



North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Committee

Public Meeting at 7.30 pm on Tuesday, 2nd March 2020

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AGENDA

Item No.	Subject	Responsible Officer
1.	Election of Chair	
2.	Apologies	
3.	Declarations of interest by Councillors <i>Councillors should be reminded of the seriousness of not declaring an interest in any items to be discussed on the agenda, irrespective of whether they are a member of the committee or not</i>	
4.	The minutes of the meeting held on 28 th October 2020 to be approved and signed by the Chair	
5.	Proposed Amendments to the National Planning Policy Framework	Andrew Longley/ Samuel Humphries
6.	North northamptonshire Local Design Guidance	Andrew Longley/ Natalie Oates
7.	Strategic Planning Update	Andrew Longley
8.	Urgent items	

Issued: 22nd February 2021

Procedure for speaking at a meeting

Members of the public may speak on any item of the agenda for no more than three minutes. If you wish to speak at a meeting, please notify Anne Ireson, Democratic Services Manager at Kettering Borough Council (contact details below) by 5.00 pm on the day before the meeting.

Procedure for asking questions at a meeting

The public may also put questions to the committee. Two working days' notice of the question to be asked should be given to the Committee Support Officer (see below). Questions should be related to subjects within the Committee's remit and addressed to the Chair of the meeting. As with the procedures for speaking, asking the question should not go beyond three minutes.

An answer to the question will normally be provided verbally at the meeting. Where an answer is not available, a written response will be sent to the questioner.

Procedure for presenting petitions at a meeting

The Committee will receive petitions at the meeting, which should be presented by one person. Two working days' notice of presenting a petition at the meeting should be given to the Committee Support Officer (see details below). As with the procedures for speaking, presentation of the petition should not exceed three minutes. Petitions will be forwarded to the relevant officer for action and direct liaison with the petitioner.

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**JOINT PLANNING COMMITTEE FOR
NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**

**Meeting held virtually via Zoom on
28th October 2020**

Present: Councillor Mike Tebbutt (Chair)
Councillor David Brackenbury
Councillor Anthony Dady
Councillor Martin Griffiths
Councillor David Jenney
Councillor Andy Mercer
Councillor Steven North
Councillor Jan O'Hara
Councillor Andrew Scarborough
Councillor Malcolm Waters

Also Present: Andrew Longley (North Northamptonshire Joint Planning and
Delivery Unit (NNJPDU))
Simon James (NNJPDU)
Samuel Humphries (NNJPDU)
Natalie Oates (NNJPDU)
Paul Woods (NNJPDU)
James Wilson (Kettering Borough Council)

Rob Harbour (Borough Council of Wellingborough, Kettering
Borough and East Northamptonshire
District Councils)
Simon Richardson (Kettering Borough Council)
Anne Ireson (Kettering Borough Council)

09/20 APOLOGIES

None.

10/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

11/20 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd September 2020
be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE WHITE PAPER AUGUST 2020

A report was submitted which sought agreement for a response to the proposals contained in the Planning for the Future White Paper.

Members noted that the Shadow Executive were considering the report on 29th October.

In consideration of the draft response, Members made the following points:-

- There was no opportunity for political involvement at the development control stage.
- It could take 30 months to produce development plans, which represented a large gap between plan-making and development taking place with no political involvement.
- Extension of permitted development rights would make it difficult for North Northamptonshire Council to implement strategic infrastructure as would get development in random locations.
- Beautiful development under Pillar Two – Planning for Beautiful and Sustainable Places – was subjective and would not be the same in North Northamptonshire as in other parts of the country, and should focus on local people's needs.
- It was acknowledged that there was a shortage of housing but Councils needed to make their own choices in terms of design, location and deliverability.
- Design, infrastructure and shaping communities was important for the future of the planning system.
- The Government should be using incentives to encourage the market to deliver housing.
- Proposal 13 (to further embed national leadership on delivering better places to give greater emphasis on design in the strategic objectives for Homes England) was welcomed, although there was scepticism that this would actually be done.
- There should be more emphasis on the preference for a new consolidated Infrastructure Levy to replace Section 106.
- Developments should consist of eco-friendly houses which were fit for purpose.

It was noted that, in relation to Proposal 13, the Government had already appointed a Chairman for the body to do this.

In conclusion, Members welcomed the report and thanked officers of the NNJPDU and officers of all sovereign authorities for their work in preparing the draft response.

RESOLVED that the response to the Planning White Paper be approved.

13/20

ENGLAND'S ECONOMIC HEARTLAND (EEH) DRAFT TRANSPORT STRATEGY

A report was submitted which sought endorsement of the submitted response to England's Economic Heartland Draft Transport Strategy.

The EEH Draft Transport Strategy was first considered by the Joint Planning Committee in 2019, and an officer-level response was submitted with the caveat that the response would be taken to committee for endorsement and to consider any additions or amendments.

The response was commended by the Committee. It was felt that the response enhanced the work being done with the Ox-Cam Arc and SEMLEP. Members commented that North Northamptonshire needed to establish itself as a leading light in the Ox-Cam Arc.

It would be important in the rush to zero carbon emissions to understand the different requirements of residents living in rural areas, particularly as it was difficult for rural residents to reduce their reliance on the private car as there were no realistic alternatives that provided full coverage of routes.

The potential for enhanced railway lines on the Nuneaton to Felixstowe route was welcomed as this would take traffic off the roads. The railway line between Corby and Peterborough was also of interest in this respect. It was felt to be important that the right routes be identified to take freight traffic off the roads.. Members particularly welcomed the comment about ticket prices on the Midland mainline. Considerably cheaper tickets were available into London from Bedford and Huntingdon because Wellingborough, Kettering and Corby were still considered to be Intercity stations and not in the commuter belt, which was a disadvantage. It was felt that the Covid-19 pandemic would fundamentally change working practices in future, with fewer commuters.

Members welcomed the point about bring forward the Carbon Neutral Transport System date of 2050, although it was acknowledged this would be difficult to achieve.

A point was made about timing of the consultation, which coincided with the Planning White Paper consultation. Protection of the environment was welcomed, as were the opportunities in relation to work and how changes in work patterns impacted on travel. It was felt that proper investment in public transport was essential. Additionally, as more emphasis was being placed on digital working, there must be investment in high speed access to the internet.

The approach to green issues was commended, although caution was expressed regarding making a firm commitment to a faster process in terms of policy targets. It was felt these should be an aspiration rather than a committed target, particularly as many were vulnerable to outside influences, such as Covid-19.

The view was expressed that the Arc had now moved focus and was more hopeful for North Northamptonshire. We should continue to press to be a part of this and work with colleagues to ensure success.

Officers were thanked for their work in connection with the draft response.

RESOLVED that the Joint Planning Committee endorse the submitted response set out in the Appendix to the report.

The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 8.00 pm

Signed
Chair

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Date	2nd MARCH 2021		
Report Originator	HEAD OF NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT PLANNING AND DELIVERY UNIT		
Title	PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK		

1. <u>PURPOSE OF REPORT</u>
1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider the proposed amendments of the National Planning Policy Framework and to agree the basis of the Joint Planning Committee’s response.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Government is consulting on draft revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)¹ to implement policy changes in response to the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission (BBBBC) report “Living with Beauty”². The Government is not proposing a review of the NPPF in its entirety at this stage. A fuller review of the Framework is likely to be required in due course, depending on the outcomes of the wider planning reform proposals set out in the Planning for the Future White Paper which was consulted on in Autumn 2020.
- 2.2 Most of the proposed changes to the NPPF relate to policy on the quality of the design of new development and respond to the recommendations of the BBBBC. There are also some environment-related changes, including amendments on flood risk and climate change. The amendments also include a small number of very minor changes arising from legal cases, primarily to clarify the policy. A few minor factual changes have also been made to remove out-of-date text and an update on the use of Article 4 directions has been made. More detail on the changes is set out in Section 3 of this report.
- 2.3 Section 4 of this report provides an overview of key implications of the proposed NPPF changes for North Northamptonshire. The proposed responses are consistent with the Joint Planning Committee’s response to recent government consultations including the Planning for the Future White Paper (28th October 2020 JPC) and the ‘Changes to the current planning system’ consultation (3rd September 2020 JPC).

¹ A tracked change version of the proposed amendments to the NPPF is available here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/961769/Draft_NPPF_for_consultation.pdf

² The Government’s response to the BBBBC report is here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/building-better-building-beautiful-commission-government-response-to-the-living-with-beauty-report>

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2.4 Delegated authority is sought for the response to be finalised taking account of feedback from the Committee and input from officers from the partner Local Planning Authorities.

3. CONTENT OF THE PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE NPPF CONSULTATION:

3.1 Key elements of the proposed changes to the NPPF are summarised below.

Chapter 1. Achieving sustainable development

3.2 Amendments include:

- Paragraph 8(b) has been amended in response to the BBBBC recommendations to emphasise the importance of well-designed, beautiful, and safe places in achieving the social objectives of sustainable development.
- The wording in paragraph 8(c) has been strengthened to emphasise the role of planning in protecting and enhancing our natural, built, and historic environment.
- The wording of the presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11(a)) has been amended to broaden the high-level objective for plans to make express reference to the importance of both infrastructure and climate change.

Chapter 3. Plan-making

3.3 Amendments include:

- In response to the BBBBC recommendations, paragraph 20 has been amended to require strategic policies to set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale, and design quality of places.
- Paragraph 22 has also been amended in response to the BBBBC recommendations to clarify that councils who wish to plan for new settlements and major urban extensions will need to look over a longer time frame, of at least 30 years, to reflect the likely timescale for delivery.

Chapter 4. Decision-making

3.4 Amendments include:

- The Government is seeking to ensure Article 4 directions can only be used to remove national permitted development rights allowing changes of use to residential where they are targeted and fully justified. Two different options on amending Paragraph 53 are being proposed: where they relate to change of use to residential, they are limited to situations “where this is essential to avoid wholly unacceptable adverse impacts” (or, alternatively “where this is necessary in order to protect an interest of national significance”).

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- Proposals clarifying that Article 4 directions should be restricted to the smallest geographical area possible are also made.

Chapter 5. Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes

3.5 Amendments include:

- Paragraph 64 has been amended to clarify that, where major development involving the provision of housing is proposed, planning policies and decisions should expect at least 10% of the total number of homes to be available for affordable home ownership. This is to address confusion as to whether the 10% requirement applies to all units or the affordable housing contribution.
- Paragraph 69 has been amended to remove any suggestion that neighbourhood plans can only allocate small or medium sites. This was not the policy intention, so the wording has therefore been amended to clarify that neighbourhood planning groups should also give particular consideration to the opportunities for allocating small and medium-sized sites (no larger than 1ha) suitable for housing in their area.
- Paragraph 72 has been amended to reflect Chapter 9: “Promoting sustainable transport” in ensuring that larger scale developments are supported by the necessary infrastructure and facilities including a genuine choice of transport modes. Paragraph 72(c) has also been amended in response to the BBBBC’s recommendations to clarify that when planning for larger scale development, strategic policy making authorities should set clear expectations for the quality of the places to be created and how this can be maintained (such as by following Garden City principles) and ensure that masterplans and codes are used to secure a variety of well-designed and beautiful homes to meet the needs of different groups in the community.
- Paragraph 79 (e) has been amended in response to the BBBBC’s policy proposition 1 e) that it opens a loophole for designs that are not outstanding, but that are in some way innovative, and that the words ‘or innovative’ should be removed. This change is not proposed to rule out innovative homes, rather that it will ensure that outstanding quality can always be demanded, even if an innovative approach is taken.

