

WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Monday, 31 January 2011 at Northampton

PRESENT: Councillor Chris Millar (Chair); Councillor Mary Clarke (Deputy Chair);
Councillors Wendy Amos, Jim Bass, Robin Brown, Joy Capstick, Richard Church, Stephen Clarke, Andres Gonzalez de Savage, Brian Hoare, Brian Markham, Chris Over, John Townsend and Tony Woods

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were none.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Joint Planning Committee held on 26 October 2010 were agreed and signed by the Chair.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Millar declared a Personal interest in item 6 – West Northamptonshire Pre Submission Joint Core Strategy in so far as the discussion related to the WNDC Northampton Planning Committee of which he was a member.

Councillor Church declared a Personal interest in item 6 – West Northamptonshire Pre Submission Joint Core Strategy in so far as the discussion related to the WNDC Northampton Planning Committee of which he was a member.

4. MATTERS OF URGENCY

There were none.

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (IF ANY)

Roger Kingston stated that the revised Joint Core Strategy had ignored the thousands of comments made by the public in respect of the consultation on the Emergent Joint Core Strategy. No revisions had been made and the report stated, in his view arrogantly, that no changes were required. Paul Hobden in a recent article on trends in planning strategy had quoted Andrea Leadson's comments that planning in West Northamptonshire was in a mess; there was no respect of history or planning policy. Mr Kingston referred to what he believed had been the mistakes of the development of Northampton East. It was critical that infrastructure was put in before development took place. The development of Northampton East had not done anything to protect Northampton Town Centre. He believed that the Joint Core Strategy was an unsound foundation upon which to base planning decisions and noted the spin in respect of the orbital by-pass (North West Northampton) that would be a single carriageway road to nowhere. Mr Kingston commented that unless Councillors abandoned the Joint Core Strategy he would continue to campaign against them at the forthcoming local elections in May.

David Ballard stated that he was the new Chair of the Mid Northamptonshire Parishes

Association. They had been involved in this process for some years and wished to put a marker down in respect of their continuing interest. The Association shared concerns that infrastructure should be put in place before development took place. He noted that the Joint Core Strategy did recognise this but that there was no detail as to how this would be achieved. He understood that other public bodies such as the NHS and Education were independent but would have preferred more detail on how this infrastructure would be dealt with.

Councillor S Hollowell commented that his comments were directed at the public. The Joint Core Strategy being presented to the meeting was very different to that presented a year previously. Some people would be happy with it and some would not. People should remain engaged with the process; if they did not others would, so that at a public inspection, a Inspector might be influenced by developers and other interests. The public needed to ensure that their voice was heard.

6. WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE PRE-SUBMISSION JOINT CORE STRATEGY

The Head of the JPU submitted a report that sought approval for the publication of the Pre Submission version of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy, as attached to the report, for the statutory six weeks representation period in accordance with Regulations 27 and 28 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008. Any representations should be in respect of the soundness and legality of the document. He referred in particular to paragraphs 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 of the report and noted that the Pre Submission Draft did not fully accord with the RSS in the light of the Government's intention to repeal RSSs but did reflect local need and deliverability. It did set out where development would and would not take place and where land would be protected. The overriding principle was "no infrastructure, no development".

The Head of the JPU commented that the Joint Core Strategy was the longer term strategic plan for the area. It was not intended to deal with detail. It provided a spatial vision and listed activities that would take place in different areas. The process had begun with an Issues and Options exercise in 2007 which had led to the Emergent Joint Core Strategy in 2009 and a Regulation 25 Consultation to highlight other related issues. There had been significant public response to these consultations that had been reported to the Joint Planning Committee over the previous year and the Officer response to the consultation on the Emergent Joint Core Strategy formed Appendix 2 of the report. The report before the Joint Committee was the culmination of all of that work. A list of documents forming the Evidence Base was set out on page 186 of the Pre Submission Draft and the documents themselves either were or shortly would be available from the JPU's web site. The Communication and Consultation Strategy that the Joint Committee had previously approved, was appended at Appendix 3.

