



**Planning Policy Committee
30th July 2018**

**Draft Local Plan Part 2 – Area Portrait, Vision
and Outcomes, Spatial Strategy**

Purpose of report

The revised Local Development Scheme (LDS) anticipates the Local Plan Part 2 to be submitted to the Secretary of State by late spring/ early summer 2019, with adoption by December 2019. In order to achieve these milestones it is necessary for Committee to approve relevant sections of the draft Local Plan, with a view to undertaking wider consultation on the draft text during Autumn 2018, prior to pre submission in Spring 2019. This report provides the overall spatial development strategy (introductory part of the Local Plan Part 2), for consideration and agreement in advance of the public consultation.

Attachments:

Appendix 1 Draft Local Plan text (Area Portrait, Vision and Spatial Development Strategy)

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Local Plan Part 2 will, when adopted, form part of the statutory development plan for East Northamptonshire. It will set out the more detailed District-level site specific and non-strategic policies, to accompany the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS) 2011-2031 (Local Plan Part 1), and made Neighbourhood Plans.
- 1.2 Preparation of the Local Plan Part 2 formally commenced with the first (issues) consultation, under the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, as amended (Regulation 18). This ran between January and March 2017; findings of the consultation were reported to the Planning Policy Committee on 3 April 2017 (Item 5).
- 1.3 The Regulation 18 consultation was followed by three rounds of engagement workshop events, for Members and Town/ Parish Councils:
 - **May – October 2017** – Topic/ theme based Member workshops; reported to Planning Policy Committee, 27 November 2017;
 - **November 2017 – January 2018** – Area focused (town centre/ urban area and rural area) Member workshops; reported to Planning Policy Committee, 19 February 2018;
 - **February – April 2018** – Town and Parish Council Workshops; reported to Planning Policy Committee, 23 April 2018.
- 1.4 The Regulation 18 consultation and subsequent workshops have enabled local issues to be identified, to inform the emerging draft text for the Local Plan Part 2. This report allows for Members to formally consider the introductory section of the emerging Local Plan Part 2; the Area Portrait, Vision and Outcomes, and Spatial Development Strategy.

2.0 Draft Plan – Area Portrait

- 2.1 The Area Portrait will form the second section (2.0) of the published version of the Local Plan Part 2. The first (introductory) section will set out the procedural and legal requirements for plan-making, which will need to be finalised for the published version (Pre-Submission) draft Local Plan Part 2 by early 2019.
- 2.2 The Area Portrait is the “scene setting” part of the Local Plan. It provides a historical narrative and explains key features and matters that define each of the six towns (Rushden, Higham Ferrers, Irthlingborough, Oundle, Raunds and Thrapston). It also highlights where Neighbourhood Plans may have implications for the Local Plan Part 2, in terms of the content and scope of the Plan.
- 2.3 The Area Portrait also describes the main elements of the rural areas. It defines three distinctive spatial parts of the rural area:
- Rockingham Forest and Welland Valley;
 - Nene Valley;
 - Rural hinterland for the predominantly urban southern area.
- 2.4 The Area Portrait provides the basis for understanding the purpose and rationale for policies within the main body of the Plan.

3.0 Draft Plan – Vision and Outcomes

- 3.1 The strategic element of the Local Plan Vision and Outcomes is set out in the JCS. The draft Local Plan Part 2 section 3.0 recognises this, but has considered where further, local detail is necessary; i.e.:
- Three main spatial elements of the district, supported by visions for each of these sub-areas, recognising their homogenous spatial character;
 - Local Plan (JCS) Outcomes and how these relate to the Council’s Corporate Outcomes;
 - Application of the presumption in favour of sustainable development for the Plan.
- 3.2 The main policies within the Local Plan Part 2 itself will all flow from the Vision and Outcomes. As for the Joint Core Strategy (Local Plan Part 1), the Plan will state which policies connect to which Outcomes.

4.0 Draft Plan – Spatial Development Strategy

- 4.1 The Spatial Development Strategy (section 4.0) is the first section of the main Local Plan document. It applies the overarching principles of Core Strategy Policy 11 and Table 1 (Network of Urban and Rural Areas) within the East Northamptonshire context.
- 4.2 It addresses the following issues:
- Recognition of the differing spatial development strategies for each of the six towns already defined by Policy 11/ Table 1 of the Core Strategy;
 - More detailed spatial development strategy for rural settlements; i.e. large villages, small villages, urban outliers and restraint villages (regarded as open countryside);

- Definition of “villages” or rural settlements to which Core Strategy Policy 11(2)(b) and Table 1 should apply, together with restraint villages which should be regarded as open countryside;
- Detailed settlement boundary criteria for urban and rural settlements, to inform Neighbourhood Plans (where these are being prepared), or integrate “made” Neighbourhood Plans with the Local Plan Part 2.

4.3 Subsequent sections of the Local Plan Part 2 are divided into specific themes. These are based around the proposed scope of the Plan (subject of a separate report; Agenda Item 6):

- **Section 5.0: Natural Capital** – environment, green infrastructure, energy, leisure and recreation;
- **Section 6.0: Social Capital** – design, culture, heritage, tourism, health and wellbeing, community infrastructure;
- **Section 7.0: Economic Prosperity** – employment, economy, town centres/ retail;
- **Section 8.0: Housing Delivery** – housing mix/ tenure, affordable housing, specialist housing, market delivery, site specific allocations ;
- **Section 9.0: Town Strategies** – Higham Ferrers, Irthlingborough, Oundle, Raunds, Rushden, Thrapston;
- **Section 10.0: Monitoring and implementation.**

5.0 Conclusion

5.1 The draft text for the introductory sections of the emerging Local Plan Part 2 is presented to Committee for approval. It sets out the overarching direction of the Plan, which will be supported by more detailed policies within the remainder of the document.

