

Item No: 7
Date: 16 December 2008

**WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
JOINT STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Work Programme Position Statement
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REPORT OF THE INTERIM HEAD OF THE JOINT PLANNING UNIT

Background

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline the progress on the programme and workstreams to date, and in particular the known remaining gaps in the evidence base. It outlines the next stages in the work programme that are required to fulfil the approved Local Development Scheme timetable. It does not repeat the material set down in the Final Report on Findings of the Review of the Joint Planning Unit by Addison & Associates in August 2008, but does account for this work.
- 1.2 The overall programme requires a spatial portrait to be produced, a vision for the plan area and a set of spatial objectives that guide the strategy and policies in the West Northamptonshire Core Strategy and provide the context for the Northampton Central Area Action Plan. A 'first phase' of evidence collection is required, followed by integrating the findings to establish options for the core strategy. As options are developed and choices made with respect to the matters addressed in the plan, then any gaps in the evidence base or additional evidence that will be required for finer grain work will be uncovered. Essentially this could be called the 'second phase' of evidence gathering. In practice the process is iterative and aspects of plan making can continue in many circumstances whilst some detailed evidence 'catches up' as long as this is not critical to all decisions associated with an aspect of the plan and does not leave the plan wanting with respect to 'soundness'. Given the current position there is a need to progress an assessment of the quality of the evidence produced to date as options are developed. This will be part of the work undertaken in the coming months and is outlined further below.

Progress on Workstreams

- 1.3 The progress on the first phase of the evidence base is now clear and significant studies of work are complete or due to complete in the next 3 months. Appendix 1 contains the main components of the evidence base and is an extract from the approved Local Development Scheme.

- 1.4 The key areas of yet to be completed first phase, West Northamptonshire wide, evidence collection for the Core Strategy and Affordable Housing and Developer Contributions DPDs and its progress appear to be as follows:
- a. Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment – progress had stalled but assistance on methodology has been provided by Andrew Wright, whilst responsibility for the management of the project is being transferred within the Joint Planning Unit. Appropriately skilled temporary staff will be engaged in delivering the survey phase of the study by the end of February. A project plan is being produced and the panel will be reengaged.
 - b. Update on the Strategic Housing Market Assessment – this is being undertaken in house by housing officers of Daventry District, Northampton Borough and South Northamptonshire District in partnership with the planning officers. Some additional viability assessment may be required which may need to be commissioned early in 2009. This will provide key evidence for the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document.
 - c. Northamptonshire Strategic Employment Land Assessment – Northamptonshire Enterprise has commissioned this work which will fulfil the requirements of Employment Land Reviews and is due to report in March 2009.
 - d. Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level I – is being finalised following comments from the Environment Agency. It is due in December. The level II scoping of this work is under way and will be commissioned in the new year.
 - e. Green Infrastructure and Environmental Sensitivity Studies – the Northampton Study, and the Towcester and Brackley Studies are due to be completed mid December 2008.
 - f. Water Cycle Study – level 1 due for completion by end of February 2009.
 - g. Rural accessibility assessments and modelling – can be undertaken in house by NCC.
 - h. Strategic urban design appraisals– to frame the strategy with respect to urban form, public realm and place making. These have not yet been progressed but will be critical to the strategic framework for place making. The scope of work to be determined.
 - i. West Northamptonshire Sports Facility Strategy – due for completion by end of January 2009.
 - j. The pursuit of evidence of service needs, projections and plans for education, health, social services etc. A start has been made and this will be done in partnership – partners’ plans will be at various states of development.
 - k. The West Northamptonshire Retail Study – is due for completion December 2008 and on track.
- 1.5 The second phase of evidence which will be required, having assessed and identified options, will include finer grain work for the strategic allocations in the Core Strategy including further transport modelling, environmental impact assessments, water cycle study, infrastructure planning and an element of master planning. This is all to support the evidence of deliverability of the locations chosen. However, the magnitude of this work is not possible to assess accurately until the current evidence base is integrated to assess options and quality checked. Some of this phase II evidence could require only a light touch.

