



8.0 DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES: VILLAGE AND RURAL AREAS

8.1 The rural parts of East Northamptonshire are rich in environmental and landscape quality and contain a wide range of settlements that perform different roles and functions. The North Northamptonshire preferred approach categorises those settlements not identified as service centres as Network Villages. The roles and relationships between these villages are extremely complex and accordingly the planning framework for the rural area should be flexible and responsive to local needs.

Scale and Distribution of Development

8.2 There is clear guidance in both the Regional Plan and preferred spatial strategy as to the need to focus development on the service centres, whilst allowing for limited development in the remaining villages.

8.3 The Council considers that in order to achieve sustainable rural communities, there is potential and pressing need for some additional development in the network of villages to help sustain local communities and to meet local housing needs. To accord with strategic planning policy this would, however, need to be carefully planned and not result in unsustainable patterns of development.

8.4 The North Northamptonshire preferred approach is that the network of villages in East Northamptonshire should accommodate a maximum of 1460 houses over the next sixteen years. Some of this requirement has been met through housing completions or outstanding commitments (most outside the Plan area). This is largely expected to be absorbed in villages that function as smaller service centres, which include villages within East Northamptonshire that fall outside the scope of this Plan area. Large scale allocations of market housing that are not related to local needs are inappropriate in villages that lack the services to serve their community and a wider rural area.

8.5 Chelveston and Crow Hill are the only villages within the Plan area where a village framework line is proposed (appendix 1). In these settlements there may be infilling opportunities, as well as scope for the subdivision of houses and conversion or redevelopment of sites currently in other uses. Other settlements include Avenue Road near Rushden, Caldecott and Newton Bromswold. These will be



categorised as Restraint Villages and the policy approach will be to treat them as open countryside. The scope for development in this case will be limited to that meeting the needs of agriculture or forestry, development in support of sustainable rural diversification, or development that supports employment space for smaller start-ups, especially within the smaller villages.

Preferred Option

8.6 No further land is allocated in the Plan area villages (Chelveston cum Caldecott and Newton Bromswold) to meet general market needs. Development will be restricted to that required to meet identified local needs, conversion of existing buildings and rural diversification activities.

Other Options Considered

8.7 A possible option is to allocate sites within the villages. This option is rejected as the villages in the Plan area do not contain the services and facilities to function as smaller service centres for the rural hinterland and additional growth would be unsustainable.

Crow Hill

8.8 Crow Hill is a residential area about 1.5km from Irthlingborough town centre. There is a large employment site (currently a laundry), a local shop and public house, along with a newly refurbished community centre. The area has recently undergone improvements to the old local authority housing. Since 2001, there have been 32 dwellings completed and another 12 were under construction at the last survey in April 2006.



Preferred Option

8.9 It is the preferred approach to treat Crow Hill as a village and draw a boundary around the built up area using the criteria in paragraph 4.11. This would allow infill, conversions and extensions as long as policy and other considerations are met. There is some concern that treating Crow Hill as a separate settlement could lead to links being lost with the main town. However, historically Crow Hill has good social links with the town, defining the area as a village would be unlikely to have an impact on this relationship.

Other Options Considered

8.10 Crow Hill could be considered an urban, although separate, part of Irthlingborough. A separate town boundary would then be drawn, and could mean there is greater potential for development. This is not considered appropriate due to the divorced nature of the settlement and that it is not a sustainable location for major development due to the distance to the town centre.

8.11 Another option is to classify the area as open countryside. This is not appropriate as there are several facilities located in the settlement and it can be considered free-standing and a contained area.

Avenue Road Area

8.12 South of the main town area of Rushden, there is a substantial area of ribbon development along Newton Road, Avenue Road and Bedford Road. In the past the policy approach has been to allow for continued infilling and redevelopment within the already built up frontages (policy RU2 of the adopted Local Plan). Over the years a significant amount of residential development has occurred in the area, particularly in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s. At the same time the already minimal local services have been lost to the community. Since 2001 there have been five dwellings completed and one remains with planning permission.

Preferred Option

8.13 Classify the Avenue Road area as open countryside, allowing only for conversion of existing buildings, development to meet agricultural needs and rural diversification proposals.