Chapter 8. Promoting healthy and safe communities

3.6 Amendments include:

- Paragraph 91(b) includes minor changes to help to clarify Government’s expectations for attractive pedestrian and cycle routes. This supports the BBBBC’s recommendations on supporting walkable neighbourhoods.
- Paragraph 96 has been amended to emphasise that access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities and can deliver wider benefits for nature and efforts to address climate change.

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Chapter 9. Promoting sustainable transport

3.7 Amendments include:

- Paragraph 104(d) has been amended to support the BBBBC's recommendations on encouraging walking and cycling.
- Paragraph 108(c), and supporting footnote 45, has been amended to prevent continuing reliance by some authorities on outdated highways guidance. The amended wording states that in assessing sites that may be allocated for development in plans, or specific applications for development, it should be ensured that the design of schemes and standards applied reflects current national guidance, including the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code.

Chapter 11. Making effective use of land

3.8 Amendments include:

- Paragraph 123 has been amended to include an emphasis on the role that area-based character assessments, codes and masterplans can play in helping to ensure that land is used efficiently while also creating beautiful and sustainable places.

Chapter 12. Achieving well-designed places

3.9 Amendments include:

- Paragraphs 124 and 125 have been amended to include the term "beautiful" in response to the BBBBC's recommendation for an overt focus on beauty in planning policy to ensure the planning system can both encourage beautiful buildings and places and help to prevent ugliness when preparing local plans and taking decisions on planning applications.
- Paragraph 126 has been amended to emphasise that all local planning authorities should prepare design guides or codes consistent with the principles set out in the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code and which reflect local character and design preferences.
- A new paragraph 128 has been added in response to the BBBBC's recommendations and the manifesto commitment to give communities greater say in the design standards set for their area. This reflects the Government's proposals for a National Model Design Code, which will include a model community engagement process, and will create a framework for local authorities and communities to develop a more consistent approach which reflects the character of each place and local design preferences. It also clarifies that the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code should also be used to guide decisions on planning applications in the absence of locally produced guides or codes.
- A new paragraph 130 has been added to reflect the findings of the BBBBC and the Government's ambition to ensure that all new streets are tree-lined, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible.

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- Paragraph 132 has been amended so that it now makes reference to Building for a Healthy Life as a means of assessing design quality.
- New paragraph 133 responds to the BBBBC's recommendations to make clear that development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design. In addition, it clarifies that significant weight should be given to development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design.

Chapter 14. Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

3.10 Amendments include:

- Paragraph 156(c) has been amended to clarify that plans should manage any residual flood risk by using opportunities provided by new development and improvements in green and other infrastructure to reduce the causes and impacts of flooding (making as much use as possible of natural flood management techniques as part of an integrated approach to flood risk management).

Chapter 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

3.11 Amendments include:

- Paragraph 174(d) has been amended to clarify that development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around other developments should be pursued as an integral part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity and enhance public access to nature.

4. IMPLICATIONS FOR NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

- 4.1 The proposed changes summarised above in Section 3 seek to strengthen the NPPF in relation to design and the environment, and are welcomed in principle. However, the detailed implications should be considered alongside the JPC's response to the Planning for the Future White Paper consultation which raised concerns on issues including: the practical implementation and resource requirements of proposals related to design; the implications of a less regulated system with more permitted development; and the lack of detail in the White Paper on issues of climate change and protecting and enhancing the environment.
- 4.2 The strengthened requirement for sustainable development that contributes to delivering core sustainability objectives is notable in the proposed changes. The amendments clarify that development must not only consider climate impacts and biodiversity gains but must also be of a beautiful design. These changes are welcomed and should support the delivery of existing policies in the JCS

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which seek to deliver these outcomes and provide the framework for the approach in the North Northamptonshire Strategic Plan.

- 4.3 Proposals for LPAs to prepare design guides/codes consistent with the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code are generally supported as positive tools for encouraging good design and quality. However, as raised in the JPC response to the Planning White Paper, significant resources will be required (in both public and private sectors) to create these guides and codes. Additional resources will be needed given capacity issues and the pressure already on the design service in North Northamptonshire.
- 4.4 The focus on ‘beautiful’ within the proposed changes is noted. It is important that the concept of ‘beautiful’ is properly understood (as beauty can be read as subjective/visual only) and more detail should be provided in the NPPF. The essential ingredients of successful placemaking must be recognised and that design quality is not simply about housing delivery. Great places go beyond aesthetics and visual appearance, encompassing other important principles such as social opportunity/integration, community, health/wellbeing, and local economy. North Northamptonshire supports Building for a Healthy Life (BHL) 2020 as a valuable tool in assessing and shaping development proposals. In this respect, the proposed reference to BHL in para 133 is welcomed.
- 4.5 Other proposals that go towards improving design quality are welcomed, for example the new paragraph in Chapter 12 making clear that development not well designed, particularly those contrary to relevant planning policies on design, should be refused. This should add more weight to design issues when it comes to planning decisions and supporting the implementation of existing policies.
- 4.6 It is recommended that concerns should be raised regarding the proposed changes on the use of Article 4 directions to restrict the use of Permitted Development (PD) rights in specific local areas, as outlined in para 3.5 above. This will result in councils finding it more difficult to implement such directions where there are valid concerns about the impacts of permitted developments. The JPC response to the Planning White Paper raised concerns that the increased use of PD would result in the standardisation of development, with little control over design quality. This is at odds with the Government’s aim to raise design quality.
- 4.7 Finally, the JPC expressed concern in its response to the Planning White Paper that not enough detail was provided on climate change issues. Further clarity and emphasis through amendments to the NPPF is therefore supported. This includes adjusting the presumption in favour of sustainable development so that it requires plan-makers to “align growth and infrastructure; improve the environment; mitigate climate change and adapt to its effects” as well as amendments to Chapter 7 and 9 on promoting walking and cycling and facilitating a genuine choice of transport modes.

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5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The proposed changes to the NPPF strengthen the approach to design and the environment and should be supported in principle. There are however concerns over resource requirements for implementing some of the changes, and the implications of restricting the ability of LPAs to remove PD rights in response to local issues.
- 5.2 It is proposed that the JPC's response to the consultation should incorporate the points in section 4 of this report. Given the consultation still has a number of weeks to run, delegated authority is sought for the response to be finalised taking account of feedback from the Committee and input from officers from the partner Local Planning Authorities.

6. RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 **The Head of the North Northamptonshire JPDU recommends that the Joint Planning Committee agrees the proposed response to the NPPF changes as set out in this report and gives the Head of the JPDU, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman, delegated authority to finalise the Joint Planning Committee's consultation response.**

Contact Officers: Samuel Humphries (01832 742358)

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Date	2nd MARCH 2021		
Report Originator	HEAD OF NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT PLANNING & DELIVERY UNIT		
Title	NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE LOCAL DESIGN GUIDANCE		

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update the JPC on progress with preparing local design guidance in North Northamptonshire and to endorse, and recommend to the new Council:
- a. The immediate use of Building for a Healthy Life a key tool for shaping and assessing development proposals in line with the policies of the JCS; and
 - b. The early adoption of a Design Charter setting out the Council’s ambition for place-shaping and the processes through which this will be achieved.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Joint Planning Committee (JPC) on 3rd September 2020 was updated on the changing national context in relation to design. It agreed an approach to preparing local design guidance to implement the place-shaping policies of the JCS, in a way that does not duplicate national policy/guidance and is aligned with Government thinking. The first element of this agreed approach was a NN version of Building for a Healthy Life (BHL)¹. A member seminar was held on 10th September to consider BHL in greater detail and the process and timescale for implementing local design guidance in NN.
- 2.2 This report updates members on the national design context and on progress with preparing local design guidance. It also sets out how this work could be taken forward by the North Northamptonshire Council (NNC).

3. NATIONAL CONTEXT

- 3.1 The Government is putting great emphasis on promoting high-quality design in new development. It is implementing many of the recommendations from the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission. As reported to the 3rd September 2020 JPC, this includes the following national policy/ guidance on design includes:
- NPPF policy on achieving well-designed places (February 2019)
 - National Planning Practice Guidance on design process and tools (October 2019)

¹ [Building for a Healthy Life](#) (BHL), published in July 2020, is the new version of the Building for Life 12 assessment methodology that is endorsed in the Joint Core Strategy. It provides an enhanced tool for shaping and assessing housing-led developments, consistent with national guidance and JCS policies. It has been written in partnership with Homes England and the NHS England, and is also endorsed by the Home Builders Federation, Design Network and Urban Design Group.

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- National Design Guide setting out 10 characteristics of good design (October 2019)
 - Building for a Health Life (July 2020) which, although not a Government publication, is endorsed by Homes England and the NHS.
 - Planning for the Future White Paper (August 2020)
- 3.2 Both the JPC and Shadow Executive provided comprehensive responses to the proposed reforms in the Planning for the Future White Paper, which included a greater focus on design at the local level. The Government has indicated that it will publish its response to consultation on the White Paper in the spring, setting out its decisions on the proposed way forward, with potential for legislation in the autumn.
- 3.3 On 30th January 2021 the Government launched a package of measures which it considered would support the delivery of better designed and more sustainable homes, streets, and neighbourhoods. Alongside the Government's response to the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission's recommendations², updates to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the National Model Design Code (NMDC) were issued for consultation until 27th March 2021. An update on the DfT/ MHCLG Manual for Streets is expected later in the year.
- 3.4 The proposed changes to the NPPF are discussed in Item 5. It is not proposed to respond to the NMDC at this stage as it is a high-level document and many of our questions/feedback will relate to implementation rather than content. A pilot programme has been launched seeking 10 local authorities to test the application of the NMDC. The Chief Planning Officers Steering Group considered whether the JPDU should bid to take part in this but concluded that the timescales and resource requirements are prohibitive given current workloads and the challenges of local government reorganisation. The NNJPDU will continue to be involved in MHCLG training events and updates on the NMDC pilots to help shape future design policy in NN.
- 3.5 The documents listed in para 3.1 set out the basic principles/characteristics of good design. They are intended to be used as a platform and baseline for understanding the local context and an analysis of local character and identity to assist Local Authorities with the production of new local / place specific design guides and design codes. The NMDC and Manual for Streets will provide more detailed guidance with specific standards to guide the delivery of quality places.

² The Government's response to the final report of the BBBB is available on this link: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/957673/BBBC_response.pdf

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4. NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE APPROACH

4.1 Significant progress has been made in taking forward the approach to local design guidance in NN since the September 2020 JPC. Key elements of the NNJPDU design programme are discussed below.

BHL implementation

4.2 Members and CPOs have given strong support to rolling out BHL as a key tool for assessing and shaping development proposals. As set out in Item 5, the Government is proposing revisions to the NPPF to refer to BHL. The JPDU provided briefing and training events to officers from the partner Councils in November 2020. This included a briefing session on the NN Design Service, feedback from [Lessons Learned](#) monitoring undertaken in March 2020, and a series of BHL training workshops run by the JPDU Design Manager and Stefan Kruczkowski (co-author of BHL). Further BHL training sessions will be delivered throughout 2021 and BHL will continue to underpin local design policy and guidance, and structured assessment of planning applications. It is recommended that the JPC formally endorses the use of BHL to the NNC.