5.2 This report seeks approval of the Planning Policy Committee for the initial sections 2.0-4.0 of the draft Local Plan Part 2. The subsequent sections (3.0-10.0) of the draft Plan will be presented to the next Planning Policy Committee, on 17 September 2018.

6.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

6.1 There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this report. The Local Plan Part 2 will undergo Equalities Impact Assessment screening as an integral part of the Plan preparation process.

7.0 Legal Implications

7.1 The forthcoming (Autumn 2018) consultation 2 is a non-statutory consultation. Therefore there are no legal implications arising from this report.

8.0 Risk Management

8.1 The Local Plan has an accompanying project risk register. This indicates that current resources will need to be increased in order to deliver a sound plan within the revised Local Development Scheme milestones.

9.0 Resource and Financial Implications

9.1 There are no direct resources or financial implications arising from this report.

10.0 Constitutional Implications

10.1 There are no constitutional implications arising from this report.

11.0 Customer Service Implications

11.1 There are no customer service implications arising from this report.

12.0 Privacy Implications

12.1 There are no customer service implications arising from this report.

13.0 Corporate Outcomes

13.1 The relevant Corporate Outcomes are:

- Good Quality of Life – Prosperous and Sustainable: Regeneration and Economic Development, Sustainable Development, High Quality Built Environment
- Effective partnership working
- Effective management
- Knowledge of our customers and communities

14.0 Recommendation

14.1 The Committee is recommended to:

- i) Approve the draft text and policies for the introductory sections of the emerging Local Plan Part 2, for consultation during autumn 2018 as follows:
 - Section 2.0: Area Portrait;
 - Section 3.0: Vision and Outcomes; and
 - Section 4.0: Spatial Development Strategy.

(Reason – to allow the indicated sections of the Plan to be prepared for an initial non-statutory consultation for the emerging draft District-wide Local Plan Part 2 to take place during the Autumn)

Legal	Power: Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012				
	Other considerations: National Planning Policy Framework North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy				
Background Papers: None					
Person Originating Report: Richard Palmer Planning Policy and Conservation Manager Michael Burton Principal Planning Policy Officer ☎ 01832 74(2142/2221) ✉ rpalmer@east-northamptonshire.gov.uk mburton@east-northamptonshire.gov.uk					
Date: 07/02/2017					
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Appendix 1: Draft Local Plan Part 2 text

- **Area Portrait**
- **Vision and Outcomes**
- **Spatial Development Strategy**

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1.0 Introduction / Foreword (Headings)

1.1 Foreword:

- The Layout of the Local Plan Part 2

1.2 Introduction:

- What work has already been done?
- Where this Plan sits in the Planning system
- Context for Neighbourhood Planning
- Duty to Cooperate
- Soundness tests
- Legal compliance
- Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment
- Habitat Regulations Assessment
- Equalities Impact Assessment
- Delivery, Monitoring and Review

2.0 Area Portrait

Introduction – Background to the Plan area

- 2.1 The Local Plan Part 2 covers the whole of the District of East Northamptonshire. It provides additional district/ sub-district level policy detail to support the overarching spatial strategy for North Northamptonshire set out in the Local Plan Part 1; the Joint Core Strategy (JCS), adopted in July 2016.
- 2.2 The Plan area contains contrasting rural and urban aspects. The Area Portrait (section 2.0) provides background contextual information for the Plan. These concepts are developed further; through the Vision and Outcomes (section 3.0), and the Spatial Development Strategy (section 4.0), before providing more detailed thematic and site specific policies which make up the remainder of this document.
- 2.3 This Area Portrait provides background information for each of the six towns within the district; starting with the designated Growth Town (Rushden) and then considering the other five Market Towns (Higham Ferrers, Irthlingborough, Oundle, Raunds and Thrapston). Each of these designated Market Towns has its own character and functional role. These distinctive characteristics are recognised through this Plan.
- 2.4 These towns have all undergone significant population growth (Table 1, below); with an overall 20% increase occurring in the urban areas over the past 15 years (2001-2016). Proportionally, Higham Ferrers, Irthlingborough and Thrapston have seen the highest levels of growth (30% or more).
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Table 1	Population (2001 Census)	Population (2011 Census)	Population (2016 estimate)	Population increase (2001-16)	% increase (2001-16)
Rushden	25,849	29,272	30,282	4,433	17.1%
Higham Ferrers	6,086	8,083	8,410	2,324	38.2%
Irthlingborough	7,033	8,535	9,112	2,079	29.6%
Oundle	5,345	5,735	6,177	832	15.6%
Raunds	8,275	8,641	8,809	534	6.5%
Thrapston	4,855	6,239	6,361	1,506	31.0%
TOTAL	57,443	66,505	69,151	11,708	20.4%

- 2.5 The Plan sets out similar information for the rural areas, recognising the contrasting geographical characteristics within the district. It also notes the implications of Neighbourhood Plans which have been “made” (adopted) since 2016.

