Desborough/Rothwell and for limited expansion at Burton Latimer.

7.7 For East Northamptonshire the District Council supports a balanced spread of development across the area to avoid over-concentration in the south. Other responses favour targeting growth at key settlements. Oundle Town Council has stressed the environmental constraints on growth whereas Raunds Town Council emphasises the regeneration benefits that growth could bring. The rural workshop underlined the high levels of housing development that towns such as Rushden and Thrapston have experienced in recent years and the view that infrastructure, jobs and the town centres need to catch up before further major expansion is planned.

**PREFERRED OPTION: DISTRIBUTION OF NEW HOUSING**

7.8 The Preferred Option aims to achieve the most sustainable distribution of new housing, working within the constraints of the Regional Strategy and recognising that development patterns in the immediate future will be in part governed by the supply of housing already ‘in the pipeline’ in the form of existing planning permissions and the potential to use previously developed land and buildings (‘brownfield sites’) within the towns. Additionally, existing local plan allocations that perform well against sustainability criteria will be carried forward into the detailed site specific plans being prepared by the districts. The Preferred Option assumes that overall development in the rural areas will continue at a rate no higher than that experienced in recent years. The approach aims to:

- Reflect the current and planned roles for the towns (based on the preferred option for the North Northamptonshire settlement hierarchy), ensuring that residents have good access to jobs, services and facilities.
- Focus new investment and population where it is most needed to regenerate areas, strengthen and improve local services and the environment.
- Give good accessibility to public transport and allow efficient use of the road network.
Avoid directing unacceptable development pressures to the places with the most sensitive built or natural environments.

Avoid overloading existing services and facilities or should provide opportunity to support new facilities.

Have regard to the reality on the ground in terms of the supply of housing land and local knowledge including views on infrastructure constraints and greenfield development opportunities.

7.9 Table 2 below illustrates how housing development would be distributed under this option and what this might mean in terms of new sites to be allocated through Local Development Documents. The Plan will give guidance on the phasing of this development. This will be related to infrastructure investment, including improvement of the A14 and upgrading of sewage disposal infrastructure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SETTLEMENT</th>
<th>PREFERRED OPTION FOR DISTRIBUTING HOUSING GROWTH*</th>
<th>ADDITIONAL GROWTH IMPLIED ON GREENFIELD EXTENSIONS</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td><strong>GROWTH TOWNS</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Corby</td>
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<td>8350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kettering</td>
<td>Min 7300</td>
<td>4120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellingborough</td>
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<td>4990</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>1320</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
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<td>850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thrapston</td>
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<td>East Northants rural</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Figures include completions since 2001, existing planning permissions, local plan allocations, theoretical urban capacity and a windfall allowance for the rural areas based on past rates of development.
OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

7.10 Greater concentration on Growth Towns with development elsewhere in the districts of Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough being limited to existing permissions, allocations and urban capacity. This would give a strong urban focus (around 36,000 new homes at the Growth Towns) but could hinder the development and regeneration of the smaller towns within Kettering Borough.

7.11 Settlement size - with the largest places receiving the largest share of new housing, based on current population size. This would not achieve the Growth Town focus sought by the Regional Strategy - only providing around 31,000 new homes at Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough towns.

Period Beyond 2021

7.12 The RSS requires us to have regard to the possibility of another 28,000 new homes being built in North Northamptonshire in the 10 years to 2031.

7.13 Responses to the Issues and Options Paper generally support the Plan taking a long term view in order to plan comprehensively for infrastructure, services and facilities and to avoid growth to 2021 prejudicing potential growth to 2031.

7.14 A review of the Regional Strategy that will determine levels of growth up to 2026 has commenced. The Regional Assembly is currently consulting on an Options Paper that sets out options for additional housing in North Northamptonshire (see www.emra.gov.uk/regionalplan). These are all based around continued growth.

7.15 These options need to be tested through the Regional Strategy process and future reviews of the North Northamptonshire Plan. It is therefore premature for the Plan to set firm housing figures beyond 2021. The Preferred Approach is for the Plan to note the aspiration for continued growth beyond 2021 and to give an indication as to which of the Sustainable Urban Extensions have potential to meet some of the future growth needs.

Location and Scale of Sustainable Urban Extensions

7.16 A mix of brownfield and greenfield sites are required to deliver the rates of growth envisaged in the Regional Strategy. The Plan will identify the Sustainable Urban Extensions that will act as the focus of greenfield development at Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough in the period to 2021. These strategic sites will be critical to the delivery of the Plan and will be phased to take place throughout the Plan period. The release of further greenfield sites will be dependent on the monitoring of land supply including progress on the delivery of brownfield sites.

7.17 The Issues and Options paper sought views on the directions of growth for Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough and also on whether:

A The expansion of the three growth towns should be concentrated in a few very large sustainable urban extensions; or

B Some of it should be dispersed amongst a greater number of sites.

CONSULTATION RESPONSE

7.18 The main directions of growth (north-east and west of Corby; east of Kettering and east and north-west of Wellingborough) were broadly endorsed, with comments received on a range of other possibilities. Response to the Issues and Options paper generally favoured the first of the above options on the basis that larger developments are more sustainable, providing a greater range of facilities and economies of scale.
PREFERRED OPTION

7.19 A thorough assessment of all potential directions of growth for Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough has been carried out (North Northamptonshire Urban Extensions Study, JPU October 2005). This has taken the form of a sustainability appraisal, drawing together information on environmental constraints (landscape, biodiversity, heritage, coalescence), accessibility to key services and facilities (schools, town and local centres) and infrastructure constraints (utilities provision, impact on highway network). This work has identified the best locations for expansion of the towns over the period to 2021 and beyond. This does not mean that these areas have automatically passed any environmental or sustainability tests needed for planning permission to be granted. The impacts of development in these locations will be evaluated in greater detail through the plans prepared by the districts and through the assessment of planning applications.