NN Design Charter

4.3 A key element of the NN approach is the preparation of a Design Charter. This will be a succinct, locally distinctive, and visually engaging document that will build upon the place shaping principles in the JCS and take forward the provisions of the National Design Guide. It will meet the government's expectation that local planning authorities should establish their own local design code or use the government's National Model Design Code (NMDC).

4.4 The Design Charter will:

- set out the vision for NNC and key themes/principles for better design/placemaking in the local context
- set out the 'design process' for achieving better design outcomes
- set out a Service Level Agreement for NNC design service and mandatory requirements for applicants

4.5 It will be shaped through active engagement (co-production) and endorsed by key stakeholder groups (internal and external). A workshop with officers from planning, highways, environmental and public health, and other specialisms is taking place in March. A member workshop will take place with NNC Members before wider stakeholder consultation.

4.6 The Charter will be the key document for the new authority, to raise the bar and set out clear expectations in terms of design and placemaking for NN and the foundation for further SPDs, design codes etc.

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Other NN guidance/design initiatives

- 4.7 As reported to the 3rd September 2020 JPC, a suite of other SPDs and local design guidance will be produced by the North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) to address key topics in greater detail, using material from the draft place-shaping SPD wherever possible. This will ensure that previous work and issues previously raised by Members can be taken forward. The JPDU and LPAs are currently reviewing the range of development plan documents, supplementary planning documents and other guidance that the NNC will need and will identify the suite of additional design guidance through this exercise.

Taking this approach forward into the NNC:

- 4.8 As discussed at the Member Seminar on 10th September, securing high quality development and sustainable places is dependent on:
- **Strong design policies** being in place to ensure that significant weight is given to design issues in planning decisions (including at appeal) and across NNC's other activities. The early adoption by NNC of a Design Charter will support this by setting out the Council's ambition for place-shaping and the processes through which this will be achieved. The strategic plan will need build on the place-shaping policies in the current JCS, and to respond to proposals in the white paper as these are brought forward. Other development plan documents and supplementary planning documents will complete the suite of local design policies.
 - **Adequate resources and skills** to implement the Council's Design Charter and policies. As set out in the JPC's response to the Planning for the Future White Paper, this will require boosting in-house capacity and skills in urban design and other built and natural environmental disciplines, and also in enforcement to ensure delivery of agreed standards. These matters are being considered in the design of the planning service within NNC. External expertise will continue to be needed and the JPDU is exploring the establishment of a NN Strategic Design Panel as a means of securing additional expert resource to consider strategic development proposals.
 - **Training** of officers and members to equip them with the skills and confidence to make sound and robust decisions that push for higher design standards. Design tools such as BHL will be essential to this.
 - **Harmonised processes** to ensure that developers experience the same messages and requirements on design quality (e.g. in application validation information), no matter which part of NNC they are dealing with.

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5. RECOMMENDATION

5.1 The Head of the NNJPDU recommends that the Joint Planning Committee:

- 1. Endorses and recommends to NNC the approach to local design guidance set out in this report, in particular:**
 - a. The immediate use of Building for a Healthy Life a key tool for shaping and assessing development proposals in line with the policies of the JCS; and**
 - b. The early adoption by NNC of a Design Charter setting out the Council's ambition for place-shaping and the processes through which this will be achieved; and**
- 2. Notes that the delivery of high-quality design across NN will require enhanced capacity in urban design and access to expertise in other built and natural environmental disciplines.**

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Date	2nd MARCH 2021		
Report Originator	HEAD OF NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT PLANNING & DELIVERY UNIT		
Title	STRATEGIC PLANNING UPDATE		

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT
1.1 To update the Joint Planning Committee on the Oxford-Cambridge Arc Spatial Framework and recommend to the new Council a draft scope and timetable for the North Northamptonshire Strategic Plan.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This is the last meeting of the Joint Planning Committee (JPC). The North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) will take over as strategic planning authority from 1st April 2021. This is therefore a “handover” report to provide members with an update on strategic issues, and to make recommendations to NNC on how strategic planning should be taken forward.
- 2.2 At its 25th July 2019 meeting, the Joint Planning Committee (JPC) considered a report on the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS) review. The conclusion of the report was that the JCS did not require an immediate update, but that this should be kept under review, particularly in relation to progress on the Oxford-Cambridge Arc Spatial Framework (ASF). It was agreed that the new plan should be referred to as the North Northamptonshire Strategic Plan (NNSP) and should cover the period 2020-2041, with the spatial vision potentially extending to 2050 to align with the Arc. A provisional timetable for updating the JCS was included within the report.
- 2.3 This report updates the JPC on strategic planning work in North Northamptonshire focusing on the Oxford-Cambridge Arc Spatial Framework (ASF). It is proposed that preparation of the NNSP should formally commence this year, aligned with the programme for the ASF. Views are sought on the draft scope and timetable provided at [Appendix 1](#). This will be recommended for inclusion in the NN Local Development Scheme, which NNC will need to publish to outline its programme of development plan preparation.

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3. FACTORS INFLUENCING THE NN STRATEGIC PLAN

National context:

- 3.1 The NNSP will need to address the strategic matters set out in the NPPF and any revisions to it. Consultation is currently taking place on changes to the NPPF (see Item 5). These are reflected in the proposed scope of the NNSP.
- 3.2 The Government published the 'Planning for the Future' White Paper in August 2020, containing potentially radical changes to the types and policies Local Plans could contain, the evidential and appraisal requirements, and the stages and timescales involved. Proposals included:
- Simplified plans with three categories of land (Growth, Renewal, Protection), with automatic permission in principle for development in Growth Areas.
 - Policies to set clear rules for development rather than general planning policies, which would be included in the NPPF.
 - A standard method for establishing binding housing requirement figures.
 - A single statutory 'Sustainable Development Test' to replace the tests of soundness
 - Removing the Duty to Cooperate.
 - Plans to be increasingly digitised, based on interactive maps to make them more accessible and to focus engagement on the plan-making stage.
 - Local Plans will be required to meet a statutory timetable and should take no longer than 30 months to prepare.
- 3.3 The JPC agreed a comprehensive response to the White Paper consultation at its 28th October 2020 meeting. It is understood that the Government will publish its response to the White Paper in the Spring. Many of the proposals will require legislation and there will be a transitional period for implementation. The proposed reforms will not therefore impact fully on the preparation of the NNSP. However, NNC will need to consider the final package of reforms and decide what elements of the proposals it must incorporate, or that it wishes to incorporate into the new plan.
- 3.4 The Government has stressed the need for work on Local Plans to continue. A Government [written ministerial statement](#) on 19th January 2021 made reference to the deadline of December 2023 for all authorities to have up-to-date Local Plans in place. The Statement sets out that *"It is critical that work should continue to advance Local Plans through to adoption by the end of 2023 to help ensure that the economy can rebound strongly from the COVID-19 pandemic"*. The statement is clear that the White Paper reforms should not be used as a reason to delay plan-making: *"The Planning for the Future White Paper consultation closed in October. The White Paper sets out proposals to deliver a significantly simpler, faster and more predictable system. These proposals will need further development. Authorities should not use this period as a reason to delay plan-making activities. Authorities who have an up-to-date plan in place will be in the best possible position to adapt to the new plan-making system"*.

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3.5 It is therefore important to progress the NNSP in advance of the implementation of the White Paper proposals. The proposed NNSP timetable at [Appendix 1](#) allows some flexibility but will need to be reviewed when further details of planning reforms are announced.

Sub-Regional context: Oxford-Cambridge Arc Spatial Framework

3.6 Previous reports have updated the JPC on the background and current position regarding the preparation of Oxford-Cambridge ASF and the implications for North Northamptonshire. The ASF will provide the key context for the preparation of the NNSP and timescale for doing so.

3.7 The Government published a [policy paper](#)¹ introducing its proposals for the preparation of an ASF on 18th February 2021. The policy paper is provided at [Appendix 2](#). This indicates that the spatial framework will set a plan and policies with the status of national planning policy. Based on a long-term, strategic approach to planning for growth across the area, the Government considers it will help to unlock the long-term potential of the area in a sustainable way, improving the Arc as a place to live and work. It will give communities a chance to shape the long-term future of their area and will help to ensure the benefits of growth are felt across the region.

3.8 The policy paper sets out the approach the Government intends to take, including:

- a timeline for developing the framework,
- how it will engage communities and work with local partners, and
- the high-level scope of the framework, including the approach it will take to planning for the environment, infrastructure, economic growth, and new homes and place-making.

3.9 Alongside the publication of the ASF policy paper, the Government has also announced its intent to establish a Growth Body in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc which it considers will give a clear economic leadership voice to the Arc. The Government intends to work with local partners to ensure the Growth Body is tailored to the region's unique opportunities.

High-level scope of ASF:

3.10 At para 2.1 the Government sets out its intention to develop a long-term Spatial Framework for the Arc that will support better spatial planning, provide a blueprint for better-targeted public investment, give investors and businesses greater long-term certainty over growth plans, and allow communities to shape the long-term future of places across the region. The nature and content of the Spatial Framework will be subject to the outcome of both detailed consultation and sustainability appraisal. The Government's approach will be based on 10

¹ Planning for sustainable growth in the Oxford- Cambridge Arc- An introduction to the Oxford-Cambridge Arc Spatial Framework, February 2021

core principles (p.11), including that it will plan to 2050 and beyond to create the foundation for long-term sustainable growth.

3.11 Section 2 explores what this approach will mean for:

- The Arc’s economy (p.12 paras 2.3-2.6)
- The Arc’s environment (p.13 paras 2.7-2.8)
- Transport and infrastructure in the Arc (p.14 para 2.9)
- Housing and planning in the Arc (p.15 paras 2.10-2.11).

3.12 Para 2.10 states that the Government will plan for the right level of growth in the Arc, to ensure it is a great and affordable place to live and work- both for existing residents and communities of the future. To do this, the Spatial Framework will identify:

- the most sustainable locations for new homes, including identifying Opportunity Areas, to support local planning authorities to plan for this growth
- the infrastructure needed to support sustainable growth in those locations, and the key locations for strategic infrastructure to support sustainable growth
- locations for environmental enhancement to achieve greater environmental benefits that can allow development to take place elsewhere

Timetable and how the ASF will be developed:

3.13 Para 3.1 of the policy paper sets out that over the next two and a half years, a specialist team in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government will work with communities and local partners to develop a robust, evidence-based Spatial Framework.

3.14 The Government will seek to implement the Spatial Framework as spatially specific national planning policy. Local planning authorities preparing local development documents (including local plans) will have to have regard to the Spatial Framework, as they do with other national policies and guidance. The timeline for developing the ASF is set out below:

1. **Developing a vision for the future of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc** – We will undertake wide public engagement to shape a vision for the area, through a consultation in **summer 2021**.
2. **Towards a Spatial Framework** – We will develop options for turning the vision into policy, based on engagement and initial evidence gathering and analysis. We will publish these options for consultation in **spring 2022**.
3. **Draft Spatial Framework** – To finalise the Spatial Framework, we will consider responses to this consultation, and undertake spatial analysis, option testing, impact assessments and stakeholder engagement. We will publish a draft Spatial Framework for consultation in **autumn 2022**, with implementation of the final Framework shortly after.

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Status of the ASF:

3.15 The paper states that the Government will take an integrated approach to planning for the Arc, to ensure it can deliver the sustainable outcomes it wants to see. To achieve this the Spatial Framework will have the status of national planning and transport policy, providing a strategic framework for local planning.

