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Date	25TH JULY 2019		
Report Originator	HEAD OF NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT PLANNING & DELIVERY UNIT		
Title	REVIEW OF THE NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT CORE STRATEGY		

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 For the Joint Planning Committee to consider the need to update the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy and the potential timetable for doing so.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The North Northamptonshire (NN) Joint Core Strategy (JCS) was adopted in July 2016. It is the strategic Part 1 Local Plan for North Northamptonshire, providing the big picture for development across North Northamptonshire in the period 2011-2031 and ensuring that an up-to-date decision-making and investment framework is in place. It is being taken forward in more detail by Part 2 Local Plans prepared by the Partner Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) and Neighbourhood Plans where these have been or are being produced.
- 2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states at para 33 that *“Policies in local plans and spatial development strategies should be reviewed to assess whether they need updating at least once every five years, and should then be updated as necessary. Reviews should be completed no later than five years from the adoption date of a plan, and should take into account changing circumstances affecting the area, or any relevant changes in national policy. Relevant strategic policies will need updating at least once every five years if their applicable local housing need figure has changed significantly; and they are likely to require earlier review if local housing need is expected to change significantly in the near future”*.
- 2.3 The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) states that, following a review, the local planning authority must decide either:
- *that their policies do not need updating and publish their reasons for this decision; and/ or*
 - *that one or more policies do need updating, and update their Local Development Scheme to set out the timetable for this revision.*
- If necessary, authorities should then update their policies.*
- 2.4 In the light of the above, a review of the need to update the JCS must be completed by July 2021. At its 26th April 2018 meeting, the JPC agreed that this review should be undertaken early in 2019/20, to take account of proposals for a strategic vision for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc and monitoring of the relevance

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and effectiveness of the adopted JCS in its first three years post-adoption. If deemed necessary, the JPC report identified a potential timescale for a rapid update of the JCS as part of the NN 'offer' in seeking to secure a Growth Deal with Government (see 3.14-3.16 below). This would have involved consulting on the scope of the JCS in winter 2019; consultation on a publication plan in autumn 2020; submission in spring 2021; and adoption in winter 2021. The JPC recognised that this indicative timescale was heavily dependent upon the nature and timing of the strategic vision for the Arc, including whether it has been subject to any formal consultation and examination process (including whether duty to cooperate issues have been resolved).

- 2.5 This report reviews the need to update the JCS taking account of the latest national policy and practice guidance. It focuses on the sub-national context relating to the Oxford-Cambridge Arc and local context including monitoring triggers in the JCS and the implications of the Unitary Authority taking over from the JPC as strategic planning authority for NN in April 2021. The conclusion is that the JCS does not require an immediate update but that background work should continue so that the unitary authority can make rapid progress once the formal plan-making process starts. It will be important to keep the need for an update under review should circumstances change, for instance in relation to nationally assessed Local Housing Need (LHN) or the prospects of securing an early package of Government funding support.

3. FACTORS INFLUENCING THE JCS REVIEW

National context

- 3.1 The [revised NPPF](#) (February 2019) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It is accompanied by Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), most notably on Plan-making. Chapter 3 of the NPPF focuses on plan-making. Paras 17-19 set out the plan-making framework and the role of strategic and non-strategic policies. The revised NPPF places greater emphasis on the role of Strategic Policies within the development plan. Para 17 sets out that *"the development plan must include strategic policies to address each local planning authority's priorities for the development and use of land in its area"*. Para 21 of the NPPF requires that *"Plans should make explicit which policies are strategic policies"* and that *"these should be limited to those necessary to address the strategic priorities of the area (and any relevant cross-boundary issues), to provide a clear starting point for any non-strategic policies that are needed"*.
- 3.2 Para 20 of the NPPF, broadly defines the scope for Strategic policies:
- "Strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, and make sufficient provision for:*
- a) *housing (including affordable housing), employment, retail, leisure and other commercial development;*

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- b) *infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, security, waste management, water supply, wastewater, flood risk and coastal change management, and the provision of minerals and energy (including heat);*
- c) *community facilities (such as health, education and cultural infrastructure); and*
- d) *conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation.”*

