

<b>NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT PLANNING COMMITTEE</b>		Item 4	Page 1 of 7
Date	<b>23<sup>rd</sup> OCTOBER 2019</b>		
Report Originator	<b>HEAD OF THE NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT PLANNING &amp; DELIVERY UNIT</b>		
Title	<b>ENGLAND'S ECONOMIC HEARTLAND OUTLINE TRANSPORT STRATEGY</b>		

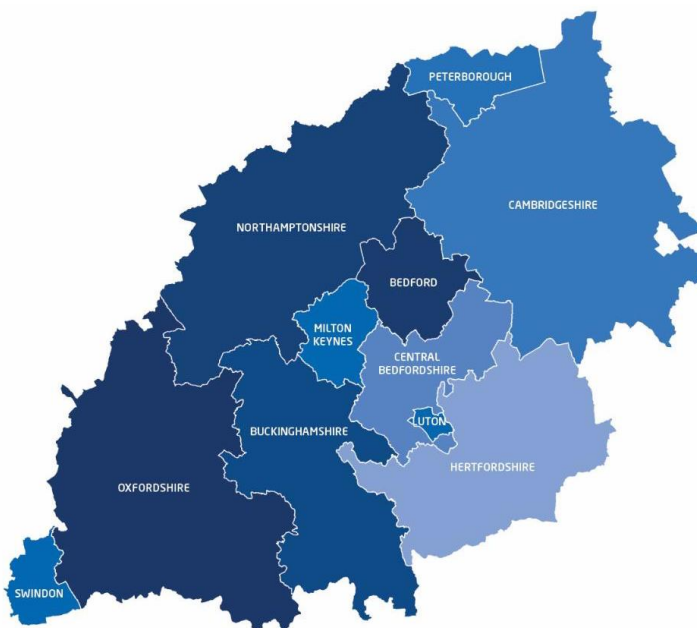
## 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 For the Joint Planning Committee to agree a response to England's Economic Heartland Outline Transport Strategy.

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 England's Economic Heartland is an alliance of local authorities that was established in 2014. North Northamptonshire sits within EEH which covers the authorities in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc plus Hertfordshire and Swindon (see Figure 1). EEH's focus is primarily transport, although it has an interest in wider infrastructure and related issues. The intention is that EEH will become a sub-national transport body (STB). A key function of each STB is to prepare a transport strategy for its area. Government and local transport authorities such as Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) must take this strategy into account when preparing their own transport-related strategies, proposals and decisions. Through its representation on the EEH Transport Forum and active engagement in the officer working groups, NCC and the partner LPAs will be closely involved in work on the Transport Strategy.

Figure 1: Current EEH area



<b>NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT PLANNING COMMITTEE</b> <b>23<sup>rd</sup> OCTOBER 2019</b>	Item 4	Page 2 of 7
---	-----------	-------------

2.2 [EEH's Outline Transport Strategy: Framework for Engagement<sup>1</sup>](#) was published at the EEH annual regional conference on 16th July 2019 as the start of formal engagement on a strategy for the EEH area. The outline strategy is a vehicle for engagement with partners and the wider stakeholder community about the approach the strategy should take and what it should contain. Responses on the Outline Transport Strategy can be submitted up until 31 October 2019. Discussions and feedback captured during the engagement phase will play a key role in shaping the Final Transport Strategy, due for publication in early autumn 2020.

### 3. CONTENTS OF STRATEGY

3.1 A presentation on the Outline Strategy will be provided to the JPC by officers from EEH and a summary is set out below. The outline strategy poses a series of questions (see Appendix A). These will be addressed where appropriate in the response. The JPDU's proposed comments for inclusion in the JPC's response to the outline strategy, are set out in Section 4.

3.2 The outline strategy looks ahead to how the EEH transport system needs to develop over the next 30 years. It sets out the nature of the challenges and opportunities which are likely to be faced in shaping the transport system for the long term. This includes asking what needs to be done differently to improve connectivity in ways that enable individuals, communities and businesses to realise their potential. The document asks for views on what needs to be done to encourage investment in new jobs and to support the delivery of planned growth. It also stresses that this must be done hand-in-hand with an improvement to quality of life, unlocking new opportunities for everyone, regardless of where they live, their background or circumstances. Significantly, it also states that this must be done in ways that result in 'net gain' for the environment.

