

Item No: 5
Date: 6 th July 2009

WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
JOINT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK
JOINT STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

West Northamptonshire Emergent Joint Core Strategy
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REPORT OF THE INTERIM HEAD OF THE JOINT PLANNING UNIT

Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval of Members for the publication of and public consultation on the Emergent Joint Core Strategy, as attached at Appendix 1.

Recommendation

- 1.2 That the Joint Strategic Planning Committee agrees to the publication of the Emergent Joint Core Strategy, for the purpose of public consultation..

Context

- 1.3 The Joint Core Strategy (JCS) will be the long term strategic plan for the development of West Northamptonshire (WN) (Northampton, Daventry and South Northants Councils) – it deals with the big picture of what will happen in the future. It is a “spatial” policy document, which means it deals with places and the activities that happen within them.
- 1.4 Preparation of a JCS is a legal requirement and the partner authorities of Northampton Borough, Daventry District, South Northamptonshire Council and Northamptonshire County Council have been required by Government to produce a JCS for their collective areas. The partner authorities are working in close co-operation with West Northamptonshire Development Corporation (WNDC) – a key body in the delivery of development and infrastructure.
- 1.5 The Committee is aware that work has been progressing on the Emergent Joint Core Strategy, which is a fundamental step towards approving a Joint Core Strategy. Members’ workshops, Members; briefings, the Officer Charette and the responses from the Issues and Options and Regulation 25 Consultations have been incorporated into and have influenced the thinking and strategic approach set out in the current document.

Nature of the document

- 1.6 Informed through previous consultations and the collection of a wide ranging evidence base, the publication of an Emergent Joint Core Strategy is a further stage in the process. **It is not a done deal and is not the final strategy.** It does outline well developed current thinking towards delivering strategic levels of growth in West Northamptonshire.
- 1.7 The emergent JCS explains how the important choices for WN are being informed; sets out the preferred directions for strategic growth, particularly around Northampton, Daventry, Towcester and Brackley; the pivotal importance of retail investment to town centre regeneration; the essential need to deliver infrastructure and the policy approach to sustaining our rural communities and countryside character.
- 1.8 **A fundamental principle, both for Members and Consultees, is that if there are specific areas identified for growth that are not favoured, then suitable alternatives, which can equally meet the strategic objectives and vision, must be found. It is not an option to say “no” to the principle of growth.**
- 1.9 The emergent JCS sets out the broad strategic framework for developing the area to 2026 and beyond. It will provide a clear focus for investment and the spending plans of key public sector agencies to deliver essential infrastructure alongside quality new developments.
- 1.10 The strategic plan objectives set out within the document have been refined, with the benefit of feedback from consultation and workshops, and are now much more specific and distinctive. These objectives have informed the choices in respect of directions of growth and will further inform the direction of policies.

Sustainability Appraisal

- 1.11 The sustainability appraisal of the Emergent Joint Core Strategy is on-going and will be published alongside the Joint Core Strategy as part of the consultation in mid July 2009.

Consultation Strategy

- 1.12 In line with the key actions highlighted within the consultation strategy, a six week public consultation will commence in mid July and will continue throughout August 2009. It is unfortunate that this consultation must take place over the summer period, but this is necessary to allow the strict timetable set out in the Government approved Local Development Scheme to be met. However, under Regulation 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) (Amendments) Regulation 2008, any representations can be made in response to a specific Development Plan through the entire production process and therefore this consultation is effectively ongoing.

- 1.13 A number of press releases will take place as well as the distribution of information which will be largely web-based. Public exhibitions will take place throughout the six week consultation period. Full member briefings will take place throughout August as well as Parish Council workshops. A launch event for landowners and developers and a combined event for the Local Strategic Partners will also be arranged. The consultation will comply with the Statement of Community Involvement, the Regulations and good practice. An Equalities Impact Assessment on the process will be undertaken before consultation begins.
- 1.14 Feedback from the consultation process on the Emergent Joint Core Strategy will be used to inform the preparation of the final core strategy which will be policy specific, concise and confident in its approach.

Key Strategic Elements

- 1.15 The JCS **must** deliver the targets for housing and jobs as set out in the Government's Growth Agenda (as set down in RSS8 and MKSM SRS) to 2026 and can plan forward to at least until 2031.

The headline figures for housing and jobs throughout West Northamptonshire are:-

2001 – 2026	62,125 homes
2001 – 2026	37,200 jobs*

* more recent evidence indicates that this figure could be higher.

- 1.16 The minimum housing requirements for the Northampton Implementation Area, Daventry District and South Northamptonshire are:-

Northampton Implementation Area	43,000	(17,444*)
Daventry District	11,870	(8,009)
South Northamptonshire	7,255	(4,341*)

(*residual numbers when known commitments are allowed for).

- 1.17 The approach set out in the Emergent Joint Core Strategy, principally to provide a mechanism for the funding and delivery of essential infrastructure, but also to provide long term certainty as to growth within West Northamptonshire provides for housing numbers as follows:-

Northampton Implementation Area	32,760
Daventry District	8,200
South Northamptonshire	4,860.