Urban areas

Rushden: Growth Town

- 2.6 Rushden, once described as an ‘appendage’ to Higham (*Kelly’s Trade Directory, 1854*), underwent a dramatic expansion and industrialisation in the late 19th century. A once rural village was turned in to a thriving centre for the boot and shoe industry. Many buildings, including former factories, social clubs, chapels, churches and housing, dating from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, survive and are a strong reminder of the town’s heritage. A number of buildings predate the boot and shoe boom, which glimpse the former landscape setting; these can most noticeably be seen in Rushden Hall, as well as St Mary’s Church and a number of buildings along the High Street.
- 2.7 Rushden today, whilst being the most southern town within the district, is very much the urban hub of the predominantly urban southern part of the district. It is by far the largest town within the district and has seen substantial population growth over the past 15 years, from just below 26,000 (25,849; 2001 Census) to over 30,000 (30,282; 2016 estimate). The town is flanked by a number of industrial sites to the east and west, whilst more recent housing developments have expanded the town to the south and east.
- 2.8 Rushden is designated as a Growth Town in the Local Plan Part 1 (North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2011-2031), and is expected to undertake a significant amount of development over the plan period. The wider town contains a mix of existing leisure facilities, businesses and services as well as forthcoming leisure, retail and business opportunities; most notably Rushden Lakes (opened in 2017) and the proposed mixed use development of the Rushden East Sustainable Urban Extension, adjoining the eastern side of the town. The growth for the area is anticipated to provide for greater investment and value within Rushden.

Rushden Neighbourhood Plan (made June 2018)

- 2.9 The recently “made” Rushden Neighbourhood Plan contains a range of detailed non-strategic policies for the town and its hinterland. These policies form part of the development plan for the area, sitting alongside the Local Plan. They include smaller housing site allocations within the main urban area of Rushden detailed development management policies and site specific designations such as open spaces and town
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centres. The Local Plan Part 2 will provide additional policies for the town, where they are needed to ensure comprehensive development plan coverage for Rushden.

Higham Ferrers

- 2.10 Higham Ferrers, the home of some of East Northamptonshire's oldest buildings, benefits from a vibrant and attractive historic core. The architecture of the Church of St Mary the Virgin, its prominent spire and the group of buildings that surround the churchyard (all Grade I Listed Buildings) add a certain theatrical zeal to the sense of place, with many positive and landmark buildings in and adjacent to the town centre and College Street (Chichele College and The Green Dragon, for instance).
- 2.11 Over the years Higham has had its fair share of residents and visitors. It is the birth place of Henry Chichele (Archbishop of Canterbury 1414 – 1443 and the founder of All Souls College Oxford) who established Higham Ferrers School in 1422. The Duchy of Lancaster is a key landowner in and around the town, acknowledging the town's Royal connections.
- 2.12 Higham Ferrers is the historic market town for the south of the district, having been granted a market charter in 1251. Proportionally it has undergone the largest population growth (over 38%) of the six towns within the district during the previous 15 years (2001-16); from just over 6000 (6086; 2001 Census) to just over 8400 (8410; 2016 estimate).
- 2.13 To the north of Higham, new housing developments have led to an extended settlement away from its historic core. This has resulted in a closer physical link to Irthlingborough, although separated by the A45/ A6 Chowns Mill roundabout and the 20th century Irthlingborough viaduct, under which flows the River Nene.

Higham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan (made April 2016)

- 2.14 The Higham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan was the first in the district to be "made" (adopted), setting out a range of site specific proposals and designations, including the town centre, local green space, main employment areas, proposed Greenway extensions and providing a strategic housing land allocation of 300 dwellings to the east of Ferrers School.

Irthlingborough

- 2.15 Irthlingborough is separated from the other southern urban centres of Rushden, Higham Ferrers and Raunds by the River Nene. It was historically involved in the iron and gravel mining industry and much of the surrounding landscape is shaped by this historic activity. The church of St Peter, with its distinctive lantern tower, dominates the sky line and holds dominion over the north side of the Nene Valley.
 - 2.16 Whilst Irthlingborough has a historic association with excavation and the landscape is well related to this, much like the other towns in the south of the district, industrialisation due to the boot and shoe industry resulted in a quick expansion from a farming community to a town. The boot and shoe trade developed from an aspect of the community in the 18th century to being fully established and a prominent aspect of the town's economy by the late 19th century.
 - 2.17 Irthlingborough has seen significant population growth (approximately 30%) over the previous 15 years (2001-16). The population has increased from just over 7000 (7033; 2001 Census) to just over 9100 (9112; 2016 estimate).
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- 2.18 Most of the growth in Irthlingborough proposed over the next 15 years (i.e. during the remainder of the current Local Plan period) will be delivered through the 700 dwellings sustainable urban extension to the west of the town. Approval was granted in 2014, although discussions continue around development contributions. This and other smaller commitments to the east (Attley Way) and west (Wellingborough Road), combined with recent developments at the former Sunseeker Caravan site (Finedon Road) and Crow Hill (to the north of the main urban area), have expanded and will continue to grow the town throughout the Plan period. Annual monitoring will indicate whether any further development land allocations are needed to meet the current Local Plan Part 1 (JCS Policy 29. Table 5)) requirement for the town.