7.20 Based on this work and the consultation response, the Preferred Option is to concentrate on a few large urban extensions that can include a mix of homes, jobs and other uses and can deliver the infrastructure, facilities and a high quality environment to support a step change in the rate of housing development (Option A). It leaves a degree of flexibility for some smaller greenfield sites to be developed alongside the principal sustainable urban extensions. The preferred directions of growth for each of the Growth Towns are shown on Figures 3 and 5. Locations for urban extensions are indicative only. The precise boundaries will be determined by the district planning authorities.

7.21 It is proposed that the Plan should:

- Identify the preferred location of an initial sustainable urban extension to each of the three towns that will be capable of incorporating in the region of 4,000 - 6,000 new homes. This is considered to be the critical mass required to provide places with a sustainable balance of homes, jobs and local services (and a quality environment to go with it) and also the ability to provide significant enhancements to local infrastructure. These urban extensions to the north-east of Corby, east of Kettering and east of Wellingborough will provide key building blocks for the delivery of growth; and

- Identify potential for expansion of the initial urban extensions or locations for further urban extensions that can deliver growth later in the plan period and potentially extending beyond 2021. The scale and phasing of development at these locations will be determined through the detailed plans prepared by the individual districts, having regard to infrastructure constraints and other development opportunities (including smaller greenfield sites that are demonstrated to be sequentially preferable). Release of these additional urban extensions may be brought forward if progress with the initial urban extension for that town is delayed or if development on brownfield sites falls significantly below anticipated levels.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

7.22 All potential directions of growth for Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough have been assessed through the North Northamptonshire Urban Extensions Study. None perform as well as the preferred directions of growth in respect of sustainability appraisal objectives, if substantial urban extensions are to be accommodated. However some opportunities may exist for smaller urban extensions. The preferred option allows for these opportunities to be assessed by the district planning authorities alongside the principal urban extensions. The option of breaking development down into a greater number of sites (Option B) would make it more difficult to secure the infrastructure and facilities required to support growth and to secure sustainable mixed use developments.
Figure 3: CORBY – Preferred Directions of Growth

Initial Urban Extension

Further Urban Extension to commence before 2021

Figure 4: KETTERING – Preferred Directions of Growth

Initial Urban Extension
Figure 5: WELLINGBOROUGH – Preferred Directions of Growth

Initial Urban Extension (includes committed Wellingborough East development)

Further Urban Extension to commence before 2021

WELLINGBOROUGH

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Employment

7.23 A major challenge for the Plan is to ensure that growth in housing is accompanied by a greater number and quality of employment opportunities. The Regional Strategy provides for an indicative 43,800 new jobs between 2001 and 2021.

7.24 Of most relevance to the issue of jobs growth and economic development in light of the MKSM growth was research undertaken by Roger Tym and Partners investigating potential employment scenarios and the subsequent land requirements. This study (the Employment Land Futures report) considered those industrial/commercial sectors that are provided for through the planning system. These are the traditional employment use classes of business, general industrial and storage and distribution, which in normal terms relate to office based services, manufacturing and warehousing/distribution respectively. The economy of North Northamptonshire will be made up of a large number of other economic activities such as retailing, public services and education. It is likely that over half of new jobs will be generated by these other activities.

7.25 The study looked at the levels of growth, the resulting indicative jobs figure and the desires of existing planning and economic development policies. The economies of the four districts of North Northamptonshire and their characteristics (for instance in terms of labour supply) were also analysed. The study found that the workforce in North Northamptonshire districts is generally less well qualified than the national average, with particular issues in Corby. Skills development is a key issue in making the area more attractive for new employers, particularly in higher value added activities.

7.26 The study considered several scenarios in order to assess the impact on jobs growth of different policies and situations. The scenarios ranged from one of market led growth to policy led growth in which jobs growth is distributed on the basis of where it is most needed to address current deprivation and/or to cater for future population growth. The market-led scenario would deliver only around 22,000 new jobs, generated largely by indigenous enterprise, the demand for services by the local population and inward investment continuing the trends of recent years. The policy-led approach would deliver around 47,400 new jobs, the additional jobs representing ‘footloose’ growth - activities that have a choice of location and may be directed to different areas by supply-side factors including the provision of sites and infrastructure.

7.27 The study concluded that the policy-led scenario is ambitious and that it may not be possible by 2021 to attract demand on the scale indicated, particularly in Corby and especially in higher-value office based activities. Two further scenarios were investigated that were variations on the policy led approach. The worst-case scenario indicated the potential impact of having policies that place restrictions on development in some places and attempt to push development to others that the market does not find attractive, with the result that North Northamptonshire as a whole loses out. A more acceptable option envisages Corby being successful in attracting industrial/distribution jobs but less so for service sector jobs, which would instead be accommodated at Kettering and Wellingborough (hereafter called the ‘second-best scenario’). The study concluded that either this or the more ambitious policy-led approach should be the starting point for the Plan.
7.28 The Options paper published in June 2005 discussed some of the issues relating to the creation of jobs. The main options put forward were:

A Diversify jobs in the area into higher value added activities, such as offices and research and development;

B Build on the area’s existing strengths, such as warehousing and distribution; and

C Plan to do both of the above by developing complementary roles for individual towns and the rural areas as part of an overall bigger picture.

