



PLANNING
ISSUES IN NORTH
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

HAVE YOUR
SAY ON
HOW OUR
PLACES
SHOULD BE
PLANNED



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Joint Planning Unit

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TOWARDS A NEW JOINT CORE STRATEGY

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	3
General	3
What's included in the review?	5
Where are we starting from?	5
2. YOUR ISSUES	7
What have people already told us?	8
3. WIDER ISSUES	9
New Homes and Population Growth	9
Services and Facilities	11
Employment	11
Countryside and Villages	13
Town Centres	14
Market Towns and the Role of Rushden	15
Climate Change and Green Infrastructure	16
4. NEXT STEPS	19
How to comment	19
Timetable for the new Plan	19

The Joint Planning Unit has put together this Issues Paper to help you to have your say about the future of places in North Northamptonshire. This in turn will help us to put together a new Joint Core Strategy – the local planning framework for the area.

The joint planning unit works on behalf of the councils for Corby, East Northamptonshire, Kettering and Wellingborough, and Northamptonshire County Council. It supports the Joint Planning Committee, which is made up of three councillors from each of the five councils.

Part 1 of this document is an introduction and explanation of the local planning situation at the moment. Part 2 asks what you see as the issues in your local area and part 3 looks at wider planning issues that need to be tackled across the whole of North Northamptonshire. Some questions are provided to get you thinking and a separate questionnaire has been produced to help you feed back your comments. Part 4 explains how you can send us your comments and what the next stages are in making the new Plan for the area.

For more technical detail and a summary of previous consultation, please see the additional background papers on the Joint Planning Unit website: www.njpu.org.uk

I. INTRODUCTION



The Joint Core Strategy is the Plan for the area covering East Northamptonshire, Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough. It deals with issues that need to be looked at across council boundaries, outlining a big picture to be developed in more detail through plans prepared at the local or neighbourhood level. It came into effect in June 2008 and is monitored every year to check whether it is working.

The Plan is now under review for several reasons, including the economic recession; consequent delays in providing infrastructure; the need to extend the time frame to ensure the Plan looks at least 15 years ahead; and the need to boost job creation so that housing growth can be balanced by employment. In addition, the Government wants a change to 'Localism' in all walks of life. This means councils helping local people to help themselves; whether it is planning for their neighbourhood, running local services or becoming more involved in how council services are delivered. However, despite the Government's proposals for more neighbourhood level plans, there is still a requirement for councils to produce an overall Plan for the area.

It is not the intention to change the Plan wholesale – there is much that is still relevant – but it does need to say more about local needs and local ambitions for change. There is more freedom to do this than there was in the past because 'top down' regional policies and housing targets are being abolished by the Government.



NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

A variety of urban and rural places are working together to make the area greater than the sum of its parts.



Last year, we made a start on the review with technical work and with discussions on rural areas and market towns. The partner local authorities are all considering what levels of development are right for their areas. Each council will be reviewing its position as part of this consultation process and in the light of the Government incentives for housing and economic development.

The new Plan will cover the 20 year period up to 2031. It is difficult to look forward over this amount of time but one of the reasons for making a Plan is to give some certainty about how the area will change. Certainty is needed by residents but also by businesses, public agencies and the investors and developers who will ultimately commit to delivering that change on the ground.

To point the way, a **vision** will set the scene for the Plan and guide the overall approach and priorities. The key themes within the vision are:

Self reliance – making sure more choices are available locally so people do not need to travel far for jobs, goods and services and the area becomes more prosperous.

Green living – creating an environment and a way of life that is more resilient to the effects of global influences, such as climate change and a move away from an oil-based economy.

Strengthening the area's special mixed urban and rural character – the mix of 12 large and small towns and 109 villages, set in attractive countryside, gives the area variety and increases the opportunities for self reliance and green living.

High standards of design and good quality of place are at the heart of the current Plan's vision and objectives, which seek to improve existing places and create new ones that look good and work well. The Plan sets out the conditions for making development acceptable and is supported by a Sustainable Design guide that says more about how quality standards can be met. The design and quality policies are expected to remain in the new Plan but supported by further action to make sure that they are put into effect more consistently.

WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THE REVIEW?

We consulted in early 2009 on the main issues to be dealt with in the Plan review, some of which were highlighted through a Government Inspector's recommendations on the current Plan. These issues set an overall direction for the new Plan but there are choices to be made within each of them:

- Building in local ambitions about how places could change for the better – the 'Quality Agenda'
- Looking at the future roles of the towns and giving more guidance for the countryside and villages
- Climate Change and how the area can adapt to it
- Achieving a better jobs/housing balance
- Setting out the location and timing of infrastructure, employment and housing development in the 20 years to 2031



WHERE ARE WE STARTING FROM?