Emerging Irthlingborough Neighbourhood Plan

- 2.19 Irthlingborough Town Council applied to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan in 2014; the Neighbourhood Area designation was confirmed in December 2014. As of summer 2018 however, no draft Plan has yet been published.

Oundle

- 2.20 Oundle is the main market town and service centre for the rural north of the district. It is closely related to other larger urban centres to the north and east, namely Stamford and Peterborough. The town is situated on the inside of a large meander of the River Nene, enclosing the urban area on its north, east and south sides.
- 2.21 Oundle has been settled since the Iron Age, having been a trading place and market centre for local farmers and craftsmen for at least 1500 years. It also has significant ecclesiastical heritage; St Wilfrid set up a monastery in the 8th century, which was later replaced by the current St Peter's Church. The town underwent significant growth in the 11th and 12th centuries, such that it was then granted a market charter.
- 2.22 The town also has a longstanding academic heritage, with a grammar school first founded in 1465. Sir William Laxton, a former pupil, then founded Laxton Grammar School in 1556, which subsequently became Oundle School. These dual historic ecclesiastical and educational aspects of the town's history have combined to define the unique character of Oundle.
- 2.23 Oundle has seen some population growth during the past 15 years (2001-2016). The population has risen from just over 5300 (5345; 2001 Census) to nearly 6200 (6177; 2016 estimate) and further growth is anticipated during the remainder of the Plan period.
- 2.24 Beyond the main built up area, adjacent to the River Nene, are a number of significant riparian landmarks. To the south of the town, Barnwell Country Park and the Oundle Marina retail and leisure redevelopment scheme (permitted in 2018) provide a significant opportunity to develop the town's tourist potential. Also in close proximity to the town, on the opposite bank of the River Nene, are landmark (currently vacant) heritage assets; the Riverside Hotel to the east and Barnwell Mill to the south. It will represent a key challenge for the planning system to bring these premises back into viable uses.

Emerging Oundle Neighbourhood Plan

- 2.25 Since 2012, Oundle Town Council has been working to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan. The first draft version was published for consultation in April 2018, so a challenge for the Local Plan Part 2 will be to ensure that the respective Neighbourhood and Local Plan policies will complement one another.
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Raunds

- 2.26 Raunds, whilst not as famous as Rushden for its boot and shoe industry history, had a boom period during the 19th century, developing from an agricultural community to a town by the early 1800s. Raunds and the surrounding area contain a number of ancient monuments as well as archaeological sites of international significance.
- 2.27 The town has particularly good road transport links; the A45 trunk road which links through to the A14, allowing easy access to the M1 and A6 to the west, and A1 to the east. As such, with Raunds being the first major settlement to the south of the A14 off the A45, the town acts as a passing gate way from the more rural northern part of the district to the urban centres in the south.
- 2.28 Today, Raunds has a major strategic industrial/ warehousing area to the north west of the main urban area (Warth Park). The initial development phase at Warth Park took place during the early 2000s, with major expansion (phase 2) having taken place since 2012. The town as a whole will continue to grow, with new developments already under construction to the north, north east and south of the town. These existing commitments are expected to be delivered over the remainder of the plan period, by 2031.
- 2.29 In recent years population growth at Raunds has been limited. The population increased by 6.5% over 15 years (2001-2016), from just below 8300 (8275; 2001 Census) to just over 8800 (8809; 2016 estimate). Accelerated population growth is anticipated during the remainder of the Plan period, as the major urban extensions around the town are implemented.

Raunds Neighbourhood Plan (made November 2017)

- 2.30 The “made” Raunds Neighbourhood Plan contains a range of detailed non-strategic policies for the town and its rural hinterland, many of which would otherwise be covered by the Local Plan Part 2. It does not allocate further development land allocations, as all of the required growth is already delivered, under construction or permitted. Instead, the Neighbourhood Plan focuses upon the re-imagining of the town centre and the retention of existing assets including employment areas, community facilities and open spaces.

Thrapston

- 2.31 Thrapston is a historic market town, situated midway along the River Nene within the district. It was granted a market charter in 1205; soon after a bridge crossing the river was constructed between Thrapston and the neighbouring village of Islip on the opposite (west) bank of the river (first recorded in 1224). The current nine arches bridge is more recent, although it is likely that this was constructed as a replacement for the earlier bridge.
- 2.32 Thrapston is situated at a significant cross roads, between the Northampton – Peterborough road (A45/ A605), which follows the Nene Valley and the main east-west trunk road (now the A14) which connects east coast ports with the West Midlands conurbation (Birmingham, Coventry and the Black Country). Since the 1980s it has functioned as the administrative centre for East Northamptonshire Council, largely due to its central location within the district.
- 2.33 Thrapston has seen significant population growth (over 30%) over the previous 15 years (2001-2016). The population has increased from below 5000 (4855; 2001 Census), to nearly 6400 (6361; 2016 estimate). This is largely due to major new development at
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Lazy Acre, on the north east side of the urban area. Development to the south of the town is currently under construction, “filling the gap” between the current built-up/ urban area and the A14.

- 2.34 Despite the significant population increase and situation on the main strategic road network Thrapston retains its rural character, with agriculture remaining a significant sector of the local economy. Notably, the town retains its cattle market, the sole remaining livestock market in the counties of Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire. Like Raunds, Thrapston also is also host to a number of national logistics and distribution centres, due to its location on the strategic road network, particularly the east-west A14 and A45 trunk roads. In addition a number of businesses are located in the town, including the District Council offices.

