



6.0 DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES: VILLAGE AND RURAL AREAS

6.1 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

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

6.3 The Council considers that in order to achieve sustainable rural communities, there is pressing need and indeed potential for some additional development in the rural north of the district. The North Northamptonshire preferred approach is that the network of villages in East Northamptonshire should accommodate a maximum of 1,460 houses over the next sixteen years. Some of this requirement has been met through housing completions or outstanding commitments. This is largely expected to be absorbed in villages that function as local or smaller service centres, all of which fall outside the Raunds Plan area. Site allocations for market housing that is not related to local needs are inappropriate in villages that are not identified service centres.

6.4 Ringstead, Stanwick and Hargrave are the only villages within the Plan area and all have a village framework line proposed to indicate the settlement boundary as defined by the criteria in section 4.9. In these three villages there may be infilling opportunities, as well as scope for the subdivision of houses and conversion or redevelopment of sites currently in other uses.

6.5 Outside the development boundaries of the three villages, the policy approach will be to treat other isolated groups of buildings 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.

Preferred Option

6.6 No further land is allocated in the Plan area villages 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. Development will normally take place within the defined village frameworks, unless exceptional circumstances can be justified. Opportunity sites within the village frameworks are highlighted for future consideration and for the purposes of public consultation.

Other Options Considered

6.7 A possible option is to allocate sites for general needs development within Ringstead and Stanwick, based on the current size of the villages (the largest in the district in population terms). This option is rejected as neither Ringstead nor Stanwick perform a service centre role for a wider area or for smaller network villages nearby, although both have local facilities that serve their own communities. The amount of growth that has occurred in the last 20 years has not been accompanied by investment in local infrastructure. The strategy is now therefore to focus growth on the rural service centre of Raunds and to redress the infrastructure imbalances in the villages with the aim of creating more self contained communities.

Hargrave

6.8 Hargrave is a small network village with a relatively compact centre and a 2006 population estimate of approximately 240. Village facilities include a church, a pub and a village hall. Two dwellings have been completed since 2001.

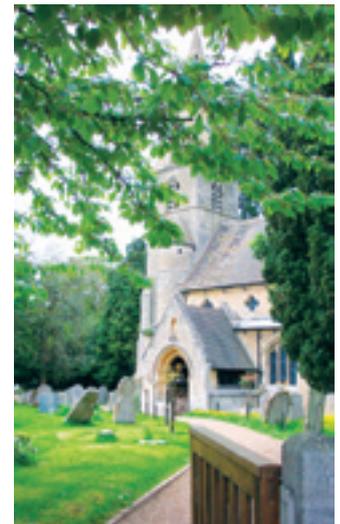
6.9 The proposed settlement boundary includes the main built up parts of the village and there are four areas designated as Important Open Space that provide visually important breaks which add to the character of the village. It is important to maintain existing facilities and to identify opportunities for the village community to continue to meet local needs for housing and open space.

Preferred Option

6.10 Opportunity sites are identified on the village map below that could be allocated solely for affordable housing if an up to date survey proves a need. Sites within the village boundary should be prioritised above those on the edge or separated from the boundary. An area is also identified that has potential for the development of a village playing field and play equipment. The sites are marked with symbols rather than outlined on the map, as further consideration needs to be given to the necessary extent of any area.

Other Options Considered

6.11 Do not identify opportunity sites for affordable housing and recreation space. This was rejected as where it is possible to suggest sites that could meet local requirements; it was considered better to include these in the document for the purposes of public consultation.



Map 7 – Preferred options for Hargrave



Ringstead

6.12 Ringstead is a large network village with a 2006 population estimate of approximately 1,450. Significant development in the 1980s led to a population increase of 15% between the census in 1981 and that in 1991. Population growth has slowed more recently, although new house building has continued: there were 10 dwellings completed between 2001 and 2006 and there is currently scope for a further 21 units on sites with planning permission (April 2006 survey).

6.13 The provision of local services is reasonable for the current population and the village retains a lot of local employment, particularly at Dodson and Horrell, Terimpex and various small businesses located on Denford Road. Despite this, there

are strong links with Raunds for employment and service provision and a footpath/cycle route to Raunds would be of considerable benefit in terms of highway safety and encourage more sustainable forms of movement as the town further develops in its role as a rural service centre. Ringstead is a very mixed community at present, with a good social balance and a reasonable amount of existing affordable housing. The aspiration is to maintain this balance and not to allow for large scale market housing development that puts additional pressure on the village infrastructure. The primary school is on quite a constrained site and the Education Authority will need to advise whether there may be a need to identify land for further extension and improvement over the Plan period. There may also be opportunities for wider community use of school facilities.