Other Options Considered

8.14 Continue with the current infilling policy. This is not favoured as the area is not a sustainable location for continued intensification of development. The shop and post office were recently lost to residential redevelopment and no basic local services remain in the area, therefore residents have to travel, largely by private car, in order to reach essential facilities in Rushden.

Rural Buildings

8.15 Although the majority of the countryside is of an open nature, it also contains a large stock of farm and other buildings, such as farmsteads. Many of these buildings are well related to existing settlements and are no longer needed for their original purpose. The reuse of these buildings can help bring under-used buildings into productive use, and if used for business purposes can help to boost the economy.

8.16 Although the preferred development strategy for North Northamptonshire targets most development over the Plan period to the main settlements and to a much lesser extent to the villages, certain types of activity will still be appropriate in the countryside. These relate to proposals that can positively help to support the diversification or development of the rural economy and the relative sustainability of the communities that live in these areas. However, it is necessary for this to be controlled in order to conserve the environment of the countryside and amenity that also contributes towards sustainability.



8.17 Government guidance in PPS7 encourages the reuse of existing buildings in the countryside for business purposes, and states that the Plan should include criteria based policies against which proposals for the reuse of rural buildings can be assessed. On this basis it is suggested that the Plan could contain a policy that requires that:

- the character of any buildings of historic or visual interest is conserved;
- there are no adverse impacts on wildlife;
- schemes are of an appropriate scale in relation to their rural surroundings (in terms of visual impact and nature of traffic generated);
- schemes do not involve a significant increase in the scale of built development; and
- schemes are limited to situations where the buildings are substantially intact.

8.18 PPS7 (Paragraph 17) states that business reuse of rural buildings is preferable to conversion to housing. Residential conversion can cause more harm to the character of historic buildings, and conflicts with the objective of limiting residential development in the countryside. However, in some circumstances it may be appropriate. The Plan could include a policy that sets out circumstances in which residential conversion may be appropriate, which could include the following exceptions:

- where business reuse is not viable; and
- where business reuse would generate an inappropriate number of vehicle movements in a particular location (for example, in remote locations with poor access).

Preferred Option

8.19 The above criteria based policies are adopted to ensure that the countryside functions as an attractive and viable environmental, economic and recreational resource.

Other Options Considered

8.20 A moratorium on conversions is rejected because the Plan needs to find ways to keep rural communities prospering. Rural buildings present opportunities to provide for a range of local needs.

8.21 A do nothing approach was rejected as rural buildings in the countryside may fall further into disrepair, become a safety hazard and become unsightly in their location.



9.0 MONITORING

9.1 Monitoring is now a statutory part of the new planning system and will provide a mechanism for reviewing and updating policies.

9.2 The final Plan for the Three Towns area will be monitored through the Annual Monitoring Report, to be produced at the conclusion of each calendar year. This is to monitor the effectiveness of the final chosen policy approach and will identify if any of the policies are not achieving their desired goals.

9.3 When the final policy approach is decided appropriate indicators will be drawn up. It is these indicators and their associated targets that will be monitored and will show if the policies are working to fulfil their objectives.

9.4 This process will also ensure that the policies are regularly reviewed and take into account new circumstances in the Plan area.

9.5 Along with this the Sustainability Appraisal will also be updated to take into account changes that may have occurred and to ensure that the policies are meeting the sustainability objectives.



10.0 WHAT COMES NEXT

This document is being widely distributed and the planning policy team will also be holding a series of workshops around the Plan area to discuss the key themes. Details of the events will be available on the Council's website or by contacting the number below.