The new Plan will not be starting with a blank piece of paper: existing planning consents already provide for over 20,000 homes to be built across North Northamptonshire, so this reduces the number of extra sites that still need to be found. However, some of these 'committed' developments may take longer to build than originally planned because of the recession.

Looking back over the period from 2001 to 2010, about 15,000 new homes were built. Jobs growth has been much lower and there was a net gain of only 4029 jobs between 2001 and 2009 (the latest year statistics are available for), and there was actually a net loss in industrial jobs.

The current Plan says that a lot of growth (both housing and employment) will be at five large edge of town sites (called "Sustainable Urban Extensions") at Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough – these are shown on the map on the next page. The development of these large sites depends on major new infrastructure (roads, schools and other facilities) some of which will be provided at the developers' expense. Planning permission has been granted for four of these large sites and development is well underway on one - Priors Hall Park in Corby. In the meantime, the smaller market towns and villages have come under pressure for housing development, as they are widely seen as attractive places to live.

North Northamptonshire has attracted significant investment to support its planned growth. For example, a new Tresham campus is taking shape in Corby and the health authority continues to invest in Kettering General Hospital. Anglian Water is making a major investment in the water supply and sewerage systems and there is now capacity for more development to take

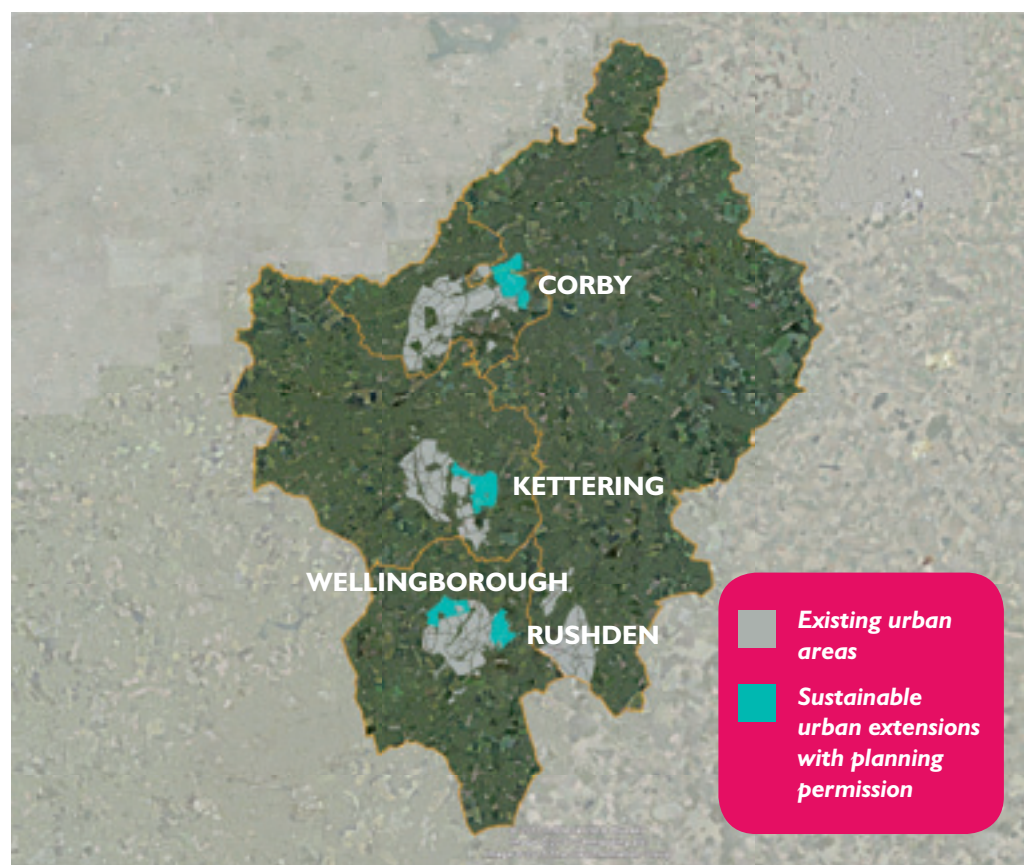
place. A new railway station, Willow Place shopping centre, the Cube, the Enterprise Centre and the new Swimming Pool have all opened in Corby.

Environmental improvements have been made in Corby, Kettering, Wellingborough, Raunds and Irthlingborough town centres (and more are on the way, including at Rushden town centre). These are part of the work that councils can do to make places more attractive to visit and do business in. Compared to five years ago, more people are staying in North Northamptonshire to do their shopping, rather than going further afield to Northampton, Milton Keynes, Peterborough and Leicester.

