

Item No: 9

Date: 16 July 2012

**WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE  
JOINT STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE**

**Proposed Changes to the Pre-  
Submission West Northamptonshire  
Joint Core Strategy**

**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF THE JOINT PLANNING UNIT**

**1. Purpose**

1.1 The purpose of this report is:

- a) To seek approval for the publication of Proposed Changes to the Pre-Submission version of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy, as attached at Appendix 1, for the statutory six weeks representation period in accordance with Regulations 19 and 20 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, to run from 14 August to 26 September 2012, together with an additional two week advance publicity period to take account of the fact that the representations period coincides with the summer holiday period;
- b) To note and seek approval of the officer responses to the representations received to the West Northamptonshire Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy, February 2011, as attached at Appendix 2; and
- c) To seek approval for the Communication and Consultation Strategy at Appendix 3 to support the Proposed Changes to the Pre-Submission version of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy.

**2. Recommendations**

2.1 That the Joint Strategic Planning Committee:

- 1) Approves the Proposed Changes to the Pre-Submission version of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy for the statutory six week representations period in accordance with Regulations 19 and 20 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, to run from 14 August to 26 September 2012, together with an additional two week advance publicity period to take account of the fact that the representations period coincides with the summer holiday period;

- 2) Notes and approves the officer responses to the representations received to the West Northamptonshire Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy, February 2011, as attached at Appendix 2;
- 3) Authorises the Chair of the Joint Strategic Planning Committee to agree any editorial changes required to the Proposed Changes to the Pre-Submission version of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy; and
- 4) Approves the Communication and Consultation Strategy, as attached at Appendix 3, to support the Proposed Changes to the Pre-Submission version of the Joint Core Strategy.

### **3. Overview of the Joint Core Strategy Process to Date**

- 3.1 The Joint Core Strategy will be the long term strategic plan for the development of Daventry District, Northampton Borough and South Northamptonshire administrative areas – 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 and between them. The Joint Core Strategy is the priority planning document and all subsequent documents must reflect what it says.
- 3.2 At its meeting on 31 January 2011 the West Northamptonshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee approved the publication of the Pre-Submission version of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy for the statutory six weeks representations period in accordance with the then Regulations 27 and 28. The content of the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy was informed by the Joint Core Strategy Issues and Options (2007), the Regulation 25 consultation (2009) and the Emergent Joint Core Strategy consultation in 2009, as well as the collection of a wide ranging evidence base and on-going work with technical bodies.
- 3.3 At its meeting on 25 July 2011 the West Northamptonshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee formally received the quantitative analysis of and the summary of the main issues raised by the representations received to the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy.
- 3.4 At its meeting on 13 March 2012 the JSPC noted the changes to the national policy context including the imminent publication of the National Planning Policy Framework and agreed that in the light of the national policy changes as well as the representations to the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy changes to the Pre-Submission version should be prepared for consideration by the Committee at its meeting on 16 July 2012.
- 3.5 The representations received to the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy in 2011 have been taken into account in the preparation of the Proposed Changes to the Pre-Submission version of the Joint Core Strategy. Joint Planning Unit Officers have prepared recommended responses to the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy representations, attached as Appendix 2, for the Committee to note and approve at this meeting.

- 3.6 A report of the community engagement and consultation undertaken to date on the Joint Core Strategy, including previous consultation stages and the responses received, was published alongside the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy in February 2011. That report has been updated to include details of community engagement and consultation undertaken and the responses received at the Pre-Submission stage. This updated report will be available alongside the Proposed Changes to the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy when it is published for the statutory six weeks representations period commencing in August 2012.

#### **4. The Proposed Changes to the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy – An Introduction**

- 4.1 In the light of the representations to the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy and changes to national planning policy, particularly in terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), changes are proposed to the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy. These Proposed Changes include the presumption in favour of sustainable development and overall, ensure that the Joint Core Strategy is now in full accordance with the NPPF. The Proposed Changes do not go to the heart of the plan but are considered necessary to ensure the Strategy is sound. The vast majority of the Proposed Changes are simply to factually update the plan or to correct minor drafting errors and these are termed Minor Proposed Changes. However, some of the changes are more important, although they still do not change the overall strategy or the direction of the plan, these are termed Significant Proposed Changes.

