

Name of Committee	CABINET
Date:	30 July 2007
Cabinet Member:	Richard Church
Portfolio:	Regeneration
Corporate Manager:	Chris Cavanagh
Directorate:	People, Planning and Regeneration

Report Title	West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy – Issues and Options Discussion Paper
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Key Decision	YES
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1. Recommendations

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) That Cabinet approves for consultation the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Issues and Options Discussion Paper as set out in Appendix 1 of this report. b) That Cabinet agrees the outline of the consultation process for the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Issues and Options Discussion Paper as set out in Appendix 2 of this report. c) That Cabinet agrees that the detail of the consultation process be agreed with the Portfolio Holder (Regeneration). d) That any modifications to the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Issues and Options Discussion Paper arising as the result of consideration by Daventry and South Northamptonshire Councils to be delegated to the Corporate Manager (Regeneration and Growth) in consultation with the Portfolio Holder (Regeneration). |
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2. Summary

<p>2.1 The report explains the purpose and background of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Issues and Options Discussion Paper. The report explains the nature of the issues and options stage and describes the contents of the Discussion Paper. The Discussion Paper is attached as Appendix 1. Appendix 2 of the report outlines the consultation process for the Discussion Paper. The report also sets out the next stages in the preparation of the Joint Core Strategy.</p>

3. Report Background

Purpose and Background of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy

- 3.1 The Core Strategy is a statutory document that the Council is required by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 to prepare as part of the Local Development Framework (LDF).
- 3.2 In September 2006, Northampton Borough Council's Cabinet agreed to the preparation of a Joint Core Strategy covering the entirety of the three administrative areas of Daventry District, Northampton Borough and South Northamptonshire Councils (the three Councils), and that a revised Local Development Scheme for Northampton be prepared for approval by Cabinet prior to submission to the Government Office for the East Midlands (GOEM).
- 3.3 Consequently the three Councils of Northampton Borough, Daventry District and South Northamptonshire Councils jointly prepared a Local Development Scheme (LDS). The Joint LDS was approved by the Borough Council's Cabinet in March 2007 for submission to GOEM. GOEM approved the Joint LDS on 19 March 2007 and it was brought into effect on 31 March 2007.
- 3.4 The LDS is a public statement of the Council's programme for the production of local development documents. The LDS sets out the following information:
- A brief description of all the local development documents to be prepared and the content and geographic area to which they will relate;
 - Which local development documents will be statutory development plan documents (DPD) and which will be non-statutory supplementary planning documents (SPD);
 - Which policies and proposals in the existing Local Plan and supplementary planning guidance are to be saved;
 - Which, if any, local development documents are to be prepared on a joint basis with one or more local planning authorities;
 - The planned timetable for preparing each local development document and the key milestone to be achieved.
- 3.5 The Joint LDS sets out those local development documents that will be common and those local development documents that each Council will prepare individually. The Joint LDS commits the three Councils to significant joint working with the preparation of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy, the Northampton Implementation Area Development Plan Document (DPD), the West Northamptonshire Development Control Policies DPD, the West Northamptonshire Rural Areas DPD and the West Northamptonshire Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

3.6 The Joint LDS also sets out those LDDs that each of the three Councils intend to prepare individually over the next three years. For Northampton Borough Council, the DPDs that will be prepared are:

- Central Area Action Plan DPD
- Sixfields Area Action Plan DPD

3.7 The Joint Core Strategy is the priority document in the Joint LDS. It is the overarching document and all subsequent documents must be in conformity with it.

3.8 The Joint LDS sets out the following description of the Joint Core Strategy:

“To set out the spatial vision, spatial objectives and policies including the context for the area action plans, site specific allocations, the Rural Areas DPD and other DPDs and SPDs covering sustainable urban extensions and associated strategic infrastructure, transport and phasing as well as a monitoring and implementation framework for Daventry and South Northamptonshire districts and the Borough of Northampton. It will also set out the hierarchy and role of the settlements in West Northamptonshire, including the villages. It will set out the retail hierarchy including the role and broad location of district/ local centres and other retail developments. It will include consideration of the role of the rural areas including conservation, protection and diversification. It will include consideration of the relationship between West Northamptonshire and its wider context.”