Whilst progress has been significant, Government funding has been severely cut back in the past year, resulting in some delays to key infrastructure projects. For instance Tresham college has been unable to get funding to replace its Wellingborough campus. A14 widening and improvements have been put back until after 2015. Corby link road/Geddington bypass and the Isham bypass have been identified as needed but the programme for building these has slipped; further technical work is now necessary to ensure they receive Government funding. Electrification of the Midland Mainline has also been delayed until after 2014.

The aerial view below shows the ‘sustainable urban extensions’ that already have planning permission and these will influence the choices that are still to be made about where else North Northamptonshire should grow.

SUSTAINABLE URBAN EXTENSIONS WITH PLANNING PERMISSION



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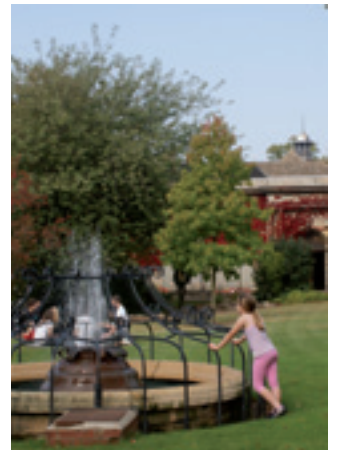
2. YOUR ISSUES



Places are made by people and for people and they have always changed to meet our changing needs. This section asks what needs to be done in your neighbourhood to make sure that change is for the better.

The Plan is as much about the future of existing places and communities as it is about where new development should go. That means we need a good understanding of how places are working now, what is missing, and what opportunities there are for change. To understand places better, we need to think about how easy it is for people to get to where they work and do their shopping; whether there are enough school, medical, open space and other facilities in local areas; and whether people's housing needs are being met. On top of this, we need to think about what types of jobs are available in the area; what older housing and employment areas need to be regenerated; what cultural and sport opportunities are available for local people and visitors; and how easy it is to get to green space and out into the countryside.

Lots of things can change over a 20 year period and the way we live our lives is likely to change too. For example, looking back 20 years, there was no public access to the internet and the first mobile phones were just becoming available. In 1991, the population of North Northamptonshire was just under 265,000 whereas it is now around 306,000. Looking forward 20 years, tell us what you think could change, or what needs to change. You can do this using a detailed questionnaire (see the back page for how to get hold of this) or you can comment on the www.atyourplace.org website.



WHAT HAVE PEOPLE ALREADY TOLD US?

At a small towns workshop held in February 2010, district and town councillors, local landowners and businesses discussed the market towns and Rushden, ranking them according to quality of life and ability to meet local needs. The workshop groups ranked Oundle as the most vibrant town; whilst Desborough and Irthlingborough were identified as the small towns most in need of regeneration. Burton Latimer was felt to have strong links to Kettering, a good level of jobs and good local restaurants. Rothwell, Higham Ferrers and Thrapston were seen as good from a quality of life point of view but poor in terms of ability to meet local needs for services. Raunds was placed lower on quality of life and was not felt to have enough jobs and services to support the size of its population. Rushden was acknowledged to be the fourth main town in North Northamptonshire, but the town centre was felt to need a lot of regeneration and more jobs are needed locally.

YOUR VIEWS:

- *How could your neighbourhood change for the better?*
- *Which parts of towns should be prioritised for change or regeneration?*
- *Where are there opportunities for development?*

At a rural workshop held in January 2010, district and parish councillors, local land owners and voluntary groups wanted a move to what they called 'organic' growth, in other words small scale developments and population increase that might help to keep local services open. They also felt that the Plan could identify 'clusters' of villages that could work together to share services and perhaps bring new ones in. This was seen as being a good way forward for the smaller and more remote villages in the north east of the area. It was however felt that very large villages near to the towns should be treated differently. Getting around without a car was one of the biggest issues, though people felt there was now a lot of scope for working from home. Improved broadband coverage and speeds were felt to be the key to this and could perhaps be provided through new community 'hubs', for instance using the local school, pub or shop as a focus for an expanded network.

Sixth formers have told us that there is a shortage of things to do in the area, there are few good shops, and they have difficulty in getting to places. This all means that they generally want to move away to find jobs or go to college, as they see other places having more to offer. Having said that, they do feel the area has a special character and environment that they might wish to move back to when they want to settle down or start a family.



3. WIDER ISSUES



Feedback so far has helped us focus on some wider issues that need to be dealt with in the review of the Plan. This section looks at what has been learned to date and asks some questions to help move matters forward.

NEW HOMES AND POPULATION GROWTH

A key issue for the Plan is how many new homes should be built over the next twenty years. All recent Governments, including the present one, have recognised that not enough houses are being built. This is preventing many people from finding a decent, affordable home and is holding back the national economy.

