



East
Northamptonshire
Council

Planning Policy Committee – 18 June 2012

North Northamptonshire Core Strategy Review – Strategic site allocations

Purpose of report

To request direction by the Planning Policy Committee for the potential allocation of specific major development sites at Irthlingborough, Raunds, Rushden and Thrapston in the emerging North Northamptonshire Core Strategy Review.

Attachment(s)

Appendix 1 – Urban Extensions Study – Rushden Update (May 2012)

Appendix 2 – Urban Structures Study (North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Committee, 24 November 2011, Item 4, Appendix 3(iv))

Appendix 3 – UES Potential Growth Sectors

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 As Members of the Planning Policy Committee will be aware, a significant amount of the Planning Policy Team's workload is currently focused upon the emerging North Northamptonshire Core Strategy Review. The North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit (JPU), who are leading the project, are proposing to take a draft Pre-Submission Core Strategy Review document to the North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Committee (JPC) on 3 July.
- 1.2 The Core Strategy Review, as required by the new guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), is expected to include strategic policies to deliver the homes and jobs needed in the area (paragraph 156). As appropriate, the NPPF requires the Core Strategy Review to allocate specific development sites or indicate broad locations for strategic development (paragraph 157).

2.0 Emerging direction in respect of the Core Strategy Review

- 2.1 In accordance with the NPPF the Core Strategy Review will become the principal Local Plan document for East Northamptonshire, together with the Boroughs of Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough. Previous meetings of the North Northamptonshire JPC have agreed an emerging spatial direction, with the draft vision and outcomes for the Core Strategy Review having been approved on 12 January 2012.
- 2.2 In respect of the District, the draft vision specifies that: "East Northamptonshire will be the heartland of small and medium sized enterprises, based on regenerated and thriving market towns with an enhanced role for Rushden. Diverse, sustainable villages and a living, working countryside will provide the backdrop for tourism, creative industries and low carbon businesses to locate at the meeting point of the Nene Valley and Rockingham Forest".
- 2.3 Also of significance, the vision states that: "North Northamptonshire will be outward looking, taking advantage of its excellent strategic transport connectivity". It also makes specific reference to the role of Kettering, providing a focus for surrounding market towns and villages (including Thrapston). Critically, the vision also emphasises how the "business community will capitalise on its [Kettering's] excellent connectivity, including its position on the Trans-European A14".

3.0 Implications for East Northamptonshire

- 3.1 The emerging Core Strategy vision, given its increased focus upon Rushden, will entail the allocation of specific strategic development sites through the Core Strategy Review. At the very least, the NPPF requires that broad locations for strategic development should be identified.
- 3.2 The current (2008) Core Strategy specifies that “Site-specific Development Plan Documents may identify opportunities for smaller scale Sustainable Urban Extensions at Smaller Towns and Rural Service Centres” (Policy 9). It also explains that these **will** be brought forward at the smaller towns of Desborough, Rothwell and Irthlingborough and at the rural service centre of Raunds (paragraphs 3.80/ 4.31).
- 3.3 The issue that has arisen, particularly recognisable in the case of Raunds, is that while the current Core Strategy allocates a specific quantum of residential development, this is not supported by strategic land allocations. It was intended that specific sites would be designated through the relevant “site allocations” plan. In the case of Raunds and Irthlingborough, through the Four Towns Plan, which is at an early stage in the preparation process and will now follow the Core Strategy Review.
- 3.4 It is essential to ensure that the designation of specific towns (i.e. Rushden) to accommodate strategic urban extensions does not lead to a situation where no specific direction of growth is specified. As has already happened in the case of Raunds, it is important to ensure that other towns do not find themselves inundated with rival development schemes which, in combination, could lead to unsustainable patterns of development.

4.0 Existing and emerging evidence base for allocating strategic development sites

- 4.1 On 23 June 2011, the JPC agreed the scope and draft structure for the Core Strategy Review, including identification of the location and intended broad form of urban extensions. To this end, the JPU is currently considering a range of potential strategic site allocations or urban extensions at Irthlingborough, Raunds, Rushden/Higham Ferrers and Thrapston.
- 4.2 Much information regarding individual sites/ locations is already available through existing evidence base documents, in particular:
- Northamptonshire Strategic Employment Land Assessment (SELA), November 2009 (Atkins);
 - North Northamptonshire Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), February 2009 (Roger Tym & Partners), SHLAA update anticipated June 2012;
 - East Northamptonshire Urban Extensions Study (August 2006, December 2006).
- 4.3 These documents already provide a significant evidence base by which strategic sites may be identified. Both East Northamptonshire Council and JPU officers are currently working upon the following studies which will support this existing evidence:
- SHLAA update (anticipated June 2012);
 - East Northamptonshire Urban Extensions Study (Rushden Update – **Appendix 1**);
 - Urban Structures Study (anticipated June/ July 2012);
 - Updates to recent transport modelling work (“DIAMOND Traffic Impact Assessment, AECOM), e.g. to take account of recent commitments at Raunds.
- 4.4 These documents will inform the eventual allocation of strategic development sites

through the Core Strategy Review. They are also expected to form the basis by which smaller, non-strategic development sites will be allocated through the Four Towns Plan. The remainder of this report will briefly consider each town, together with potential locations for the development of urban extensions.