The Head of the JPU referred to the Pre Submission Draft of the Joint Core Strategy that was appended to the report as Appendix 1 and highlighted the sections within it. The Strategy sought to maximise the use of existing land and buildings but recognised that all of the demand could not be met without Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUEs). 50,150 homes needed to be provided by 2026 which was a significant reduction on the RSS figure of 62,000. 16,000 jobs were also needed by 2026 across a broad economic base. Appendix 4 of the Pre Submission Draft set out the Infrastructure Delivery Plan Schedule that had been compiled following extensive consultations with service providers and partnering authorities. It set out estimated costs and timescales and the policy requirements for each SUE. Other key documents to the Pre Submission Draft included a Sustainability Appraisal and Equalities Impact Assessment. If the Joint Committee were minded to approve the Pre Submission Draft, the six weeks statutory consultation referred to above, would commence on 17 February 2011 and end on 31 March. The Joint Committee would then consider the consultation responses and then be asked to approve the document for submission to the

Secretary of State.

The Chair commented that the huge amount of work undertaken to get to this stage needed to be recognised. The concerns expressed by members of the public in respect of infrastructure were shared by the Joint Committee: the Joint Committee supported the principle of “no infrastructure, no development”. The Chair acknowledged the comments made by Councillor Hollowell in recognising the difficult situation that existed and that not everyone would be happy with the Pre Submission Draft: the issue still remained that West Northamptonshire had a housing problem that needed dealing with.

Councillor Wendy Amos proposed and Councillor Chris Over seconded “That recommendation 3 be amended to read “Authorises the Head of the Joint Planning Unit in consultation with the Chair of the Joint Strategic Planning Committee to agree any.....”. The amendment was agreed.

In answer to questions, the Head of the JPU commented that for the public consultation a Guide and Note would be produced to be read alongside the Pre Submission Draft to help explain it and the purpose of the consultation. All respondents would have their responses acknowledged together with a unique reference number.

Councillor Richard Church observed that the Pre Submission Draft was a very different document to the Emergent Joint Core Strategy that had been published in 2009. This was largely due to the demise of the RSS, and therefore it was not constrained by it. The housing and employment needs now reflected the natural population growth of the towns and villages making up West Northamptonshire ie the needs of the current population and their children. Massive inward migration to West Northamptonshire was not foreseen. The alternative, if this housing was not provided, would be that people would either live in overcrowded conditions or would be homeless. He commented that there appeared to be misconceptions by the public and elsewhere about the effects of the Localism Bill, currently before Parliament: Local Authorities would still be expected to produce Core Strategies and Greg Clarke MP, on 24th January 2011 had made a statement that Local Authorities that already had Core Strategies should continue to use them and that those who were did not should make swift progress to complete them. Infrastructure was very important and the Pre Submission Draft set this out in a strategic way. He referred to concerns in respect of the development of Buckton Fields and the effect upon the infrastructure of Kingsthorpe Corridor, and in particular, the Cock Hotel Junction in terms of further congestion and air pollution.

Councillor Richard Church proposed and Councillor Tony Woods seconded “That and additional policy principle be added to Policies N4, N8 and N11, to read: “A financial contribution to improvements to the Kingsthorpe Corridor (A508) including the Cock Hotel Junction” and that an additional policy justification be added to the associated Polict Justification for these policies. The proposed additional policy justification would be added to the existing paragraphs regarding transport improvements. The exact wording would vary between each policy justification, but would essentially state the following: “Financial contribution will be required for other highway infrastructure improvements as identified in Policy XX and through detailed transport assessments.”” The amendment was agreed.

In answer to questions concerning how infrastructure projects would be paid for the Head of JPU commented that it was true that small scale developments would not deliver the infrastructure required, however, the Strategy needed to be viewed as a whole and therefore the infrastructure quantum as a whole, so that, for example, the infrastructure requirements of the three SUE’s north of Northampton should be viewed as a whole. Furthermore, the Infrastructure Strategy set out a phasing of provision that should be read against the phasing of housing delivery and jobs delivery. Everything should be in the right order

otherwise planning permission should not be granted.