North Northamptonshire has previously been identified as well placed to provide new homes as part of a national 'Growth Area'. As many as 63,000 new homes would be needed by 2031 to meet the regionally set housing targets for the area. This would allow the population to grow from around 311,000 people in 2011 to around 404,000 in 2031. The Core Strategy made plans for the first phase of this growth and planning permissions are now in place for over 20,000 new homes.

Now that regional housing targets are being abolished, there is flexibility to decide how many new homes, on top of those that already have planning permission, are right for the area. This decision needs to weigh the benefits that new homes and people bring in shaping the future of the area, against the pressures and problems they can create. Additional homes and a growing population can:



- meet the housing needs of local people
- support existing and new services and facilities
- create new jobs and provide a skilled workforce for existing businesses and to attract new employers
- increase spending power and investment in the town centres



- use up valued open spaces and countryside
- change the character of places – particularly if not well designed
- cause traffic congestion and pressures on other infrastructure and services
- create disruption for local communities during construction

The ‘big picture’ is that, because of the recession, North Northamptonshire can’t deliver previous growth targets in the period to 2031. The market won’t support this level of growth in homes and jobs over this timescale (over 3,100 new homes each year when the highest level before the recession was 2,100) and resources are unlikely to be available to deliver all the necessary infrastructure.

YOUR VIEWS:

- *Are we right to scale back the housing targets for North Northamptonshire?*
- *Would you support additional housing being built where you live (bearing in mind that some will already have planning permission)?*
- *If so, what benefits would you want this to bring to your neighbourhood?*
- *If not, what if anything, would make additional housing acceptable to you?*

However North Northamptonshire’s towns have been growing over the last 30 years and the area continues to be attractive to people moving from London and the south east. While North Northamptonshire is only around an hour from London by train, house prices remain low, at around 75% of the national average. These market pressures and the amount of housing that already has planning permission mean that North Northamptonshire will continue to provide homes for people moving in from other areas. To continue recent trends would require about 35,000 new homes (1,750 each year).

The Councils have made an initial assessment of what level of growth is desirable and deliverable provided that adequate investment is made in infrastructure. This suggests a target of around 41,000 homes for the whole area (2,000 each year), which is a third less than previous growth targets but would still mark North Northamptonshire out as a nationally important growth area. One option could be for Corby to take the lion’s share of this growth (18,000) followed by Kettering (10,600), Wellingborough (6,000) and East Northamptonshire (5,900). This would allow the population of North Northamptonshire to grow by an average 1.1% each year to a total of 379,000 people in 2031. This compares to growth of around 0.9% each year since 2001.

In refining the bigger picture we need to understand local aspirations and opportunities for growth: how could places change for the better and does additional housing, with the population and resources it brings, have a role to play?

The Government is introducing a ‘New Homes Bonus’ as an additional incentive for local communities to accept housing development. This will be a significant source of funding for local infrastructure and services in the years ahead. The Government also plans to make it easier for additional housing to be promoted by communities themselves through the proposed ‘Community Right to Build’.



SERVICES AND FACILITIES

For places to work well, and for people to have a high quality of life, good provision of infrastructure is needed. Infrastructure is the term used to describe a whole range of services and facilities, for example roads, railways, public transport, sewerage, schools, libraries, doctors, leisure centres, sports facilities and open spaces. North Northamptonshire has seen a lot of new development over the past 30 years but infrastructure has not always been improved or expanded to support the increased population. In the past, Government funding has been available for some improvements but that will not always be the case in future and other sources of money will need to be found.

The whole approach of the current Plan is based on growth only being acceptable where it is accompanied by the provision of infrastructure and jobs. The new Plan will not depart from this principle and will be supported by a detailed infrastructure strategy, which makes it clear what services and facilities are needed as a result of new homes and jobs coming into the area, who is expected to pay for and provide new infrastructure and when it will be provided.



EMPLOYMENT

Getting more and better jobs is a key objective for North Northamptonshire. There is currently about 0.9 jobs for every home in North Northamptonshire, but the balance varies across the area, with 75% of jobs concentrated at the three Growth Towns of Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough. The aim of making North Northamptonshire more self-reliant suggests that a higher ratio of jobs to homes is desirable. However, this is not currently a realistic prospect for the area, given past trends and forecasts of future potential. Factors such as the structure of the local economy, workforce size and skills available all have an effect; and the area is surrounded by stronger economic centres such as Northampton, Peterborough and Leicester.