3.9 The timetable for the production of the Joint Core Strategy is set out below:

Commencement of Preparation	Sept 2006
Preparation of Scoping Report for the Sustainability Appraisal Report	Oct 2006 – Jan 2007
Strategic Options and Issues (Pre-Submission consultation)	March – Oct 2007
Public participation on Preferred Options and initial Sustainability Appraisal report	Feb – March 2008
Submission of the Joint Core Strategy and the Sustainability Appraisal	August 2008
Pre-Examination Meeting	December 2008
Independent Examination	Feb – March 2009
Adoption of the Joint Core Strategy	December 2009

3.10 All development plan documents, including the Joint Core Strategy, will be assessed against the nine tests of soundness by an independent planning inspector appointed by the Planning Inspectorate. The tests of soundness are set out in the government’s Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks. The tests are:

- i. It has been prepared in accordance with the local development scheme;
- ii. It has been prepared in compliance with the statement of community involvement,

- iii. The plan and its policies have been subjected to sustainability appraisal;
- iv. It is a spatial plan which is consistent with national planning policy and in general conformity with the regional spatial strategy for the region and it has properly had regard to any other relevant plans, policies and strategies relating to the area or to adjoining areas;
- v. It has had regard to the authority's community strategy;
- vi. The strategies/policies/allocations in the plan are coherent and consistent within and between development plan documents prepared by the authority and by neighbouring authorities, where cross boundary issues are relevant;
- vii. The strategies/ policies/allocations represent the most appropriate in all the circumstances, having considered the relevant alternatives, and they are founded on a robust and credible evidence base;
- viii. There are clear mechanisms for implementation and monitoring; and
- ix. The plan is reasonably flexible to enable it to deal with changing circumstances.

Issues and Options Stage

- 3.11 One of the key aims of the local development framework system is "front loading". This means that Councils should take key decisions early in the preparation of local development documents. The aim is to seek consensus on essential issues early in the preparation of local development documents and so avoid late changes being made. This is why the issues and options stage is so important – enabling a wide ranging and open debate at the start of the Joint Core Strategy's preparation.
- 3.12 The purpose of the issues and options stage is to identify the key issues and develop alternative options to address those issues. The alternative options will come from the evidence base and the views of everyone with an interest in West Northamptonshire.
- 3.13 The evidence base takes many forms. It includes facts and figures, e.g. population statistics, house prices through to detailed and complex studies such as Northampton Longer Term Growth Options Study, Northampton Multi-Modal Study and the West Northamptonshire Housing Market Assessment. The evidence for West Northamptonshire is extensive and developing.
- 3.14 To start the issues and options stage three events were held – a key stakeholder conference and two workshops with Councillors from the four Councils.
- 3.15 In April 2007 the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Issues and Options Conference was held to launch the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy. The purpose of the Conference was to start to inform organisations and individuals about the process and timetable for the Joint Core Strategy and to start the debate about the issues facing West Northamptonshire and the alternative options to address them. The Conference was targeted at those organisations

and individuals with technical knowledge. A report of the Conference is available on the Council's website.

- 3.16 In June 2007 two workshops were held with Councillors from Northampton Borough, Daventry District, Northamptonshire County and South Northamptonshire Councils to start the debate with them about the issues and the development of alternative options.
- 3.17 These events have contributed to the development of the Issues and Options Discussion Paper but they were just the start of the Issues and Options Stage.