- 3.3 As noted at 2.1 above, the JCS provides the strategic policies for NN. This includes development proposals of strategic significance including Sustainable Urban Extensions and large housing (500+ dwellings) and employment (5+ ha) sites. This approach ensures that the strategic priorities of the area are addressed and simplifies the preparation of Part 2 Plans, which can focus on local matters.
- 3.4 The NN unitary authority will need to prepare strategic policies to address these matters as part of its development plan. It is currently envisaged that this will comprise an update of the JCS. This report refers to the “JCS” update or revision but the statutory plan completed by the NN unitary authority will not be a “joint plan”. It is therefore proposed that the JCS update should be referred to as the NN Strategic Plan when the process commences.
- 3.5 Para 22 explains that “*strategic policies should look ahead over a minimum 15 year period from adoption, to anticipate and respond to long-term requirements and opportunities, such as those arising from major improvements in infrastructure*”. The 2016 JCS meets this requirement, setting out policies and proposals for the period to 2031. The plan period for the JCS update will need to be agreed by the unitary authority in its Local Development Scheme. Whilst the Arc work looks to 2050, it could be more appropriate for the statutory timescale of the Plan to be 2020-2041, with the Spatial Vision potentially extending to 2050 to align with the Arc. This is because those aspects of the Plan which must be evidence based, such as housing and jobs numbers, are better suited to this shorter time horizon. An end date of 2041 would also be consistent with the proposed end date for the West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan, which should allow evidence and cross-boundary issues to be considered more effectively (including potential for joint commissioning of technical work).

Sub-national context: Oxford-Cambridge Arc

Corridor-Wide Vision to 2050

- 3.6 Paras 5.1 to 5.17 of the report to the 25th April 2019 JPC on the Arc provided an extensive overview of the background and current position regarding the Corridor-Wide Vision and the implications for North Northamptonshire. The preparation of a spatial vision/strategy for the Arc has not met the Summer 2019 target that was recommended by the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) and anticipated when the JPC previously considered the timetable for revising the JCS.

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- 3.7 The [Joint Declaration](#) between Government and local partners published in March 2019 stated that “...*We recognise that meeting all these ambitions for the Arc requires us to take a long-term view, at least to 2050, and for us to work collaboratively across geographical, political and thematic boundaries. Doing so will require open thinking and dialogue without harming the ongoing plan-making process. While extant local development plans and joint plans must evidently retain their integrity whilst they are in place, we will consider what planning approaches and flexibilities may be appropriate in future, within and across the Arc, to better support meeting our overall ambitions. This could include considering the role of a spatial vision or strategy for the Arc as a whole, as well as the most suitable delivery vehicles for specific developments. We recognise that resources would need to be available for this work.*”
- 3.8 Discussions are ongoing between Government and local partners in relation to the spatial vision or strategy. It is understood that this is likely to comprise a non-statutory “spatial framework”. The scope and timetable for this has yet to be agreed but, based on experience elsewhere, the JPDU considers that it is likely to take around 2 to 2.5 years (allowing for technical work and consultation/engagement). It is therefore considered unlikely that an agreed spatial framework for the Arc will be available before the end of 2021.
- 3.9 The delay in preparing an Arc-wide spatial framework means that the strategic context for any immediate work on updating the JCS will be unclear. This lack of top-down guidance will pose challenges (e.g. in deciding what scale of growth to plan for) and it will be important to have greater clarity before the JCS update is finalised. However, the uncertainty over the strategic context also provides opportunities for the JPDU and partner Councils to help inform and shape the Arc spatial framework from the bottom-up, by feeding in NN evidence, issues and ambitions.
- 3.10 Close engagement with the Arc work will be important to ensure that the JCS update can proceed in parallel rather than being delayed until a spatial framework is finalised. The JPDU participates in the Arc Place Group which is leading work on the spatial framework (reporting to Leaders and Chief Executives). In addition, officers from the JPDU and the LPAs met AECOM in May 2019 to input into the technical work they are undertaking on behalf of MHCLG exploring scenarios for economic growth across the Arc and the associated housing and infrastructure that may be required to support them. MHCLG has stressed that the AECOM study will not be the spatial vision for the Arc, just part of the evidence base for future plans.
- 3.11 The JPDU and partner councils will continue to undertake preparatory technical work for the JCS update and will feed this into work on the Arc spatial framework. The JPC agreed in March 2018 that this should include work in respect of longer-term growth options. Where possible, this will build on work already completed or commissioned in relation to the Arc, including the AECOM study referred to above.

