

STATEMENT FROM THE WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

1. **Establishment of the WNJSPC**

The West Northamptonshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee (WNJSPC) was established on 25th July 2008 by Statutory Instrument No 1572 for the purposes of Part 2 (Local Development) of the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act. The Committee covers the administrative areas of Daventry and South Northamptonshire Districts, and Northampton Borough Council. Northamptonshire County Council is also a member of the WNJSPC.

The Joint Strategic Planning Committee consists of 3 Councillors each from Daventry and South Northamptonshire Councils, 4 councillors from Northampton Borough and 2 from the County Council. It met for the first time on October 21st 2008. The Committee has the power to invite Observers to the Committee, who can contribute to the discussion, but do not have voting rights. The West Northamptonshire Development Corporation and Wellingborough Borough Council have been invited to sit on the Committee as Observers.

At its first meeting, the WNJSPC agreed governance arrangements and a revised Local Development Scheme (3 year programme for production of Development Plan documents).

2. **The Joint Planning Unit**

The Joint Planning Unit consists of Planning Policy Officers seconded from the constituent authorities. The Officers serve the newly created Joint Strategic Planning Committee. The work of the Unit is overseen by a Programme Board, which consists of Senior Officers from the constituent authorities, together with WNDC.

3. **Programme for producing Development Plan Documents.**

The planning system requires that the programme for planning document production be set out in a Local Development Scheme, which is approved by the Secretary of State. The Strategic Planning Committee agreed a revised programme of document production at its inaugural meeting on 21st October. The revised LDS came into effect on the 21st November 2008 after the Secretary of State declined to make a Direction under Sec. 15(4) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. This LDS is therefore the LDS for West Northants for the purposes of Paras. 4.53 to 4.58 of PPS12. It will ensure that sufficient land is allocated for housing and employment in accordance with RSS8 and the MKSM Sub-Regional Strategy together with the necessary supporting infrastructure.

The programme identifies that seven Development Plan Documents and three Supplementary Planning Documents will be produced. The majority of these documents are of direct relevance to the Appeals namely:

- West Northamptonshire Core Strategy DPD
- West Northamptonshire Developer Contributions and Affordable Housing DPD
- West Northamptonshire Site Allocations DPD
- West Northamptonshire Development Management Policies DPD
- Daventry Town DPD
- West Northamptonshire Affordable Housing Policies SPD

It makes provision for the Joint Core Strategy to be published in November 2009, with submission in March 2010 and adoption in January 2011. The other DPD's will follow the Core Strategy in accordance with the LDS timetable.

A copy of the LDS timetable for the production of these documents is attached at Appendix A. Details of the intended scope of these documents can be found in the Local Development Scheme.

WNJSPC has declared its intent to ensure that the milestones for the production of the DPD's and SPD's are adhered to.

4. Purpose of the Joint Core Strategy

The need for joint working between the authorities was established in Northamptonshire Policy 2 of the MKSM Sub-Regional Strategy adopted in March 2005.

In May 2006, GOEM confirmed that the approach set out in the then approved Local Development Schemes of the above Councils was no longer appropriate and that the Councils should move towards preparing a Joint Core Strategy.

In moving the constituent authorities towards the preparation of a Joint Core Strategy, GOEM's objectives were to make sure that cross boundary issues would be dealt with effectively and that there would be a clear and comprehensive framework for the planning and delivery of the future growth in the area.

In September 2006, Baroness Andrews issued a statement on behalf of the Government. She welcomed the decision of the three authorities to work together on the grounds that this approach would allow infrastructure needs to be properly investigated and to provide a clear context for growth area investment. This approach would also provide a strong framework for protecting the environment and delivering economic growth.

The Joint Core Strategy will, therefore, set out the spatial vision, spatial objectives and spatial strategy for all sustainable communities in West Northamptonshire, together with a comprehensive delivery strategy. It will make strategic allocations to 2021 (depending upon the data on housing trajectory and supply that will arise from completion of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment) and ensure the maintenance of at least the five year housing land supply together with establishing directions of growth for the later phases of the plan period.

The Core Strategy will include some detail of the early sustainable urban extensions including the type and disposition of activities and land uses. The Core Strategy will provide an integrated framework for investment including associated strategic social infrastructure such as health and leisure facilities, green infrastructure, the transport and accessibility strategy and phasing of development. It will provide the context for all other Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents and will set out a monitoring and implementation framework for West Northamptonshire.

A fuller explanation of the purpose of the Joint Core Strategy can be found in the Local Development Scheme (November 2008)

5. Progress on the Joint Core Strategy.

Work commenced on a Joint Core Strategy for West Northamptonshire in September 2006. An Issues and Options Paper was published for consultation in September and October 2007.

Since that time, changes have been introduced to the planning system with revised regulations and PPS 12. These require more specificity on certain elements of the Strategy such as identifying strategic sites rather than broad directions of growth.

The Joint Planning Unit is therefore currently completing the evidence base for the Core Strategy. A wide range of studies has already been undertaken, but more work is still required on a number of studies, such as the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and the Water Cycle Study to inform the allocation of Strategic Sites and Sustainable Urban Extensions.

6. Issues for the Inquiry

As a strategic planning authority, the WNJSPC does not wish to comment on the detailed aspects of planning applications, these are matters for the Secretary of State to determine. However in the case of the five appeals currently being considered at Daventry (Monksmoor, Danetree and Church Fields) the WNJSPC is of the view that the proposed developments are of such a scale, both individually and cumulatively, that they have the potential to affect the outcome of the Core Strategy and the proper planning of the area.

WNJSPC accepts that the delay in producing a Core Strategy for the area has led to a housing land supply of less than five years in Daventry. The Appeals therefore have to be considered in this context. PPS3 para. 71 indicates that local planning authorities should consider planning applications favourably where there is less than a five year land supply, having regard to the policies in PPS3, including specifically para. 69.

It is for the Secretary of State to determine whether or not the Appeals before her meet, either collectively or individually, the criteria set out in para. 69.

However, in considering whether or not the proposed development meets these criteria, the WNJSPC would ask that she has particular regard to the final bullet point in that paragraph. The *raison d'être* behind moving the three local planning authorities to preparing a Joint Core Strategy was to ensure that cross boundary issues were considered in the round and that proper provision was made for the delivery of the necessary infrastructure to support the growth area, in other words to establish a spatial vision for the growth area.

WNJSPC is of the view that the proposals currently before the Inquiry should not be determined outside the Joint Core Strategy, unless the Secretary of State is satisfied that approval of these proposals, either individually or collectively, would not prejudice the underlying principles behind the Government's requirements for the production of a Joint Core Strategy in order to achieve the purposes set out above.