CONSULTATION RESPONSE

7.29 The majority of people stated the importance of diversifying North Northamptonshire’s economy to provide higher value/higher technology activities. This will require enhancing the skills base, as well as having a range of higher education establishments and ensuring that there are sufficient high quality sites to support this. The location of North Northamptonshire on the Oxford/Cambridge Arc was considered to provide opportunities to develop high tech industries and research and development opportunities that could reduce the need for out commuting and raise the image and skills of the area. Equally, there are a number of sites already in the pipeline for strategic distribution uses, and it is therefore not viable to expect a reduction in this type of development over the early part of the Plan period. Overall, most people felt that option C was the best approach.

PREFERRED OPTION

7.30 In view of the regeneration needs of Corby and the preference for diversification of the economy of North Northamptonshire as whole, option C is the preferred approach. To support this the policy led approach (as outlined in the employment study mentioned above) would be the most likely to deliver the outcomes required and the creation of the 43,800 jobs identified in the Regional Strategy. This would envisage Corby succeeding in attracting the desired additional service jobs and therefore its economy (and the economy of North Northamptonshire) becoming more diversified. It will however be important to monitor the situation (see section 10 below). If Corby’s diversification occurs more slowly than expected, it will be necessary to allocate additional land at Kettering and Wellingborough to ensure that service sector jobs are not lost from North Northamptonshire. Potential sites should be identified by the districts to facilitate rapid allocation if this is needed.

7.31 Town centre Master Plans and the Regeneration Framework for Corby allow for significant redevelopment opportunities and scope for new office type development. This is the preferred location for this type of development. However, the town centres cannot entirely accommodate the amount of land envisaged as being required for office-based uses. Furthermore, in view of the need to bring about economic growth as fast as possible, certain types of business use (particularly research and development type uses) will find more commercially attractive locations within the planned urban extensions or on other prominent sites at the edges of the towns.

7.32 The employment land futures study highlights the dangers of spreading prime business park type development opportunities so thinly that no one site achieves sufficient quality and critical mass. If supply is not sufficient, many of the best jobs are likely to go to competing locations outside North Northamptonshire. The Plan will therefore propose criteria to help in the selection of further strategic employment sites. A phasing approach may be needed to promote the identification of a limited number of the best sites in the more detailed plans prepared by the districts, providing capacity in line with forecast requirements, and providing the best possible infrastructure to these sites, promoting them intensively and reallocating surplus land to other uses.

7.33 Further detailed studies of the existing and currently planned employment supply in each of the four districts need to be undertaken, ideally before the submission Plan is finalised. In any event they will need to be completed in order to feed into the more detailed plans of the individual districts, which will identify the sites for development.
Table 3 shows projected jobs growth and the net employment land requirement under the Preferred Option, along with the current supply and indicative residual requirement for land for the period to 2021.

Table 3 provides an overall figure for North Northamptonshire of over 47,000 jobs. The need to develop a mechanism for monitoring the creation of these new jobs against the delivery of new housing is referred to in section 10 of this document.

Table 3 indicates that there is currently an oversupply of land available for manufacturing, a general undersupply for strategic distribution and an undersupply of land suitable for office needs. This suggests the need to re-orientate land allocations away from manufacturing and more towards office-based uses, and the need for de-allocation of some 114 hectares. These figures are only indicative and each district will have to undertake a review of the employment land currently available and make a decision as to what sites could be retained for what uses (for example, some of the sites currently allocated for manufacturing could be given over to office uses or, if no longer required for employment purposes, to housing). Such reviews would need to take account of commercial and sustainability issues (reviews have recently been undertaken at Corby and Kettering). A particular issue may be the need for general industrial land. The negative requirement for this suggested in Table 3 is due to land requirements being based on employment forecasts. There is however likely to be some future demand for general industrial land from existing and new businesses, which should be investigated by the districts.

Whilst there appear to be large quantities of land being given over to strategic distribution, much of this is in the form of existing commitments. Table 3 indicates that there is no need to allocate further sites for strategic distribution in Kettering and East Northamptonshire. There will however need to be a flexible approach given that strategic distribution uses can provide the catalyst for bringing forward mixed-use employment sites. The preferred option is to continue to build on the area’s strengths at the same time as moving towards more diversification. This means that some additional land is forecasted as necessary in order to continue to build upon North Northamptonshire’s existing strengths in the distribution sector. It should be noted however that the forecasted jobs growth in office-based uses is higher, pointing towards an overall more diverse local economy.

In terms of identifying sites in the more detailed plans prepared by the districts, it will be important not to generate an oversupply of land. The proposed approach will be for the detailed plans prepared by the districts to identify enough land to meet a ten year supply based on the policy-led scenario, with monitoring mechanisms to allow for constant review of the situation. If there is a fast level of development demand, then reviews of those detailed plans could be undertaken to pinpoint further land as required (which should have already been identified in the employment land reviews for the districts).
### Table 3: Distribution of Employment Land and Projected Jobs Growth for North Northamptonshire to 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>TOTAL LAND REQUIRED (HA)</th>
<th>INDICATIVE EXISTING SUPPLY (HA)</th>
<th>INDICATIVE REQUIRED ALLOCATION (HA)</th>
<th>JOB GROWTH</th>
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<td>CORBY</td>
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</table>

### OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

7.39 Option A would require a major shift in the economy of North Northamptonshire to one based more on higher value added activities. Over the period of the Plan this is extremely unlikely because the labour supply in the area does not currently have the required quantity of the right skills to support these types of jobs. The effect in the short to medium term would therefore be one of either not achieving the jobs, as companies would not locate here, or of large increases in people from outside North Northamptonshire commuting here to work, thereby increasing traffic movements, pollution and contribution to climate change. Equally, the existing work force in North Northamptonshire would increasingly have to search outside the area for employment. Option B would not deliver the regeneration aspirations of Corby or provide for the future needs of North Northamptonshire as a whole in the face of a changing global economy.
**Town Centres and Retail**

7.40 The town centres provide a focus for local communities and are one of the main means by which the three Growth Towns and the surrounding smaller towns and villages interact. Corby, Desborough, Raunds and Irthlingborough have all suffered to an extent from high vacancy levels and poor environmental quality, and all need significant investment and regeneration. Master Plans, regeneration frameworks or health checks have been prepared for many of the centres to guide future development. If developed in an appropriate way, the town centres could be major drivers of employment growth.

7.41 A study has been carried out to investigate the roles and relationships between town centres within North Northamptonshire and then appraise the potential development needs of them in order to maximise the benefits of town centre development to North Northamptonshire as a whole. (Roger Tym and Partners, North Northamptonshire Town Centres Roles and Relationships study).

7.42 The study identifies the trend within the retail industry of increasing concentration of investment in larger centres and notes that significant competition is posed by larger centres outside North Northamptonshire such as Northampton, Peterborough and Milton Keynes. A survey to review the shopping patterns of North Northamptonshire residents concluded that there is significant ‘leakage’ of residents’ expenditure on ‘comparison’ goods, with 50% going to places outside North Northamptonshire. Around 18% of expenditure on convenience goods is spent outside the area. The majority of the smaller North Northamptonshire centres are generally healthy, serving a mainly local customer base, but are expected to gradually lose comparison market share in favour of the three larger centres. The study found that Kettering is presently the main centre in terms of retailer interest and existing floor space. Corby and Wellingborough also have prominent roles but Rushden less so.

7.43 In light of the proposed population growth (and thus expenditure) and the desire to pull back some of the comparison expenditure lost to surrounding centres, there is a substantial retail floor space requirement for North Northamptonshire overall. Across the network of centres as a whole, further development is required to take best advantage of the opportunities offered by growth to create more self-contained and sustainable communities. The study concluded that the best way of focusing new retail growth was to have a balanced centres strategy, concentrating on the Growth Towns but allowing for slightly more growth at Kettering and accepting that attracting new comparison retail in general will become more difficult in most of the smaller towns. The indicative floor space requirements for the Growth Towns are set out in Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Centre</th>
<th>Indicative Requirements 2004 to 2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kettering</td>
<td>28,000 sq.m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corby</td>
<td>21,000 sq.m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellingborough</td>
<td>21,000 sq.m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(To put this in perspective, the comparison floor space within existing town centres is 18,620sq.m in Corby, 40,200sq.m in Kettering, 13,320sq.m in Rushden and 28,170sq.m in Wellingborough)
Towards a Joint Core Spatial Strategy

7.44 Significantly more new comparison floor space may be required in the period up to 2031 (up to 160,000 sq.m over the 2004 – 2031 period in total).

7.45 In terms of convenience floor space, there is an overall requirement for around 12,200 sq.m in North Northamptonshire, up to 2021. (The existing Tesco and Sainsburys in Kettering add up to about this amount of floor space). The rural north-east of the area has the most evidence of current local deficiencies and therefore there is some scope for small scale new supermarket development. In the main, the study recommends that floor space growth should be located in the main areas of population expansion. In the period from 2021 to 2031, there is likely to be a requirement for a further 12,000 sq.m across the area.

7.46 The study also investigated leisure uses and concluded that there is a need for a further 13 cinema screens by 2021, rising to 18 screens by 2031. There is presently a lack of choice in the food and drink offer of Corby and Kettering and this is seen as a key deficiency. Some of the smaller centres already have a good food and drink offer (for instance Burton Latimer and Oundle) and enhancing this strength will assist with the health and sustainability of those centres.

Consultation Response

7.47 No town centre and retail options were put forward in the Issues and Options paper but there was a question about what types of development were most suitable and most needed.

7.48 In general, people stated the need to ensure the development of an enhanced retail offer, to work towards self-containment for towns in North Northamptonshire. It was recognised that there is a need to support the development of increased employment opportunities within town centres and that strong and healthy centres would have benefits for the wider economy and community. The need to support the regeneration of Corby and the roles of the smaller towns were also emphasised.

The Preferred Option: Town Centres, Retail and Leisure

7.49 As a result of the study mentioned above and the consultation feedback, the Preferred Option is to attempt to develop the town centres to achieve an increase (at a realistic level) in their current share of residents’ expenditure. In a North Northamptonshire context this would also allow for slightly more retail development at Kettering so that North Northamptonshire as a whole is a more attractive shopping location. This approach will support the towns in realising the visions set out in the various Master Plans and the Corby Regeneration Framework. The rates of development of new retail floor space implied by the study will act as a guide for the more detailed plans prepared by individual districts and not as a barrier to development. However, if a town centre is planning to develop far more rapidly than envisaged in a three-centre strategy, it will be necessary to consider the wider impacts on other town centres within North Northamptonshire.