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- 3.12 The JPDU's engagement will be guided by what NN wants to achieve from being within the Arc. This was discussed at the JPC and JDC on 15th March 2018 in relation to the delivery of the vision and outcomes set out in the adopted Joint Core Strategy (JCS), including to NN in 2031 being:
- o A showpiece for modern green living and well-managed sustainable development;
 - o A strong network of settlements within an enhanced green framework of living, working countryside
 - o Outward looking, taking advantage of its excellent transport connectivity to be a nationally important growth area and focus for inward investment
 - o More self-reliant...investment in infrastructure and jobs will have led to less need to travel and will have shaped places in a way that meets the needs and aspirations of local people
 - o An exemplar for construction-based innovation and the delivery of low carbon growth
- 3.13 These ambitions are being refined through further work. The North Northamptonshire Investment Framework (NNIF) is an important part of this, setting out measures to accelerate housing and employment delivery and identifying priorities for future funding. It was agreed by the JDC at its meeting on 6th June 2019. As previously advised, the NNIF can be viewed on the JPDU website: <http://www.nnjpu.org.uk/publications/north-northamptonshire-investment-framework/>. The Investment Framework provides a robust evidence base for funding bids and discussions with Government over support in accelerating delivery of consented growth plans. The JDC noted that it is a 'live' document that will be updated periodically as new information becomes available and new projects are identified. The JPDU's consultants Lichfields are now undertaking further work on the economic narrative referenced at the 25th April JPC, and a workshop with key stakeholders was held on the 18th June. This work will inform NN's input into the Arc and funding discussions and the JPC will be updated.

Growth Deal

- 3.14 A letter of intent was sent to the Secretary of State in October 2018 to highlight NN's ambition to secure a growth deal to enable NN to contribute substantial early economic and housing growth to the Arc. This proposed that, in return for a commitment from Government to a substantial package of support, in addition to existing funding streams and commitments, NN could offer:
1. Accelerated economic development and housing growth based on an up-to-date joint strategic plan to 2031 (the Joint Core Strategy), to deliver 20% above Local Housing Need (LHN); and
 2. A commitment to a rapid revision of the JCS in line with the strategic vision for the Corridor to 2050.
- 3.15 The expectation was that this offer and potential asks would provide the basis for negotiating a bespoke housing and growth deal along the lines of that

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secured in Oxfordshire. However, it is evident from subsequent discussions that MHCLG is seeking to move away from locality-based deals towards a more coordinated Arc-wide approach to securing funding and prioritising investments.

- 3.16 It is understood that investment in the Arc will be sought through the Comprehensive Spending Review in autumn 2019 and that discussion on investment priorities will be at Arc or sub-area basis (the Central Area for NN). The NNIF provides evidence of immediate needs and will provide a basis for NN's input into these Arc discussions and for exploring other potential funding sources. However, the shift away from a locally based growth deal reduces the confidence that NN will, in the short term, secure a tailored package of support to accelerate the delivery of committed growth and to plan for increased levels of development in the longer term. The JPC will be updated if this situation changes but it is considered that the current uncertainty reduces the urgency of revising the JCS and will make it prudent to consider various scenarios for new housing and jobs growth to be planned for in the JCS.