The rural area

- 2.35 The district is subdivided by the A14, the main East Coast – Midlands Trunk Road. This divides East Northamptonshire between the more urban southern area and predominantly rural northern parts of the district. Three distinctive rural sub-areas are noted:
- Nene Valley, including agricultural Claylands to the east of the River Nene;
 - Rockingham Forest – to the north west of the Nene Valley, south east of the Welland Valley and north of the A14, including the major tributaries of the River Nene (Harper’s Brook and Willow Brook); and
 - Rural hinterland for the predominantly urban southern area of the district, to the south of the A14 (also known as the Four Towns area).

Nene Valley

- 2.36 The Nene Valley is the major feature which defines the whole of the district. It rises above (to the west of) Northampton and flows south west/ north east, entering the Wash at Sutton Bridge, Lincolnshire. It is a major national waterway, with the vast majority of the area of the district situated within the River Nene catchment area.
- 2.37 The importance of the River Nene to the district has long been recognised (e.g. through the River Nene Regional Park). The Nene Valley Strategic Plan (October 2010¹) recognised the vast variety of functions of the River Nene and sought to bring environmental, leisure, tourism, economic, planning and land use matters in a single document. This was subsequently implemented through a number of more focused projects, such as “Destination Nene Valley” (DNV), a new pathfinding partnership project aiming to build on existing frameworks to better position and promote the Nene Valley, and the Nene Valley Improvement Area (NIA), designated 2011, and supported by the NIA business Plan, which seeks to achieve a step-change in the mechanisms for delivering nature conservation to create a resilient ecological network along the river valley.
- 2.38 All of the six towns within the district are situated on, or in close proximity to, the River Nene. Historically, the river has been a major communications link. The River Nene is navigable for 88 miles, between Northampton and the Wash. It was approved for navigation under a 1724 Act of Parliament, with works to make the river navigable from

¹ <http://www.riverneneregionalpark.org/publications/>

Peterborough upstream to Northampton progressively implemented between then and 1761.

- 2.39 A branch of the London and Birmingham Railway was later constructed along the Nene Valley between Blisworth and Peterborough, and opened in 1845. This functioned as a secondary railway link and, although an important freight route for iron ore trains, was eventually closed in the 1960s. The Nene Valley has also been a major arterial road route since Roman times. Indeed, much of the A45/ A605 road link within the district (connecting Milton Keynes, Northampton, Peterborough and East Anglia) follows the route of a former Roman road.
- 2.40 Within the district a number of villages are situated on, or in close proximity to, the River Nene. These are Ringstead, Denford, Islip, Thorpe Waterville, Aldwincle, Wadenhoe, Pilton, Lilford, Ashton, Cotterstock, Tansor, Fotheringhay, Warmington, Nassington and Yarwell. These villages also host a number of historic assets, including notable Buildings at Risk (Ashton Mill and Lilford Hall) and the nationally significant historic monument of Fotheringhay Castle.
- 2.41 The Claylands to the east of the Nene Valley also include a number of nationally important sites of historic interest. In 2010, the Ashton Estate (with Ashton Wold) was designated a Grade II Park and Garden under the Register of Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 for its special historic interest, having been developed by the Rothchild family as a model agricultural estate in the late 19th/ early 20th centuries. Other important features to the east of the Nene Valley include Barnwell Castle, first built in the 12th century and subsequently used as a Royalist arsenal in the Civil War. The landscape of the Claylands is defined by its open character, extensive views and intensive agricultural economy.
- 2.42 Overall, the Nene Valley and Claylands to the east include a number of significant heritage assets, some of national importance (e.g. Fotheringhay Castle, Ashton Estate). To the south (upstream) of Thorpe Waterville, much of the Nene Valley is covered by the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA/ Ramsar site, an internationally important habitat for migrating winter birds. The Local Plan, with reference to the various Nene Valley strategies, should accommodate the (sometimes) competing matters of tourism, heritage and the natural environment.

Rockingham Forest and Welland Valley

- 2.43 To the west of the River Nene, the largest geographical area of the rural part of the district is defined by the Rockingham Forest. This area was designated a royal hunting forest in the 11th century, a role that continued until the 19th century. Despite this designation the area was not extensively forested; rather, the name arose from its royal designation.
- 2.44 The Rockingham forest is bisected by Harper's Brook and Willow Brook, two main tributaries of the Nene; both flow west-east. The Rockingham Forest defines most of rural north part of the district, to the north of the A14 and west of the Nene Valley. It supports many rural communities but is closely connected to a number of urban areas; Oundle and Thrapston to the east, Corby to the west and Stamford to the north.
- 2.45 Within the heart of the forest itself are a small number of larger rural settlements, some which function as service centres for a wider rural hinterland. The larger service villages
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within the Rockingham Forest include Brigstock, Easton on the Hill, King's Cliffe and Nassington.

