

East Northamptonshire Part 2 Local Plan Examination

Opening Statement – 6th April 2022

Welcome to Thrapston,

North Northamptonshire Council is pleased to welcome you as the Inspector and all participants to the Examination of the East Northamptonshire Part 2 Local Plan. The Council is pleased that the hearing sessions are able to progress in person and welcome you to the council chamber in Thrapston, which of course was the home of East Northamptonshire Council, under which the drafting and submission of the Local Plan took place.

Indeed both the former Council and the new Unitary were, and are, a proactive authority which has sought to embrace growth and to deliver homes, jobs, infrastructure, services and facilities to meet the needs of current and future residents while ensuring that the local character of the area, which makes it special, is enhanced.

Before I say more, I would like to thank Members and Officers of the former East Northamptonshire Council for their dedication and hard work in preparing the Plan for inspection and I would also like to pay tribute to the engagement of the many stakeholders and members of the public who have contributed to the formulation of the Plan

North Northamptonshire Unitary Authority was created on 1st April 2021, and this Part 2 Local Plan will form part of the development plan for the Unitary Authority covering the former East Northamptonshire area. It will also, upon adoption, ensure full Unitary-wide coverage for Part 2 Plans across North Northamptonshire.

The Local Plan for the East Northamptonshire area has been prepared in two parts. The North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS), which is the Part 1 Strategic Local Plan, was adopted in July 2016. The JCS covers the four former Councils of Kettering, Wellingborough, East Northamptonshire and Corby that now comprise North Northamptonshire Unitary.

In addition to this there is also a Rural North, Oundle and Thrapston Local Plan, which was adopted in July 2011 and a handful of saved policies from the old District-wide Local Plan, which will be superseded with the adoption of the Part 2 Local Plan. There are of course, a number of made Neighbourhood Plans as well, these will continue to provide policy guidance alongside the Part 2 Plan.

The Joint Core Strategy sets out strategic policies for the area, it sets the scale and distribution of development. In the East Northamptonshire area, It directs development principally to the Growth Town of Rushden, which is the focus for infrastructure investment and higher order facilities to support major, employment, housing, retail and leisure development.

The Market Towns of Higham Ferrers, Raunds, Irthlingborough, Thrapston and Oundle will provide a strong service role for their local communities and surrounding

rural area with growth in homes and jobs to support regeneration and local services. In the rural area, development is limited to that which supports a prosperous rural economy, or to meet a locally arising need.

The JCS sets out a requirement for 8,400 dwellings and 7,200 jobs for East Northamptonshire in the period from 2011 to 2031.

The Part 2 Local Plan has been prepared in the context of the spatial strategy and the requirements set out in the JCS.

The purpose of the Part 2 Local Plan is to allocate non-strategic sites and to provide detailed local policies for the former East Northamptonshire area. It does not review the housing requirement or the spatial strategy. However, it does need to ensure that the minimum requirements as set out in the Strategic Plan are met up to 2031. It does this by proposing new site allocations alongside strategic sites and existing commitments and proposing local policy direction. It also sets out more detailed policy for the delivery of the strategic sustainable urban extension at Rushden East, as required by the Strategic Plan.

The Plan provides local policies which address topics such as specialist housing for older people, self-build and custom build housing, safeguarding of employment land, town centres, sport and recreation, and green infrastructure provision.

In a former District that is largely rural in nature, particularly to the north of the A14, there is a strong focus on green infrastructure in the Plan, this builds on the more strategic regional and local corridors identified in the JCS and seeks to connect local communities to these corridors through the creation of these strategic and local connections.

The Plan also places a strong emphasis on good quality design with development principles for the rural area which were developed, for example, following a detailed analysis of the rural settlements, and gathering advice and opinion with workshop sessions with parish and town councils.

Plan preparation has included extensive and thorough consultation which has sought to identify and address issues, through various public consultation period and events, including more focussed workshop events. Ongoing dialogue with key agencies and developers has led to additional statements being prepared as part of the index of submission evidence documents supporting the Plan.

Sustainability Appraisal has been undertaken throughout the preparation of the Plan and the Sustainability Appraisal demonstrates that reasonable alternatives have been considered. This is supported by a detailed Habitats Regulations Assessment, which has been particularly important in recognising the status of the Upper Nene Gravel Pits, an area of Special protection within the former District.

The Council considers that the Plan has met all of the statutory requirements and that the submitted Plan is sound. However through the Publication Plan consultation a number of comments were received which the Council considered would result in a more effective document. Therefore, the Council has proposed a series of changes to

the Publication Plan, these are set out in the '*Schedule of proposed modifications to the Publication Plan*'. This schedule will be further updated following the submission of the Council's Matters Statements to incorporate additional proposed changes in response to the Inspector's questions.

The Council has already indicated that it would like the Inspector to recommend main modifications to the Plan where necessary to make the Plan sound and legally compliant.

The Council welcomes this independent examination of the Plan and looks forward to engaging positively in discussions with the Inspector and participants throughout the hearing sessions.

Cllr Brackenbury/Richard Palmer

06/04/2022