- 4.2 The preparation of the Proposed Changes to the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy has been informed by the previous consultations on the Joint Core Strategy, the collection of a wide ranging evidence base which is listed in Appendix 2 of the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy and updated by the Proposed Changes.

##### What do the Proposed Changes Say?

- 4.3 The Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy sets out a vision for the West Northamptonshire area in 2026 and that vision and the spatial strategy that underpins it is unchanged.

- 4.4 The Proposed Changes to the Pre-Submission are divided into Minor and Significant Proposed Changes. Minor changes are those which, for example, correct typographical errors or update factual information. The following paragraphs set out the significant proposed changes to the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy, however it is recommended that the full list of changes is reviewed for a comprehensive understanding.

##### *A new Objective 16*

- 4.5 The Proposed Changes identify an additional objective to the JCS. Objective 16 refers to the need to conserve and where possible enhance important heritage assets. Whilst heritage is mentioned in Objective 15 it was considered reference to heritage and the need for its appropriate protection should be expanded in an additional and separate objective.

### *The Spatial Strategy*

- 4.6 The Spatial Strategy remains unchanged other than minor rewording to update the section and to update the housing, retail floorspace capacity and employment figures it contains. Revised housing figures take account of new planning consents since the Pre-Submission version was first published which reduces the remaining housing requirement from 21,370 homes to 19,810 homes. The job numbers are increased from 16,000 to 19,000 (as explained under the heading Economic Advantage below). Retail floorspace capacity is reduced largely due to a reduction in available spending, although the Grosvenor Centre redevelopment remains unchanged and is a key element for delivery within the plan.
- 4.7 The hierarchy of towns and centres and the distribution of the development between these places remains unaltered in the JCS. This includes maximising the use of land and buildings within the existing urban areas of the towns and by developing new Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUEs).

### *Sustainable Development*

- 4.8 The overall aim of the Pre-Submission JCS is to deliver sustainable development and this aim continues and is supported by Proposed Changes which ensure the policy basis is robust and in line with the new National Planning Policy Framework. Proposed Changes include some rewording of the Pre-Submission JCS Policy on Sustainable Development Principles (Policy S10) including reference to development being designed to improve environmental performance, energy efficiency and adapt to a changing climate over its lifetime. A new policy titled Low Carbon and Renewable Energy (Policy S11) is introduced via the Proposed Changes which requires major development to contribute to reductions in carbon emissions.

### *Connections*

- 4.9 The Proposed Changes add further detail to the delivery of improvements to the A45 between Junction 15 of the M1 and the Great Billing Junction at Northampton. Reference is also made to A43 Kettering to Northampton Improvements at Policy C3 titled Strategic Connections.

### *Economic Advantage*

- 4.10 A central and continuing theme for the JCS is to secure economic stability for the area and a range of job opportunities.
- 4.11 Since the consultation on the Pre-Submission JCS Northampton has been awarded an Enterprise Zone. The Northampton SEMLEP Waterside Enterprise Zone will support the regeneration of Northampton town and bring with it some 7,000 new jobs. Northampton University has recently announced its intention to explore the feasibility of moving to the Waterside area of Northampton. Due to this new focus of employment opportunities and potential for higher level education provision, the Proposed Changes envisage the location of a Technology Realm within the Enterprise Zone which will benefit from this synergy. Hence the reference to a Technology Realm located at Northampton North Sustainable Urban Extension will no longer be sustainable and the Proposed Changes take this into account.

- 4.12 The Proposed Changes make provision for 19,000 new jobs increasing the number of jobs by 3,000 from the figure stated in the Pre-Submission JCS version. This increase seeks to ensure a range of jobs are provided and to acknowledge that although Northamptonshire has remained reasonably resilient to the recent economic downturn, some jobs have been lost.
- 4.13 There is no change proposed to the need to protect existing employment sites and the town centres of Northampton and Daventry will continue to be the focus of regeneration, renewal and jobs growth. The strategic role of Daventry International Rail Freight Terminal (DIRFT) and Silverstone Circuit is maintained within the JCS, and SUEs in all four of the West Northamptonshire towns will continue to provide for local employment opportunities.

