

**WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT
DOCUMENT/LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN STEERING GROUP**

Tuesday 14 November 2006 at 6.00pm

Jeffery Room, The Guildhall

AGENDA

1. Apologies
2. Notes of the meeting held on 17 October 2006
(copy attached)
3. Matters Arising
4. Programme Director's Progress Report Clive
Thomas
5. Governance Steve
Pointer
6. Northampton Longer Term Growth Options Study -
Presentation Steve
Pointer
7. Joint Local Development Scheme and Joint Core
Strategy Update Claire
Berry
8. Any Other Business
9. Date of Next Meeting - 14 December 2006

Agenda Item 2

WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT DOCUMENT/LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN STEERING GROUP

Tuesday, 17 October 2006

PRESENT:	Councillor Hadland	NBC (Chair)
	Councillor Amos	DDC
	Councillor Barnes	SNC
	C Berry	NBC
	R Boulton	NCC
	S Bovey	DDC
	Councillor Caswell	NBC
	C Cavanagh	NBC
	M Hayes	WNDC
	G Hughes	GOEM
	J Morgan	SNC
	S Pointer	NBC
	Councillor Smith	NCC
	R Strugnell	SNC
	C Thomas	NBC
	Councillor Townsend	SNC
	R Wood	DDC

ACTION

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Millar, Councillor Harker, Richard Fox, Danny Brennan, Roy Pulling and S Flack.

2. NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 SEPTEMBER 2006

The above notes were agreed.

3. MATTERS ARISING

(A) Project Manager

It was noted that this would be discussed under Item 4 on the agenda.

(B) Resourcing the Project Manager Post

C Thomas advised that the post was being evaluated through the Northampton Borough Council Job Evaluation Process and early indications were that the cost would be approximately £45,000 with on-costs. This was comparable with the equivalent post in North Northamptonshire. It was stressed that this was only an indication and it was anticipated that the full evaluation would be available during the next week.

(C) Change in the Name of the Post From Project Manager

It was noted that the post title had been changed to West Northamptonshire

Joint Planning Unit Manager.

(D) Line Management Arrangements for the Project Manager

C Thomas confirmed that it was proposed that the NBC Corporate Director would manage the post holder in terms of day-to-day arrangements including pay, appraisal, holidays and other such personnel procedures.

(E) Communication/Resources Plan

It was noted that a draft Communications Plan had been circulated and it would be discussed later in the agenda. This would require input from the Manager of the Joint Planning Unit once appointed. Work had begun in developing a Resources Plan.

(F) EDAW Report

R Boulton advised that work on the report was still ongoing and once it had been completed an executive summary would be produced. It was anticipated that this would be towards the end of November 2006. The whole study would also be available as a public document.

4. PROGRAMME DIRECTOR'S PROGRESS REPORT

C Thomas presented the report circulated, which updated the Steering Group in respect of the Joint Planning Team Manager, the Joint Planning Team office location, Resources Plan, Joint Planning Team secondments, Communications Plans and governance.

The Chair referred to the proposed Memorandum of Understanding appended to the report and suggested that members needed to discuss this with their respective Local Authorities and bring back any comments to a future meeting.

R Strugnell then referred to the Person Specification for the Joint Planning Unit Manager post and the essential criteria in respect thereof. He referred to the wording "substantial experience of project management" and the previous discussion in terms of ensuring that candidates were also planners. In view of this it was suggested and agreed that this wording be changed to "proven track record of project management".

Councillor S Barnes referred to the previous discussion relating to the "West Northamptonshire" badge and suggested that it would be more appropriate to reflect in the name the partnership between the three Local Authorities. There was also the problem that there may be confusion with the WNDC. The Steering Group discussed this suggestion and it was felt that this was a good opportunity to promote the message that the three Councils were working in partnership. Suggestions from the Steering Group members were invited.

Councillor Townsend requested that the short listing and interview dates for the Joint Planning Unit Manager post be set as soon as possible as members were involved in appointing to the post and therefore they needed to get the dates in their diaries.

Reference was made to the offer of office accommodation at Towcester Mill and C Thomas advised that a number of colleagues, including representatives from

each Local Authority, had visited the premises on 13 October. There were several issues to be resolved in terms of compliance with DDA and timing, in that the accommodation needed to be available for the life of the Team and SNC had their own plans in terms of the regeneration of that area. Also there were other practical issues that needed to be considered such as reception facilities. He advised that the requirement was for office space to accommodate a maximum of ten people with an area for displays which would be used at key points during the consultation process. In addition there would need to be appropriate IT and communication facilities available and the accommodation needed to be located at a site which was easily accessible for all officers.

