

Item No:
Date: 26 July 2010

**WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
JOINT STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE**

West Northamptonshire Emergent Joint Core Strategy Consultation Responses
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REPORT OF THE HEAD OF THE JOINT PLANNING UNIT

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is for the West Northamptonshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee to formally receive and to note the contents of the summaries of the responses that were received to the West Northamptonshire Emergent Joint Core Strategy consultation held in 2009. This is a necessary procedural step in the preparation of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the West Northamptonshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee:

1) Formally receives and notes the contents of the summaries of the responses that were received to the West Northamptonshire Emergent Joint Core Strategy consultation held in 2009.

3. Introduction to the Emergent Joint Core Strategy

3.1 The approved West Northamptonshire Local Development Scheme (February 2010) sets out the content and timetable of the Local Development Framework for West Northamptonshire. The Joint Core Strategy is the priority document for preparation. It is the overarching document and all subsequent documents must reflect what it says.

3.2 The Joint Core Strategy will be the long term strategic plan for the development of West Northamptonshire – it deals with the big picture of what will happen in the future. It is a spatial policy document, which means it deals with places and the activities that happen within and between them.

- 3.3 Preparation of the Joint Core Strategy is a legal requirement and the partner authorities of Daventry District, Northampton Borough, South Northamptonshire and Northamptonshire County Councils are producing a Joint Core Strategy for their collective areas; an area referred to as West Northamptonshire. The partner authorities are working in close co-operation with West Northamptonshire Development Corporation to produce the Joint Core Strategy and ensure the delivery of development and infrastructure.
- 3.4 At its meeting on 6 July 2009 the West Northamptonshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee approved the publication of the West Northamptonshire Emergent Joint Core Strategy for consultation. The Emergent Joint Core Strategy was published on 31 July 2009 for a six week consultation period which was subsequently extended by 2 and half weeks to 30 September 2009 due to printing problems with the accompanying consultation questionnaire.
- 3.5 The content of the Emergent Joint Core Strategy was informed by the Joint Core Strategy Issues and Options (September 2007) and Regulation 25 (January 2009) consultations, the collection of a wide ranging evidence base and on-going work with technical bodies such as the Environment Agency. The Emergent Joint Core Strategy marked a fundamental step towards the submission and adoption of the Joint Core Strategy. The Emergent Joint Core Strategy set out thinking at the time of its publication with respect to the policy approach that should be taken in West Northamptonshire and was based on the evidence collected to date. It was not a draft plan or final strategy; it did not set out policies but it did set out the policy approach and the preferred options and rejected options for the locations of growth at each town in West Northamptonshire. It was emphasised in the Emergent Joint Core Strategy that at that time some parts of the evidence base were clearer than others. Where further work was needed this was noted in the text of the document.
- 3.6 The Emergent Joint Core Strategy sought to explain the thinking of the Joint Strategic Planning Committee at the time of its publication and offered a chance to make comment. The Strategy was written for everyone with an interest in the future of the places that make up West Northamptonshire. It was noted in the Emergent Joint Core Strategy that it would have impacts on existing communities, businesses, landowners, developers and investors. It was also noted that it would increase the level of dialogue with bodies such as the Environment Agency, the Highways Agency and Natural England.
- 3.7 The Emergent Joint Core Strategy was subject to a sustainability appraisal and an appropriate assessment by independent environmental consultants Environ. Environ's reports were published alongside the Emergent Joint Core Strategy to allow respondents to the Emergent Joint Core Strategy to reflect on Environ's appraisal and assessment in preparing their responses.

4. The Emergent Joint Core Strategy Consultation

4.1 The Joint Strategic Planning Committee considered a report about the Emergent Joint Core Strategy consultation at its meeting on 30 March 2010 (Agenda Item 7). The Committee report set out a summary of the consultation that was undertaken for the Emergent Joint Core Strategy including:

- 1) full details of the community involvement and consultation methods used throughout the Emergent Joint Core Strategy consultation;
- 2) the number, geographical distribution and form of the responses; and
- 3) the proportion of the responses in support, not in support, unspecified and do not know.

Emergent Joint Core Strategy and Consultation Questionnaire

4.2 In terms of responding to the Emergent Joint Core Strategy respondents could use the following methods:

- 1) *Consultation Questionnaire* - A consultation questionnaire was published alongside the Emergent Joint Core Strategy. The questionnaire enabled respondents to answer each of the consultation questions set within the Emergent Joint Core Strategy with the answer “Yes”, “No”, or “Don’t Know” and provide reasons for each response;
- 2) *Online Consultation Feedback System* - The Joint Planning Unit used the web-based Limehouse consultation system to enable individuals and organisations to view and download the Emergent Joint Core Strategy, the consultation questionnaire and the accompanying Sustainability Appraisal and Appropriate Assessment. Once registered on the Joint Planning Unit’s consultation system respondents could also submit their responses electronically. The Partner Authorities’ websites also provided links to the consultation system on their websites.
- 3) *Letter, Email or Fax*
- 4) *Recorded Phone Message*
- 5) *Public Exhibition Feedback Form*

5. The Emergent Joint Core Strategy Consultation Responses - Summaries

5.1 As a result of the Emergent Joint Core Strategy consultation 4,781 individuals and organisations submitted 6,355 responses containing a total of 120,668 individual comments, also known as representations. All the responses have been logged and an acknowledgement sent to each respondent.

5.2 All responses to the Emergent Joint Core Strategy are available to view on the Joint Planning Unit’s website or by appointment at the Joint Planning Unit’s office in Northampton.

5.3 The Joint Planning Unit has coded all the responses by the consultation questions set in the Emergent Joint Core Strategy and entered them into a database. The responses have then being summarised by consultation question. The summaries of all the responses by question and in question number order, i.e. starting with question 1 through to question 52, is attached to this report as Appendix 1. Introductory notes are included at the beginning of the Appendix along with a glossary and a contents page.

6. Next Stages

6.1 All respondents to the Emergent Joint Core Strategy will be notified of the publication of the responses, the timetable for the next stages and the nature of the next stages of the Joint Core Strategy preparation process.

6.2 The responses to the Emergent Joint Core Strategy will be taken into account in the preparation of the Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy. At a future meeting the West Northamptonshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee will receive the officers' recommended response to the consultation responses to the Emergent Joint Core Strategy for the Committee's consideration.

6.3 The Head of the Joint Planning Unit has sought legal advice from Counsel that the approach to the reporting and consideration of the responses to the Emergent Joint Core Strategy, as set out above, is acceptable. Counsel has confirmed that this approach is acceptable.