The Joint Core Strategy Issues and Options Discussion Paper

- 3.18 Drawing on the work to date the West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit has prepared the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Issues and Options Discussion Paper for consultation. The Discussion Paper is attached to this report as Appendix 1.
- 3.19 The Discussion Paper sets out the main issues that have been identified so far that the Joint Core Strategy must address, and suggests a series of options for the future to address the issues. The purpose of these options is to stimulate debate and discussion on the key priorities for West Northamptonshire.
- 3.20 The Discussion Paper does not seek to set out all possible issues and alternative options, instead it represents initial thoughts and provides the opportunity to raise new issues and options.
- 3.21 The paper is structured into a number of sections. Section 1 is an introduction. Section 2 sets out a draft vision and draft spatial objectives for West Northamptonshire. Sections 3-12 are by place or area and cover West Northamptonshire, Northampton Implementation Area, Daventry, South Northamptonshire, Towcester, Brackley, Silverstone Circuit, Daventry International Rail Freight Terminal, Weedon Depot and the Rural Areas. Each section provides some context, then a summary of the key issues followed by some alternative options.
- 3.22 Questions are asked throughout the Discussion Paper to generate debate and seek feedback on the vision, the objectives, the issues and the options.
- 3.23 The Joint Core Strategy Issues and Options Discussion Paper will be subjected to a strategic sustainability appraisal by independent environmental consultants Environ. Environ's report will be published separately but at the same time as the Discussion Paper to allow respondents to the Discussion Paper to reflect on Environ's appraisal in preparing responses to the Discussion Paper. This strategic appraisal will then form the basis of the detailed initial sustainability appraisal report which will be prepared alongside the Preferred Options document and published with the Preferred Options document for consultation in February – March 2008.

The Consultation Process

- 3.24 The Discussion Paper will be subject to an eight week consultation period from 5 September – 31 October 2007.
- 3.25 The outline of the consultation process for the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Issues and Options Discussion Paper is set out in Appendix 2 of this report. This is based on the three Councils' Statements of Community Involvement that were adopted in Spring 2006. The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is a statutory document that forms part of the Local Development Framework. The SCI sets out how the community will be involved in the preparation of the LDDs and consulted on planning applications. The second test of soundness is that the LDD has been prepared in compliance with the Statement of Community Involvement.
- 3.26 The detailed arrangements for each part of the consultation process are currently being made and will need to be agreed by the three Councils' Portfolio Holders.

The Next Stages

- 3.27 The responses to the Issues and Options Discussion Paper will be assessed and used in the preparation of the next stage, the 'Preferred Options' document that will set out the preferred approach to the spatial vision, the spatial objectives and the policies that the Joint Core Strategy will contain. The Preferred Options document will also take into account national and regional guidance and any additional evidence. The Preferred Options document will be subject to consultation and again, the responses to that consultation will be fed into the production of the 'Submission Joint Core Strategy' which will be the final version produced by the three Councils. This will then be published for comment at the same time as being submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for consideration at a Public Examination. Those making representations on the Submission document will be able to submit their case for consideration. A report and final document will be produced by the Inspectorate and adopted by the Councils.

4. Options and Evaluations

- 4.1 Cabinet may decide not to approve the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Issues and Options Discussion Paper for consultation. However this is not recommended as the preparation of the Joint Core Strategy in accordance with the Joint Local Development Scheme affects the Council's Strategic Improvement Plan, the Corporate Plan and the allocation of Planning Delivery Grant to the Council.
- 4.2 Cabinet may decide to make amendments to the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Issues and Options Discussion Paper. However, significant changes would affect the ability to meet the timetable set out in the Joint Local Development Scheme.

5. Resource Implications (including Financial Implications)

5.1 Northampton Borough, Daventry District and South Northamptonshire Councils have already informally established the West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit (JPU). The JPU is responsible for preparing the joint DPDs and SPDs, including the Joint Core Strategy. The JPU is currently staffed by officers from each of the three Councils' planning policy teams on an informal secondment basis. The three Councils have recently appointed a permanent manager for the Joint Planning Unit and resources from each Councils' existing LDF budgets have been allocated to fund this post. The JPU is hosted by Northampton Borough Council at the Cliftonville House offices.