- AGREED:**
- (1) **That officers and Councillors on the Steering Group discuss the proposed Memorandum of Understanding appended to the report within their respective Local Authorities and that feedback be provided at a future meeting.** NBC/DDC /SNC
 - (2) **That the progress on the recruitment of the Joint Planning Team Manager, the Joint Planning Team office location, the Communications Plan, Resource Plan, Joint Planning Team secondments be noted.**
 - (3) **That the wording in the Person Specification in relation to the essential criteria “substantial experience of project management” be changed to read “proven track record of project management”.** S Pointer
 - (4) **That members of the Steering Group be advised of the dates for the short-listing and interviews for the Joint Planning Team Manager post within a week.** C Thomas
 - (5) **That any ideas for re-badging “West Northamptonshire” be forwarded to C Thomas.** All

5. PROGRAMME FOR PRODUCTION OF THE CORE STRATEGY

A report was circulated in relation to the programme for the production of a Core Strategy. C Berry presented the report, particularly referring to the timetable and the proposal to jointly produce the LDS. Reference was made to Appendix 1 and it was noted that Daventry and South Northants intended submitting the proposals and timetable in relation to the LDS to the November 2006 meetings of Cabinet and/or Strategy Group. NBC would be submitting these to the Cabinet meeting on 4 December 2006. S Bovey stressed the importance of identifying which task could be done in parallel within each Local Authority and ensuring that all three Councils progress at the same rate when possible.

M Hayes requested that the Steering Group consider whether it were appropriate, in the context of the growth agenda, to produce some Area Action Plans in advance of the Core Strategy where there were particular pressures to deliver growth. The Steering Group discussed this suggestion and whether it was an approach that could be of benefit to all three Councils. C Thomas suggested that this was an issue that required careful consideration by the Board as such a decision needed to be soundly based and be of benefit, as far as possible, to all three partners. It may also be that expert advice in respect of

this was necessary.

The Steering Group then discussed the importance of ensuring infrastructure was delivered to support housing growth.

- Agreed :**
- (1) That the timetable for the production of the Core Strategy as set out in paragraph 4 of the report be approved.**
 - (2) That the principle of one joint West Northamptonshire Local Development Scheme for Daventry District, Northampton Borough and South Northamptonshire Council be approved.**
 - (3) That the principle of jointly preparing those Local Developments Documents listed in paragraph 8 of the report be approved.**
 - (4) That the Board consider the suggestion that some Area Action Plans be developed ahead of the Core Strategy for certain areas where there are pressures to deliver growth.**

Board

The Chair thanked members of the Joint Planning Team for the work they had undertaken in producing the programme.

6. NORTHAMPTON LONGER TERM GROWTH OPTIONS STUDY - UPDATE

C Berry presented the report circulated referring to the six stages of the study and particularly Stage 5 relating to the Key Stakeholder Consultation Proposals. It was suggested that a workshop style event be held on about 20 November 2006 for a “technical” group of key service providers, utilities and statutory bodies. This would be followed by presentation to the Steering Group at its meeting on 14 December 2006. Thereafter it was proposed that a meeting be held with the Ward Councillors in Northampton Borough and those members of Daventry District Council, South Northants Councils, Borough Council of Wellingborough and Northamptonshire County Council who represent wards adjacent to the Borough.

The Steering Group then discussed the proposed consultation process and sought clarification as to who the “technical” key stakeholders would be. It was suggested that the term “stakeholders” be changed as this may give the impression to lots of parties that they should be involved in the consultation at this stage. It was noted that public consultation would take place at the issues and options stage. The Steering Group discussed the timing of some of the elements of consultation and it was suggested that the study be signed off by the Steering Group at its meeting on 14 December 2006. It was also suggested that, at that meeting, the Steering Group were provided with a briefing (one piece of A4) providing the key messages which could then be shared with a wider audience. In relation to the “technical” consultees it was requested that information be provided at the meeting on 20 November 2006 as to who these key stakeholders would be.

AGREED: (1) That the progress towards the Northampton Longer Term Growth Options Study be noted.

(2) That the proposals for the Stage 5 – Key Stakeholder Consultation be agreed subject to the study being signed off at the meeting of the Steering Group on 14 December 2006.

(3) That at the meeting on 14 December 2006 members of the Steering Group be provided with a briefing providing the key messages which they could then share with a wider audience ensuring that a consistent approach was being taken.