Local Context

- 3.17 The NPPG indicates that in reviewing a plan, an authority can consider information such as:
- *changes to local circumstances; such as a change in Local Housing Need;*
 - *their Housing Delivery Test performance;*
 - *whether the authority can demonstrate a 5 year supply of deliverable sites for housing;*
 - *their appeals performance;*
 - *success of policies against indicators in the Development Plan as set out in their Authority Monitoring Report;*
 - *plan-making activity by other authorities, such as whether they have identified that they are unable to meet all their housing need; and*
 - *significant economic changes that may impact on viability.*
- 3.18 Local Housing Need (LHN) is assessed by the application of the standard method set out in NPPG (or in the context of preparing strategic policies using a justified alternative approach as provided for in para 60 of the NPPF). The standard method is based on a formula using household projections with adjustments for affordability and a cap applied in some instances. For NN the LHN is currently assessed at 1,813 homes per annum. This is higher than the JCS requirement for a minimum 1,750 dwellings pa but less than the 'strategic opportunity' that the plan identifies for 2,000 dwellings pa. The NPPF/NPPG indicate that LHN would supersede JCS housing requirements for the purpose of assessing 5-year supply if the plan is not updated within 5 years of adoption (i.e. by July 2021). However, given that LHN is close to existing JCS requirements, this does not provide a justification for immediately updating the JCS. This may change if subsequent LHN figures are substantially higher, but the timescale for revised figures is not currently known.
- 3.19 The government published the Housing Delivery Test (HDT) in February 2019. In summary, the HDT compares the net homes delivered over three years

(15/16, 16/17 and 17/18) to the homes that should have been built over the same period (their housing requirement) by dividing the former by the latter. It is worth noting that all NN Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) passed the HDT. More information including the full results can be found on the government website¹.

3.20 All NN LPAs can also presently demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing land (the headlines from the 2017/18 Authorities Monitoring Report were reported to the reported to the 25th April 2019 JPC).

3.21 In addition to these national provisions regarding housing supply, the JCS contains (page 197 and para 9.18) a monitoring trigger that refers explicitly to triggering a partial update of the JCS in the event of Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUEs) in a district/borough delivering less than 75% of projected housing completions in three consecutive years (based on the trajectories set out in Appendix 4 of the JCS). This reflects the significance of the SUEs in the delivery of the JCS and is to ensure that the objectively assessed need for housing in the Housing Market Area is met.

3.22 Table 1 below shows that this trigger has been hit as a result of slower-than-planned development at the Wellingborough and Kettering SUEs. Corby SUEs performed better against this monitoring trigger.

Table 1: SUE performance 2016/17-18/19

SUE	16/17 JCS	16/17	%	17/18 JCS	17/18	%	18/19 JCS	18/19	%
Priors Hall	245	155	63%	293	269	92%	293	238	81%
Weldon Park	40	39	98%	60	62	103%	60	111	185%
West Corby	0	0		0	0		50	0	0%
WEAST	125	0	0%	175	0	0%	250	57	23%
Wellingborough North	25	0	0%	200	0	0%	250	0	0%
Kettering East	120	29	24%	180	124	69%	220	132	60%

3.23 Delivery on the SUEs has been slower than envisaged in the JCS due to market conditions and the high costs of upfront infrastructure. However, all four of the consented SUEs (also referred to Garden Communities) are now making significant progress on site either via housing delivery or key access routes under construction, and it anticipated that delivery will continue to accelerate. Investment by Homes England has been important in achieving this progress. It is also important to note that substantial progress is being made with the Part 2 Local Plans which will identify additional sources of housing supply on non-strategic sites to contribute to delivery of the JCS and strengthen the housing land supply situation. The Plan for the Borough of Wellingborough was adopted in February 2019, Corby and Kettering will shortly be consulting on their Pre-

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-delivery-test-2018-measurement>

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Submission Plans, and East Northamptonshire Council is developing its Pre-Submission Plan.