- National planning policy status will allow it to have significant weight in the planning system for guiding local plan production and in decision-making. It will sit alongside the National Planning Policy Framework.
- National transport policy status will allow it to guide the plans prepared by local transport authorities. Transport policies will sit alongside land use policies in the Spatial Framework in a fully integrated single land use and infrastructure plan.

3.16 Paras 3.6-3.7 of the paper describe the measures that the Government will take to ensure sustainability is at the heart of the Arc Spatial Framework. A sustainability appraisal, incorporating a Habitats Regulations Assessment, will inform and underpin development of the Spatial Framework. Para 3.7 states: *“We will underpin the Spatial Framework with a robust evidence base. We will work to ensure it meets a sustainable development test so that the Framework provides a clear and useful starting point for local councils”*.

3.17 Para 3.8 of the policy paper sets out that Government expects local planning authorities to continue to develop local plans before the publication of the Spatial Framework. *“These changes will sit alongside wider planning reforms, and as we take forward our response to the ‘Planning for the Future’ consultation, we will outline transitional arrangements and the role of the Spatial Framework within any new system”*.

3.18 At paras 3.9-3.14 Government sets out how it wants to make the best use of data and digital tools, in line with its vision for reform of the wider planning system. This includes using data and digital technology to support its policy making (para 3.12), using digital engagement processes to make it easy for people to raise their views about proposals in the Spatial Framework and the Spatial Framework will be visual and map-based, standardised, and based on the latest digital technology, so that it is easy to access and understand.

Implications for North Northamptonshire

3.19 The proposed timetable for the ASF provides greater clarity, with milestones that can be factored into the NNSP timetable. The timetable for the ASF is challenging and will require significant input from NNC (including three consultations in 18 months). It is important that this time pressure does not undermine the engagement and robust testing that must underpin the ASF. It is noted that the current timetable does not include for an independent

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examination of the proposals or an end date for the ASF to be finalised as national policy.

NN Input into the ASF:

- 3.20 It is considered essential that NNC is actively involved in the development of the ASF at officer and member levels to maximise the opportunities and benefits for NN. Officers from the JPDU and partner councils have been involved in the technical groups such as the Place and Environment groups and the JPDU is represented on the ASF Working Group that will work closely with the MHCLG team.
- 3.21 Evidence produced for the NNSP will inform the NN input into the ASF. The JCS and other strategies endorsed by the JPC/JDC, including the North Northamptonshire [Investment Framework](#) and [Economic Prospectus](#), are a strong starting point. They set out NN's ambitions and what it can offer to the Arc. The economic prospectus will be updated to give NNC a strong basis on which to engage positively with Government and other stakeholders, ensuring that NN maximises the opportunity to drive economic recovery and sustainable growth. In this respect, it is good to see the statement at para 1.15 of the policy paper that "As growth happens, we need to 'level up' opportunity and outcomes across the region to address the specific challenges the Arc faces".

Scope and status of the ASF:

- 3.22 Para 1.23 of the paper recognises existing joint planning arrangements in Northamptonshire and that unitarisation of Councils will support more strategic planning. This recognition is welcomed and the preparation of the NNSP taking forward the existing arrangements in NN should mean that NNC is well placed to respond to the ASF and strategic planning focus.
- 3.23 The proposed scope of the ASF covers the expected range of issues and the status of the document as national policy will provide greater certainty for the preparation of Local Plans (including the NNSP) that will need to take account of it. However, it is unclear whether the ASF will identify the quantum of housing and economic development in the Arc and the potential distribution of this. The policy document makes no mention of housing targets, saying only that the framework will "*plan for the right level of growth in the Arc" and will meet housing needs "in full"*. Further clarity on this will be important as the ASF is developed.
- 3.24 It is also noted that the framework will identify "*the most sustainable locations for new homes, including identifying Opportunity Areas, to support local planning authorities to plan for this growth*". Para 2.12 clarifies that "*It will indicate locations but will not include site allocations, and it will not include detailed policies set elsewhere in national policy or better left to local plans.*"
- 3.25 As referenced above, the proposed status of the ASF as national policy is supported in principle. This is consistent with the JPC response to the Planning

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for the Future White Paper which set out that focused, democratically produced regional/sub-regional policy guidance could help simplify Local Plans. It also expressed a preference for Local Housing Need (LHN) to be determined taking account of the wider context provided by the emerging Spatial Framework for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, where it can be considered alongside employment provision, strategic infrastructure, and the varying constraints, opportunities, and ambitions across the Arc.

- 3.26 The commitments in para 3.1 of the paper regarding consultation and engagement are supported, as are the measures to ensure sustainability is at the heart of the ASF. It is critical that these matters underpin the preparation of the ASF. However, there is no reference within the paper to how the ASF will be independently examined.
- 3.27 The NNSP will inform and be influenced by the development of the ASF. The timetable for the ASF and its relationship with the NNSP timetable is set out in Appendix 1. This timetable provides opportunities for the NNC to help inform and shape the ASF from the bottom-up, by feeding in NN evidence, issues and ambitions. It should ensure that the NNSP can broadly proceed in parallel with the ASF, rather than being delayed until it is finalised.

4. NNSP SCOPE AND TIMETABLE

Scope:

- 4.1 The proposed scope of the NNSP builds on the report to the 25th July 2019 JPC that set out the issues the plan would need to cover, including the key strategic issues identified in the NPPF. The NNSP will take forward the issues identified in the scope of the ASF and provide more local guidance on these issues.
- 4.2 As discussed at para 3.3, further consideration of the format and structure of the NNSP will be needed when the Government publishes its response to the Planning White Paper. It is clear from the White Paper and ASF policy paper that the NNSP will need to be a visual and map-based plan.
- 4.3 The NNSP will form the strategic part 1 Local Plan for NN, to be supported by a combination of area-based or topic-based plans, which could include reviews and updates of the Part 2 Local Plans.
- 4.4 Feedback from the partner LPAs has informed the proposed scope and has identified areas where the approach in the JCS should be strengthened. Issues identified include:
- Putting climate change at the heart of the plan, with ambitious, realistic policies for mitigation and adaptation, including a credible trajectory to net zero by 2050 at the latest.
 - A greater emphasis on health and wellbeing.

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- A stronger vision for employment to strengthen and diversify the economy of NN, taking account of existing sectoral strengths, opportunities provided by the Oxford-Cambridge Arc and implications of Covid-19, including changes to working patterns.
- A stronger approach to Town Centre regeneration taking account of the impact of policy changes and social/economic implications including Covid-19.
- Need to consider the wider context of the environment in the NNSP which should underpin the Plan.
- Need for sufficient flexibility to respond to changes in circumstances e.g. allow smaller sites/alternative delivery mechanisms should this be necessary to maintain a 5-year housing land supply.

4.5 The proposed scope focuses on updating and strengthening the policy approach in the JCS, reflecting feedback that most JCS policies are working well. Ongoing 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 and monitoring of appeal decisions. This will assist in the refining and updating of policies.

Plan period:

4.6 It is proposed that the plan-period be changed to 2021-2041 rather than 2020-2041 as previously agreed. This provides a 20-year plan period and follows logically from the JCS end date of 2031.

Evidence base:

4.7 The JPDU and partner LPAs have been working to identify and progress the evidence base for the NNSP and are in the process of finalising consultancy briefs to procure evidence in relation to Climate change and the Housing and Economic Needs Assessment (HENA). Initial work is also being progressed with Natural England to consider potential areas of Functionally Linked Land (FLL) in relation to the Special Protection Area (SPA). The evidence base will be developed as the plan is progressed and will also utilise evidence commissioned for the ASF and the Northamptonshire Strategic Infrastructure Model (NSIM).

4.8 A formal 'Call for Sites' will be undertaken in Summer 2021, allowing interested parties to submit potential sites for consideration through the NNSP and other relevant workstreams (such as registers of brownfield sites). In advance of this, landowners can continue to make the JPDU/LPAs and NNC aware of sites that they wish to promote when the NNSP formally commences.

Timetable

4.9 The updated timetable for the NNSP reflects the latest position in relation to the ASF. It extends the July 2019 timetable by 6 months but this should allow the NNSP to influence and respond to key stages of the ASF. It will be necessary to review the timescale when further detail is available on planning reforms and

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when the ASF vision is published, but it is important to progress the NNSP in the meantime.

- 4.10 In March 2020, the Government set a ‘clear deadline’ of December 2023 for all authorities to have up-to-date Local Plans in place. Government can intervene in Local Plan processes where they consider there is a lack of progress being made, plans are out of date, or there are high housing pressures and intervention would have an impact. It is considered that the risk of this is very low in NN. There will be a package of up-to-date Part 2 Local Plans in place and substantial progress will have been made in preparing the NNSP within the wider context of the ASF. As previously discussed, a significant number of policies in the JCS are still considered to be working effectively in the development management process.
- 4.11 From July 2021, the JCS will be 5 years old and housing land supply will be measured against LHN. In December 2020, the Government has confirmed that it is not proceeding with the revised “standard method” formula that would have seen the calculated Local Housing Need (LHN) for North Northamptonshire increase from 1,837 per annum to 3,009. This is very positive news for NN and reflects strong representations made by planning authorities including the Joint Planning Committee. Provided that NN can continue to maintain a 5 year housing land supply, this will reduce the risk of speculative planning applications whilst the NNSP is being prepared.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The NN Strategic Plan will be a key statutory document for the NNC and the authority will be able to own and shape the plan from the start rather than inheriting a work-in-progress. The proposed timetable for the NNSP allows for this and should enable the plan and its evidence base to inform and respond to the Ox-Cam Arc Spatial Framework. It also allows flexibility to respond to potential reforms set out in the Planning for the Future White Paper when these are implemented. It is recommended that the proposed scope and timetable for the NNSP is endorsed by the JPC and recommended to NNC for inclusion in its initial Local Development Scheme.
- 5.2 Finally, given that this is the last meeting of the Joint Planning Committee, it is worth reflecting on what it has achieved, and how its work will be taken forward by NNC. The JPC was the first joint planning committee in the country, established by the Secretary of State in July 2005 as the local planning authority responsible for the preparation of the strategic plan for North Northamptonshire (NN). It has met formally on nearly 60 occasions, in addition to which members have participated in workshops, seminars and study tours to consider planning issues across the area. Supported by officers from the Joint Planning and Delivery Unit (JPDU), the JPC has prepared two Joint Core Strategies and a range of other NN-wide plans and strategies. It has also provided an influential NN voice in responding to national and regional consultations. The collaboration

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of the councils through the JPC has been recognised as national best practice and has allowed NN to attract significant Government funding, together with support from national agencies and organisations.

- 5.3 It is anticipated that NNC will establish a Planning Policy Committee or Advisory Board/ Panel to oversee the preparation of development plans, reporting to the Executive and Council as appropriate. JPDU officers will become part of the NNC planning service. This will allow NNC to build on the success of the current strategic planning arrangements.

6. RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 **The Head of the JPDU recommends that the Joint Planning Committee endorses the draft scope of the North Northamptonshire Strategic Plan and potential timetable set out in Appendix 1 and recommends this to NNC for inclusion in the North Northamptonshire Local Development Scheme.**

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APPENDIX 1 - DRAFT SCOPE OF NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE STRATEGIC PLAN

- 1.1 The North Northamptonshire Strategic Plan (NNSP) will cover the whole North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) area. The Plan will review and where appropriate replace the policies that address the strategic priorities for the area in the adopted Joint Core Strategy (Part 1 Local Plan). The Strategic Plan will be supported by a combination of area-based or topic-based plans and which could include reviews and updates of the Part 2 Local Plans.
- 1.2 The statutory period of the Plan will be 2021 to 2041, with the spatial vision extending to 2050 to align with the Oxford-Cambridge Arc Spatial Framework (ASF). This is because those aspects of the plan which must be evidence based, such as housing and job numbers, are better suited to this shorter time horizon. An end date of 2041 is also 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. However, a longer-term view on climate change will also be evidenced and considered as part of a holistic, long-term approach.
- 1.3 The scope of the NNSP will focus on strategic matters which will, as a minimum, meet the requirement, set out in the NPPF, for NNC to have a plan that addresses the strategic priorities for its area. The Plan will help to deliver the priorities set out in other NNC plans and strategies and will respond to the challenges and opportunities presented by the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. It will inform and be influenced by the development of the ASF. The timetable for the ASF and its relationship with the NNSP timetable is set out in [Table 1](#) below. This timetable provides opportunities for the NNC to help inform and shape the ASF from the bottom-up, by feeding in NN evidence, issues, and ambitions. It should ensure that the NNSP can broadly proceed in parallel with the ASF, rather than being delayed until it is finalised by the Government.
- 1.4 There will be a particular emphasis on place-making for NN communities to ensure that development and associated infrastructure supports the creation of healthy places and is delivered through a plan-led approach.
- 1.5 Climate change will be at the heart of the NNSP, with ambitious, realistic policies, consistent with social, economic, and environmental objectives, and with legislation and national policy. The plan must be based on robust evidence, including a credible trajectory to net zero carbon by 2050 at the latest. Technical work will explore the potential to accelerate this to reach net zero sooner.
- 1.6 The plan will build upon existing JCS policies and initiatives that respond to climate change, including the Rockingham Forest for Life and other green infrastructure proposals, measures to limit the need to travel by car, and identification of priority areas for new energy infrastructure. The approach to climate change will consider both the built and natural environment,

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**APPENDIX 1 - DRAFT SCOPE OF NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE STRATEGIC
PLAN**

sustainability standards of buildings and delivery of climate mitigation and adaption to ensure resilience across North Northamptonshire.

1.7 To address the key strategic priorities for the area it is expected that the scope of the plan will include the issues set out below. This may be refined subject to national guidance and consultation feedback:

- **The spatial vision for North Northamptonshire** – extended to 2050 to reflect the ASF.
- **The approach to climate change** – setting the framework for the local response to the climate emergency, building on existing initiatives and setting priorities to deliver net zero carbon.
- **The spatial strategy for the distribution of development** – including the roles of settlements and the distribution of housing, employment, retail, leisure, and other commercial development. Cooperation will be needed with adjoining authorities to ensure cross boundary issues, including options for the longer-term growth of Northampton and development options for Bedford Borough are considered.
- **The housing requirement** – The number of new homes to be provided across North Northamptonshire and the distribution of these. Within this context, the size, type, and tenure of housing needed for different groups will be identified including the proportion of the overall housing requirement that should be affordable.
- **Economic growth** – An economic vision to strengthen and diversify the economy of NN, taking account of existing sectoral strengths, opportunities provided by the Oxford-Cambridge Arc and implications of Covid-19, including changes to working patterns. An overall jobs target for North Northamptonshire, distribution of this and identification of strategic locations for new employment land.
- **Town Centres** - Updated policy guidance and strategy for town centres and retail development taking account of the impact of policy changes and social/economic implications including Covid-19. This will focus on regeneration and supporting recovery from Covid-19 including opportunities for town centres to become community service hubs with increased leisure and residential space.
- **Strategic Infrastructure** – Key infrastructure projects that are required to deliver the strategy such as strategic transport schemes, utility networks and community facilities.
- **Strategic Development Locations and Opportunities** – Strategic sites that are key to the delivery of the spatial strategy will be identified in the

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Plan. The strategic site threshold¹ for the NNSP will be refined as the plan is progressed, including consultation on its scope. The location of these sites will be a key consideration in the context of climate-change related risks and ensuring future development contributes towards a reduction in carbon emissions. The plan will define clear development principles for these areas. These will be the basis for design codes/frameworks.

- **Place shaping/sustainable development** – Key principles to ensure high quality development and sustainable places. The design and future sustainability of development will be a key consideration in the approach to climate change and the NNSP will set out a stronger approach to integrating land-use and transport considerations. This will include a review and refresh of the Protecting Assets policies in the JCS to ensure they are as locally distinctive as possible with increased emphasis on health and wellbeing. It may be necessary to harmonise the approach to open space/sports provision across NN and the broad criteria for the delivery of these.
- **Built & Natural Environment** – Key principles and measures to achieve environmental net gain including the protection, restoration, and enhancement of natural, built, and historic assets. This will include natural capital benefits such as flood protection, recreation and improved water and air quality as well as ensuring appropriate measures for nationally and locally designated wildlife sites and priority habitats. The NNSP will seek to maximise the health and wellbeing benefits of nature and accessibility to it. Opportunities to enhance the green infrastructure network within NN and maximise its wider benefits and opportunities will be set out.

Stages of Plan Preparation

- 1.8 The various stages of development plan document preparation, as set out in the Regulations² are summarised below. The approach to consultation and engagement will be set out in the NNC Statement of Community Involvement.
- **Initial Evidence Gathering** - This stage involves gathering evidence, including the views of local communities. It also involves initial consultation on the Sustainability Appraisal Technical Report.
 - **Initial consultation and continued work on evidence gathering (Regulation 18)** – The Council will consult on the scope of the NNSP and

¹ The current threshold in the JCS is 500+ dwellings or 5+ ha of employment land. This will be reviewed taking account of the thresholds for development proposals to be considered by NNC's Strategic Development Management Committee.

² The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

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issues to be considered within it followed by consultation on options for the strategy to address these issues. Engagement with stakeholders and the community will continue throughout this stage.

- **Publication (Proposed Submission) (Regulation 19)** – This stage involves a formal consultation on the final version of the Local Plan when the Council will invite all interested parties to submit representations on the soundness and legal compliance of the Plan.
- **Submission (Regulation 22)** – The Council will formally submit the Local Plan to the Secretary of State for independent examination.
- **Examination (Regulation 24)** – Representations are considered by an independent Planning Inspector, including at hearing sessions. Following the examination the Inspector will produce a report and may recommend changes (modifications) to the Plan.
- **Adoption (Regulation 26)** – This is the process whereby the Council formally adopts the Local Plan as part of the statutory Development Plan for the area.

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Table 1: Arc Spatial Framework and potential NNSP timetable March 2021

Date	ASF (February 2021)	NNSP (March 2021)
Early 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch of the Spatial Framework (Feb 2021) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence Gathering and Scoping
Spring 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement with local partners and public. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence Gathering and Scoping
Summer 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vision for Spatial Framework published for consultation. Evidence base developed. Ongoing engagement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence Gathering and Scoping. Member briefings and workshops
Autumn/ Winter 2021		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation on Scope and Issues (Regulation 18)
Spring 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publication of 'Towards a Spatial Framework' for consultation. Ongoing engagement. 	
Summer 2022	<p><i>Spring 2022-Autumn 2022</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further option testing and consideration of consultation responses. Ongoing engagement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation on Options
Autumn 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publication of draft Spatial Framework and evidence base for consultation. Ongoing engagement. 	
Early 2023	Publication & implementation of ASF (no date given)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed Submission consultation (Regulation 19)
Spring 2023		
Summer 2023		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submission to Secretary of State (Regulation 22)
Autumn 2023		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examination Hearings (Regulation 24)
Winter 2023		
Summer 2024		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adoption of DPD (Regulation 26)

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HM Government



OXFORD -
CAMBRIDGE
ARC

Planning for sustainable growth in the Oxford- Cambridge Arc

An introduction to the Oxford-Cambridge
Arc Spatial Framework



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1. Introduction:

Why we need a new approach

- 1.1** At Budget 2020, the government committed to developing, with local partners, a Spatial Framework for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc – the area that spans the five ceremonial counties of Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire.
- 1.2** This is an opportunity for us to work with communities and local partners to develop a plan that will:
- support **long-run sustainable economic growth** across the area
 - help to **make the area a brilliant place to live, work and travel in** – for existing residents and future communities alike
 - support **lasting improvements to the environment, green infrastructure and biodiversity**
- 1.3** We will do this by focusing on the strategic opportunities for growth and environmental improvement that cross local administrative boundaries and require more joined-up thinking across the area – such as strategic approaches to support cleaner air and biodiversity net gain, or a more integrated approach to planning for new transport infrastructure alongside new development. In doing this, we will aim to set a framework that supports better, more sustainable planning and growth at the local level.
- 1.4** This paper sets out:
- why the government is taking this approach
 - what it will mean for growth, spatial planning and infrastructure provision in the area
 - how we will work with communities and local partners to develop it

Why the Oxford-Cambridge Arc?

A unique economic and environmental opportunity

- 1.5** The Oxford-Cambridge Arc sits at the heart of England. The area forms a strategic 'Arc', which is home to a unique business, science and technology ecosystem. Oxford and Cambridge are world-leading centres of research and innovation. There are 10 significant higher education institutions within the Arc, including Cranfield University, with its world-leading specialisms in automotive and aerospace engineering, the Open University, and the world-leading centres of learning at the University of Oxford and University of Cambridge. The Arc accounts for 7.1% of England's economic output (measured by Gross Value Added, or GVA) and it is home to some of the country's fastest growing and most innovative places. Cambridge's rate of patent applications – a key indicator of innovation – is the highest in the UK, at over 12 times the national average. Milton Keynes is the fastest growing city in the country.¹ Work on the COVID-19 vaccine, testing and treatment is the latest example of the Arc's unique innovation and business environment leading efforts to tackle a global challenge.
- 1.6** The desirability of the Arc as a place to live, visit, work and invest is in part due to the quality of the local environment, the rich and diverse character of its landscapes, and the resultant high value of the area's natural capital. We value the natural environment, so we want to meet the economic potential of the Arc in a way that takes the significant opportunity for environmental improvement. Nature and the environment are not constrained by administrative boundaries, and delivering significant positive environmental outcomes requires long-term coordinated action from the public and private sector. The government has already set out its intention for the Arc to embody England's 25 Year Environment Plan, which we will work together to deliver, including through planning for local natural capital. By working across the Arc, we have an opportunity to drive environmental improvement including recovery of nature and biodiversity net gain, cleaner air, reduction of flood risk and improving resilience to floods, ensuring communities have better access to green space and more sustainable energy and water supplies, and growing the £2.27 billion of value the Arc's natural environment provides each year in ecosystem services.²

¹ See Centre for Cities, Cities Data Tool – available at <https://www.centreforcities.org/data-tool/#graph=map&city=show-all&indicator=patent-applications\\single\\2018>

² Taken from the Oxford-Cambridge Arc Natural Capital Account, developed by the Environment Agency – available at <https://www.oxcamlncp.org/building-our-evidence-base#page-section-5e860a509dbd75505c439f13>

- 1.7** The Arc is also an area that is constrained by inadequate infrastructure, a stressed and fragmented natural environment, escalating housing costs, and complex local governance. It is at risk of worsening outcomes for the environment if we do not overcome constraints and meet future demands in the right way. Addressing these constraints is key to realising the full economic and environmental potential of the area.³
- 1.8** Forecasts vary, but successive studies have found that there is a clear transformational opportunity. With the right interventions and investment, economic forecasts suggest that by 2050 we would see economic output growing by between £80.4 billion and £163 billion per annum, with between 476,500 and 1.1 million additional jobs.⁴ The Arc's success is key to the UK's national prosperity, international competitiveness, and ability to meet the challenges and opportunities we will face as a country over the next century, including climate change and supporting nature recovery, technological change, fighting COVID-19 and preventing future pandemics.
- 1.9** That is why the government has identified the Arc as a national economic priority area. National and local partners are jointly committed to reaching the potential for transformational growth and environmental improvement.⁵