Board

(4) That, at the meeting on 14 November 2006, members of the Steering Group be provided with details of the “technical” stakeholders who would be attending the stakeholder event.

C Berry

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was none.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 14 NOVEMBER 2006

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on 14 November 2006.

Agenda Item 5

Item	Page
?	1

West Northamptonshire Joint Local Development Document/ Local Transport Plan Steering Group	
Meeting Date	14 November 2006
Title	Governance of Joint Plan making in West Northamptonshire

Recommendation

That:

- a) The revised Memorandum of Understanding relating to the Preparation of Development Plans for West Northamptonshire be agreed
- b) The proposals made in paragraph 3 of this report be agreed

Purpose of Report

This paper proposes revised proposals for the development of governance and working arrangements to facilitate better joint working between local planning authorities in West Northamptonshire.

Joint Local Development Document /Local Transport Plan Steering Group

1. The current Joint Local Development Document Steering Group arrangements would benefit from further strengthening. The recent decision to prepare a Joint Core Strategy LDD covering all of the three District areas and a subsequent Joint Development Document related to sustainable urban extensions in the Northampton area requires enhanced and well worked out joint working arrangements at Member level if the Joint LDDs are going to be delivered swiftly.
2. A paper, which considered modifications to the existing Memorandum of Understanding, was presented to the last meeting of the Steering Group. Members deferred consideration of the paper, pending further dialogue with colleagues in each Council. Officers have re-drafted the Memorandum to take account of developing thinking on the issue and to seek to ensure that the Group's pivotal role in taking a leadership role in joint planning matters across the three districts is effective and understood by all.

Item	Page
?	2

3. It therefore proposed that:
- a. Responsibility for chairing of the Joint Group should continue to be shared by the three plan making authorities, with chairing should be held for a year at a time;
 - b. Attendance of the Group should be by two leading members from each plan making authority – the Leader and Portfolio Holder, or their nominated representatives, with supporting officers and the support of members/officers from the County Council, West Northamptonshire Development Corporation and GOEM
 - c. Amendments are made to the Memorandum of Understanding to ensure that members are committed to championing matters agreed within the Group within their respective authorities. It focuses the purpose of the Group singly on the joint plan making process authorities but ensures that the Memorandum is also signed by the County Council and West Northamptonshire Development Corporation.
 - d. In future the officer attendance should primarily be limited to Heads of Planning, the Chair of the Joint Planning Programme Board and the Joint Planning Manager.
 - e. The name of the Steering Group be changed to the Joint Planning Leadership Group to ensure that the significance of the Group is clear and that its deliberations and advice must be given the seriousness and status it needs within each Authority.

Proposed Revised Memorandum of Understanding relating to the Preparation of Development and Transportation Plans for West Northamptonshire

8. A proposed Revised Memorandum of Understanding relating to the Preparation of Development Plans for West Northamptonshire in draft is attached as Appendix 1.. The existing Memorandum of Understanding is at Appendix 2.
9. It is proposed that the Revised Memorandum of Understanding be agreed.

Report prepared by: Stephen Pointer, Northampton Borough Council

Item	Page
?	3

Appendix 1

PROPOSED
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING RELATING TO THE
PREPARATION OF JOINT DEVELOPMENT PLANS IN WEST
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
(OCTOBER 2006)

BETWEEN

- DAVENTRY DISTRICT COUNCIL
- NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
- SOUTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL
- NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
- WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Context for Joint Planning

- 1) Through the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands (RSS8) and the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy, approved in March 2005, Northampton, Daventry and Towcester have been identified as locations for growth in West Northamptonshire. These strategies express “*a presumption in favour of preparation of Joint Local Development Documents*” such as to “*help co-ordinate the development of the Northampton Implementation Area and address common issues*”.
- 2) Additionally, the three Local Strategic Partnerships for Northampton, Daventry and South Northamptonshire have between them set out a collective vision and agenda for West Northamptonshire. This draws strongly on the three community strategies, reflecting the challenges associated with West Northamptonshire’s new role as part of a national growth area and promoting the opportunity to become an exemplar for sustainable communities. This vision needs to be realised and be reflected in the development and transport plans covering West Northamptonshire. West Northamptonshire Development Corporation has published a Prospectus setting out key areas for action to help achieve this mutual outcome and is developing a Growth Delivery Plan to secure implementation of its objectives.
- 3) For this growth to be progressed in an effective, cohesive and sustainable manner the local authorities of Northampton Borough Council, Daventry District Council and South Northamptonshire Council covering West Northamptonshire

Item	Page
?	4

are committed to working together and with partners to shape and produce development plans to accommodate this growth.