6.14 Despite the tight settlement boundary, there is still significant scope for development within the village framework over the Plan period, initially through the implementation of existing planning permissions. Further scope is provided through small scale infilling opportunities. In the longer term there is potential for the redevelopment of brownfield sites for uses that meet locally generated needs.

6.15 Local employment sites in the village need to be safeguarded for future new business and industrial uses, where these can exist side by side with residential uses. Sites in village locations are however not generally suitable for large scale new storage and distribution uses, due to the heavy vehicles they attract onto rural roads. To retain a balanced community, it is necessary to plan for new employment, particularly as over the next 15 years it is possible that some existing employers will relocate their businesses elsewhere. It is also necessary to plan for improvements to community facilities, encourage more use of local shops and services, and provide for open space and recreation needs.



6.16 Ringstead is used as a cut through for people travelling from Raunds to Thrapston, or east towards the Addingtons. Further traffic calming and the redesign of key junctions would significantly improve the local environment. There are also problems with on street parking on some of the narrower parts of the High Street in particular, as many residents have no off road parking facilities. Space for local residents' car parking would improve amenity and make the local shops more accessible. Existing garage courts off Greenbank Terrace also need environmental improvement if they are to adequately provide for residents parking requirements in the area.

6.17 Open spaces within the village need to be safeguarded. At the moment there is one designated area of important open space on Church Street but there are further spaces within the village that could potentially be safeguarded. Additionally, existing recreation facilities off Gladstone Street need to be safeguarded and possibly extended. Another local aspiration is for the creation of a central village green, providing a focus and community 'hub' linking the High Street services with the village hall and local club premises.

Preferred Option

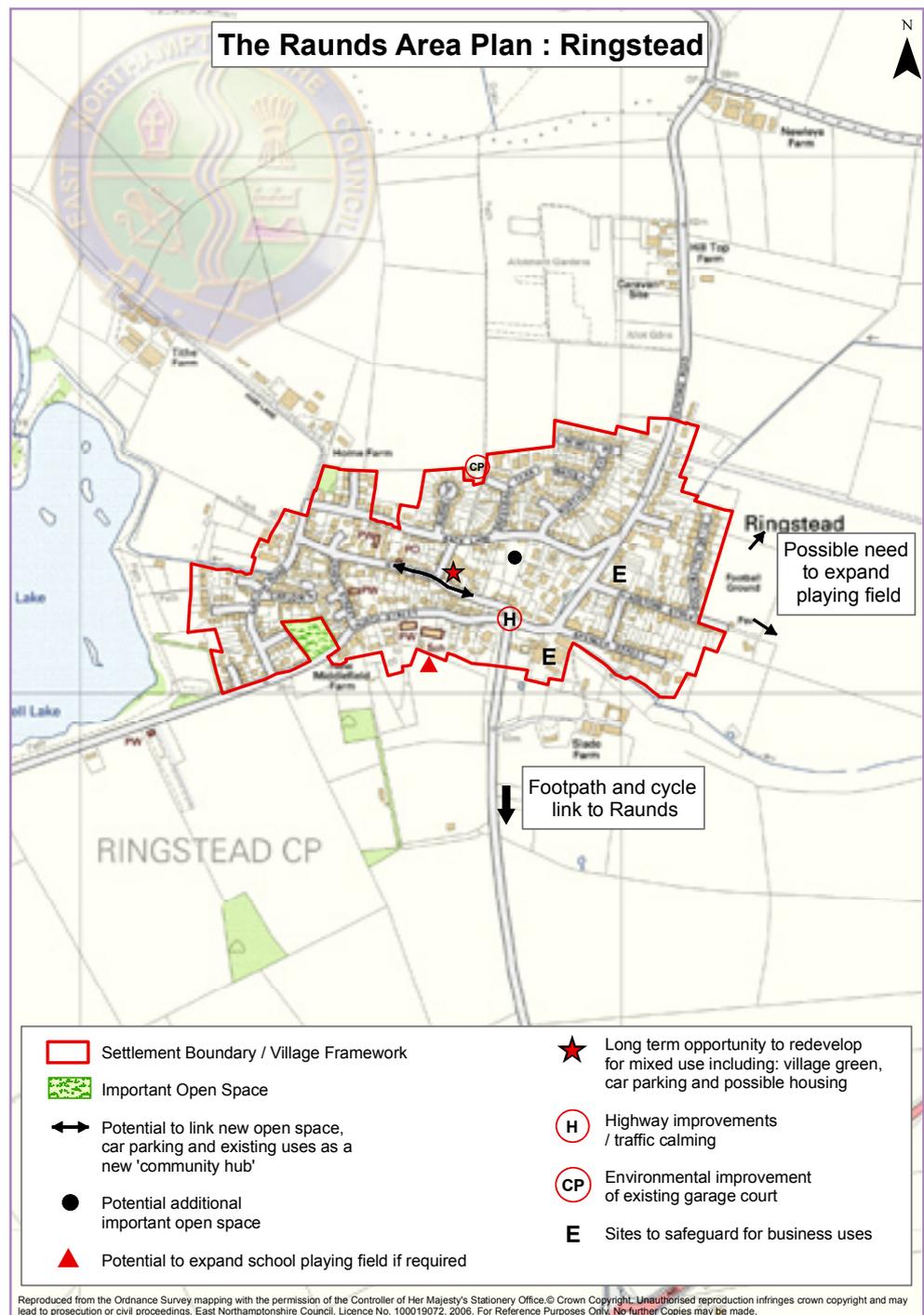
6.18 The preferred option is to limit new build development to within the village framework and to plan to meet local needs only. Opportunity sites are marked on map 8, which could provide scope for improving recreation and amenity