#### *Housing*

- 4.14 The Proposed Changes to the housing section of the JCS reflect the updated housing numbers as in the Proposed Changes to the Spatial Strategy. Further Proposed Changes are made in relation to affordable housing requirements to take account of the Government's announcement of a new affordable rent model. This allows Registered Providers of affordable housing to charge rents on new build developments and relets. The Affordable Rent tenure has now been included within the definition of affordable housing set out in the National Planning Policy Framework and the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) was consequently updated to reflect the Affordable Rent tenure.
- 4.15 Policy H2 of the JCS deals with the proportion of affordable housing required on development sites. Proposed Changes to this policy include the introduction of a revised percentage of affordable housing requirements for developments in rural and urban areas and revised requirements for affordable housing and site size thresholds to reflect the results of the updated SHMA.
- 4.16 Policy H3 refers to the provision of housing in rural areas as rural exceptions sites. Proposed Changes to this policy are as a consequence of the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework which encourages Local Planning Authorities to consider the provision of market housing where this would ensure the delivery of affordable housing to support rural exception schemes.

#### *Built and Natural Environment*

- 4.17 The Built and Natural Environment section of the JCS contains a range of policies covering topics such as biodiversity, green infrastructure, landscape, heritage assets, water, pollution and ground instability.
- 4.18 There are some significant Proposed Changes to policies within this chapter including changes to the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area where further assessment has resulted in the definition of a defined protection zone shown on a new Figure 7 included within the JCS.
- 4.19 The Proposed Changes divide policy BN7 titled Flood Risk into two policies covering Flood Risk and a new policy BN7A titled Water Supply, Quality and Wastewater Infrastructure. The new policy seeks to ensure new developments take full account of the need for an adequate water supply and waste water infrastructure and to ensure that as far as practicable water quality is protected or improved.

### *Infrastructure*

- 4.20 A major concern of local communities is to ensure that facilities and services are provided to meet future growth. A key requirement of the JCS is to secure appropriate levels of funding to ensure that support is provided at an appropriate level and in a timescale where it is able to support development from the outset. The Proposed Changes to the Pre-Submission JCS update the information in relation to known infrastructure requirements and a new Appendix 4 Infrastructure Requirements to the JCS is included. This updates detailed information in relation to the Key Primary Infrastructure Projects included at Table 7 of the JCS.

### *Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUEs)*

- 4.21 The JCS approach to locating new development continues the concept of Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUEs). These are located around Northampton, Daventry, Towcester and Brackley and will accommodate the housing needs of each area. There are however some detailed Proposed Changes to the land use requirements for some of the SUEs as set out below:

- The Technology Realm is relocated from Northampton North SUE to the Northampton SEMLEP Waterside Enterprise Zone (as described above).
- Northampton Kings Heath SUE (known as Dallington Grange) is reduced from 3,500 dwellings to 3,000 dwellings in recognition of some site constraints including archaeology and ecology.
- Daventry North East SUE (also known as Churchfields) will deliver around 2,000 dwellings to 2026 instead of 2,500 dwellings although the overall development remains at 4,000 dwellings. The slower delivery of houses in the period to 2026 is anticipated due to the slowing of the economy and house building rates generally that are anticipated in the early part of the plan period.
- Towcester South SUE will still deliver 1,500 dwellings in the period to 2026 but the overall size of the SUE will be reduced by 300 dwellings to 3,000 in recognition of prevailing market conditions.
- Brackley East SUE is reduced by 30 dwellings to 350 dwellings to reflect the most up to date detailed information on the development of the site.

- 4.22 There are also some Proposed Changes that apply to all SUEs for example reference to Park and Ride provision is deleted from all SUEs. Northamptonshire County Council as highway authority considers that even on the busiest corridors delivering Park and Ride within the period to 2026 will be unlikely and a viable business case for establishing a Park and Ride bus service has not been established from any of the identified SUEs.