7.50 The current retail hierarchy is set out below in table 5, with commentary on the potential role of the centres based on a balanced network approach, with 3 strategic centres:
7.51 The ‘status quo’ option is to plan on the basis of each town centre developing to meet its own needs. This would mean further retail development, but at a slightly reduced level from that envisaged under the Preferred Option. A dispersal of retail development across the area based purely on current market shares would also be unlikely to bring about an increase in the area’s overall share of residents’ expenditure. Failure to plan for an increased share of expenditure would have repercussions for the sustainability of development (in terms of more traveling outside of the area for shopping and other services) and for the wider economy of North Northamptonshire (the lower levels of development would provide for lower numbers of jobs).

8. THE ENVIRONMENT AND GREEN SPACES

8.1 A quality environment, accessible countryside, water areas, green space and good leisure and cultural facilities will be an important factor in attracting new people and investment to the area, as well as enhancing the quality of life for existing communities. The Plan will need to contain policies that promote an improved environment, by requiring high standards of design and sustainable construction, protecting and enhancing environmental assets (including landscape and biodiversity) and providing for an interconnected network of multi-functional green space. Green spaces can serve many uses, including landscape enhancement, linkages, nature conservation, water management, food production, recreation, leisure and tourism and provision for healthy lifestyles. ‘Green Infrastructure’ is the term used to describe and plan for all of the above.

8.2 Work led by Northamptonshire County Council over the past few years has included a study of environmental character; a study identifying a Green Infrastructure framework to support sustainable communities in the area; and a study on the potential for a River Nene Regional Park which links the River Nene, its principal tributaries and all the Growth Towns.

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**Table 5: Current Retail Hierarchy and Planned Future Role for North Northamptonshire Town Centres**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CURRENT POSITION</th>
<th>FUTURE ROLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kettering</td>
<td>Sub regional centres and focus of new retail development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corby and Wellingborough</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rushden</td>
<td>Other main town centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burton Latimer, Desborough, Higham Ferrers, Irthlingborough, Oundle, Raunds, Rothwell, Thrapston</td>
<td>Localised convenience and service centres</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The environmental character assessment has considered what makes landscapes different from one another and what approaches are needed to protect and enhance their local distinctiveness. For example, the Rockingham Forest area has landscape characteristics and patterns of elements including the wildlife found there, which distinguishes it from places in the Welland Valley, or flatter areas with few trees such as the eastern fringes of North Northamptonshire. The Northamptonshire environmental character process is unique in that it has brought together separate character assessments of biodiversity, the current landscape and the historic landscape. Importantly, the process recognises that all landscapes matter, not just those that are particularly well known or evoke strong images. Maintaining and enhancing environmental character is not about restricting growth but it is about planning for the appropriate type and design of development so that it protects what is special and strengthens local distinctiveness. Environmental Character Areas have been identified as a basis for new policies and guidelines in the Plan.

The green infrastructure study has identified opportunities for linking existing spaces and facilities so that the Plan can set out proposals for a network of multi-functional green space. This will help with co-ordinating and prioritising the delivery of proposals for improvements and assist with the management of growth and landscape change. Green Infrastructure will help to connect communities to spaces and places, and people to nature. It will contribute to improved environmental quality, people’s quality of life and well-being. The River Nene Regional Project is one of the main ways in which new Green Infrastructure opportunities are being identified, as well as mechanisms for funding and investment.

In the responses to the Issues and Options paper there was general agreement that environmental matters and Green Infrastructure should be given greater weight in the decision-making process. Also, that Green Infrastructure is a high priority that should be given equal weighting with other forms of infrastructure.
8.6 The improvement of existing areas of greenspace was considered just as important as the creation of a wider framework of multi-functional spaces. There was support for addressing existing areas first to make sure they are not disadvantaged, however, the requirement for early planning of interconnected greenspace networks was highlighted, to ensure their quality and sustainability. Equally, it was considered necessary to ensure that new Green Infrastructure should be created at the same time as new development areas, to ensure that existing spaces are not over utilised. New development should be required to contribute towards the establishment, enhancement and/or ongoing management of Green Infrastructure.

8.7 It was felt that there is a relationship between Green Infrastructure and more traditional forms of infrastructure, particularly where there are access needs (for example vehicle, cycle, pedestrian, public transport) in order to make better use of spaces. Finally, there was some concern that the planning process should ensure adequate and ongoing management of Green Infrastructure.

8.8 In terms of coalescence of settlements, there was clear support for the draft Vision that stated that the Growth Towns would remain ‘distinctive and separate’. Areas of particular concern were Wellingborough’s potential coalescence with Northampton or Irthlingborough and Kettering’s potential coalescence with Corby.

PREFERRED OPTIONS: ENVIRONMENTAL CHARACTER

8.9 Policies in the Plan will seek to conserve and enhance the character, diversity, cultural identity, and amenity of Environmental Character Areas by:

- Ensuring high standards of design which respond to (and enhance) landscape character and local distinctiveness by reference to characteristic patterns, layout, scale, massing, materials and design;
- Conserving and enhancing the character, appearance and setting of buildings, sites, structures, areas and landscapes of historic, architectural, cultural or archaeological interest;
- Conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of North Northamptonshire, preventing the isolation and decline of species and habitats, seeking opportunities for the creation of new habitats that are characteristic of their locality and the management of features of nature conservation interest;
- Seeking opportunities for innovative new design that restores character for areas of degraded landscape. This new design should involve innovative use of elements and features characteristic of the locality; and
- Providing a framework for more detailed area and site based character assessments.