- 4) Northampton Borough Council, Daventry District Council and South Northamptonshire Council are the authorities responsible for the Local Development Documents accommodating and allocating growth in West Northamptonshire

Intentions of Joint Planning

- 5) The District authorities, as Local Development Document authorities in West Northamptonshire, are jointly committed to the sustainable growth of Northampton, Daventry and Towcester and wider West Northamptonshire including realising necessary supporting transport and other infrastructure. The authorities will seek to develop complementary strategies for these areas, and work constructively together on cross boundary issues and matters, which jointly affect West Northamptonshire.
- 6) To this end the authorities commit to formal engagement/ consultation with each other and other partners, including Northamptonshire County Council and the West Northamptonshire Development Corporation (WNDC), on strategic planning issues, particularly related to the co-ordination of transport and other infrastructure planning, and also on reviews of regional and sub-regional strategies. The authorities are committed to liaison with Wellingborough Borough Council and the North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Committee as appropriate

Scope and Programme of Joint Planning

- 7) Joint planning will take the form of
 - a. Co-ordination of the programme and approach to local development documents across West Northamptonshire
 - b. the preparation of a Joint Core Strategy (Local Development Document) covering the three authorities including those matters concerning the long term strategic planning and growth of Northampton, Daventry and Towcester.
 - c. other Local Development Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents which may be needed in future.

Arrangements for Joint Planning

- 8) The three authorities will meet as the West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Leadership Group.

Item	Page
?	5

- 9) The purpose of the Leadership Group will be for members of the three District plan making authorities, in conjunction with the County Council and West Northamptonshire Development Corporation, to agree together at a strategic level the development of joint planning documents in order to gain common agreement and therefore enable joint documents to be swiftly endorsed through the decision making processes of each Council.. The Leadership Group will also consider the approaches of studies and documents and to consider any other matter of common interest related to spatial planning within West Northamptonshire.
- 10) The Leadership Group will comprise Leaders and Members/Portfolio Holders with Executive responsibility for planning policy within each District Council. Leading members of the County Council and WNDC Board will be invited. Whilst the Group will not have any executive powers and responsibility and all local development documents relating to each authority will remain the sole responsibility of the respective preparing authority, it is the sole means for debating and agreeing joint planning policy and therefore Members will:
 - a. Be prepared at each Leadership Group to debate issues and reach common agreement
 - b. Promote and recommend an agreement of the Leadership Group to the relevant Council decision making body
 - c. Consider within each Council the scope of planning matters which require formal Council approval and which can be taken via delegated powers to Leaders and Portfolio Holders
- 11) Voting rights at the Group on district and borough Local Development Documents shall be granted to Northampton, Daventry and South Northamptonshire authorities. .
- 12) Each authority should be represented by two members - the Leader and Portfolio Holder (or his/ her nominated representative) with support from the Chief Planning Officer of each authority (or his/ her nominated representative) and the Joint Planning Manager for the West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit.
- 13) One elected Member from each of the three District authorities shall be present at the meeting, for it to be quorate.
- 14) Officers of the Government Office for the East Midlands and Members of Northamptonshire County Council and the West Northamptonshire Development Corporation will be invited to attend its meetings as observers

Item	Page
?	6

and contributors. Other organisations may be invited with the agreement of the Chair to meetings as appropriate.

- 15) The Chair shall rotate annually between the three district authorities. Meetings shall be hosted in rotation by the three district authorities. Meetings will normally be held on a bi-monthly basis. Administrative arrangements will be made by the officer Joint Planning Team supporting the Joint Planning work.

Signed.....

.....Date
 Leader – Daventry District Council

.....Date
 Leader – Northampton Borough Council

.....Date
 Leader – South Northamptonshire Council

.....Date
 Leader – Northamptonshire County Council

.....Date
 Chair – West Northamptonshire Development Corporation

Item	Page
?	7

APPENDIX : THREE

APPENDIX: TWO

EXISTING
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING RELATING TO THE
PREPARATION OF DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSPORTATION PLANS
FOR WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
(MARCH 2006)

BETWEEN

- DAVENTRY DISTRICT COUNCIL
- NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
- SOUTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL
- NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

As the local planning authorities (and highway authority in the case of Northamptonshire County Council) responsible for preparing Local Development Documents and transport plans and policies, including the Local Transport Plan, within West Northamptonshire.