The Chair invited each member of the Committee to comment and or make suggestions for alterations to the Pre- Submission Draft Joint Core Strategy.

Councillor Jim Bass queried the apparent disparity between housing need of 50,000 homes and job creation of only 16,000. He also commented upon the coalescence of the Northampton North SUE with Overstone and junction issues at the Round Spinney Roundabout. He hoped that there would be both good quality houses and jobs. The Head of JPU commented that population projections predicted a 26% increase in the numbers of people aged between 76 and 89 over the next few years and therefore not so many jobs would be required. Coalescence was an issue that Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) would need to address and it was agreed that these situations should be avoided.

Councillor Joy Capstick commented that the provision of jobs was crucial and welcomed Northampton, Kings Heath SUE as a means of providing good quality housing and a school to this area.

Councillor Chris Over observed that good quality housing and jobs were key to the development of both Daventry and Brackley. He also emphasised the importance of protecting Borough Hill and Daventry Country Park which was already mentioned in the Pre Submission Draft.

Councillor Wendy Amos commented that she supported the need for the Strategy and requested that if the park and ride proposal at Northampton, Kings Heath was not proceeded with that the site be retained as public open space. It was noted that if the ambition was to have a park and ride site, then this should be made a requirement.

Councillor Wendy Amos proposed and Councillor Chris Over seconded:

- “1. That a map of DIRFT be produced to accompany the “Submission” Joint Core Strategy.
2. That in respect of the Daventry North East SUE on page 148 of the Pre Submission Draft paragraph 13.26 be continued with the following wording:

“It is essential that there is a clear separation between the proposed allocation and the village of Norton to the east. An extensive area of Structural Greenspace is proposed in this location to contain the development and to reinforce this important gap. It will provide space for planting to reduce the visual impact of development in this location on views from Norton, and will help to protect the setting of Borough Hill, a Scheduled Ancient Monument.”
3. That in respect of Policy N7 in relation Northampton Kings Heath SUE on page 131 of the Pre Submission Draft, paragraph 12.56 be continued by the following:

“The allocation extends to the west to accommodate land for a park and ride site as part of the transport strategy which provides for park and ride sites around the town (policy C5).”
4. That in respect of the JPU response to Question 29 on page 88 of Appendix 2 the reasons for rejecting this option should extend beyond merely a job numbers issue and should make reference to other planning issues made by many consultees; the following to be added to the JPU response:

“In addition there is concern that this location is not well related or connected to the existing built form of Northampton and would not therefore result in a

sustainable form of development. An allocation in this location would attract investment that would be better located in Daventry and Northampton, and hence this allocation would be harmful to plans for their regeneration.”

The amendments were agreed.

Councillor Robin Brown commented that he pleased with the Pre Submission Draft and that should protect Councils from attacks by developers. He was also pleased with the proposals for Park and Ride and the plans for a modal shift in transportation. In respect of the comments made in respect of the past development of Northampton East he asked what was different about this strategy. The Head of the JPU commented that this strategy required that infrastructure was put in place ahead of development and that modern design and building standards were greatly different to 40 years ago.

Councillor Andre Gonzalez de Savage expressed concerns in relation to pages 128, 129 and 130 of the Pre Submission Draft in respect of the existing pressures at peak times on the A45 junctions in Northampton and at Junction 15 of the M1. The proposals to build thousands of homes nearby to these junctions would worsen the situation and he queried the effects on deliveries to these homes, access by emergency vehicles, air pollution, pressures on the existing road network and the need for secondary schools and the need to protect existing communities. He also noted that public transport measures alone were unlikely to resolve the situation and that public money for solutions would not in future be available.