8.10 The Environmental Character Areas will be shown on the Proposals Maps for the various detailed plans to be prepared by individual local authorities. The policy approach will be supported by more detailed guidance for each Environmental Character Area and the various assessments and character areas identified by the biodiversity, current and historic landscape assessments. This will be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document for Northamptonshire as a whole, and provide a framework to guide spatial planning at every level from the North Northamptonshire Plan through to Area Action Plans and Design Statements at a local level.
OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

8.11 The alternative option considered was a continuation of the Special Landscape Areas identified in the County Structure Plan. This would be contrary to national policy, however, which recognises that all landscapes matter and is essentially a restrictive approach giving protection to limited areas of landscape identified as ‘special’. It does not provide guidance in terms of design or for other areas that may be equally distinctive. It would not provide enough opportunities for protecting and enhancing all of the landscapes within North Northamptonshire and therefore is not considered a realistic option.

PREFERRED OPTIONS: GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

8.12 The Plan will seek a net gain in Green Infrastructure across North Northamptonshire by:
- Protecting and enhancing existing natural and historic assets;
- Providing for the creation and management of new Green Infrastructure assets to meet identified needs; and
- Improving the management of existing Green Infrastructure.

8.13 The Plan will include a policy on Green Infrastructure that refers to the network of spaces made up of the ‘sub-regional’ corridors that follow the main rivers and the ‘local’ corridors that link them to the urban areas.

8.14 Development proposals will be expected to provide the local open space requirements (for example playing fields and play grounds) made necessary through development. These requirements will be identified through local open space assessments carried out for the individual districts. Development will also offer opportunities to provide links to the existing Green Infrastructure network in addition to a contribution to wider Green Infrastructure requirements. The next section of this document deals with the wider infrastructure funding issues in more detail.

8.15 Although development will be expected to make a significant contribution to the provision of Green Infrastructure, this alone will not provide enough funds to achieve the vision of the comprehensive network. It is essential, therefore, that organisations coordinate their efforts to attract funding in the longer term. The text associated with the Plan policy will refer to the River Nene Regional Project as one of the main delivery mechanisms for the Green Infrastructure. The key diagram for the Plan will also show a priority investment zone as the project area, based upon the original River Nene Regional Park proposal but extended to take account of the links to the Growth Towns.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

8.16 The provision of Green Infrastructure is an essential element of sustainable communities. The alternative considered was the traditional approach, which has been to plan for open space, play areas and recreation facilities for each development as it occurs. In the past, this has led to missed opportunities and uncoordinated provision and has not provided the necessary linkages between spaces and places. The existence of a Green Infrastructure framework plan will help with delivering assets of a strategic nature. Provision on an ad-hoc basis would miss valuable opportunities and be an inefficient use of resources.
Preferred Option: Preventing Coalescence

8.17 The Regional Strategy requires that growth should be planned so as to ensure the continued physical separation of the three Growth Towns and prevent coalescence with smaller towns and settlements along the north-south urban core. The preferred option is for the Plan to identify ‘strategic gaps’ where landscape character and rural restraint policies will be reinforced by policies seeking to:

- Protect the setting and separate identity of settlements;
- Avoid coalescence; and
- Maintain the openness of land between settlements.

8.18 These strategic gaps could be identified in broad terms on the Plan’s key diagram. They will be defined on the Proposals maps for the more detailed plans to be prepared by individual local authorities. This should take account of the longer term growth potential of the towns.

8.19 Draft Strategic Gaps are therefore proposed between:
1. Kettering and Corby
2. Kettering and Isham
3. Northampton and Ecton/Earls Barton
4. Wellingborough and Ecton/Earls Barton
5. Wellingborough, the Harrowdens and Finedon
6. Wellingborough and Irthingborough
7. Wellingborough and Rushden/Higham

The detailed plans to be prepared by the individual districts should consider the need for further strategic gaps related to the growth of the smaller towns or rural service centres.

Other Options Considered

8.20 The Plan could rely on the policy of restraint in rural areas, the identification of landscape character areas and the Green Infrastructure framework. This would avoid introducing a further sub-regional designation in the form of Strategic Gaps (with the potential difficulties of definition at the local level). It would also give greater flexibility to consider the merits of individual development proposals. However, this option would not guarantee the maintenance of a definite separation between settlements, with the risk of allowing coalescence. The Green Infrastructure corridors are intended to be relatively flexible in their locations. Strategic gaps need to be in fixed locations.

8.21 The Plan could propose to designate Green Belts. However, it is not clear that the conditions for formal Green Belt designation could be met by proposals in North Northamptonshire. Green Belts are also intended to be very long term in their operation and do not offer flexibility to respond to changing circumstances or the need for further growth. In addition Green Belts are intended to be several miles wide, which may not be possible in some parts of North Northamptonshire.
9. DELIVERING INFRASTRUCTURE, REGENERATION AND GROWTH

9.1 An important theme through the Issues and Options paper is the position taken by the local authorities that housing growth is only acceptable on the basis that the necessary services, facilities and jobs are provided at the same time, or preferably earlier.

9.2 This is reflected in the Business Plan of the local delivery partnership, which identifies a number of “drivers” for creating sustainable communities and delivering a step change in growth in North Northamptonshire. These are:

- Investment to regenerate town centres;
- Investment in key infrastructure and first class public services;
- Creation of new and better jobs;
- Enhancement of the environment and provision of a network of multi-functional green spaces;
- Driving up the quality of new development; and
- Investment in the A14.