- 2.46 The River Welland forms a north western boundary to the Rockingham Forest. Villages such as Easton on the Hill and Collyweston are situated upon a prominent ridge which overlooks the Welland Valley. Other villages such as Duddington, Harringworth and Wakerley are defined by the Welland Valley. The Welland Valley Partnership has recently developed a vision² for the enhancement of the river valley, emphasising the resource that the river provides for the northernmost part of the district.
- 2.47 The Welland Valley is defined by a number of significant features. The Harringworth Viaduct is the longest in Britain, carrying the former Midland Railway's Nottingham – Melton – Kettering loop line. It is also defined by a number of historic stone bridges (Collyweston, Duddington and Wakerley) together with the 20th century Ketton cement works (Rutland).
- 2.48 The Rockingham Forest and Welland Valley combine to define the largest parts of the rural area of the district. The role of the Rockingham Forest is already recognised in the Core Strategy, which identifies its role in carbon storage through the Government's Carbon Plan. The role of the Welland Valley as a defining feature for the northern part of the district should also be recognised; it is noted that the Barrowden and Wakerley Neighbourhood Plan provides some detailed local policy direction for green infrastructure enhancements along the Welland Valley.

Rural hinterland for the predominantly urban southern area

- 2.49 Whilst the southern area (that south of the A14) is made up of a far denser urban core than the northern part of the district, its rural hinterland is still an intrinsic feature of the southern part of the East Northamptonshire district. Several smaller settlements are present located in close proximity to the urban centres. These vary in size from the larger villages of Stanwick and Ringstead to the smaller picturesque rural parishes of Chelveston cum Caldecott, Great Addington, Little Addington, Hargrave and Newton Bromswold.
- 2.50 Stanwick and Ringstead both benefit from local facilities, typical of villages of their size (e.g. convenience store, post office, fast food takeaway and a pub). These serve primarily local needs, however travel out of these villages is necessary for other local amenities. The two villages benefit from their own primary schools. Stanwick also has a large recreation ground that adjoins the north eastern end of the village which offers sporting provision. Just outside the village, west of the A45 is Stanwick Lakes, a large nature reserve with visitor centre, walking, cycling and leisure opportunities. To the west of Ringstead is the Willy Watt Marina, a site for mooring boats as well as providing camping opportunities.
- 2.51 Also within the southern area are the freestanding villages of Chelveston, Great Addington, Little Addington, Hargrave and Newton Bromswold. Chelveston cum Caldecott parish is divided into three separate settlements: Chelveston, Caldecott and Chelston Rise. Each village has its own distinctive character set within the rural heartland of the southern area. Whilst amenities are limited in these villages, their rural location and isolation is part of their charm and draw to residents.

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-welland-valley-partnership-enhancing-the-river-welland>

Rural area Neighbourhood Plans

- 2.52 Several communities, led by Parish Councils, have taken advantage of the opportunities that Neighbourhood Plans offer, to develop distinctive local spatial visions and planning policies. The following rural area Neighbourhood Plans are already “made” (adopted):
- Chelveston cum Caldecott (made July 2017);
 - Glapthorn (made July 2018);
 - Stanwick (made July 2017).
- 2.53 Elsewhere a number of Neighbourhood Plans have reached significant milestones and contain detailed site specific policies, including development land allocations and designations such as Local Green Space and settlement boundaries; matters that the Local Plan Part 2 should recognise and accommodate.
-

3.0 Vision and Outcomes

- 3.1 The Plan's Vision and Outcomes are informed by the Council's Corporate Plan (2016-2019). The Corporate Plan, which is reviewed every 3-4 years, sets out the Council's key priorities that the Council will be focussing on at the time that this Plan has been prepared.
- 3.2 The Corporate Plan sets out a vision for East Northamptonshire Council: "*Working with our communities to sustain a thriving district*". Underpinning this vision, the corporate priorities are:
- **Sustainable development** – recognising continuing demand for housing in the area, the need for growth and the benefits it can bring, particularly in helping to revitalise the town centres; supporting sensible levels of growth while preserving the character of our historic towns and villages;
 - **Regeneration and economic development** – securing improvements to the quality of the town centres, working with the private sector to bring investment into the area, reverse the decline of some towns and work with communities to achieve their aspirations for their local area;
 - **Financial stability** – control costs, provide value for money services and building effective partnerships; and
 - **Customer focused services** – improve the quality of information and services to maximise delivery of online services, while working closely with partners to recognise the needs of the most vulnerable communities.
- 3.3 It is noted that the priorities of sustainable development, and regeneration and economic development are particularly relevant to the Local Plan Part 2. The Local Plan Vision and Outcomes will recognise these key challenges.