- 4.23 Proposed Changes also provide for a greater degree of flexibility in relation to the retail provision at new Local Centres within the SUEs. However, these will still be subject to impact assessment over 1000 sqm.

### *The Rural Areas*

- 4.24 Much of West Northamptonshire is rural in nature with a dispersed network of almost 190 villages and hamlets. The rural communities account for approximately one-third of West Northamptonshire's population. In Daventry and South Northamptonshire districts the percentage of people living in rural communities is as high as 75%.

4.25 Policy R1 of the Rural Areas section refers to the Spatial Strategy for the Rural Areas. Proposed Changes to this policy seek to clarify the scale of growth that is required in the rural areas and to provide greater flexibility for local decision making in recognition of the introduction of Neighbourhood Plans in the Localism Act.

4.26 The Proposed Changes specify that within the rural area of Daventry District an additional 1,355 dwellings will be built and that South Northamptonshire's rural area should deliver an additional 1,790 dwellings over the remaining years of the plan period. They also enable the local authorities, in consultation with their local communities, to determine a settlement hierarchy for the rural area and the scale of development that will be accommodated by individual settlements.

#### Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment

4.27 The Proposed Changes have been the subject of a sustainability appraisal and a Habitats Regulations Assessment (previously known as an Appropriate Assessment) by independent environmental consultants Environ. Environ's reports will be published alongside the Proposed Changes to allow respondents to the Proposed Changes to reflect on Environ's appraisal and assessment in preparing their representations and to make any observations on the appraisal and the assessment themselves.

#### Equalities Impact Assessment

4.28 The Proposed Changes to the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy are subject to an on-going Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA). The purpose of the EqIA process is to identify whether the plan has an adverse impact on equality of opportunity on the basis of a person's race, gender, disability, sexuality, religion or belief or age or on relations between or within those groups, and how this can subsequently be addressed. The EqIA will be published alongside the Proposed Changes the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy to allow respondents to the Proposed Changes to reflect on this assessment in preparing their representations and to make any observations on the assessment itself.

#### Publication Format

4.29 The Proposed Changes only will be published for representations in a series of tables, or Schedules, with one table per section of the JCS. Each Schedule will show the Proposed Changes as tracked changes to the reasoned justification and/ or policy text of the JCS. The reason/ s for the Proposed Changes and the source of the Proposed Changes (e.g. JPU officer, Representation, etc) will also be included in the Schedules. The tracked changes version of the Pre-Submission JCS, incorporating the Proposed Changes, will also be published on the JPU website for reference purposes only. The Schedules of the Proposed Changes and the associated tracked change version of the Pre-Submission JCS are attached to this report as Appendix 1.

## 5. Communication and Consultation Strategy

- 5.1 A proposed Communication and Consultation Strategy for the Proposed Changes to the Pre-Submission JCS is attached to this report as Appendix 3. The Strategy sets out the proposed arrangements for communication and consultation with the local community and all other stakeholders in respect of the Proposed Changes to the Pre-Submission JCS. The Strategy ensures that the publication and consultation on the Proposed Changes meets the legal requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and the Statements of Community Involvement adopted by the Partner authorities.
- 5.2 The Communication and Consultation Strategy proposes a **two stage** approach which is summarised below:
1. **Proposed Changes publicity** – Advanced publicity through press releases, articles in JPU and Partners’ newsletters etc, to ensure that as many people as possible are aware of the statutory representations period on the Proposed Changes to the Pre-Submission JCS before this commences.
  2. **Proposed Changes statutory period for representations** – Ensuring compliance with the statutory requirements prescribed by Regulations 19 and 20 of the 2012 Regulations.
- 5.3 Further detail is provided in the table at Appendix 3.