3.3 The document outlines that a key vision for the area is: *Connecting People and Places with Opportunities and Services*. These four themes are then detailed within their own sections within the strategy, the key ambitions of which are summarised below:

#### 3.4 *Connecting People*

- Frictionless travel across the region
- Investment as part of a radical approach to achieving fully integrated 'end-to-end' journeys
- Transport must address physical, cultural and digital barriers to travel
- Integrated ticketing solutions that provide ease of access between modes and service

#### 3.5 *Connecting Places*

- Investment in strategic transport corridors are transforming travel patterns, improving connectivity and helping to ensure that the sum of the parts is bigger than individual components

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<http://www.englandseconomicheartland.com/Documents/Outline%20Transport%20Strategy%20Framework%20for%20Engagement.pdf>

<b>NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT PLANNING COMMITTEE</b> <b>23<sup>rd</sup> OCTOBER 2019</b>	Item 4	Page 3 of 7
---	-----------	-------------

- East-West Rail and investment in the strategic road network are key elements of a new multi modal east-west spine
- Investment in north-south strategic corridors is as vital to long term economic success
- Infrastructure investment must be digital and physical

### 3.6 *Connecting Opportunities*

- Improved connectivity is critical to enabling economic opportunities to be realised
- Harnessing these offers opportunities to ensure that economic growth helps achieve a zero-carbon transport system by 2050
- Improved connectivity to international gateways will support business activity by providing access to global markets

### 3.7 *Connecting Services*

- The region's people and businesses are reliant on their ability to access the goods and services they need in a timely and predictable way

## 4. **IMPLICATIONS FOR NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**

4.1 The JPDU has undertaken an initial review of the Outline Strategy and the potential implications for North Northamptonshire. Consideration has also been given to the proposed NCC response. Officers are seeking delegated authority for a response to be submitted on behalf of the Joint Planning Committee. It is recommended that the proposed comments set out below, together with any further feedback from Members should form the response of the JPC.

- a) *The EEH commitment to the environment, and a 'net gain', is welcomed. It aligns with recognition of a climate emergency. The public health impacts of poor air quality include respiratory and cardio-vascular problems. Road transport is a contributor to this and the need to reduce emissions from this sector is therefore highly important, particularly on busy routes and congested areas. Other public health issues which the EEH strategy can positively influence are the need to help tackle obesity levels and diabetes through more active travel (walking and cycling) and reducing the number and severity of road traffic casualties. Inevitably, this necessitates a shift from 'business as usual' and the adoption of ambitious proposals, some of which will be radical and transformational, so that economic growth can go hand-in-hand with environmental 'net gain' and improved public health.*
- b) *The JPDU supports the four themes outlined in the strategy and recognises that the document seeks to set a new agenda, whilst understanding there is the need to fill existing infrastructure deficits. Key infrastructure priorities for North Northamptonshire to 2031 and beyond are set out in the North Northamptonshire Investment Framework (NNIF) and work is commencing on a Northamptonshire Strategic Infrastructure Plan (NSIP) to identify priorities to 2050. It will be essential that these priorities are reflected in the transport strategy as it evolves. The JPDU also welcomes the ambition of improving quality of life and unlocking opportunities for everyone as outlined on page 6 of the strategy.*

<b>NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT PLANNING COMMITTEE 23<sup>rd</sup> OCTOBER 2019</b>	Item 4	Page 4 of 7
---	-----------	-------------

- c) *Connectivity is clearly a key subject within the document and is very important for North Northamptonshire. NN is peripheral to the likely routes of East-West Rail and the Expressway within the Arc, but the A43/A45/A14 currently provide a key strategic route between Oxford and Cambridge and is also a key economic artery for North Northamptonshire connecting the main urban centres and growth locations throughout the county. The investment that has been made on the A14 corridor at the M1 junction and the Cambridge to Huntingdon improvements should be recognised with the improved travel times and this can be further utilised in the Northern part of the EEH area. The document recognises that north-south connections are still just as vital as east-west (page 35) and the JPDU would fully endorse this but would also highlight issues that have hampered these connections in recent times, notably the reduction in rail services north and south from Wellingborough train station. The strategy should seek to address issues, particularly rail connectivity from Wellingborough, which would support its overarching objectives. The A6 provides a north south link that takes in many settlements however a strategic assessment of this route would be beneficial to ensure the future usability of this route is maintained and linked with other modes of transport. The document recognises a 'connectivity gap' (page 11) which the JPDU welcomes.*
- d) *North Northamptonshire should feature more prominently within this Outline Transport Strategy given the significant growth being delivered in the area. At present there is limited focus on the key towns within North Northamptonshire as well as the important strategic connections of the A14 and A45, with the A14 not seemingly included within the 'corridor of connectivity' on pages 16/17 of the document. There is also no reference to these connections on page 82/83 in relation to their importance to the logistics sector.*
- e) *It is recognised that the Outline Transport Strategy is seeking to generate feedback and discussion and as such covers a wide range of transport and infrastructure issues. However, there are some sections within the document that are felt better addressed within Local Plans or other planning policy documents, e.g. page 20/21 on Future Vision for High Streets. Whilst the JPDU broadly supports the principles and aspirations of this approach it is unclear why this is included within the outline strategy. It should also be noted that there are issues that can arise in delivering these principles, notably through the relationship with Highways authorities and their standards, which has been an issue in North Northamptonshire. The Rural Setting section of the document (page 86/87) attempts to tackle similar issues in digitally supported rural bus services, segregated cycle routes and improved physical infrastructure linkages to villages, all of which need support from the local Highways authority to be delivered.*
- f) *It is not made clear within the document the strategy's relationship with housing numbers and potential distribution of these, for example across the Arc. It is recognised that discussions are still ongoing in relation to the potential Arc Spatial Framework and it will be important that this is considered alongside the emerging transport strategy. It would be beneficial if these were considered together given the transport and infrastructure issues outlined within the strategy.*