space (including a village green and community hub), provide for local needs and affordable housing, improve car parking facilities and lead to widespread environmental improvements.

Other Options Considered

6.19 Do not identify potential opportunity sites for various uses. This was rejected as where it is possible to suggest sites that could meet local requirements; it was considered better to include these in the document for the purposes of public consultation.

Map 8 – Preferred options for Ringstead



Stanwick

6.20 Stanwick is a large network village with a 2006 population estimate of approximately 1,950. There has been a lot of development and in-migration since the 1991 census, which showed a population of 1481: a 32% increase. There have been 11 dwellings completed since 2001 and there were a further 3 units with planning permission at the last survey in April 2006. Development to the north east of the village has encroached upon the gap between Stanwick and Raunds and it is important that the remaining gap between the settlements is maintained.

6.21 Although there is a range of local services and employment within the village, it is closely associated with Raunds and does not function as a service centre for a wider area or group of settlements. The large scale development on sites such as Hill House Gardens and Mallows Grange has not been matched by improvements to local infrastructure; although there was recently an extension to the primary school, partly funded by development at the Grange. The school is however on quite a constrained site and the Education Authority will need to advise whether there may be a need to identify land for further extension and improvement over the Plan period.

6.22 Recreation and amenity space are particularly lacking for a village of this size – the largest in East Northamptonshire. Any additions that are necessary to the school facilities may have a knock on effect on the land available for playing fields, therefore also requiring these to be extended. The Parish Council has identified a need to provide an additional football pitch and associated facilities at the existing recreation ground off Needham Road; and an aspiration for a Pocket Park to the east of the village, which could provide for informal recreation and children's play space.

6.23 Although bypassed some time ago, the village still experiences heavy through traffic as people tend to cut through on their way to Raunds. The junction of Wetenhall Road and Raunds Road would benefit from works to slow speeding traffic between Stanwick and Raunds.

6.24 The village overlooks the Nene Valley SSSI and proposed Ramsar Site/Special Protection Area (SPA), on the opposite side of the A45 trunk road. The countryside recreation facilities at Stanwick Lakes are close by but not currently very accessible to the local community due to the severance caused by the A45 (which is proposed for further dualling within the Plan period). A bridge for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders would significantly improve access and the aim is for this to be provided as part of the dualling/highway improvements, with the aim of enhancing green infrastructure linkages.

6.25 There is no justification for any further extension of built development beyond the identified village framework line shown on the map below. An existing important open space designation to the south west preserves the setting and approach to the village from this direction. It is equally important that the built form of the village does not further encroach upon land to the west and north west,



due to the visual impact on the wider Nene Valley, for this reason there should be no further development between the settlement boundary and the A45.

6.26 There is still significant scope for development within the village framework over the Plan period; through infilling, the redevelopment of brownfield sites and the improvement of existing housing areas. Any further development within the village should be restricted to meeting local needs, particularly for affordable housing.

6.27 The existing brownfield site within the village as indicated on map 9 should in the first instance be safeguarded/retained as employment use. If this existing use should prove unviable there may also be potential to redevelop the site to create a central village green and provide some affordable housing to meet local needs.