## 6. Next Steps

- 6.1 After the representations period on the Proposed Changes to the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy has closed the Joint Planning Unit will report the results of the consultation back to the Joint Strategic Planning Committee and seek the Committee’s approval to proceed to submit the Joint Core Strategy to the Government for independent examination. In accordance with the revised Local Development Scheme approved by the Joint Strategic Planning Committee on 12 June 2012 submission will take place in December 2012. The following documents taken together will constitute the Submission Joint Core Strategy:
- The Pre-Submission version of the Joint Core Strategy;
  - The representations received to the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy in February and March 2011;
  - The Proposed Changes to the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy; and
  - The representations received to the Proposed Changes to the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy.
- 6.2 An independent Inspector will be appointed by the Government to examine the soundness of the Joint Core Strategy. The inspector will take all of these documents into account together with the supporting evidence base and hold a public examination into the Joint Core Strategy. It is expected that the examination will take place in Spring 2013 with adoption of the JCS in October 2013.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Maps illustrating the “Saved Policies” which will be removed (as set out in Schedule 5 of the Joint Core Strategy) should the Joint Core Strategy be adopted:

- 1 Daventry Local Plan 1997
- 2 Northampton Local Plan 1997
- 3 South Northamptonshire Local Plan 1997

Copies are available from the JPU on request.

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### Appendix 3

#### Communication and Consultation Strategy for the Proposed Changes to the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy

Stage	Timing	Actions
<b>1. Proposed Changes – Pre-Joint Strategic Planning Committee Publicity</b>	<b>June/ July 2012</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. A briefing note for all Councillors from the Partner Councils to explain the recent changes to the planning system, the implications for the Joint Core Strategy and the next stages of the process.</li><li>2. Briefing meetings for Councillors from the Partner Councils and representatives from Town and Parish Councils.</li><li>3. JPU Newsletter.</li><li>4. Articles to be included in Partner Councils' newsletters – subject to editorial deadlines.</li><li>5. Joint news release and press conference for local media. To be agreed by the Chair of the Joint Strategic Planning Committee and the Leaders of the Partner Councils.</li><li>6. Social media communications i.e. Twitter, Facebook.</li></ol>

<p><b>2. Proposed Changes – Statutory period for representations</b></p>	<p><b>July - September 2012</b>  2 week advance publicity period from Tuesday 31 July to Monday 13 August.</p> <p>6 week statutory period from Tuesday 14 August to Wednesday 26 September.</p> <p>Added 1 day due to the Bank Holiday on 27 August 2012.</p>	<p>a) Advert to be placed in local newspapers circulating across the West Northamptonshire area.</p> <p>b) All Proposed Changes related documents to be made available at the Partner Councils' offices, and in all the other 'deposit venues' specified in the adopted Statements of Community Involvement.</p> <p>c) A short summary leaflet explaining the Proposed Changes and the representations process will be circulated to consultees, Town and Parish Councils and made available at all Council offices and other "deposit" venues.</p> <p>d) All Proposed Changes related documents to be made available for review/download with full 'on-line' representations facilities available from on the JPU website with links from the Partner Councils' websites.</p> <p>e) Letters or emails explaining the Proposed Changes to the JCS sent to the specific consultation bodies<sup>i</sup>, the general consultation bodies<sup>ii</sup> and all organisations and individuals (including Town and Parish Councils) on the JPU Consultation database containing the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The statement of representation procedures;</li> <li>• The statement of arrangements (i.e. when and where the documents are available); and</li> <li>• A Representation Form and Guidance Note for Respondents.</li> </ul> <p>f) Paper copies of the Proposed Changes related documents to be made available on request.</p> <p>g) Social media communications i.e. Twitter, Facebook.</p> <p>h) News release for the local media.</p>
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<sup>i</sup> The specific consultation bodies are listed in Regulation 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and relate to organisations responsible for services and utilities and infrastructure provision.

<sup>ii</sup> The general consultation bodies are also specified in Regulation 2 of the 2012 Regulations and comprise:

- voluntary bodies some or all of whose activities benefit any part of the local planning authority's area
- bodies which represent the interests of:
  - different ethnic or national groups in the local planning authority's area
  - different religious groups in the local planning authority's area
  - disabled people in the local planning authority's area
  - persons carrying on business in the local planning authority's area.