5.2 The Northampton Local Development Framework budget is already allocated at £66,000 pa for the next two years and is currently further supported by Planning Delivery Grant. Allowance has been made within this budget for the Borough Council to contribute to the Joint Core Strategy Issues and Options consultation process. The costs of this consultation process will be equally shared with Daventry District and South Northamptonshire Councils.

6. Risk and Opportunity Issues

6.1 In preparing the Joint Local Development Scheme it was found that the main areas of risk relate to:

- Staff turnover;
- Capacity of the Planning Inspectorate and other agencies to cope with demand nationwide;
- Programme slippage;
- Political differences;
- Delays in Examination process and/ or legal challenge;
- Changes to national or regional guidance.

6.2 The Joint LDS identifies measures that will be taken to address these risks.

6.3 The three Councils have agreed that in addition to further consideration of the most appropriate model for staffing the JPU, consideration should also be given to the governance arrangements for the joint DPDs and SPDs.

6.4 The principal opportunity is the strengthening of existing partnerships through joint working resulting in sounder policies.

7. Consultees (Internal and External)

Internal	None.
External	Daventry District Council, South Northamptonshire Council, Northamptonshire County Council, Government Office for the East Midlands, West Northamptonshire Development Corporation, Technical Stakeholders.

8. Compliance Issues

A: How Proposals Deliver Priority Outcomes

Strategic Improvement Plan
<p>The West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy will be fundamental to the achievement of the following outcomes in the Strategic Improvement Plan 2006/09:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• We will deliver sustainable growth that meets the aspirations of current and future generations; and• We will produce a vision for the town, based on consultation with local people, which sets out for the short, medium and long term the type of place we want Northampton to be.
Corporate Plan
<p>The first, second, fourth and fifth priorities, and their sub-components, of the Corporate Plan 2007-2011 are relevant to the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To ensure that our communities are safer, greener and cleaner;• To improve housing and health to enhance the well-being of our communities;• To promote economic development and growth in Northampton;• To strengthen our commitment to partnership working and engaging with our communities to deliver better outcomes.

B: Other Implications



Other Strategies
<p>The West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy influences and is influenced by all the Council's strategies and plans, including the Council's Housing Strategy.</p> <p>As the most important document within the Local Development Framework and as a spatial plan the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy will guide the decisions of a wider range of organisations, agencies and individuals beyond the Council itself. These will include: the West Northamptonshire Development Corporation; Northamptonshire County Council; infrastructure and service providers such as the Highways Agency, the Primary Care Trust, Anglian Water, telecommunications and energy providers; environmental bodies such as the Environment Agency and the Wildlife Trust; voluntary agencies; registered social landowners; and land and property developers.</p> <p>A key role of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy is to implement the Government's growth agenda as expressed in the Sustainable Communities Plan and the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy.</p> <p>The West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy also influences and is influenced by the Community Strategies for Northampton, South Northamptonshire, Daventry and Northamptonshire.</p>

Finance Comments
Resource Implications as above – nothing further to comment.

Legal Comments
No comments.

9. Background Papers

Title	Description	Source
Planning Policy Statement 12 – Local Development Frameworks	Sets out the policies that should be taken into account by local planning authorities in the preparation of local development frameworks and minerals and waste development frameworks.	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (now Department for Communities and Local Government)
Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands (RSS8)	The development strategy for the East Midlands for the period up to 2021 within which the Local Development will be prepared.	Government Office for the East Midlands
Draft East Midlands Regional Plan	Consultation draft replacement of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands, covers the period to 2026.	East Midlands Regional Assembly
Northampton Local Development Framework – Revised Local Development Scheme	Report to Cabinet – 15 March 2007	Northampton Borough Council
Northampton Statement of Community Involvement	Sets out how the community will be involved in the preparation of local development documents and consulted on planning applications.	Northampton Borough Council

Name	Signature	Date	Ext.
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Director			7287
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