9.3 The local delivery partnership is developing an Infrastructure Delivery and Investment Plan that will identify both strategic and local infrastructure needs. This investment plan will cover themes such as transport, regeneration, green infrastructure, leisure, water management, affordable housing, education, health, emergency services and safety, waste, and utilities.

9.4 The investment plan will inform the work on the North Northamptonshire Plan and identify funding mechanisms, including contributions from developers and public funding. Public funding may include Government growth area funding and the programmes of other agencies such as English Partnerships, East Midlands Development Agency and Northamptonshire Partnership.

9.5 Some infrastructure and facilities are ‘local’ in that they are directly related to a local need or specific development, for example schools, doctors, local roads and utilities. Other infrastructure and facilities are of more strategic importance for the sub-region and beyond, including improvements to the A14 or the provision of a passenger rail service to Corby, for example. Some strategic facilities necessary or desirable to deliver sustainable growth in North Northamptonshire have a ‘critical mass’ that means that they are likely to be focused in a single location, an example being Kettering General Hospital, which serves most of North Northamptonshire. Early work on the Infrastructure Delivery and Investment Plan has identified a number of other strategic facilities that North Northamptonshire may need to plan for in the future. This includes a university standard higher education/further education campus, a medium sized conference venue and an over-night HGV service area.

9.6 Detailed phasing of developments in relation to infrastructure will be a matter for the plans to be prepared by individual districts. The North Northamptonshire Plan will reflect only strategic constraints. It should be possible for most essential infrastructure such as schools, health facilities, local roads and gas, water and electricity supply to be planned and provided in a way that does not
impede development. That is not to say there will not be challenges, for example, traffic congestion in Kettering and Wellingborough town centres needs to be addressed. The local delivery partnership will have a key role to play in this process. The main infrastructure issues that may impede growth are the capacity of the A14 to accommodate further traffic and the upgrading of sewage disposal infrastructure, including the ability of local sewage treatment works to serve growth at Kettering and Wellingborough. Further studies will be required into the scope for upgrading the sewage treatment works and the potential impacts on the wider water environment.

9.7 A study is being undertaken on behalf of the Highways Agency to identify and cost the options for upgrading the A14. The Highways Agency is currently limiting or objecting to some development proposals within North Northamptonshire on the basis that insufficient capacity exists on the A14. It is essential that improvements to the A14 are brought forward earlier than 2017, as currently planned, and that measures are put in place to manage and alleviate congestion on the strategic and local road network (improved public transport with a passenger rail service at Corby) in the intervening period so that growth does not result in unacceptable impacts on the existing communities. If this cannot be achieved, it is unlikely that North Northamptonshire will be able to deliver the amount of development set out in the Regional Strategy within the timescale envisaged.

CONSULTATION RESPONSE

9.8 Overall it was considered that the list of infrastructure types in the Issues and Options paper was fairly comprehensive. Other infrastructure needs identified included flood relief and sewage treatment, plus culture related facilities such as museums and art galleries. It was agreed that infrastructure should be provided either before or with housing growth. Contributions from developers were seen as key to ensuring that infrastructure is provided to ensure the delivery of sustainable communities.

9.9 Priorities for infrastructure provision varied according to the interests of the respondent. There was some indication that it was too early to decide on priorities as there was still a lot of work to be done on, for example, transport and utilities. Improving services and facilities for existing communities and not just new and expanded ones was also a priority, as the infrastructure ‘deficit’ has been building up for some years now.

9.10 The response in relation to the role of the growth towns favours a high degree of self-containment but also to develop distinctive and complimentary roles. In relation to infrastructure and facilities this could mean ensuring that each town has a range of facilities and services appropriate to its role, including meeting the day-to-day needs of its population and that consideration is given to the most appropriate location of strategic facilities in the wider interests of North Northamptonshire. The approach must balance the need to guide investment in the best interests of North Northamptonshire with the need to give flexibility for service providers and the market to bring forward development proposals.

PREFERRED OPTION: DELIVERING INFRASTRUCTURE

9.11 The Preferred Approach for the Spatial Strategy is to:

Identify the key strategic infrastructure needs of North Northamptonshire on the key diagram where locations are known. For example, the priorities for improving the transport network and the proposed framework of Green Infrastructure, or where there is a clear indication from service providers or the local delivery partnership on preferred locations, and where it is desirable for the Plan to give such a steer (for example should any strategic facility relating to higher education/ skills training be located at Corby where the issue of upskilling workforce is most pressing?).
Outline key strategic infrastructure that should be planned for in the detailed documents prepared by each of the districts. For example suitable land will need to be identified to enable the development of the community based health facilities to complement the hospital at Kettering and each of the initial Sustainable Urban Extensions will require a secondary school and primary and pre-school provision.

Set out enabling policies for facilities that are not yet identified, recognising that new needs and opportunities will arise over the life of the Plan. These policies could provide general guidance on the location, scale and form of facilities. For example, for facilities that meet the health, leisure or other needs of the general public, a sequential approach will be followed with the preference being for sites within or adjacent to town centres, followed by edge-of-centre sites with good public transport accessibility.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The alternative option considered is for the Plan not to provide guidance on strategic infrastructure needs. The disadvantage of this is that, without an overall strategy, all of the individual planning authorities might seek to accommodate ‘attractive’ facilities such as a university campus but none might choose to plan for uses such as waste disposal facilities or HGV overnight service. Also this would weaken the link between infrastructure delivery and other aspects of the Plan.