5.0 Irthlingborough

- 5.1 The 2006 Urban Extensions Study and 2009 SHLAA both identify Irthlingborough West as the most appropriate location for development. This matter was considered by the Planning Policy Committee on 23 January 2012, during the debate concerning the publication of the 2011 Annual Monitoring Report (Agenda Item 6).
- 5.2 In respect of Irthlingborough West, Members accepted that while the Core Spatial Strategy does not explicitly allocate this site for development, Policy 9/ paragraph 4.31 specifically refer to the development of a Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE) at Irthlingborough. Development of an SUE to the west of the town as the preferable direction for growth is also being considered through the current masterplanning exercise, and the Urban Extensions Study and 2009 SHLAA both provide clear evidence that this is the most suitable site.
- 5.3 Accordingly, the development of an SUE at Irthlingborough West, currently the subject of an application (including 700 dwellings), was included within the 2011 AMR as an emerging site allocation. In this case, the existing evidence base clearly identifies a preferred location for an Irthlingborough urban extension; to the west of the town. On this basis, the site may come forward in accordance with Policy 9 in the adopted (2008) Core Strategy.

6.0 Raunds

- 6.1 As Members are aware, a large quantum of development around Raunds has recently been granted planning permission:
- Northdale End (Raunds North East) – 310 dwellings;
 - Phase 2, Warth Park (Raunds West) – >105,000 m² employment land;
 - RPC Containers, Grove Street (south of town centre) – 58 dwellings;
 - West End, Brick Kiln Road (Raunds North) – 230 dwellings/ >18,000m² employment land;
 - Darsdale Farm, Chelveston Road (Raunds South) – 460 dwellings.
- 6.2 These consents total over 1000 dwellings and approximately 130,000m² of new employment land. This exceeds the current Core Strategy housing target for the next decade (830 dwellings, 2011-21) and these schemes are also anticipated to deliver a significant number of jobs (2000-2500).
- 6.3 The 2011 Raunds Masterplan identified tension about the scale and location of growth at the town. A reduction in the proposed level of growth over the next decade (from approximately 800, down to 500 homes) emerged from discussions with the stakeholder group. This was derived from an average of housing completions in the town over the past 14 years. This figure, and the basis for it, came from resident-led suggestions, and were subject to group discussions.
- 6.4 There is also potential for further schemes to come forward over and above those sites already committed; e.g. Raunds West, Raunds East and Raunds North (between the Northdale End and West End sites). However, given the quantum of development already committed and the local aspirations identified through the 2011 Masterplan, it is not considered appropriate to consider further development of a strategic scale at Raunds through the Core Strategy Review.

7.0 Rushden/ Higham Ferrers

7.1 One of the main aspects of the Core Strategy Review concerns the future spatial development strategy for the Rushden/ Higham Ferrers urban area. At the recent JPC meeting (12 January 2012), Members endorsed the view that Rushden should be either a growth town or a supporting growth town. This raises two key issues:

- Should the Rushden/ Higham Ferrers urban area be considered as a single entity for the purposes of defining a growth strategy for the two towns or should they (as with the current Core Strategy) be classified as entirely separate entities?
- What would be the most appropriate location for a significant new urban extension?

7.2 In addition to the Urban Extensions Study (UES) and SHLAA, the JPU is currently working to produce an Urban Structures Study (USS). Some key findings of this emerging project, which assesses the 12 towns in North Northamptonshire looking at their existing structure of streets and open spaces and how this allows people to get around, were considered by JPC Members on 24 November 2011 (**Appendix 2**).

7.3 The USS has considered Rushden and Higham Ferrers as being a single urban area. In the case of the two towns, the UES found the following potential directions of growth to have the highest potential:

- South, towards the railway (Midland Main Line);
- East of the A6.

7.4 The 2006 UES and the draft Rushden update (Appendix 1) provide a more systematic assessment of the possible directions of growth for Rushden and Higham Ferrers. These identify:

- 7 potential growth sectors (Rushden);
- 3 potential growth sectors (Higham Ferrers, south of A45/ River Nene).

7.5 **Appendix 3** summarises the findings of the main studies. It considers each of the 10 potential growth sectors in turn and whether each of these represents an appropriate location for a strategic urban extension within the Core Strategy Review. Appendix 3 identifies the following potential growth sectors as possible locations for a new urban extension:

- Rushden East – East of A6 Bypass, between John Clark Way and Newton Road (RUS3);
- Rushden West – Between A45 and Irchester Road/ Knuston (B569), as far as Midland Main Line Railway (RUS5);
- Rushden South West – Between Irchester Road/ Knuston (B569) and Wymington, as far as Midland Main Line Railway (RUS6);
- Higham Ferrers South East – Between John Clark Way (Rushden) and Chelveston Road (B645) (HIG1);
- Higham Ferrers North East – Between Chelveston Road (B645) and A45 (HIG2).