Further Sustainability Appraisal/ Strategic Environmental Assessment may need to be commissioned for options selection, and will be required for the pre-submission and submission documents. In addition an 'Appropriate Assessment' of the implications of the DPD for sites that fall within the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) will be required.

- 1.6 For the sake of clarity depending upon the ability to attract the right skills in house (see report item 6 on this agenda) at least some of these areas of work will need to be commissioned.
- 1.7 The split between work to be achieved in house and to be commissioned is expected to be as follows for completion of phase I evidence:
 - a. In house i.e. among partners – Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, update on Strategic Housing Market Assessment and strategic urban design appraisals.
 - b. Commissioned – viability assessments linked to the Strategic Housing Market Assessment for affordable housing.
- 1.8 The split between work to be achieved in house and to be commissioned is for completion of phase II evidence will be dependent upon the skills attracted to the JPU, and contributions from partners but could be:
 - a. In house i.e. among partners – transport modelling including rural accessibility, master planning, infrastructure planning.
 - b. Commissioned - Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level II, Sustainability Appraisal/ Strategic Environmental Assessment, infrastructure planning, environmental impact assessments, water cycle study.
- 1.9 It is assumed that evidence required for the Northampton Central Area Action Plan will be contained in the strategic evidence base for the Core Strategy and the Developer Contributions and Affordable Housing DPD together with existing studies. However, contingency should be made in the budget.
- 1.10 The key workstreams required to move progress on the LDS forward and targets for the next five months are:
 - a. Agreement of a spatial portrait, spatial vision, spatial objectives and spatial strategy for the Core Strategy.
 - b. Developing engagement with the technical work and the relationships with key partners to progress the work and raise the levels of ownership of the outcomes including councillors of the JSPC and beyond, officers of the partner authorities and WNDC in addition to other key service delivery partners.
 - c. Production and delivery of a strategy for all associated public consultation, engagement and publicity to inform and engage communities in West Northamptonshire. This will draw from previous work undertaken on consultations.
 - d. Clarification of the options and their implications for places with reference to the spatial vision and spatial objectives and the evidence base.
 - e. Selection of preferred options including directions of growth and sustainable urban extensions for the Core Strategy.
 - f. Production of the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document.

- 1.11 The following months programme will then deliver the production of the pre submission West Northamptonshire Core Strategy and Northampton Central Area Action Plans for publication to meet the approved Local Development Scheme timetable. The Developer Contributions and Affordable Housing DPD will progress alongside the development of the Core Strategy. There is a significant level of workload encapsulated in the whole of the programme for the next nine months and beyond to meet the Local Development Scheme timetable.
- 1.12 There are key workstreams for the Joint Planning Unit that are associated with supporting delivery of the LDS and need to be fulfilled :
- a. Completion of the detailed programme for the Core Strategy and Central Area Action Plan. This is underway.
 - b. Introduction of sound project management and project planning practice using project briefs and timetables in addition to time recording against projects. Project briefs for key workstreams are being produced and will include an element of quality check on existing evidence as well as the clear relationship with the LDS programme.
 - c. Introduction of performance and workload management and monitoring systems. These are required as project responsibilities and lines of reporting are blurred. Analysis of appropriate workloads has been undertaken and reorganisation of individual responsibilities with respect to the Core Strategy is being implemented from the 1st December.
 - d. Design and set up of monitoring databases and systems in addition to the collation of base data for plan making e.g. updated information on employment and housing completions, construction of housing trajectory and capture of constraints.
 - e. Improvement of filing and information management as well as recording of the audit trail for evidence. Protocol for information management and recording of decisions on projects are needed to ensure the evidence trail is in place and overcome the impact of projects being transferred between many personnel in their history. This is underway.
 - f. Completion of the introduction of the Limehouse software for consultation and document production.