Exploring Better Ways of Securing Developer Contributions

As well as identifying strategic infrastructure requirements and indicating how development should be phased in relation to its provision, the Plan needs to provide the policy framework for securing appropriate developer contributions towards infrastructure provision. North Northamptonshire has been identified by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister as a “pilot area” for a new approach.

Consultants have been appointed to:

- Test the infrastructure identified as required to support future growth;
- Estimate the likely public sector funding that is to be available to meet the costs of this infrastructure;
- Identify and test the levels of funding that can reasonably be secured from development;
- Develop a robust and practical methodology for applying the pilot; and
- Recommend how this should be enshrined in policy terms and implemented.

The types of infrastructure that will be covered by the work include affordable housing, community centres, leisure centres, outdoor sports, open spaces, play areas, recycling, libraries, cemeteries, secondary schools, primary schools, nurseries, fire, police, ambulances, hospitals, public transport and road improvements. The aim of the work will be to recommend standard charges for various types of infrastructure and thresholds for the size of site that will make contributions, in order to make the process of developer funding clearer and more certain. Where the infrastructure is needed for North Northamptonshire as a whole (in other words it is ‘strategic’ infrastructure such as trunk road improvement, water supply or sewage treatment works) it will be necessary to justify the amount that individual developments will have to pay towards this and find a means of pooling contributions and using them as and when needed.

The recently revised Circular on the use of planning obligations makes it clear that standard charges and the pooling of contributions to meet wider needs is acceptable to the Government. In the context of major growth and change, it seems that this approach offers the most comprehensive and certain way forward.
PREFERRED OPTION

9.16 The Plan will set out in policy the approach to using a strategic tariff to cover a range of off site infrastructure costs. The approach is looking at distinguishing between brownfield and greenfield sites and taking account of the costs and viability of development to support the sequential release of sites through a realistic approach to delivery. A related Supplementary Planning Document will be prepared that sets out in more detail the costs, standard charges and thresholds for the implementation of the policy.

9.15 The delivery partnership will seek to enter into a local area agreement with the Government to ensure that there is a planned approach to infrastructure investment and that the delivery of sustainable communities is not compromised by a shortfall in public or developer funding.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED:

9.17 Continue to use planning obligations on a site-by-site basis, through individual negotiations on needs and costs. This has not been making optimum use of developer funding and does not give the certainty of outcome required to support the principle of infrastructure led development.

9.18 Rely on public sector funding to secure the necessary infrastructure. This has not worked in the past as the programming of improvements to services and facilities has usually relied upon the need already being in existence and therefore proven – in other words the infrastructure has not been provided until some time after houses are built and occupied.

10. MONITORING AND REVIEW

10.1 An Annual Monitoring Report needs to be prepared for the Plan as part of monitoring the overall Local Development Framework for North Northamptonshire. The Objectives set out in section 4 summarise the key policy directions of the plan. They will assist in providing a framework for monitoring, through the development of related targets and indicators, which will be set out in the plan.

10.2 The growth strategy is based on forecasts of economic growth including job creation. If this growth does not materialise, the supply of housing will need to be managed accordingly to avoid unsustainable commuting patterns from resulting. The Regional Strategy makes this link, providing for an indicative 43,800 jobs for North Northamptonshire but stressing that this is to be used for monitoring and reviewing the sub-regional proposals as a whole rather than relating them to individual areas or phases of housing development.

10.3 In view of this, there is a need to monitor job creation (not just commercial development) as well as housing and infrastructure development. There is also a need to monitor the link between housing growth and job creation. The Plan will propose a mechanism for monitoring and controlling the jobs/housing balance across the area. The Regional Strategy indicates the rate of house building that we should be aiming for in five year phasing periods. At the very least the Plan will need to refine this in the light of what has been built to date (less than planned in the Regional Strategy) and a realistic assessment of when identified sites will come forward.

10.4 A phasing mechanism to monitor and manage the release of housing land is considered essential in order to control the pattern and speed of growth in North Northamptonshire. Aside from the link with infrastructure and jobs, the absence of a phasing mechanism is likely to result in early take up of development opportunities in the rural areas where demand is high (exhausting supply early) and of greenfield sites being taken up ahead of brownfield sites (contrary to a sequential approach).
WHAT COMES NEXT?

This paper is being widely distributed and the Joint Planning Unit (JPU) will also be holding a series of workshops around the area to discuss the key themes such as housing, jobs, infrastructure and environment in both a North Northamptonshire sense and at the individual district level. Details of the events are available on the JPU website or by contacting the number below.

We really want your views on the Preferred Strategy and Options for the North Northamptonshire Plan. Please use the response forms provided, completing a separate form for each element or policy area you wish to comment upon. A 'summary of responses' document will be prepared, which will be made available to all those responding and it will be published on the JPU website. Following this, the North Northamptonshire Plan will be prepared and submitted to the Government in Spring 2006 when there will be a further opportunity to comment.

If you want further information on the process and other matters associated with the North Northamptonshire Plan please:

- visit the North Northamptonshire JPU web pages at: www.nntogether.co.uk
- telephone the North Northamptonshire JPU on: 01536 414644
- email the North Northamptonshire JPU at: jpu@nntogether.co.uk
- write to the North Northamptonshire JPU at:
  SATRA House
  Rockingham Road
  Kettering
  Northamptonshire
  NN16 9JH

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request. Please contact the JPU at the above address.

All comments on this Preferred Options paper should be made to the North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit by 5.30pm on Friday 27th January 2006.

We will not be able to consider late responses. Please contact the JPU if you are likely to encounter any difficulties with responding in the required timescale.