7.6 Emerging development proposals of a strategic scale, such as the proposed Rushden Lakes/ Skew Bridge retail scheme, will have an impact on the preferable locations for development. For example, if the Rushden Lakes/ Skew Bridge scheme is permitted, this will have a significant bearing upon the relative merits of these possible alternative

directions of growth.

- 7.7 As explained by Appendix 3, each of the locations/ potential directions of growth raises different issues. Members should also note that RUS5 and RUS6 fall wholly outside the District and any moves to bring these forward would require agreement between Bedford Borough Council, Borough Council of Wellingborough and East Northamptonshire Council under the “Duty to Cooperate” (2011 Localism Act).

8.0 Thrapston

- 8.1 The Rural North, Oundle and Thrapston Plan (RNOTP) already includes the allocation of a significant strategic development site for 600-700 dwellings (Thrapston South, THR5). Furthermore, the emerging Vision for the Core Strategy Review emphasises the importance of the A14 as a major strategic road serving the area and linking Kettering and Thrapston to both the Midlands and East Anglian ports (Felixstowe and Harwich).
- 8.2 This has implications for Thrapston and the SELA (2009) identifies a major 50ha development opportunity to the east of the A605 Thrapston Bypass, between Thrapston and Titchmarsh. This land, in single ownership, has been identified as a potential strategic employment land allocation for warehousing and distribution, which would massively expand the existing Haldens Parkway employment area.
- 8.3 If Members are supportive of such a proposal, it will be necessary to allocate this land as a strategic employment site through the Core Strategy Review. This will entail setting out key development criteria within the emerging Review.

9.0 Conclusion

- 9.1 This report is presented to Members in order to secure a formal direction by the Planning Policy Committee in respect of the potential allocation of strategic development sites through the emerging North Northamptonshire Core Strategy Review. It explains the emerging Core Strategy Vision, the supporting evidence base and how these will affect future patterns of development within the District.
- 9.2 Members are asked to consider and provide a formal direction on the following:

- 1. Whether the explicit designation of Irthlingborough West as a strategic urban extension in the emerging Core Strategy Review should be endorsed, given that the current (2008) Core Strategy (Policy 9) already implicitly provides direction to this effect?**
- 2. Whether any further potential strategic sites should be identified at Raunds, given the quantum of land which is already committed for development?**
- 3. Given the proposals to designate Rushden as a Growth Town through the emerging Core Strategy Review, where would be the best location for a future strategic urban extension?**
- 4. Whether land east of the A605 Thrapston Bypass (north of Haldens Parkway) would be appropriate as a strategic employment site?**

10.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

- 10.1 There are no equality and diversity implications.

11.0 Legal Implications

11.1 Members will be aware of the recent changes to the planning system, introduced through the 2011 Localism Act. Under the “Duty to Cooperate” within the Localism Act, East Northamptonshire Council must continue to engage closely, constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis with neighbouring local planning authorities in preparing Development Plan Documents (the “Local Plan”).

12.0 Risk Management

12.1 If no agreement is reached between the constituent local planning authorities (Corby, East Northamptonshire, Kettering and Wellingborough) in taking the Core Strategy Review forward this may lead to a policy vacuum in the medium term. East Northamptonshire would struggle to resist inappropriate development proposals coming forward in the absence of an up to date strategic Local Plan (i.e. Core Strategy Review).

13.0 Financial Implications

13.1 None. The Core Strategy Review is being undertaken by officers already employed through East Northamptonshire Council and the North Northamptonshire JPU.

14.0 Corporate Outcomes

14.1 The relevant Corporate Outcomes are:

- Good quality of life – prosperous, sustainable
- Effective partnership working
- Strong community leadership

15.0 Recommendations

15.1 It is requested that Members endorse the following:

- **Designation of Irthlingborough West as a strategic land allocation (urban extension) in the initial draft Core Strategy Review document for consultation, ahead of the formal consultation on the Pre-Submission Draft Core Strategy Review (autumn 2012);**
- **No designation of further specific strategic site allocations at Raunds in the Pre-Submission Draft Core Strategy Review;**
- **Allocation of land east of the A605 Thrapston Bypass (north of Haldens Parkway) as a strategic employment site in the Pre-Submission Draft Core Strategy Review.**

15.2 **Members are requested to give a direction as to the Planning Policy Committee’s preferred location for a new strategic urban extension at Rushden**

(Reason – to ensure progress is made with preparing the Pre-Submission Draft Core Strategy Review document).

Legal	Power: Localism Act 2011; Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004
	Other considerations: None
Background Papers: East Northamptonshire Urban Extensions Study (August 2006, December 2006) North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Committee papers (23 June 2011, 24	

November 2011, 12 January 2012, 26 April 2012)					
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