The current Plan therefore seeks to keep this balance of 0.9 jobs per home so that the area does not become more reliant on out-commuting. This is a major challenge and there has been mixed success in attracting new jobs and keeping existing ones. Since 2001 East Northamptonshire

YOUR VIEWS:

- *What infrastructure is needed in your neighbourhood?*
- *If there is limited money to go around for infrastructure, what would your priorities be?*
- *Why are these your priorities and do you think they will change over the years covered by the Plan?*

and Kettering have both seen a net gain in jobs but Corby and Wellingborough have lost jobs through the recession.

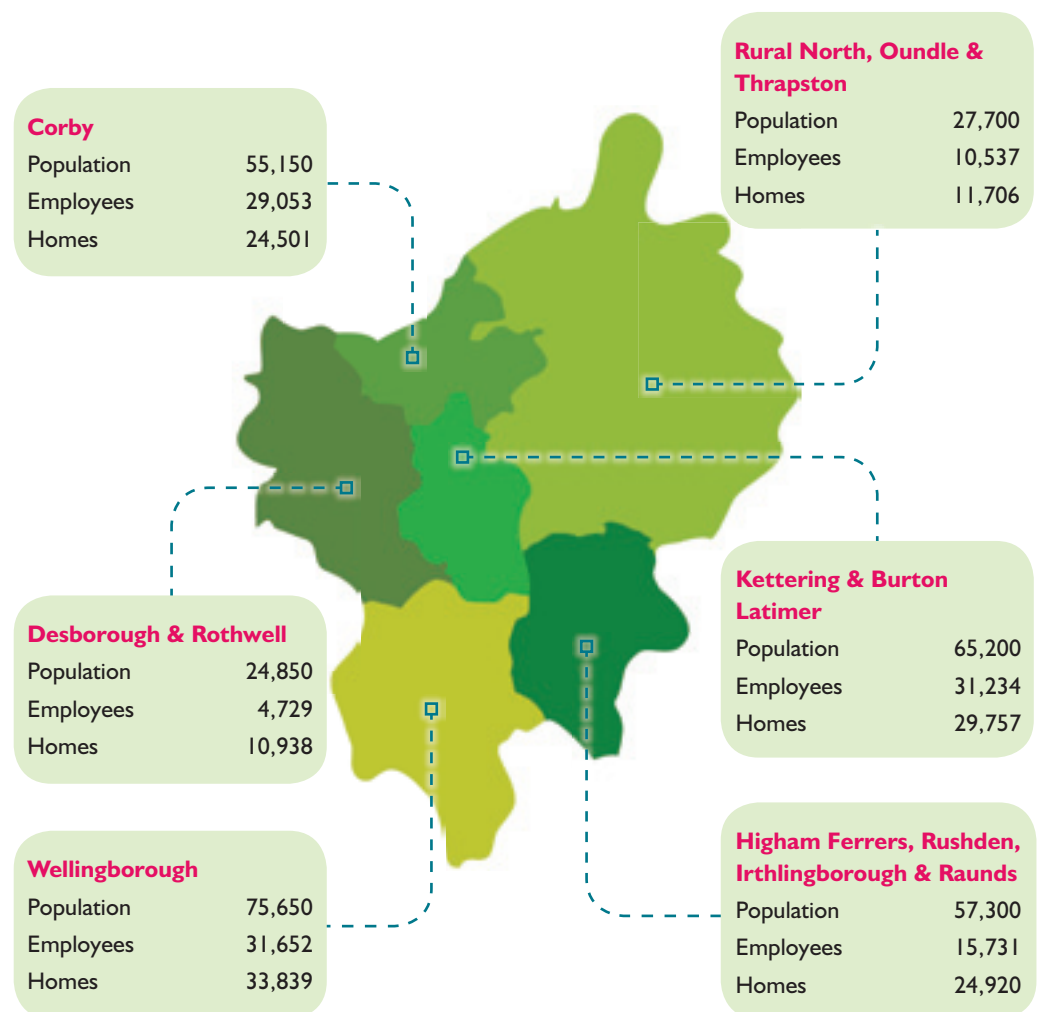
The quality of jobs and the identification of high quality employment sites will be important in helping to ensure that there are enough high value jobs for current and future residents. Since 2001, decline in manufacturing has been much greater than predicted and a lot of the employment growth has been in strategic distribution (warehousing). The area is well located for this, so it is likely that there will continue to be major market interest. Other jobs such as retail, leisure, food and drink and education are lagging behind regional and national trends and need to be better supported through the Plan. Environmental technologies and high performance engineering (including that linked with motor sport) have been identified as economic priorities for the area.