- 3.24 In the report to the 26th April 2018 JPC, the JPDU set out legal advice that the SUE performance trigger alone should not necessitate an immediate review of the JCS. This is because, notwithstanding the slower-than-planned development of the SUEs, all the Councils can demonstrate a 5-year supply of housing land and a realistic trajectory for delivering the JCS housing requirements over the plan period. An immediate update of the JCS is not therefore necessary. The JPDU is considering with the LPA's what additional work could be undertaken to address the implications of the SUE monitoring trigger, which could be along the lines of Housing Action Plans produced by some LPAs elsewhere in the country which identify and seek to resolve barriers to housing delivery on committed sites.
- 3.25 The JPDU undertakes analysis of appeal decisions to determine the effectiveness of JCS Policies. This was last undertaken in April 2019 and covered a total of 72 appeal decisions since August 2016. The analysis found that 68% of the appeals monitored were dismissed and 29% were upheld. Of the 31 non site-specific policies available to base decisions on, 18 were used by inspectors in this timeframe, with Policies 3 (*Landscape Character*), 8 (*NN Place Shaping Principles*), 11 (*The Network of Urban and Rural Areas*) and 30 (*Housing Mix and Tenure*) being among the most commonly exercised. Policy 8 proved to be the most effective in appeal decisions, it was used in a total of 72% of all appeals decisions considered and in 85% of these was used to dismiss the appeal.
- 3.26 More detailed analysis and feedback from the partner Councils is being used to assess the effectiveness of policies in the JCS, particularly through the development management process. This will assist in the refining and updating of policies in due course. However, monitoring of appeal decisions indicates that the policies of the JCS are generally being supported by planning inspectors. An update of the JCS is not, therefore, considered urgent on this basis as the JCS remains up-to-date and effective.
- 3.27 Plan-making activity by other authorities, such as whether they have identified that they are unable to meet all their housing need is an important consideration when reviewing Plans. The plans of neighbouring authorities do not presently envisage NN having to accommodate unmet development needs. Cross-boundary issues with West Northamptonshire will need to be considered through the respective Strategic Plan updates. This is acknowledged in the JCS which sets out at para 1.14 "*For the period post-2029, options outside of the West Northamptonshire boundary area may need to be tested alongside others for meeting Northampton's longer term development needs. Through the duty to co-operate and co-ordination of plan making, the respective local planning authorities will work together to positively address this issue in reviewing future Local Plans*". Consultation on issues for the West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan update will shortly be undertaken and this will be reported to the October JPC.

3.28 The establishment of the North Northamptonshire unitary authority is an important consideration in the need to update the JCS and the timetable for doing so. The unitary authority will be established on 1 April 2021. Parliamentary Orders will follow later this year and there will be elections to the Shadow Authority in May 2020. A Shadow Executive will be selected from those elected and will determine the structure, budget and service delivery model for the new council.

3.29 Until April 2021 the JPC will remain the statutory strategic planning authority for NN and the formal decision-making body for the JCS. However, the NN Strategic Plan will be a key statutory document for the new unitary and it is better that the authority owns and shapes the plan from the start, taking all key decisions rather than inheriting work-in-progress. The indicative timetable outlined in Table 2 ensures that this is the case.

4. JCS UPDATE AND PROPOSED TIMETABLE

4.1 An update of the JCS (to be known as the NN Strategic Plan) will be required but, for the reasons set out above, this should await greater certainty relating to the Arc spatial framework and should be progressed by the NN unitary authority. The urgency to commence an early review as part of a NN offer to secure a Growth Deal no longer appears to exist. It is therefore recommended that the JPC should resolve that the JCS does not require updating now for the reasons set out in this report. This position should remain under review as an update of some or all of the JCS policies may be required if some form of growth deal comes back on the table or there is another significant change in circumstances (e.g. new cross boundary issues or a major increase in Local Housing Need).

4.2 Although a formal update of the JCS should not start yet, it is considered important to identify a provisional timetable for updating the JCS once the unitary authority is established. The proposed timetable in Table 2 should help with the completion of remaining Part 2 Local Plans, by clarifying the process for considering new strategic matters.