Next Steps

- 2.0 The next three months are critical to accelerating progress on the Core Strategy to enable it to keep to timetable. Whilst the main studies are being completed the key aspects of the development of the Core Strategy to be bought forward are those noted at 1.10 a, c and d above whilst 1.10 b is an ongoing activity.
- 2.1 The delivery plan for the next three months therefore contains the following three outputs which will be progressed in tandem:
- a. **Agreement of a spatial portrait, spatial vision, spatial objectives and spatial strategy for the core strategy (1.10a).** This is to be undertaken by the Interim Head of the Joint Planning Unit drawing together work to date, redrafting in association with colleagues in the respective authorities and WNDC to a working draft identifying where a steer is needed by members. This will then be the subject of a workshop

with members prior to the February JSPC meeting where a working vision, objectives and strategy must be agreed.

- b. **Production and delivery of a strategy for all associated public consultation, engagement and publicity to inform and engage communities in West Northamptonshire.** The production of a strategy is to begin with the assistance and lead of AJ Gray, Northampton Borough Council's Engagement Officer in close collaboration with the Interim Head of the Joint Planning Unit. The programme for roll out will be in accordance with the approved Local Development Scheme timetable. This will be concurrent with 2.1a above.
- c. **Clarification of the options and their implications for places with reference to the spatial vision and spatial objectives and the evidence base.** An accelerated process is planned to take place in January. This will be a series of workshops with officers from the partnership on a charette model designed to bring each aspect of the evidence base and professional knowledge together and consider its impact on place. It will include the quality check of evidence. **The outcome is expected to be a clear identification of options for growth, and their clear implications for both new and existing communities, infrastructure planning, etcetera.** This includes options with respect to, for example, the role of major towns and the city, and approaches to the settlement hierarchy. These can then be debated with members of the JSPC in workshop format before public consideration in consultation and the assessment of how the selection of the preferred options will be handled. This may require additional workshop dates to be placed in the diaries.

2.2 The expectation with respect to partners' input to this work prior to the recruitment of the full team is preparation and participation in the workshops in 2.1c above which will bring senior planners, transportation and infrastructure specialists together from the four authorities and WNDC. In addition the inclusion of other service specialists is being explored e.g. health, education etc.

2.3 In addition in the period before the full staff complement is recruited to the JPU there will be further staff resource provided by NBC to assist in the production of the Core Strategy and fit with the Northampton Central Area Action Plan. The current contributions from NCC with respect to the time of Chris Wragg Transport Planning Manager, WNDC with respect to the time of Vincent Goodstadt (spatial planning consultant) and of Paul Bullen the Strategic Growth Manager, Northamptonshire Police are proving most helpful.

Key Risks

- 3.0 The updated detailed risk register will be produced but the key risks to this part of the programme are as follows:
 - a. Late recruitment to the permanent full time Head of the Joint Planning Unit (refer item 7 on this agenda)
 - b. Late recruitment to all other required posts

- c. Inability to recruit the required skills or supplement with consultancy support.
- d. Serious concerns arising with respect to the quality of the evidence base not least the uncertainty with respect to the current economic climate and the impact on assumptions made in studies.

3.1 The primary mitigation measures for managing these risks are set out in the papers on the following items 7 and 8 which aim to put in place an appropriate structure and budget.

Recommendation

4.0 That the Joint Strategic Planning Committee notes the report and its relationship to the Structure and Budget Reports on this agenda. The Joint Strategic Planning Committee members support efforts to accelerate progress and ensure that the approved Local Development Scheme milestones are met.

Appendix 1

Extract from approved West Northamptonshire Local Development Scheme
November 2008

Note - Studies marked with an asterix * are to be published in late 2008 or in 2009.