The County Transportation Officer commented that all development created new transportation pressures and that the previous Emergent Joint Core Strategy had recognised this in respect of the A45 in Northampton. The Pre Submission Draft proposals spread those pressures out more evenly but there was still a need to encourage a modal shift in transportation away from the car. He noted that in built up areas there were limited opportunities to create new road based infrastructure that was a further reason to encourage a modal shift. The Head of the JPU stated that the County Council had undertaken extensive work on transportation issues. Developers would be required to meet the costs. Pollution and mitigation measures were included in the Pre Submission Draft. The Draft also reflected the requirements of the County Education Officer in respect of schools.

Councillor Mary Clarke commented that South Northants Council had agreed that the JPU should prepare this Pre Submission Draft to replace the previous Emergent Joint Core Strategy that had been unacceptable. The Pre Submission Draft reflected many of the comments that had been made by the public. South Northants Council was required to provide 6,043 out of 19,900 across West Northamptonshire as a whole. She believed that this Strategy could be disaggregated by District and reflected local need. New arrangements would be needed to meet the terms of the Localism Bill; there would be a statutory duty on neighbouring Councils to co-operate. South Northants would continue to do so; it had many shared interests with its neighbours and consideration would need to be given as to how this would work in the future. All parties should remain engaged in the process. She supported the Pre Submission Draft which she believed was more robust than the Emergent Joint Core Strategy however she felt that the Strategy needed to be clearer in respect of jobs. Councillor Clarke referred to page 155 of the Pre Submission Draft and noted that the proposals for Towcester were Plan and Infrastructure led: the A5 by-pass and sustainable transportation measures were vital to reduce air pollution. A firm commitment was needed to ensure that the infrastructure would be provided ahead of the housing development in view of the downward revision of housing numbers.

The Head of the JPU stated that a substantial amount of land had already been allocated for employment and was carried through to the Pre Submission Draft. All the SUEs had regard to local employment needs. It was not clear how the current economic recession would

develop and so the Strategy needed to be flexible. There was scope for more jobs to be created so as to reverse any outward migration. Unallocated land could attract inappropriate planning applications. It was agreed that it was important to resolve the Towcester Town Centre pollution issues.

Councillor John Townsend stated that he supported the Pre Submission Draft which for the first time brought together the needs of West Northamptonshire. The Emergent Joint Core Strategy had been top down whereas the Pre Submission Draft was based on locally derived numbers. It provided a challenge to Developers to provide the required infrastructure ahead of planning permission being granted. It provided a good starting point. He believed that it was in everyone's interests to support the development of Northampton so as to improve the County Town. The WNDC would implement the Strategy. There were also challenges for the rural areas including Silverstone, Brackley and Towcester. The Strategy represented the first local plan since 1997 and he hoped that the Localism Bill would not take matters backwards. He urged people to remain engaged with the process.

Councillor Stephen Clarke commented that the Strategy provided a plan for the sustainable development of urban and rural areas. He supported the recommendations in the report.

Councillor Richard Church commented that the Pre Submission Draft recognised the importance of Town Centres and put an emphasis on the regeneration of them. Northampton Borough Council had already agreed a Town Centre Area Action Plan. Successful Towns were judged by the success of their Town Centres.

Councillor Brian Hoare noted the amount of work that had taken place to draw together the Evidence Base. Each of the District Councils had out of date local plans and the Pre Submission Draft represented a big step forward if it was agreed. It would also be a welcome step to rescind the former Emergent Joint Core Strategy. He observed that the provisions on pages 17 and 47 of the Pre Submission Draft in respect of climate change and renewable energy were important and welcomed the provision for the removal of facilities should they no longer operate. He believed that the Strategy had been informed by public comment and debate.