Context for Joint Planning

- 16) Through the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands (RSS8) and the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy, approved in March 2005, Northampton, Daventry and Towcester have been identified as locations for growth in West Northamptonshire. These strategies express “*a presumption in favour of preparation of Joint Local Development Documents*” such as to “*help co-ordinate the development of the Northampton Implementation Area and address common issues*”.
- 17) Additionally, the three Local Strategic Partnerships for Northampton, Daventry and South Northamptonshire have between them set out a collective vision and agenda for West Northamptonshire. This draws strongly on the three community strategies, reflecting the challenges associated with West Northamptonshire’s new role as part of a national growth area and promoting the opportunity to become an exemplar for sustainable communities. This vision needs to be realised and be reflected in the development and transport plans covering West Northamptonshire. West Northamptonshire Development Corporation has recently published its draft Prospectus setting out key areas for action to help achieve this mutual outcome.

Item	Page
?	8

- 18) For this growth to be progressed in an effective, cohesive and sustainable manner the local authorities of Northampton Borough Council, Daventry District Council and South Northamptonshire Council, along with Northamptonshire County Council, covering West Northamptonshire are committed to working together and with partners to shape and produce development and transport plans to accommodate this growth.
- 19) Northampton Borough Council, Daventry District Council and South Northamptonshire Council are the authorities responsible for the Local Development Documents accommodating and allocating growth in West Northamptonshire. Northamptonshire County Council is responsible for minerals and waste Development Documents and the Local Transport Plan covering West Northamptonshire.

Intentions of Joint Planning

- 20) The authorities, as Local Development Document and Local Transport Plan making authorities in West Northamptonshire, are jointly committed to the sustainable growth of Northampton, Daventry and Towcester and wider West Northamptonshire including realising necessary supporting transport and other infrastructure. The authorities will seek to develop complementary strategies for these areas, and work constructively together on cross boundary issues and matters, which jointly affect West Northamptonshire.
- 21) To this end the authorities commit to formal engagement/ consultation with each other and other partners, including the West Northamptonshire Development Corporation (WNDC), on strategic planning issues, particularly related to the co-ordination of transport and other infrastructure planning, and also on reviews of regional and sub-regional strategies.

Programme for Joint Planning

- 22) In particular, the three Local Planning Authorities of Northampton, Daventry and South Northamptonshire are jointly committed to the early adoption of Local Development Documents across West Northamptonshire to ensure that a firm and robust planning policy framework is in place to guide implementation of the vision and strategy for West Northamptonshire by the authorities, the WNDC and other agencies.

Scope and Programme of Joint Planning

- 23) Joint planning will take the form of

Item	Page
?	9

- a. A joint study to evaluate options for the longer-term growth of Northampton, prior to incorporation within future Local Development Documents.
- b. The preparation of Core Strategy (Local Development Document) in relation to those matters concerning the long term strategic planning and growth of the Northampton Implementation Area which affect all authorities.
- c. Co-ordination of the programme and approach to local development documents and transport plans across West Northamptonshire.
- d. Other Local Development Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents which may be needed in future.

Arrangements for Joint Planning

- 24) The four authorities will meet as a West Northamptonshire Joint LDD/LTP Steering Group.
- 25) The purpose of the Steering Group will be to act as a consultative body overseeing the programme set out in this Memorandum of Understanding, including seeking agreement over the policies and approaches of studies and documents and to consider any other matter of common interest related to spatial planning within West Northamptonshire.
- 26) The Steering Group will not have any executive powers and responsibility for all Local Development Documents and other development and transport plans and policies relating to each authority will remain the sole responsibility of the respective preparing authority (or three authorities in the case of Joint Core Strategy).
- 27) The Steering Group will comprise member and officer representatives of the authorities of Northampton, Daventry and South Northamptonshire Districts and Northamptonshire County Council.
- 28) Voting rights at the Steering Group on district and borough Local Development Documents shall be granted to Northampton, Daventry and South Northamptonshire authorities. Similarly, voting rights on county Development Documents and Local Transport Plans shall be granted to Northamptonshire County Council.
- 29) Each authority should be represented by the Leader and Portfolio Holder (or his/ her nominated representative) with support from the Chief Officer of each authority (or his/ her nominated representative).

Item	Page
?	10

- 30) One elected Member from each of the three District authorities shall be present at the meeting, for it to be quorate.
- 31) Officers of the Government Office for the East Midlands and the WNDC will be invited to attend its meetings as observers and contributors. Other organisations may be invited with the agreement of the Chair to meetings as appropriate.
- 32) The Chair shall rotate annually between the three district authorities. Meetings shall be hosted in rotation by the three district authorities. Meetings will normally be held on a bi-monthly basis. Administrative arrangements will be made by the officer Joint Planning Team supporting the Joint Planning work.