3 National Infrastructure Commission (2017), Partnering for Prosperity, available at <https://nic.org.uk/app/uploads//Partnering-for-Prosperty.pdf>

4 National Infrastructure Commission (2017), Partnering for Prosperity, available at <https://nic.org.uk/app/uploads//Partnering-for-Prosperty.pdf>; and internal analysis

5 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, The Oxford-Cambridge Arc: Government ambition and joint declaration between Government and local partners, March 2019. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/799993/OxCam_Arc_Ambition.pdf

A unique growth context

- 1.10** We are taking a strategic approach to planning for growth and infrastructure to realise that transformational opportunity, and our approach reflects the key features of the Arc's economy, environment and places.
- 1.11** There are a number of urban and economic centres of comparative size across the region. Oxford, Bicester, Milton Keynes, Bedford and Cambridge form a west to east spine across the Arc, but Northampton, Luton, High Wycombe and Peterborough are other important centres, and there are a number of north-south corridors connecting them to the core of the Arc. Much of the Arc's economic output relies on connections between these different centres, and in turn their connections south to London, west to Bristol, east to East Anglia and north to the Midlands.
- 1.12** This is not, therefore, just a story of Oxford and Cambridge and their sub-regions – Milton Keynes and Northampton have the highest economic output in the Arc (measured by GVA). Importantly, the sector profile of these places is different and complementary to Oxford and Cambridge. For example, Milton Keynes is a centre for financial and professional services, high performance technology, and is a key haulage and distribution centre. The area around Silverstone in Northamptonshire is a key location for the automotive sector and high-performance engineering, with strong business and research links to Oxfordshire and Luton. Peterborough, one of the UK's more successful new towns, had its origins as a town of industry, which has laid the foundations for a dynamic business environment. It continues to be a magnet for engineering talent, and trades on its connection to strategic north-south infrastructure. This connectedness is in spite of a severe and longstanding infrastructure deficit – particularly east-west transport infrastructure – felt across the Arc.⁶ There is significant potential to foster agglomerative benefits by better connecting people, places, services and businesses, and to see more effective commercialisation of research and development through better, more sustainable transport and truly sustainable patterns of development across the region.

⁶ This was a major theme of the National Infrastructure Commission's analysis of the Arc. See the NIC's final report, *Partnering for Prosperity* (2017), available at <https://nic.org.uk/app/uploads//Partnering-for-Prosperity.pdf>

1.13 These centres do not fit neatly within administrative boundaries – they are part of sub-regions with interconnected business and research clusters. The automotive and engineering sector that is concentrated in Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire and Luton and the ‘Science Vale’ cluster, which covers an area spanning Oxford, Abingdon and Didcot, are examples of this. This is an ecosystem that has grown around the Harwell Campus and Culham Science Centre, home to some of the most globally important facilities for applied scientific research. In the east of the Arc, the Cambridge bioscience cluster is located along a corridor south of the city. We therefore need a more coordinated, cross-boundary approach to planning for growth, and to ensure that the right infrastructure is in place to support it.

Heritage

1.14 There are areas of significant natural and built heritage, with internationally important environment assets, wetlands, ancient woodlands and rare wildflower-rich meadows that support unique biodiversity. The medieval centres of Oxford and Cambridge are key parts of our national built heritage and are surrounded by diverse and historic landscapes. Milton Keynes is a leading example of post-war architecture and place-making with over 6,000 acres of green public space provided in the city. The wider Arc is home to diverse landscapes and rich natural habitats, from the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the south, to the fragments of wet and species-rich fenland in the east, the remnants of ancient hunting forests to the north and central area, and rare wet grassland and ancient woodlands to the west. Yet there is a real need and a great opportunity to deliver nature recovery and an improved environment in the Arc and for this to contribute real benefits to new and existing communities and businesses. This is why the government has invested in a Local Natural Capital Plan for the area, and why the RSPB, National Trust, Woodland Trust and local Wildlife Trusts are campaigning for a focus on nature in the area.⁷ We want to protect, enhance and improve this rich inheritance for future generations and improve access to it as we support growth in the region, and we can only do that by taking a strategic approach to protect and enhance the Arc’s heritage and environment.

⁷ See RSPB (2020) Nature’s Arc, available at <https://www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/campaigning/OxCam-Arc/>

Levelling up

1.15 This government is committed to levelling up growth and opportunity across Britain. Inequalities within regions are even larger than those between regions.⁸ That is true in the Arc, as its prosperity is not felt evenly, and inequalities between and within the Arc's towns and cities are acute. Bedford, Luton, Corby and Kettering have high levels of deprivation and have not seen the economic growth of their Arc neighbours. This is also true of some of the Arc's more rural areas, such as Fenland, which has been disconnected from the recent economic growth in Greater Cambridge.⁹ In many of these places, population growth has been driven by 'overspill' from neighbouring centres but the economies of these places are characterised by comparatively low levels of productivity and wage growth. As growth happens, we need to 'level up' opportunity and outcomes across the region to address the specific challenges the Arc faces.¹⁰ At the same time, inequality is high within the major economic centres of the Arc – Oxford and Cambridge are two of the most unequal cities if the Gini coefficient is used as the metric.

The risk we face – worse outcomes for communities, the economy and environment

1.16 With high growth comes growing pains – and the Arc, like Silicon Valley, is experiencing the pain that comes from the movement of people outpacing the delivery of new infrastructure needed to accommodate them. The Arc has seen significant population growth since 2000, up 17% in that period – only London has seen a higher rate of growth.¹¹ Rates of job creation in almost every authority in the Arc far exceed current jobs targets in local plans, and housing delivery rates are significantly below the level likely to be needed to accommodate current housing need and future job creation rates.¹²

1.17 There are three areas we are particularly concerned about:

- the natural environment and climate change
- connectivity and infrastructure
- the availability of homes where they are most needed

8 Institute for Fiscal Studies (2020) Catching up or falling behind? Geographical inequalities in the UK and how they have changed in recent years. Available at <https://www.ifs.org.uk/inequality/geographical-inequalities-in-the-uk/>

9 CPIEC (2018) Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Economic Review, Final Report. Available at: <https://www.cpier.org.uk/final-report/>

10 See Centre for Cities, Cities Data Tool – available at <https://www.centreforcities.org/data-tool/#graph=map&city=show-all&indicator=gini-coefficient\\single\\2016>

11 Internal analysis based on ONS population data.

12 Figures available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/799993/OxCam_Arc_ApprovingLife

- 1.18** These are vital in maintaining and improving the Arc as a great place to live and work.
- 1.19 Environmental outcomes are poor, and the risks of further harm are high,** with regional level transport emissions responsible for 46.8% of total carbon dioxide emissions in the area, compared with 36.6% nationally. This is driven in part by car-dependence, with 67% of the workplace population travelling by car, compared to 60% nationally.¹³ Air quality is poor in many parts of the Arc – reflected in the number of Air Quality Management Areas established by local councils – harming the health of local residents.¹⁴ Flood risk is high and growing, with 74,000 properties within the Arc at a 0.1% or greater annual risk of flooding, particularly around the floodplains of the Rivers Great Ouse, Thames and Nene, and in the Fens in Cambridgeshire. Large areas of the Arc have limited ecological value and many parts of the Arc’s natural environment are relatively inaccessible to the public. Looking to the future, there is a risk that the development that comes with growth will harm the natural environment and the ecosystem services it provides to us, rather than restore nature.¹⁵
- 1.20 East-west connectivity is poor.** Cranfield University is 7 miles from Milton Keynes but getting there by public transport involves a 45-minute bus journey. Cambridge is further away – 45 miles – and can take nearly 3 hours by a patchwork of buses and trains. This is driving up car dependency, which in turn is causing high and increasing congestion.¹⁶ The East West Rail scheme will significantly improve east-west rail connectivity, but more needs to be done to promote sustainable transport, raise first and last mile connectivity around transport hubs, and better connect communities, employers, employees, businesses, cultural attractions, nature and universities, including through public transport, cycling and walking – making these the first choice for journeys.

¹³ These figures are for the area including Hertfordshire and Swindon. See England’s Economic Heartland (2020) Transport Strategy Summary, available at: <http://www.englandseconomicheartland.com/Documents/Draft%20Transport%20Strategy.pdf>

¹⁴ England’s Economic Heartland (2020) Transport Strategy Summary, available at: <http://www.englandseconomicheartland.com/Documents/Draft%20Transport%20Strategy.pdf>

¹⁵ This is a major theme of the Nature’s Arc campaign led by local environmental groups. See <https://www.rspb.org.uk/globalassets/images/get-involved/campaigning/oxcam-arc/natures-arc-4-pager-final-low-res.pdf>

¹⁶ This is why this is a major theme of the sub-national transport strategy – see England’s Economic Heartland (2020) Draft Transport Strategy, available at: <http://www.englandseconomicheartland.com/Documents/Draft%20Transport%20Strategy.pdf>

- 1.21 Housing affordability is poor.** The supply of new homes in the Arc's main centres has not kept up with demand – in Cambridge, the affordability ratio has risen to 12.76, in Oxford to 11.45 in 20 years, and in Chiltern and South Bucks to 17.62 and 15.56 respectively (the England average is 7.83).¹⁷ This has put home ownership out of reach for many. The wider economic effect of this is to make it harder for businesses to attract the skilled workers they need, to locate in the most productive locations, and is forcing longer and more polluting journeys as people travel longer distances to get to work. Population growth has been highest in areas of comparative housing affordability – Corby (30% since 2000), Milton Keynes (28%) and Peterborough (27.5%).¹⁸ Huntingdonshire is experiencing inward migration from South Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire due to housing pressures in those areas, in turn leading to some existing residents moving northwards to Peterborough, Fenland and South Kesteven as house prices have increased. Over the long term, this pattern of growth is unlikely to be sustainable for the economy, the environment or for communities in the Arc.
- 1.22** We can progress towards a better future by planning better for growth and seeking to provide for future needs before they bite, delivering the right infrastructure in the right places at the right times.