Strategic distribution has a past image of being relatively low skilled and low value, with a low density of jobs to site area and significant visual and traffic impacts. This perception can mask some of the benefits of the sector, including supporting higher skilled jobs, unlocking difficult

YOUR VIEWS:

- What sorts of jobs are needed in your town or village and where should employment sites be located?
- How can we best meet the needs of local businesses and provide room for them to grow?
- What practical measures can be taken to ensure that the rural areas are competitive and effective locations for businesses?
- Where should warehousing development be allowed and under what conditions?
- Should the new Plan identify key sites for large employment developments that are of more than local importance?

CURRENT POPULATION, EMPLOYEES AND HOMES IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE



office or light industrial sites, and delivering high standards of 'sustainable' construction. The current Plan identifies the Eurohub site at Corby as the focus for large scale distribution linked to the rail network, although viability issues have prevented the site from being developed. Rockingham Motor Racing Circuit and the land around it have recently been identified as having a lot of potential for high quality jobs linked to motor sport.

The planned growth in jobs means that new businesses need to be attracted to the area and new sites will need to be provided. It is equally if not more important that the needs of existing businesses continue to be met. Some older industrial estates could benefit from renewal to meet the changing needs of businesses, or in some cases could be redeveloped as new town 'neighbourhoods' with better new sites being found to relocate existing businesses. Rural businesses are also important to North Northamptonshire, which has a lot of employment in small businesses, recreation, tourism and farming. Improved broadband provision in the rural area would aid business start ups and enable more working from home.

COUNTRYSIDE AND VILLAGES

The focus of the current Plan is on the towns, particularly Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough (the 'Growth' towns). The towns are the most sustainable places for significant new development because they already have a good level of jobs, facilities and infrastructure that can reduce people's need to travel by car to other areas for these things. In the villages, the current approach is for development to normally take place within village boundaries, unless a local need can be shown, in which case development could be adjoining the village boundary. This approach has been criticised by some as not being flexible enough to meet development needs in the rural areas; instead 'organic growth' has been suggested as the way forward.

Despite the focus on the towns, the 109 villages throughout North Northamptonshire are home to 20% of its population. The villages have different needs and distinctive characters, making the current 'one size fits all' approach difficult. The countryside is used for many things, ranging from forestry, food and energy production, nature conservation, and water resources; to employment in many small businesses, recreation and tourism.

As well as all this, the countryside is of course home to many people and is valued for its character and heritage. Looking ahead to the global influences that may affect the area, we



YOUR VIEWS:

- *How can we encourage more working from home, community hubs and mobile services, so there is less need to travel to the towns for jobs and services?*
- *Do the countryside and villages need to attract more people to live, work and visit, to ensure a prosperous future?*
- *What sort of housing and employment growth is needed?*
- *Have village boundaries limited development and what effect has this had on communities – are boundaries necessary at all?*
- *Could villages work in 'clusters' to share jobs, services and new housing opportunities – how and where would this work?*
- *How should we define 'organic growth' - does it mean up to 10% growth in the number of houses every ten years? What impact would this have?*
- *Do you support the development of new villages? Please say where you think there is an opportunity for this.*

need to think about how the role of the countryside might change over time, and the new Plan will need to set out the overall approach.

Access to jobs and services for those without the use of a car is one of the key issues raised by rural communities. In the future, we need to plan for improved local services; better 'virtual connectivity' (high speed broadband access) to reduce the need to travel; and ensure that those without a car are supported by better public or community transport.



The Government has recently proposed a 'Community Right to Build', giving village communities the power to develop homes and services for local needs without planning permission, if at least 50% of people in the village agree. The Government also previously suggested that villages should be able to grow by around 10% every ten years if communities support this. Communities are encouraged to develop Neighbourhood Plans which could allow for more development than in the overall Plan for the area.

It has been suggested that new villages may have a role to play. Mawsley in Kettering Borough is a new village that has been developed over the last ten years or so and now has a good range of services, although not many jobs. Another new village is being promoted by the land owner at Deenethorpe Airfield (just east of Weldon). Their idea is for a high quality, traditionally designed place where new jobs and services support around 1000 new homes, which could become a new 'service centre' for the villages around it.

TOWN CENTRES



You may have seen the feature in the Evening Telegraph last December, looking at the state of our main town centres and the growth of out of town retail parks. A retail study carried out in 2010 looked at how the situation had changed since 2005. It showed that more local people were staying in North Northamptonshire to do their shopping than 5 years ago - over 61% compared to only 50% in 2005.

Despite this, Kettering and Wellingborough town centres have lost trade. Corby town centre has seen a slight gain due to new shopping developments there. The main increase in trade

HAVE YOUR SAY ON HOW OUR FUTURE PLACES SHOULD BE PLANNED

has been at the retail parks, which have become the new location for High Street shops like Next and Argos. Large supermarkets have also become 'one stop shops' which offer clothing, electrical goods and other services as well as food shopping.