Table 2: Potential Timetable for North Northamptonshire JCS and Conformity with Appropriate Regulations

Stage	Date
Evidence Gathering and Scoping Member briefings and workshops	July 2019-April 2021
Unitary Authority to agree Scope and Issues	June 2021
Consultation on Scope and Issues (Regulation 18)	Summer 2021
Consultation on Options (consistent with emerging Arc Spatial Framework)	Winter 2021
Proposed Submission Consultation (Regulation 19)	Winter 2022
Submission to Secretary of State (Regulation 22)	Spring 2023
Commencement of Examination (Regulation 24)	Summer 2023
Adoption of DPD (Regulation 26)	Winter 2023

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- 4.3 The JPDU and partner councils will continue to undertake background technical work to fulfil the requirements of the NPPF and NPPG (evidence base, Sustainability Appraisal scoping, preparation of spatial options, etc) so that the unitary authority is able to progress quickly with its Strategic Plan. More of this will be done in-house than would have been the case with a rapid update. Workshops with the JPC and Shadow Authority will ensure that members are engaged in this work and allow consultation on the scope of the NN Strategic Plan and Issues and Options to be undertaken soon after the unitary authority is formed. In the meantime, this technical work will also inform the JPC's input into the Arc spatial framework.
- 4.4 At its 25th April 2019 meeting, the JPC agreed that a 'Call for Sites' should be undertaken, where interested parties are asked to submit potential sites for consideration through the JCS and other relevant workstreams (such as the registers of brownfield sites). Following further consideration and discussion with the LPAs it is considered that a public call for sites in summer/ autumn 2019 is too early. It could result in confusion over its purpose (e.g. whether sites for further SUEs or new settlements are being sought) and would allow sites not included in emerging Part 2 Local Plans to be promoted once more. A formal call for sites will not be undertaken at this stage, but this does not prevent landowners from making the JPDU/ LPAs aware of sites that they will wish to promote when the JCS update commences.
- 4.5 In addition to background technical work, the JPDU will focus on tackling constraints to delivery of the existing JCS, supporting completion of remaining Part 2 Local Plans and providing input into the Arc spatial framework. Its other priority will be completion of the Place Shaping Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). Work is ongoing to refine the scope of the SPD and the JPC will be updated at its October meeting.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 It is a legal requirement to review a Local Plan every five years to determine whether it needs to be revised/updated. The JPDU presently considers that the JCS is up-to-date and the policies are working, including in relation to housing delivery. It is not considered that an update of the JCS is required at the current time, but this will be kept under review if there is a significant change in circumstances.
- 5.2 The proposed timescale for the preparation of the Arc spatial framework has slipped from that envisaged by the NIC. This should ideally provide the strategic context for the JCS update and the JPDU will continue to input into this work. The JPDU and partner councils will continue to undertake preparatory technical work for the JCS, building on that already completed or commissioned in relation to the Arc.
- 5.3 The prospect of a specific NN growth deal, including a commitment to a rapid review of the JCS, appears to have diminished. This reduces the urgency of

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revising the JCS and will make it prudent to consider various scenarios for the scale of new housing and jobs growth to be planned for in the JCS.

- 5.4 The NN Strategic Plan will be a key statutory document for the new unitary authority and it is better that the authority owns and shapes the plan from the start rather than inheriting a work-in-progress. The indicative timetable for the preparation of the NN Strategic Plan allows for this and also gives time for the Arc Spatial Framework to emerge.
- 5.5 In addition to background technical work for the NN Strategic Plan, the JPDU will work with the LPAs to tackle constraints to delivery of the existing JCS, support the completion of remaining Part 2 Local Plans, and provide input into the Arc spatial framework. Its other priority will be completion of the Place Shaping SPD. Work is ongoing to refine the scope of this and the JPC will be updated at its October meeting.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 **The Head of the NNJPDU recommends that the Joint Planning Committee agrees that:**
- 1. The North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS) does not require updating at the present time, for the reasons set out in the report;**
 - 2. The need for updating the JCS is kept under review, particularly in relation to progress on the Ox-Cam Arc Spatial Framework and discussions relating to growth-related funding;**
 - 3. When an update of the JCS commences it should be referred to as the NN Strategic Plan and should cover the period 2020-2041, with the spatial vision potentially extending to 2050 to align with the Arc;**
 - 4. That the JPDU should continue to input to the Arc proposals and undertake background technical work so that the NN unitary authority can progress quickly with its Strategic Plan in 2021; and**
 - 5. The provisional timetable in Table 2 should guide future work, recognising that this may need revising should there be a change in circumstances.**

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