County Wide

- Northamptonshire Local Transport Plan 2006
- Northamptonshire Accessibility Strategy
- Northamptonshire Environmental Character Assessment 2006
- Northamptonshire Joint Waste Management Strategy
- Northamptonshire Commercial Property and Employment Land Assessment
- Northamptonshire Strategic Employment Land Assessment*
- Northamptonshire Biodiversity Action Plan
- Northamptonshire Gypsy and Travellers' Accommodation and Needs Assessment

West Northamptonshire

- West Northamptonshire Housing Market Assessment
- West Northamptonshire Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment*
- West Northamptonshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment*
- West Northamptonshire Water Cycle Strategy*
- West Northamptonshire Sports Facilities Strategy*
- West Northamptonshire Retail Study*
- Northampton Longer Term Growth Options Study
- Northampton Multi-Model Study Update
- Northampton Green Infrastructure and Environmental Sensitivity Study*
- Towcester and Brackley Green Infrastructure and Environmental Sensitivity Study*
- South Northamptonshire and Daventry Crime and Disorder Strategy

Daventry District Council

- Issues Paper 2002
- Daventry District Transport Strategy 2001
- Model Development Areas 2004
- Retail Study 2003
- Housing Needs Survey 2006
- Town Centre Vision 2004
- Daventry District Council Annual Monitoring Report 2005
- Daventry LDF Core Strategy Issues and Options 2005
- Daventry Community Strategy 2006
- Daventry Urban Capacity Study 2004
- Daventry Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study
- Daventry Housing Strategy 2003
- Daventry Economic Development Strategy 2003
- Daventry Rural Revival Strategy 2003
- Sports Development Strategy 2005

- Daventry Strategic Development Options Study
- Daventry Housing Land Availability Assessment April 2008
- Daventry Annual Monitoring Report 2004/ 05
- Daventry Annual Monitoring Report 2005/ 06
- Daventry Annual Monitoring Report 2006/ 07

Northampton Borough Council

- Northampton Urban Capacity Study 2002 (2003)
- Northampton Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2004
- Northampton Playing Pitch Strategy
- Northampton Community Strategy
- South West District Review 2004
- Northampton Allotments Strategy
- Northampton Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment and Needs Audit 2006
- Northampton Employment Land Study 2006
- Northampton Central Area Design, Development and Movement Framework 2006
- Northampton Retail Study 2008
- Northampton Housing Strategy
- Northampton Housing Needs Survey
- Northampton Housing Land Availability Assessment April 2008
- Northampton Annual Monitoring Report 2004/ 05
- Northampton Annual Monitoring Report 2005/ 06
- Northampton Annual Monitoring Report 2006/ 07

South Northamptonshire Council

- Infrastructure Assessment for Towcester and Brackley
- Issues Papers (2001)
- Issues Report (2004)
- South Northamptonshire LDF Core Strategy Issues and Options (2005)
- Parish Action Plans
- Public Open Space Strategy
- Retail Studies for Brackley and Towcester
- South Northamptonshire Communications Strategy
- South Northamptonshire Community Safety Strategy
- South Northamptonshire Community Strategy
- South Northamptonshire Consultation Strategy
- South Northamptonshire Cultural Strategy
- South Northamptonshire Economic Development Strategy
- South Northamptonshire Environment Strategy
- South Northamptonshire Household Survey
- South Northamptonshire Housing Needs Study
- South Northamptonshire Housing Strategy
- South Northamptonshire Performance Plan
- South Northamptonshire Social Inclusion Strategy
- Urban Capacity Studies for Brackley and Towcester (2005)
- Towcester Multi-Modal Study

- Nathaniel Litchfield - Towcester reports
- South Northamptonshire Housing Land Availability Assessment April 2008
- South Northamptonshire Annual Monitoring Report 2004/ 05
- South Northamptonshire Annual Monitoring Report 2005/ 06
- South Northamptonshire Annual Monitoring Report 2006/ 07
- Towcester Masterplan*
- Brackley Masterplan*
- Roade Masterplan*
- South Northamptonshire Retail Study*
- South Northamptonshire Leisure Study*
- Towcester Marketing Study*