The strategic focus in the period 2021 – 2026 and at least until 2031 is on Northampton as the principal urban area, thus relieving future pressures on the other towns in West Northamptonshire.

- 1.18 To accommodate even the minimum level of growth will require a major increase in capacity to the current and planned infrastructure. This will need to include significant investment in public transport, new roads, utilities, health and emergency services. It will also mean investing heavily in social infrastructure.
- 1.19 Within West Northamptonshire, there is an inherent weakness in transportation infrastructure and it is an essential element of the strategy to relate major growth to new infrastructure providing the enabling value to contribute the funding packages that will be required to secure delivery. The prospect of Government funding over the plan period is at risk and the Joint Core Strategy needs to provide its own mechanism to deliver infrastructure.
- 1.20 The strategy around Northampton, as envisaged by the RSS and made necessary by the transportation infrastructure deficit, looks forward to at least 2031 and seeks to provide a scale of development to deliver on the strategic objectives and provide a realistic solution to the expected increase in congestion and delays on the A45 corridor. Levels of congestion and delay that would inhibit the planned growth.
- 1.21 The strategy concentrates strategic growth principally in and around Northampton, but also the towns of Daventry, Towcester and Brackley, thus minimising a broader impact on the rural areas. Its focus on Northampton, particularly in period 2021 – 2026 and beyond, relieves pressure on the other towns.
- 1.22 The strategy places Northampton as the principal focus for growth, with the essential need to make it more commercially active and a competitive retail centre. Northampton must secure regeneration within its current boundaries as a direct product of the growth agenda. Daventry, Towcester and Brackley must also secure improvements to their centres and strengthen their respective roles.
- 1.23 The key elements of “big ticket” infrastructure to accommodate the level of growth required are:-
 - Rapid public transport link from Northampton South East to the Castle Station and the central area.
 - New A45 strategic link from the A45 to M1.
 - Flore/Weedon by-pass.
 - Towcester by-pass.
- 1.24 The Strategy will address traffic congestion across West Northamptonshire, through new transportation infrastructure to increase capacity, but also through modal shift from car to other forms of transport. Public transport will be a priority and walking/cycling will be increased.

- 1.25 The level of growth required cannot be accommodated within the urban areas of our four towns, although urban capacity will be maximised. Inevitably major growth will be required into the surrounding rural areas, causing major change and impacting on existing communities. This dramatic change will be managed sensitively and the character of existing communities within new urban extensions will be protected as far as practicable. The countryside outside the growth area will be protected together with the character of our towns and settlements.
- 1.26 Key rural settlements can be strengthened, rural services protected; rural schools sustained and new jobs delivered through this strategic approach. Young people should be able to find affordable homes and remain within their communities.

Implications

- 1.27 The Emergent Joint Core Strategy is a fundamental step forward to completion of the final Joint Core Strategy. The consultation responses received will help to define and determine the plan's effectiveness and robustness. They will help to shape the final plan.
- 1.28 Members will be aware of the risks to the process of completing the preparation of the Joint Core Strategy as they are regularly up-dated through the Risk Register. The Risk Register will be up-dated following the decision taken by Members in response to this report and recommendation.
- 1.29 There will also be major risks to the delivery of the Joint Core Strategy itself which not unsurprisingly will focus on infrastructure delivery, Government funding and economic market conditions. The Joint Core Strategy, when approved, will be closely monitored to keep such risk under close appraisal.

Next Steps

- 1.30 Following on from the Emergent Joint Core Strategy consultation period, the drafting of the pre-submission document will commence taking into account all comments made. The Core Strategy pre-submission document must be submitted to the Government Office in November 2009, subject to Members approval, and an additional six week public consultation exercise will take place in relation to this document. The Core Strategy will then be formally submitted to the Government Office in March 2010.

Conclusions

- 1.31 The Emergent Joint Core Strategy represents major progress for West Northamptonshire in meeting its prescribed responsibilities for plan making and demonstrating the commitment of partner authorities to take the lead role and manage growth in the best interests of their communities.
- 1.32 Inevitably such major change will have a substantial impact on certain existing communities which must be managed sensitively seeking mitigation wherever practicable.

- 1.33 Major growth brings change and uncertainty, but also opportunity. Quality new homes for all sectors of our communities; new jobs, active, attractive town centres; new leisure/recreational facilities and improved public transport. New people will provide an increase in local expenditure supporting existing/new shops, businesses, sporting and cultural attractions.
- 1.34 Throughout this process all partner authorities will continue to involve the community in the decisions about the future planning of West Northamptonshire, so that they can influence and shape those decisions and continue our close working with West Northamptonshire Development Corporation to maximise investment and secure delivery.
- 1.35 Members are invited to consider this report and the Emergent Joint Core Strategy attached at Appendix 1, and agree to the publication of the Emergent Joint Core Strategy **for the purposes of public consultation.**