The current Plan supports new shopping developments in the town centres, rather than at retail parks, which is in line with Government policy. It plans for Kettering remaining as the main shopping centre in North Northamptonshire but with major new retail development in



YOUR VIEWS:

- What else would you like to see in your town centre and what would make you visit more often, or for longer?
- For what reasons or products/services do you visit town centres outside North Northamptonshire?

Corby and Wellingborough. Retail parks may be here to stay for the time being, but town centres have always been about more than shopping – they provide places to work, places to eat out, other services to visit and other types of entertainment. They will need to continue to change if they are to remain the heart of the towns.

MARKET TOWNS AND THE ROLE OF RUSHDEN

The new Plan can take a fresh view of all of the towns and look at their different characteristics, needs and potential. Planning decisions already made in some areas will shape development in the short term but choices still exist and a long term vision will be needed from each local community if change is to be managed over the years up to 2031.



YOUR VIEWS:

- *Where is regeneration needed most in these towns and how can it be achieved?*
- *Should Rushden play a bigger role in the new Plan and how will this relate to change at Wellingborough?*
- *Should Rushden grow and, if so, in which direction?*
- *How can market towns be improved as service centres for their surrounding villages?*

Although the clear emphasis of the current Plan is on the three Growth Towns of Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough, it is still the case that around 30% of North Northamptonshire’s population live in the market towns of Burton Latimer, Desborough, Higham Ferrers, Irthlingborough, Raunds, Rothwell, Oundle and Thrapston, and in the larger town of Rushden. The sizes of these towns range from 6,100 people in Thrapston to 28,600 people in Rushden. Most of them have seen a lot of new development in the last 20 years. The current Plan identifies these towns as “secondary focal points for growth”. Higher levels of growth have been directed to Desborough, Irthlingborough and Raunds, to help bring investment to regenerate the town centres and provide more jobs; but this is now open to review.

Rushden has a wider range of employment and services, and a larger town centre, than the eight market towns. Despite this, the current Plan gives lower levels of growth to Rushden than might be expected for a town of its size. This was because it had already seen a lot of development in the previous twenty years and local opinion was that it needed time to absorb this properly before major new development extended the town further. There is still pressure for development though. Recently land owners have put forward ideas for major new employment development between Rushden and the midland mainline railway to the west (which could include a new railway station that would help to support the regeneration of the town); as well as large areas for housing to the east of the A6 bypass.

Local work that has been carried out recently includes the Rothwell and Desborough Area Action Plan and master plans for Rushden town centre and for Raunds. Where the results of this work are available, it will be used to help form the overall strategy for North Northamptonshire.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Climate Change is a global issue but responding to it often comes down to local changes and choices. In the past 20 years, the loss of local services and jobs has increased the need to travel further by car for work, shopping and leisure; thus releasing more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Other influences have been from use of fossil fuels for energy production; poorly insulated homes; loss of woodlands; and changes in farming practices.

The Northamptonshire ‘Climate Change Strategy’ sets out action that needs to be taken to raise awareness of climate change; to limit local contributions to climate change; and to adapt to the changes that are expected over the next 20 years so that their impact is managed and



where possible reduced. There is additional work taking place to investigate ways of adapting to climate change through natural means, such as extending green spaces in and around towns.

The energy use and carbon associated with existing buildings far outweighs that expected to arise as a result of planned new development. This means that improving the existing stock of homes and business is at least as important as construction standards for new buildings. As far as energy supply goes, local heat and electricity could be provided from a combination of wind power, energy from waste, biomass, solar power and hydro power; both large and small scale projects.

The current Plan has a vision of the area as a “benchmark for green living” and it sets targets for energy efficiency and sustainable construction in new development. These targets are acknowledged as an initial local response to climate change and there have been issues with applying them in the recession, as they add to development costs. Equally, technical advances have been made since the Plan was written, which means that a wider range of choices might be available in future.

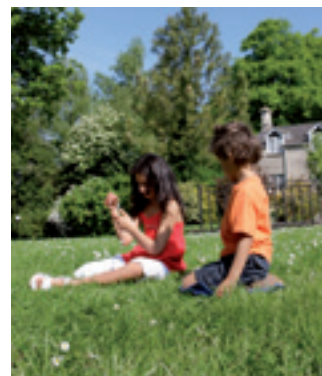
The current Plan sets a target of 20% ‘modal shift’ in large new developments – that is moving more journeys away from cars and onto public transport, walking or cycling. A lot of investment is needed in more convenient routes, better quality services and more joined up travel information, if a real difference is to be made, people’s choices increased and if alternatives to driving are to be made more attractive.