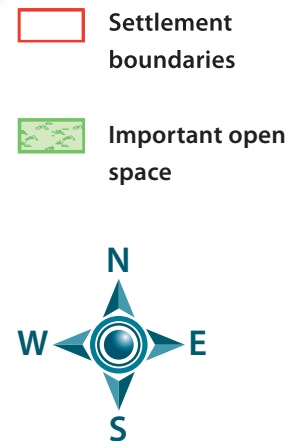
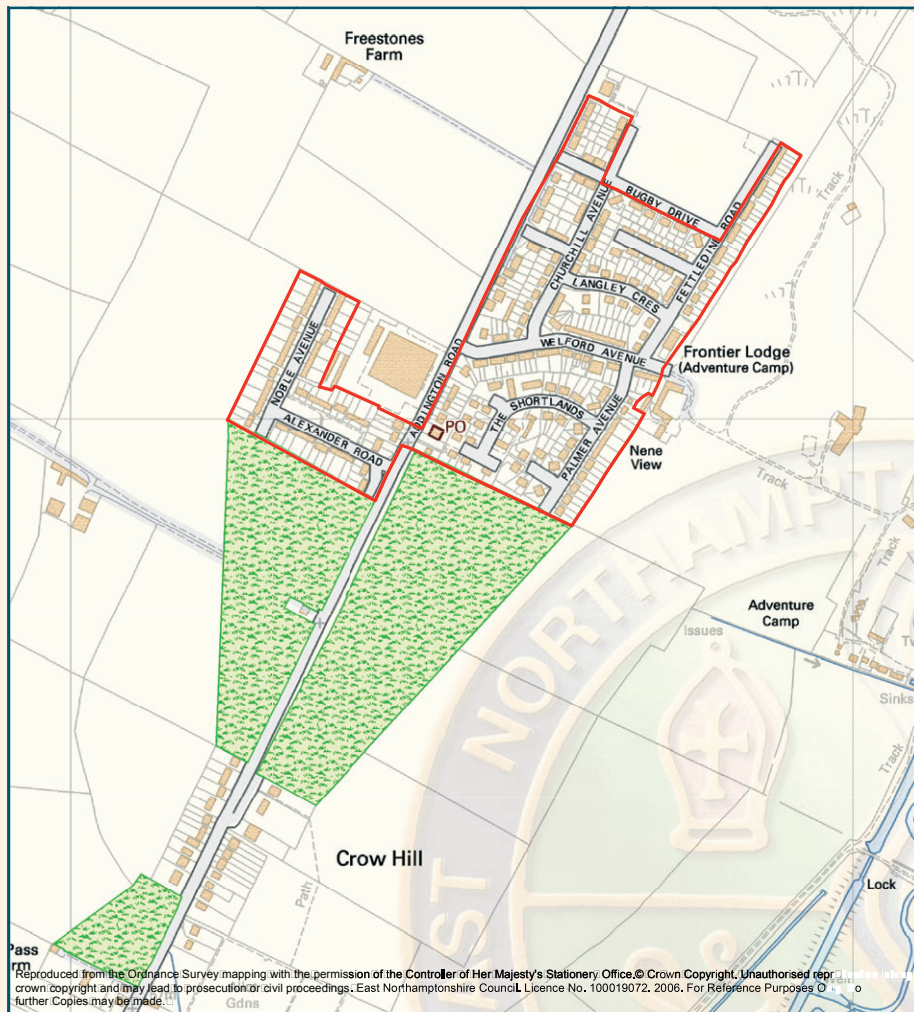
We really want your views of the Preferred Options for the Three Towns. Please use the response forms provided, completing a separate form for each element of policy area you wish to comment upon. A document summarising responses will be prepared, which will be made available to all those responding and it will be published on the Council's website. Following this, the Draft Three Towns Plan will be prepared and submitted to the Government in summer 2007 when there will be a further opportunity to comment.

If you want further information on the process and other matters associated with the Three Towns Plan please:

- visit the Planning Policy pages at the East Northamptonshire Council website at: **www.east-northamptonshire.gov.uk**
- telephone the Planning Policy team at the Council on:
01832 742010 (queries)
01832 742056 (to request a copy of the document)
- email the Planning Policy team at:
planningpolicy@east-northamptonshire.gov.uk
- or, write to the Planning Policy team at:
East Northamptonshire Council
East Northamptonshire House
Cedar Drive
Thrapston
Northamptonshire
NN14 4LZ

All comments on this Preferred Options document should be made to the Planning Policy team by 5:30pm on Monday 23rd October 2006.

We will not be able to consider late responses. Please contact the team if you are likely to encounter any difficulties with responding in the required timescale.



EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Three Towns

Rushden, Higham Ferrers, Irthlingborough

Preferred Options



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North Northamptonshire
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