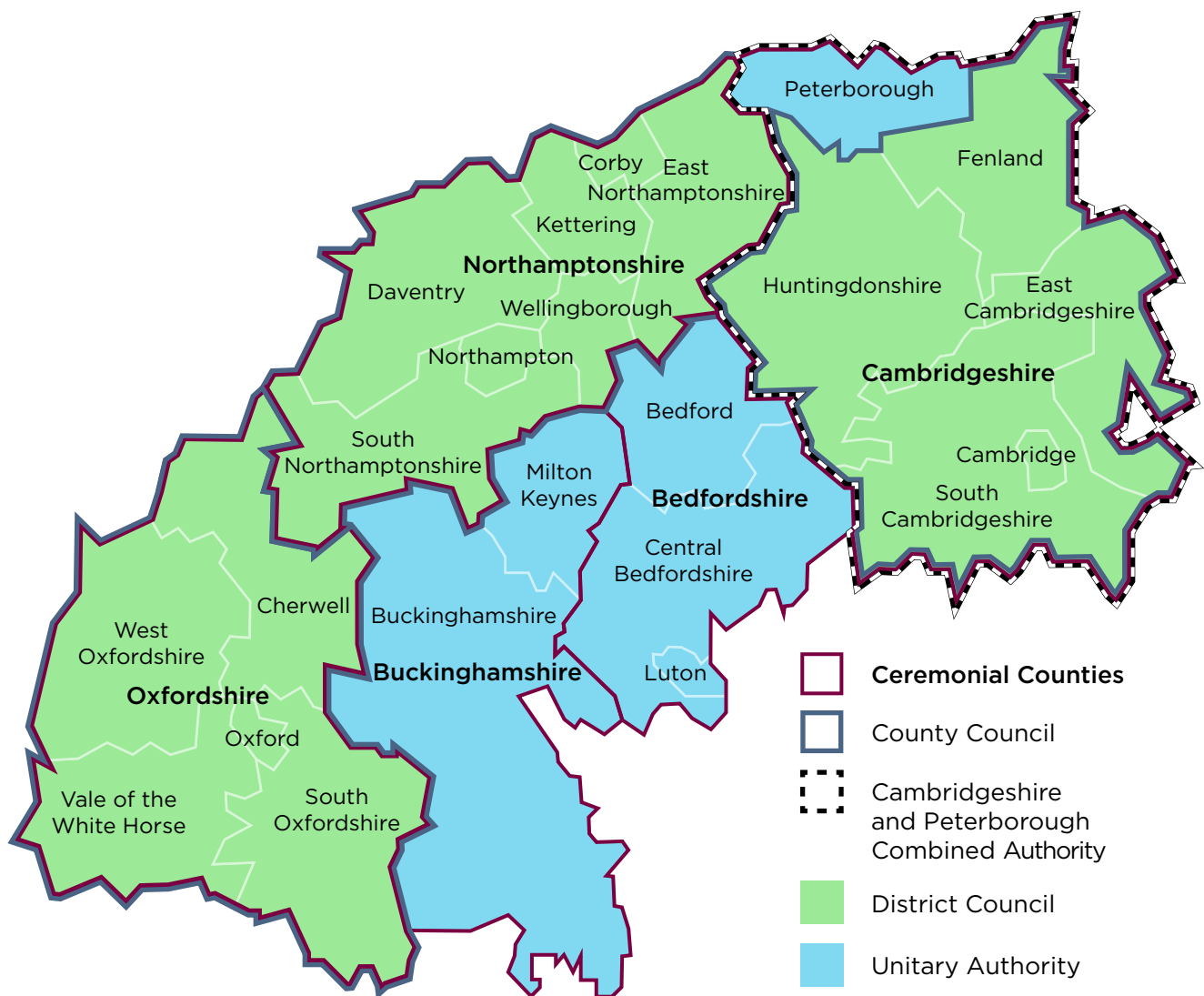
¹⁷ ONS 2019 – table 5C (Ratio of median house price to median gross annual workplace-based earnings by LAD).

¹⁸ This is also explained by the location of existing administrative boundaries, which do not reflect the full spatial coverage of economic centres such as Cambridge, Northampton and Bedford.

The need for a government-led approach to strategic planning

- 1.23** Addressing these issues requires coordinated action across the Arc, and some coordination is already happening. Unitarisation of local councils in Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire (building on existing joint planning arrangements in place in the latter) will support more strategic planning in those areas, as will the Joint Strategic Spatial Plan in development in Oxfordshire, and the non-statutory Spatial Framework in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Alongside this, the government is investing in the new East West Rail link to connect Oxford and Cambridge and providing over £400 million of Housing Infrastructure Fund investment to support delivery of housing on strategic sites. The Government has also agreed city deals with Oxford and Cambridge – an ambitious growth deal with Oxfordshire as they take forward a joint plan for the county, and a devolution deal with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority. We have also made a commitment to examine the case for development corporations, linked to the new transport hubs around East West Rail stations. But action is needed across the wider area on strategic planning, environmental, economic development and infrastructure issues.
- 1.24** A coordinated approach is difficult because the Arc comprises: 23 local planning authorities; a mayoral combined authority, eight transport planning authorities, the area's Local Enterprise Partnerships (which have responsibility for economic development), and England's Economic Heartland – the sub-national transport body that covers a slightly wider area than the Arc. There is also no single institution with the necessary competence and authority to lead a coordinated approach. This means that planning at the local level for homes, business space, infrastructure and the environment is not integrated, and is unable to take an Arc-wide view. If we want a better future, we need to plan for growth by thinking about the provision of infrastructure, housing, the environment and the needs of businesses and universities at the same time. We cannot continue to plan for transport, the environment and housing separately, or to think of economic development as separate from housing provision and commercial development.
- 1.25** To realise the full opportunities – and overcome the challenges – will require coordination of planning functions across the region. Local councils cannot do this on their own because of the level of coordination needed across the area, and because they do not have all the levers needed to develop a genuinely integrated plan. Government needs to play a supporting role to bring together a strategic approach at the Arc level to support better planning and ultimately better outcomes for the economy, environment and communities.

1.26 We can only realise the full potential of the Arc if we also take a different approach to planning for growth in the area. That means planning at the right scale, at the right time, for the right level of growth in the right places. We must do so in a way that will allow us to improve the Arc’s natural environment and combat climate change, raise prosperity in lower growth parts of the region, and give existing and future communities a genuine say in the long-term future of their homes and places. That is why calls for an approach of this kind are long-standing and growing – from the National Infrastructure Commission’s recommendation in 2017, to the recent County Councils’ Network report calling for a new approach to strategic planning, to CPRE’s calls for a statutory spatial plan for the area and industry calls for an Arc-wide planning body.¹⁹



Correct as of February 2021 – unitary authorities due to be created in West Northamptonshire and North Northamptonshire on 1 April 2021

¹⁹ See <https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/new-report-argues-for-stronger-collaboration-between-councils-to-fill-the-strategic-planning-void/>, <http://www.cpreoxon.org.uk/news/item/2820-cpre-challenges-arc-leaders-to-open-up-to-the-public-on-development-plans-for-the-oxford-cambridge-arc>; and <https://www.bidwells.co.uk/insights/Regeneration/6.pdf>

2. What the Spatial Framework will do

Introduction – core principles

- 2.1** Our intention is to develop a long-term Spatial Framework for the Arc that will support better spatial planning, provide a blueprint for better-targeted public investment, give investors and businesses greater long-term certainty over growth plans, and allow communities to shape the long-term future of places across the region. The nature and content of the Spatial Framework will be subject to the outcome of both detailed consultation and sustainability appraisal.
- 2.2** Our approach to the Spatial Framework will be based on 10 core principles:
- **Collaborative** – we will develop the Spatial Framework with local partners, including communities, local councils, businesses and universities.
 - **Adaptable** – we will create a framework that provides certainty for communities, local councils and investors about where growth will happen, and the infrastructure that will support it. But it will also need to be flexible and adaptive to change as it happens.
 - **Long-term** – we will plan to 2050 and beyond so that we create the foundation for long-term sustainable growth.
 - **Integrated** – the Framework will be based on an integrated approach to planning which spans the economy, housing, environment and transport.
 - **Inclusive** – the Framework will aim to bring benefits for existing communities and all places in the Arc – not just the highest growth centres.
 - **Digital-first** – we will make better use of digital tools to support better, more collaborative long-term policy-making.
 - **Evidence-based** – the Framework will be based on a robust and comprehensive evidence base, which we will make publicly available.
 - **Sustainable** – the Framework must strengthen our ability to meet the government’s commitment to combat climate change, support sustainable patterns of development, and support lasting improvements to biodiversity and the natural environment.
 - **Quality** – we intend to set high expectations for the quality of new development and infrastructure, so that we can create the heritage areas of the future and enhance quality of life in all parts of the Arc.
 - **Add value** – we will not duplicate local or national policies and plans, but we will take them into consideration in developing the Framework. Instead, the Framework will be genuinely strategic and focus on cross-boundary issues, policies and opportunities.

What it will mean for:

The Arc's economy

2.3 We will take an integrated approach to planning for growth. We can set better policy in the Spatial Framework, and local and national partners can invest more smartly to unlock the area's full potential, if we have a robust understanding of how and where the Arc's economy has grown, the needs of its current sectors and forecasts for future growth.

2.4 As this is not just about land use policy, we will start by developing an Arc-wide Economic Strategy. This will include:

- analysis of the Arc's economy and forecasts of future growth, including analysis of local economies and key sectors, drawing on existing analysis that has supported existing Local Industrial Strategies, and understanding of the monetary value of the Arc's natural capital
- identification of specific employment space and infrastructure requirements to support future growth
- identification of the policies and investments needed to deliver the Arc's economic potential in a sustainable way, working with local partners to identify priorities, and supporting a green recovery

2.5 The Spatial Framework will help us to deliver the strategy by ensuring that businesses have access to the space and infrastructure they need to grow – including the Arc's high-growth, innovative industries, which have specialist requirements for employment space, such as laboratories – and by ensuring that planning for delivery of infrastructure and housing is based on our Economic Strategy.

2.6 Specifically, the Spatial Framework will:

- provide an assessment of existing employment land, planned growth and anticipated future need
- set policies to support local planning authorities in allocating these as Strategic Business Zones or Strategic Industrial Locations, as appropriate
- set policies to support different land uses for different sectors and sizes of business

The Arc's environment

2.7 The Spatial Framework will help to protect and enhance the environment and the Arc's natural capital through ensuring that the environment underpins economic, transport and housing and planning decisions. We will seek to support an integrated approach to water management, cleaner air, sustainable land management, nature recovery, climate change mitigation and adaptation, in line with the government's 25 Year Environment Plan, Net Zero commitments and Clean Growth Strategy. We will do this by taking a natural capital approach to inform planning and decision-making, and setting policy to:

- support retention of, and investment in, key existing and potential new habitats, and improve access to nature and accessible green space
- set high standards for new development, including on carbon emissions, water management, green space, integrated and functional green infrastructure, e.g. for active travel and biodiversity net gain
- support an integrated water management approach, taking into account sustainable water abstraction and drought resilience, water quality, reducing risk and resilience to flooding and how and where new infrastructure should be developed
- support clean air outcomes, with clear links to housing and transport policies
- embed the enhancement of natural capital across the Arc

2.8 The Spatial Framework will also identify environmental Opportunity Areas, including water services infrastructure incorporating nature-based solutions, supporting nature recovery, biodiversity net gain and carbon sinks.