The population of North Northamptonshire is spread out over many different towns and villages, which at the moment means there is not a big enough or concentrated enough population to provide rail or tram based transport systems without major subsidy. The County Council is exploring the potential for better public transport linkages through its ‘Northamptonshire Arc’ proposals and the Plan can promote the longer term potential for better public transport systems.

Northamptonshire’s ‘biodiversity’ (the variety of life) is poor compared to many other parts of the country. A lot has been lost due to changes in farming and land management practices. Linking up habitats and improving their management for wildlife is a key part of planning for green infrastructure. Local guidance has been produced on protecting and improving biodiversity within the development process.

Green Infrastructure’ is the term used to describe the network of green spaces which have a range of different uses and benefits: from food and timber production; to recreation space and tourism attractions; to corridors for wildlife, areas absorbing carbon and areas for flood prevention. The current Plan shows a green network of sub regional and local ‘corridors’ which are to be protected and improved. Technical workshops in September 2009 and March 2010 showed support for improving green infrastructure from a wide range of organisations. It was generally agreed that this should be an essential part of any strategy for the area. The ‘Big Ideas’ supported at the workshops were:

‘Carbon Sink Forest’ – this has become the ‘Rockingham Forest for Life’ project, involving widespread tree planting to capture carbon dioxide from the atmosphere; promote recreation and tourism; provide local timber and woodfuel supplies; and link wildlife habitats.



YOUR VIEWS:

- Looking at the bullet point list of actions (right), which would you prioritise, and are there any missing?
- How can your priority actions be taken forward and who needs to be involved?
- Should there be a coordinated overall approach, for instance a 'Carbon Fund' paid into by local developers and businesses, to help pay for things like the 'Rockingham Forest for Life' project?
- Which neighbourhoods need more green space, or better links to it?
- What would encourage you to travel by car less?

Nene Valley Strategy – promoting use of the valley for tourism, recreation, employment and conservation and linking into the **Revital-Ise** project which is about recreating riverside habitats along the River Ise.

The new Plan will concentrate on finding ways to make these ideas happen as practical projects on the ground. More needs to be done if North Northamptonshire is to become resilient to the effects of climate change. Areas where the new Plan can have an influence are:

- better standards for existing buildings (insulation, heating, water use) as over 80% of the existing housing stock is expected to still be standing in 2050
- higher energy standards for new development, both housing and businesses
- finding locations for new 'renewable energy' developments – wind, biomass, waste etc
- built in 'adaptation' measures such as 'green roofs' and more tree planting in new developments
- in towns – bigger gardens, more public parks and green routes, river restoration (taking rivers back out of culverts)
- greater focus on local food and fuel production by communities and businesses
- large scale tree planting along main roads and in the wider countryside
- more attractive, safer and easier to use routes for walking and cycling within and between towns and for leisure use in the countryside
- public transport that is better joined up, faster and runs more often, both within and between towns and in the rural area
- more services and jobs provided locally, reducing people's need to travel

The Plan will guide land use decisions but it is also the place to bring together other factors which might influence such decisions – such as energy efficiency programmes, re- use of empty homes, or the level of public transport provision. Wider issues can then be tackled more effectively through businesses, communities and public bodies working together.



4. NEXT STEPS



We will be running a road show and some events in February to help you understand the process and to discuss issues of importance to you. Whether you come along to speak to us or not, please send your comments in writing if you want them recorded.

The period for comments runs until Monday 28th March. You can let us know your views by:

1. Filling in a questionnaire picked up at one of our events or downloaded from our website. This can be either e-mailed or posted back to us.
or
2. Using our place shaping website www.atyourplace.org to let us know your views in a less formal way. You can answer some simple questions, use **Facebook** or **Twitter**, or even record your thoughts on video and upload it to **You Tube**.

TIMETABLE FOR THE NEW PLAN

The Issues consultation will help us to make choices about the direction the new Plan will take. Once all the comments have been received, they will be used alongside technical work to help us make a decision on the best way forward for the Plan. A 'Preferred Options' consultation in July will give a flavour of how the new Plan is shaping up and it will then be drawn up fully by the end of the year.

We will be asking people to comment on the new Plan in early 2012, after which it will be submitted to the Government to be examined by a Planning Inspector. The examination of the Plan is expected to be in summer 2012 and the final adoption of the Plan is expected in late 2012. It is at this point that the new Plan will fully take the place of the current one.

OUR CONTACT DETAILS

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Every effort will be made to ensure this document is accessible to all. Please contact the JPU on 01536 274974 for assistance and further information.



HAVE YOUR SAY ON HOW OUR PLACES SHOULD BE PLANNED