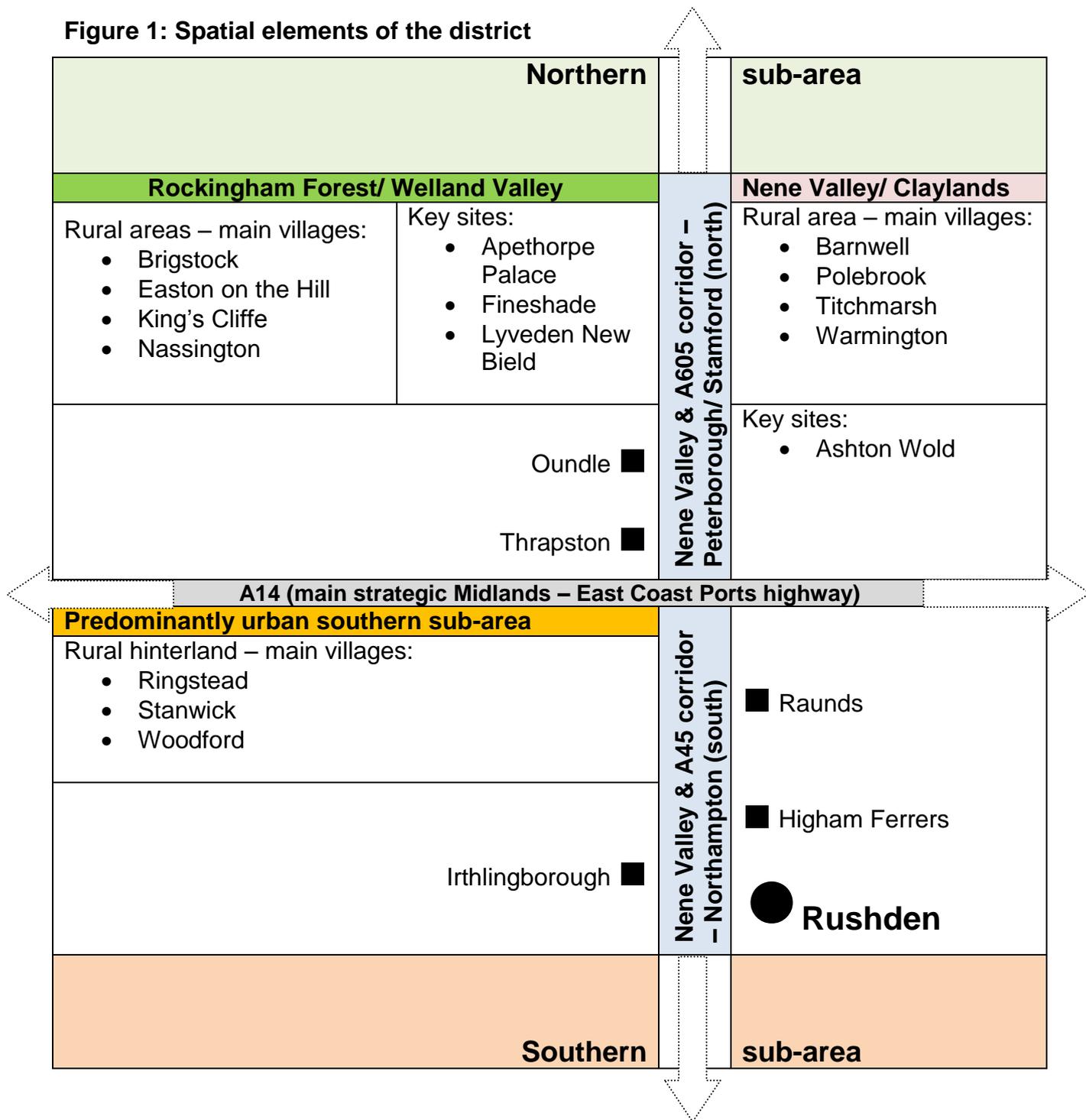
The Vision

- 3.4 The Joint Core Strategy defines an overarching Vision, for the whole of the North Northamptonshire area. It also sets out an East Northamptonshire specific Vision.

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 as the District's Growth Town. Implementation of the consented development at Rushden Lakes will have provided a new out of centre retail and leisure offer serving residents in the southern area of North Northamptonshire and delivering significant environmental benefits in the Nene Valley. 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.

3.5 The Local Plan Part 2 will aim to identify those aspects of the Core Strategy Vision that should be developed further. This Plan will aim to develop the spatial elements of this vision, recognising the diverse aspects of the district. Figure 1 (below) identifies the key spatial elements that make up the district of East Northamptonshire.

Figure 1: Spatial elements of the district



3.6 The Plan sets out three distinctive sub-area Visions which, together with the Core Strategy Vision, will provide an overall spatial Vision for East Northamptonshire.

Rockingham Forest/ Welland Valley:

- A focus for managing climate change, delivering carbon storage through re-forestation, and balancing this through ecosystem services, delivering sustainable tourism, informal leisure and new carbon-efficient businesses.
- The function of Oundle and Thrapston as key service centres for Rockingham Forest and focal points for growth in the Forest; providing a buffer between the “green” (forest) and “blue” (River Nene), at the heart of the district.

Nene Valley/ Claylands:

- The Nene Valley defines the character of the six towns within the district, and as such will be a focal point for strategic developments and “blue” tourism, to deliver water based ecosystem services and overall enhancements to tourism and the wider economy.
- The Claylands will be a focus for the rural economy, specifically sustainable agricultural businesses, and reconciling this with the “blue” infrastructure function of the Nene Valley.

Predominantly urban southern sub-area:

- The focal point for strategic housing and employment growth within the district, with a particular focus upon the Rushden’s Growth Town status and the successful delivery of the Rushden East and Rushden Gateway developments.
- Successful implementation and integration of the already committed major developments at the Market Towns of Higham Ferrers, Irthlingborough and Raunds.
- Reconciliation of the need to secure enhancements to the Nene Valley’s natural capital, while recognising the need to deliver the wider Local Plan growth agenda.

Outcomes

3.7 This Plan will recognise the 10 overarching outcomes of the Core Strategy, setting out how these can be delivered within an East Northamptonshire context (Figure 2, below).