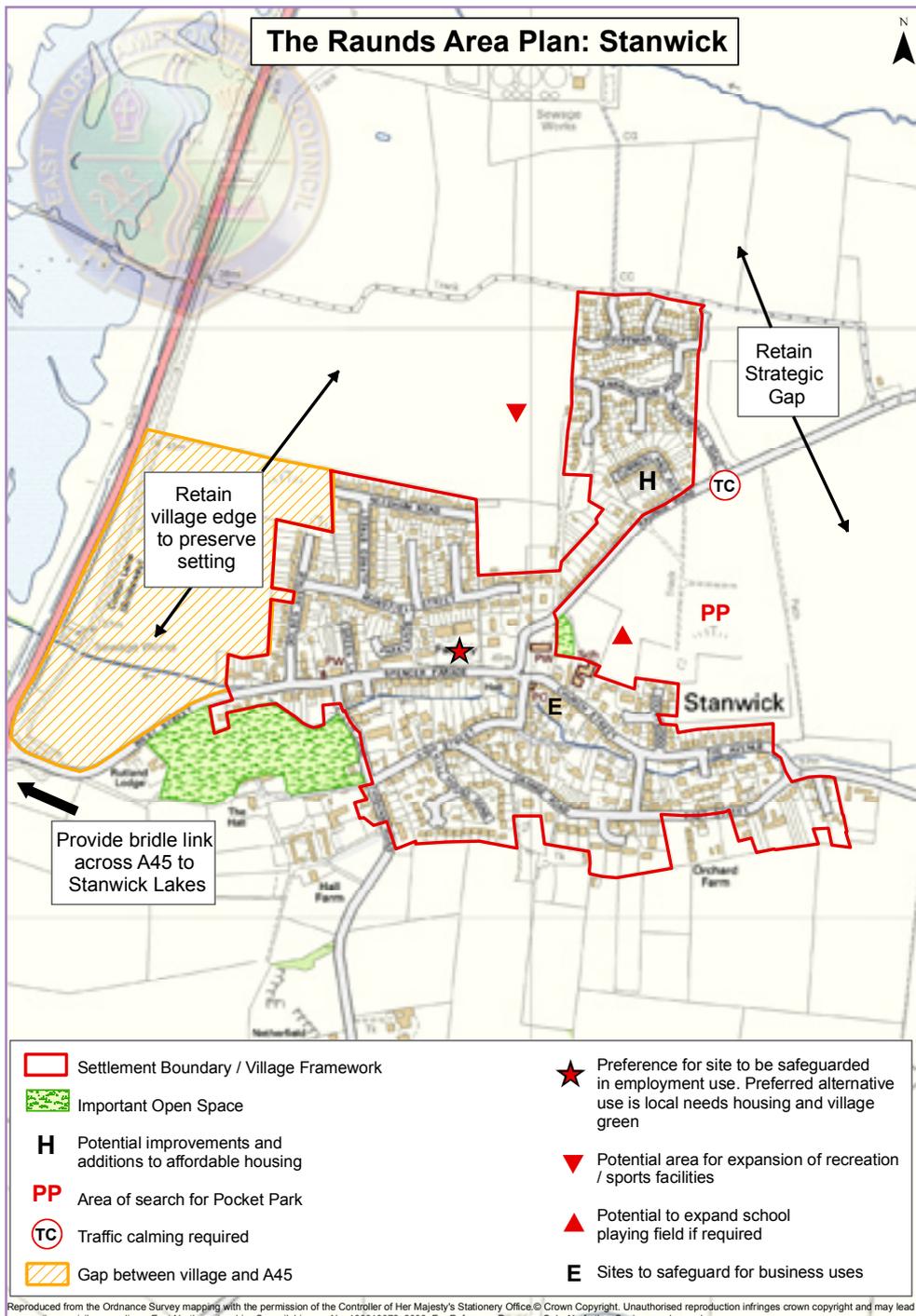
Preferred Option

6.28 The preferred option is to limit new build development to within the village framework and to plan to meet locally generated needs only. Opportunity sites are marked on map 9, and these could provide scope for improving recreation and amenity space (including a village green), provide better linkages to the wider countryside and provide for some local needs affordable housing.

Other Options Considered

6.29 Do not identify opportunity sites for affordable housing and recreation space. This was rejected as where it is possible to suggest sites that could meet local requirements; it was considered better to include these in the document for the purposes of public consultation.

Map 9 – Preferred options for Stanwick



Rural Buildings

6.30 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 re-use of these buildings can help bring under-used buildings into productive use, and if used for business purposes can help to boost the economy.

6.31 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.

6.32 Government guidance in PPS7 encourages the re-use of existing buildings in the countryside for business purposes, and states that the Plan should include criteria based policies against which proposals for the re-use 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.

6.33 PPS7 (Paragraph 17) states that business re-use 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 re-use is not viable; and
- where business re-use would generate an inappropriate number of vehicle movements in a particular location (for example, in remote locations with poor access).

Preferred Option

6.34 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

6.35 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.

6.36 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.