<b>NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT PLANNING COMMITTEE 23<sup>rd</sup> OCTOBER 2019</b>	Item 4	Page 5 of 7
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## **5. CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 The proposed response in Section 4 seeks to respond positively to the EEH Outline Transport Strategy. The Strategy's stance on connectivity and transport infrastructure is welcomed and there are measures within the document that could help enhance connectivity between North Northamptonshire and the wider area, particularly the Arc. It is considered that the strategy should also seek ways to address barriers to connectivity such as the highlighted issue of reduced rail services from Wellingborough. It should also consider further the importance of some of the key towns and strategic connections within North Northamptonshire, particularly the trunk roads of the A45 and A14. It will be critical that key projects identified in the NNIF and NSIP are fully reflected in the strategy as it evolves
- 5.2 The JPDU will welcome the opportunity to work with EEH and alongside other partners such as NCC in developing the transport strategy.

## **6. RECOMMENDATION**

- 6.1 **The Head of the North Northamptonshire JPDU recommends that the Joint Committee endorses the proposed response in Section 4 and gives the Head of the JPDU, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman, delegated authority to finalise the response in the light of the discussion at the Joint Committee.**

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<b>NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT PLANNING COMMITTEE 23<sup>rd</sup> OCTOBER 2019</b>	Item 4	Page 6 of 7
---	-----------	-------------

## **Appendix 1: EEH Outline Transport Strategy Questions**

- 1. Does the draft vision ("connecting people and places with opportunities and services") provide sufficient focus for the Transport Strategy?*
- 2. Is the ambition to have a zero-carbon transport system by 2050 sufficiently challenging?*
- 3. Do the three key principles (enabling economic growth; accessibility and inclusion; quality of life and environment) provide an appropriate framework within which to develop the Transport Strategy?*
- 4. What are the key factors influencing people's choice of travel mode?*
- 5. What are the key barriers that need to be addressed if we are to achieve frictionless travel?*
- 6. What performance measures should be used to identify the levels of service users require of the transport system?*
- 7. Should the strategy include and define appropriate 'nudge principles' (small changes which can influence user behaviour) to encourage more people to use public transport in the Heartland area?*
- 9. What weight should be given to the potential of the rail network to accommodate a higher proportion of future travel demand?*
- 10. Have we identified the key strategic transport corridors?*
- 11. Are there specific issues that should be taken into consideration as part of the connectivity studies?*
- 12. To what extent should we look to the growth in digital services to change the nature and scale of future travel demand?*
- 13. What are the core connectivity requirements for businesses operating from the region?*
- 14. What are the key performance measures for the Transport System from a business perspective?*
- 15. What measures should the overarching Transport Strategy include in order to enable the potential that exists within the four Grand Challenges of the Industrial Strategy to be realised?*
- 16. To what extent is investment in digital infrastructure more significant and/or urgent than physical infrastructure?*
- 17. How will the way we access goods and services continue to change, and what are the key issues that need to be addressed in the Transport Strategy?*

<b>NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT PLANNING COMMITTEE 23<sup>rd</sup> OCTOBER 2019</b>	Item 4	Page 7 of 7
---	-----------	-------------

*18. What freight and logistics services are important for people and businesses? For example, accessing goods (via delivery or in person); a thriving high street; access to health, education and leisure facilities?*

*19. Just in time and last minute operations are affecting the way people and businesses access goods and services. How should this growing trend affect the way we plan transport now, and in the future?*

*20. Is the approach to investment the right one? If not, why not?*

*21. Is the approach to delivery the right one? If not, why not?*