Transport and infrastructure in the Arc

- 2.9** Provision of new infrastructure is vital to ensuring the sustainability of development. In practice, that means taking an infrastructure-first approach to growth – identifying and delivering strategic infrastructure priorities as development happens. The Spatial Framework will help to do this by:
- identifying and mapping the existing provision of health, education, accessible green spaces, social and community infrastructure, utilities, green and blue infrastructure and other infrastructure requirements at an Arc-wide scale
 - determining future need based on development, and social and environmental projections, and identifying gaps in existing provision
 - using this assessment to create an infrastructure plan to facilitate future growth, including identifying opportunities to:
 - deliver sustainable transport options
 - protect and enhance the environment
 - give communities access to the public services they need
 - ensure our waste is minimised, recycled or disposed of sustainably where this is the only option
 - provide the water, digital and utilities infrastructure needed to facilitate sustainable growth
 - proactively setting strategic policies for local transport authorities and local planning authorities to enable this, building on the England’s Economic Heartland transport strategy and evidence base
 - outlining targeted climate resilience and air quality policies based on air quality modelling to ensure this new infrastructure is delivered in line with our environmental objectives
 - outlining wider strategic policies to facilitate utilities investment in line with key development opportunities, including digital infrastructure

Housing and planning in the Arc

- 2.10** We will plan for the right level of growth in the Arc, to ensure it is a great and affordable place to live and work – both for existing residents and communities of the future. To do this, the Spatial Framework will identify:
- the most sustainable locations for new homes, including identifying Opportunity Areas, to support local planning authorities to plan for this growth
 - the infrastructure needed to support sustainable growth in those locations, and the key locations for strategic infrastructure to support sustainable growth
 - locations for environmental enhancement to achieve greater environmental benefits that can allow development to take place elsewhere
- 2.11** The Spatial Framework will also outline policies to enable sustainable, transport-led development. This will include policies to enable:

- new settlements to come forward at the scale and speed needed
- new development to support habitat recovery, delivery of Local Nature Recovery Strategies, and provision of good-quality green space within schemes
- brownfield redevelopment and densification, and expansion of existing settlements, in sustainable locations or locations that can be made more sustainable by enhanced access to sustainable transport modes
- housing needs to be met in full, including delivery of much-needed affordable housing

- 2.12** All policy set in the Spatial Framework will be based on a robust evidence base and local consultation. It will indicate locations but will not include site allocations, and it will not include detailed policies set elsewhere in national policy or better left to local plans.
- 2.13** The government has also consulted on changes to the planning system more broadly. We will respond to the Planning for the Future consultation in due course, and we will work with local planning authorities in the Arc to ensure that the Spatial Framework supports transition to the new system.

3. How we will develop the Spatial Framework

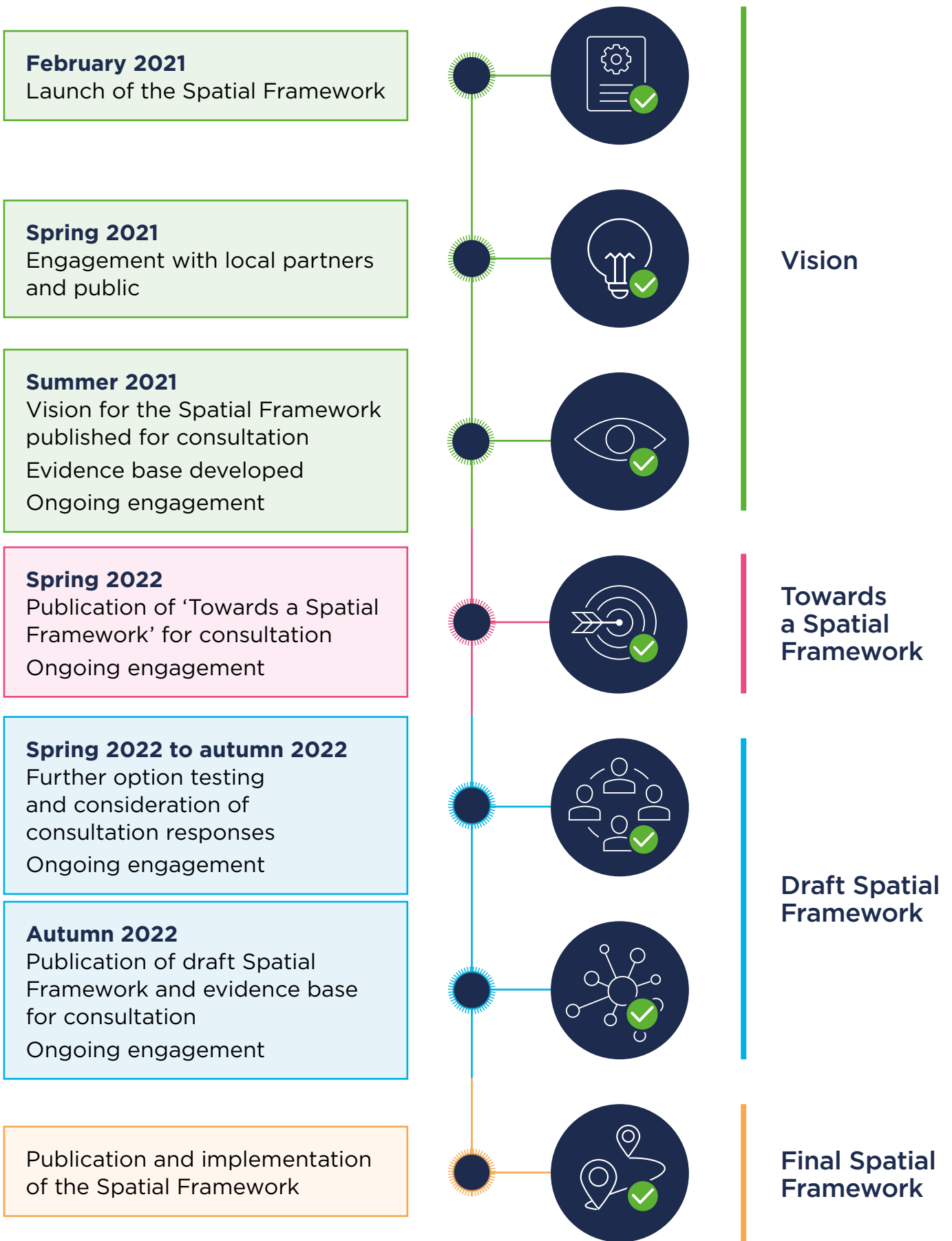
Introduction

- 3.1** Over the next two and a half years, a specialist team in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government will work with communities and local partners to develop a robust, evidence-based Spatial Framework. To ensure the Spatial Framework provides the foundation for better planning and investment for the Arc's communities, economy and environment, we are committed to:
- **working collaboratively with residents and local partners**, seeking input at each stage of decision-making
 - **understanding the environmental, social and economic impacts of policies** before we finalise, adopt and implement them, by undertaking a full and integrated sustainability appraisal
 - **developing a common digital platform and robust evidence base** to underpin the Spatial Framework and provide the basis for strategic planning in the Arc at the sub-regional level, including through a new and shared digital evidence base
- 3.2** We will seek to implement the Spatial Framework as spatially specific national planning policy. Local planning authorities preparing local development documents (including local plans) will have to have regard to the Spatial Framework, as they do with other national policies and guidance.

Indicative timeline

- 3.3** The timeline for developing the Spatial Framework covers three core phases:

- 1. Developing a vision for the future of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc** – We will undertake wide public engagement to shape a vision for the area, through a consultation in **summer 2021**.
- 2. Towards a Spatial Framework** – We will develop options for turning the vision into policy, based on engagement and initial evidence gathering and analysis. We will publish these options for consultation in **spring 2022**.
- 3. Draft Spatial Framework** – To finalise the Spatial Framework, we will consider responses to this consultation, and undertake spatial analysis, option testing, impact assessments and stakeholder engagement. We will publish a draft Spatial Framework for consultation in **autumn 2022**, with implementation of the final Framework shortly after.



Status and implementation

3.4 We will take an integrated approach to planning for the Arc, to ensure we can deliver the sustainable outcomes we want to see. To achieve this, the Spatial Framework will have the status of national planning and transport policy, providing a strategic framework for local planning.

- National planning policy status will allow it to have significant weight in the planning system for guiding local plan production and in decision-making. It will sit alongside the National Planning Policy Framework.
- National transport policy status will allow it to guide the plans prepared by local transport authorities. Transport policies will sit alongside land use policies in the Spatial Framework in a fully integrated single land use and infrastructure plan.

3.5 This will provide a clearer, coordinated framework for local transport authorities and local planning authorities when developing their own plans.

3.6 To ensure sustainability is at the heart of the Spatial Framework, the government will develop a sustainability appraisal to inform and underpin development of the Spatial Framework. The assessment criteria will be used proactively to embed sustainability into the development of the strategy. The sustainability appraisal will meet the legal requirements of Strategic Environmental Assessment as well as including social and economic factors so that we can best consider the wider impacts of policies as they are developed. We will integrate a Habitats Regulations Assessment into the sustainability appraisal.

3.7 We will underpin the Spatial Framework with a robust evidence base. We will work to ensure it meets a sustainable development test so that the Framework provides a clear and useful starting point for local councils.

3.8 We expect local planning authorities to continue to develop local plans before the publication of the Spatial Framework. These changes will sit alongside wider planning reforms, and as we take forward our response to the 'Planning for the Future' consultation, we will outline transitional arrangements and the role of the Spatial Framework within any new system.

Data and digital tools

- 3.9** We want to make best use of data and digital tools, in line with our vision for reform of the wider planning system.
- 3.10** We want to make it easy for communities, local councils and businesses to give their views on the Spatial Framework, and to ensure that we make best use of evidence and data analysis to inform policies it sets. And we have an opportunity to create a common, accessible resource for government and local partners to support better policy-making and planning in the future.
- 3.11** As we set out in the ‘Planning for the Future’ consultation, the planning system makes little use of interactive digital services and tools, with the process reliant on documents rather than data. This means that evidence is fragmented, diffuse and inconsistent, limiting the impact it can have. This means we need to go further to realise our ambition for data and digital tools in the Arc.
- 3.12** **First, we will use data and digital technology to support our policy-making.** We intend to support development of an open source, digital platform for data and evidence to support collaboration between government, businesses, local councils and communities in decision-making. We will work with local partners to create an accessible digital platform for economic, planning and environmental data, and easy-to-use tools so that people – including the public and businesses – can engage meaningfully in the process.
- 3.13** **Second, it means using digital engagement processes to make it easy for people to raise their views** about proposals in the Spatial Framework, including on smartphones.
- 3.14** **Third, it means the Spatial Framework will be visual and map-based,** standardised, and based on the latest digital technology, so that it is easy to access and understand.

4. How you can get involved

A collaborative approach

4.1 We want to ensure the Spatial Framework is built on the interests and priorities of the communities it will serve. We are committed to working collaboratively with local partners and want to give Arc residents a meaningful voice in development of the Spatial Framework. This will mean:

- **we will engage early** with local partners to shape a shared vision for growth, on which the Framework will be based
- **we will consult meaningfully** at each appropriate stage of the process, giving all relevant stakeholders the opportunity to raise views on policies and growth options as they are developed and before the Framework is implemented
- **we will work collaboratively** with local partners to inform, steer and challenge our approach

4.2 The Arc is home to a wide and diverse stakeholder landscape who will have an interest in the Spatial Framework's development. We intend to engage extensively across different audiences ranging from local councils, universities and business to residents, workers and local communities. We will keep accessibility at the core of our approach, harnessing digital technology alongside more traditional methods of consultation. This will make it easier for a wide range of people to contribute their views.

When you can get involved

4.3 We want to hear from residents and local partners at each stage of the Spatial Framework process:

- **Vision** – We want to hear from people across the Arc to shape our vision for the area, providing the foundation for policy-making and planning later in the process. **We intend to launch this process in early 2021, and we will use what we hear from initial stakeholder engagement to produce a draft vision statement for public consultation in summer 2021.**
- **‘Towards a Spatial Framework’ consultation** – Building on the vision, we will develop policy and growth options that we will test through engagement and consultation. **We intend to publish a consultation document in spring 2022 and will run an engagement process alongside this to give everyone a chance to have their say.**
- **Draft Spatial Framework** – Once we have refined our preferred approach, we will publish a draft Spatial Framework for consultation. This will give communities and stakeholders a chance to shape the detailed policies and the spatial options it will contain. **We intend to publish this in autumn 2022, with the final Spatial Framework implemented shortly after.**

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