Signed.....

.....Date
 Leader – Daventry District Council

.....Date
 Leader – Northampton Borough Council

.....Date
 Leader – South Northamptonshire Council

.....Date
 Leader – Northamptonshire County Council

Item	Page
?	11

West Northamptonshire Joint Local Development Document/ Local Transport Plan Steering Group	
Meeting Date	14 November 2006
Title	Joint Local Development Scheme and Joint Core Strategy Update

Recommendations

- a) That the Joint Local Development Scheme be NOTED.
- b) That progress on the Joint Core Strategy be NOTED.

Joint Local Development Scheme

1. Following agreement by the Joint LDD/ LTP Steering Group at the last meeting to the principle of one joint Local Development Scheme (LDS) for Daventry District, Northampton Borough and South Northamptonshire the Joint Planning Team has prepared and completed the Joint LDS. The Joint LDS has been sent to the Government Office for the East Midlands (GOEM) and WNDC for comments.
2. A copy of the LDS timetable is attached to this report.
3. The Joint LDS will be considered by each of the three Councils' Cabinets/ Strategy Groups before submission to GOEM in December 2006 for their approval. A target date of 31 January 2007 has been set for approval. The Joint LDS is to be considered by South Northamptonshire Council's Cabinet on 13 November 2006, Daventry District Council's Strategy Group on 23 November 2006 and Northampton Borough Council's Cabinet on 4 December 2006.

Joint Core Strategy

4. Following agreement by the Joint LDD/ LTP Steering Group at the last meeting to the timetable for the preparation of the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) work is now underway on the Pre-Production stage of the JCS.
5. Stage A of the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal (SEA/ SA) is in progress. The stages of the SEA/ SA process are set out in the guidance issued by the former Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.
6. Stage A is setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding the scope. This stage involves five tasks:
 - A1: Identifying other relevant policies, plans, programmes and sustainability objectives;
 - A2: Collecting baseline information;

- A3: Identifying sustainability issues and problems;
 - A4: Developing the sustainability appraisal framework; and
 - A5: Consulting on the scope of the sustainability appraisal.
7. Topic papers are being produced which will cover tasks A1, A2 and A3. These will form appendices to the scoping report. Task A4 will be covered by the topic papers and the scoping report itself. In accordance with statutory requirements, consultation (task A5) will take place for five weeks with the statutory environmental consultation bodies identified in the SEA Regulations of Natural England (formerly Countryside Agency and English Nature) English Heritage and the Environment Agency. This consultation is expected to begin on 20 November 2006.
8. A significant amount of work on Stage A of the SEA/ SA has already been undertaken for the previous Core Strategy work last year. Wherever possible this work is being incorporated into the joint SEA/ SA work.
9. The reviews of the topics to be covered by the JCS and the soundness of the evidence base for the JCS are also nearing completion.
10. The Joint Planning Team is currently preparing a discussion document to informally test options for the spatial vision and objectives with selected stakeholders. These stakeholders are:
- East Midlands Regional Assembly
 - English Heritage
 - Environment Agency
 - Government Office for the East Midlands
 - Highways Agency
 - Housing Corporation
 - Natural England
 - Northamptonshire County Council
 - Northamptonshire Enterprise Ltd
 - Strategic Health Authority and Health Trusts
 - Strategic Rail Authority (now Department for Transport)
 - Utilities
 - West Northamptonshire Development Corporation
11. The options for the spatial vision and objectives are being prepared having regard to:
- the three councils' and Northamptonshire County Council's community strategies aims and priorities;
 - the existing Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands (RSS8) and the draft East Midlands Regional Plan;
 - the draft SEA/ SA scoping report; and
 - the evidence base.

12. The draft discussion document will be circulated to portfolio holders for comments prior to consultation. It is expected that the draft discussion paper will be ready within the next two weeks. Consultation will then take place for six weeks. This consultation was originally planned to be four weeks but to allow for the Christmas break this has been extended to six weeks. The options for the spatial vision and objectives will be further tested as part of the issues and options consultation (Regulation 25 consultation) in the New Year.
13. The proposals for the issues and options consultation will be presented to the Joint LDD/ LTP Steering Group for consideration at the next meeting on 14 December 2006.

Claire Berry for West Northamptonshire Joint Programme Board.

Document is Restricted