Councillor Tony Woods referred to comments made earlier in the meeting concerning the mistakes made in developing the Eastern District of Northampton. He acknowledged that mistakes had been made but that decisions had been made at that time on the best information that had been available. The Joint Committee could only hope to minimise its own mistakes as might be judged by those sometime in the future. The negatives of Northampton East had been its overall design and quality. Estates had been designed with cars on the outside and people on the inside which, although sounding good and some of the estates had won design awards, inadvertently had built in crime. There had been problems with the design of the houses themselves, the materials that had been used and standards of insulation and heating that compared very poorly with homes in Scandinavia and Germany. Furthermore, the Eastern District had been built as an add on to Northampton rather than being intended to be linked to it. There had been an over reliance on social housing whereas now it was accepted that a mixed housing approach was accepted as being sustainable. On the positive side there had been a good mix of schools, employment, the provision of a district centre and the provision of good open spaces. Although the car was the main means of transport the Pre Submission Draft recognised the potential for public transport, cycling and walking. The Strategy represented a snap shot in time and had been produced at a time of economic recession: it reflected the cuts in public expenditure. Northampton Borough Council had an increasing housing problem with approximately 8,000 people on its housing waiting list. In addition there were those who currently shared accommodation that would like their own home. The 50,150 homes to be provided by the Strategy assumed no inward migration but if Northampton was successful as everyone wanted it to be then it would grow. The Strategy needed to be flexible so that it

could be reviewed over time. It would effectively cover a period of fifteen years and objectives over a longer period of time, perhaps 30 to 40 years, were needed accepting that they would not be clear. New UK commercially built homes were 15% smaller than the European standard and the average age of the First Timer Buyer was now 37. He believed that if communities were to work together then they had to provide the same opportunities to future generations that the Baby Boomers had enjoyed.

Councillor Brian Markham noted that of the 50,150 homes to be provided approximately 30,000 had already been built or had received planning permission. No-one could know definitely if the balance of homes and jobs and the infrastructure requirements was correct because of the economic situation. However, he felt that 50,150 new homes felt about right in the present circumstances. He did not anticipate that much of the infrastructure would be provided, or that there would be many housing starts, over the next three years. He noted that press coverage had focussed on comments made by Roger Kingston that mainly related to the Northampton SUE's, however the Strategy was about a great deal more than that; it was about regeneration, leisure and jobs throughout West Northamptonshire. The regeneration of deprived areas of Northampton would affect a greater area of the Town.

The County Education Officer stated that the plans for education were based on the demand for school places. Increasing births in the Town Centre was putting pressure on primary school places. In time this pressure would move to secondary schools. The growth to the west of Northampton required the provision of one extra secondary school. However, as much of the planned growth was scattered a better approach in those areas might be to extend existing schools. The Education Authority were considering the issues and it was possible that further secondary school provision would be needed post 2020.

In answer to a question the Head of the JPU noted that Policy C3 on page 55 of the Pre Submission Draft referred to improved rail services and journey times and included links between Long Buckby and Daventry Town Centre.

Councillor Wendy Amos welcomed the reduced size of the Northampton North SUE but remarked that the necessary infrastructure would need to make a massive improvement to existing issues.

Councillor Andre Gonzalez de Savage noted that in the future there would be very limited public funding opportunities and therefore there was a need to be realistic about what could be provided.

The Chair commented that everyone accepted that there needed to be a Strategy and that this meeting of Joint Committee marked an important stage in achieving that. Without a Joint Core Strategy there would be no opportunity to attract the inward investment that was vital to the future development and regeneration of Towcester, Brackley, Daventry and Northampton. The Strategy needed to serve the existing population.

- RESOLVED:**
1. That the Officer responses, as amended, to the representations received to the West Northamptonshire Emergent Joint Core Strategy, July 2009, as attached to the report as Appendix 2, be noted and approved.
 2. That the Pre Submission version of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy, as amended, be approved for the statutory six weeks representation period in accordance with Regulations 27 and 28 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008, to run from 17th February 2011 to 31 March 2011.
 3. That the Head of the JPU in consultation with the Chair of the West

Northamptonshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee be authorised to make any editorial changes required to the Pre Submission version of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy.

4. That the West Northamptonshire Emergent Joint Core Strategy published in July 2009 be rescinded on the basis that it is now replaced by the Pre Submission version of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy.

The meeting concluded at 20.05 hours.