Figure 2

Local Plan outcomes	Links to corporate outcomes
<p>1. Empowered and proactive communities The Plan sets out a framework for place shaping, focusing on the issues that matter to local communities and providing a context within which community led planning initiatives can flourish and prosper. It seeks to create successful, safe, strong, cohesive and sustainable communities where residents are actively involved in shaping the places where they live.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good quality of life – sustainable, clean, healthy, safe• Effective partnership working• Knowledge of our customers and communities

<p>2. Adaptability to future climate change The Plan will create more sustainable places that are naturally resilient to future climate change. Carbon footprints will be minimised and sustainable transport choice will be improved. Low carbon growth will be delivered through policies that seek the highest viable standards for energy efficiency, renewable energy and sustainable construction.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good quality of life – sustainable, clean, healthy • Effective partnership working • Effective management
<p>3. Distinctive environments that enhance and respect local character and enhance biodiversity The Plan sets out a framework for retaining the area's distinctiveness, by maintaining and enhancing landscape and townscape character. It promotes an integrated approach to biodiversity management and a net gain in Green Infrastructure, strengthening links between the countryside and the towns.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good quality of life – sustainable, clean, healthy • Effective partnership working
<p>4. Excellent services and facilities easily accessed by local communities and businesses The Plan establishes the priorities for future public and private investment and collaboration. It will help to secure provision of the infrastructure, services and facilities needed to sustain and enhance communities and support new development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good quality of life – prosperous, sustainable, clean, healthy, safe • Effective partnership working • Effective management • Knowledge of our customers and communities
<p>5. A sustainable balance between local jobs and workers and a more diverse economy The Plan provides for the workplaces, jobs, skills and sites to help build a more diverse, dynamic and self-reliant economy; one which is not overly dependent on in or out commuting. Higher skilled jobs will be facilitated through improved further education provision and enterprise and innovation will be enabled through next generation digital connectivity. Provision will be made to capitalise upon existing sectoral strengths in creating a stronger, greener economy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good quality of life – prosperous, sustainable • Effective partnership working • Effective management
<p>6. Transformed connectivity The Plan seeks transformed connectivity at all levels. It sets out measures to enhance Neighbourhood Connectivity, establishes the requirement for inter urban transport links and for improvements to the strategic road network and main-line rail connections. It identifies the growth locations that will provide connections to and support the longer-term opportunity for the Northamptonshire Arc Rapid Transit network.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good quality of life – prosperous, sustainable • Effective partnership working
<p>7. More walkable places and an excellent choice of ways to travel The Plan identifies the actions needed in order to make walking the first choice of transport to local services and jobs including increasing connectivity to and from new development and the countryside and centres and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good quality of life – sustainable, healthy • Effective partnership working

<p>ensuring that developments allow movement through them. It makes the links to the Local Transport Plan for the county, which identifies improvements to public transport, cycling networks and travel information that will encourage a shift away from car use in the towns and increase transport choice in the rural area.</p>	
<p>8. Vibrant, well connected towns and a productive countryside The Plan proposes sustainable urban-focused development and a proactive approach to meeting rural needs, supporting greater self-reliance for the area as a whole. The network of settlements will be strengthened through transformed public transport services within the north-south urban spine and out to the market towns in the east, with demand responsive services in the rural areas. Superfast broadband will support rural businesses, enable more working from home and assist the development of local food and fuel supply chains.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good quality of life – prosperous, sustainable • Effective partnership working
<p>9. Stronger, more self-reliant towns with thriving centres The Plan proposes the regeneration of town centres and of older parts of towns will help to maximise the use of brownfield land for new development and inspire community confidence in the need for positive change. Implementation of the consented Rushden Lakes development will provide an additional retail and leisure focus serving the southern area, complementing Rushden and Wellingborough town centre, which will diversify and strengthen their convenience retail provision and cultural offers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good quality of life – prosperous, sustainable • Effective partnership working
<p>10. Enhanced quality of life for all residents The Plan identifies the quality and mix of housing needed to meet the full, objectively assessed needs of the housing market area, ensuring that a sufficient proportion is affordable and accessible to all. It supports initiatives that build stable, safe, healthy and strong communities, which means respecting cultural diversity and distinctiveness; planning new development to help reduce crime, anti-social behaviour and the fear of crime; promoting well-being and health; ensuring that development is of local character; and supporting area based renewal.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good quality of life – sustainable, clean, healthy, safe • Effective partnership working • Effective management • Knowledge of our customers and communities

Presumption in favour of sustainable development

3.8 The “presumption in favour of sustainable development” is a national planning policy requirement, set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This is described as a “golden thread” running through both plan-making and decision making. It should therefore underpin the planning system at all levels and has been taken into account in preparing this Plan.

3.9 The Joint Core Strategy has sought to define this within the context of North Northamptonshire (Policy 1). Policy 1 states that:

When considering development proposals the Local Planning Authority will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. It will always work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area meeting the challenges of climate change and protecting and enhancing the provision of ecosystems services.

To be regarded as 'sustainable' within the context of North Northamptonshire, development should contribute to delivering the Plan Vision and Outcomes through compliance with the relevant policies of this Plan. Development that conflicts with policies of the Plan will be refused unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Where a development is otherwise acceptable but an independent viability appraisal demonstrates that certain policy standards cannot be achieved, the Local Planning Authority will work with the applicant to consider alternative approaches to deliver the desired policy outcomes.

- 3.10 The Local Plan Part 2 similarly fits within this strategic framework. All plan policies and decisions must be made in accordance with the requirements of JCS Policy 1, such that proposals which conflict with policies in the Joint Core Strategy, this Plan or (where applicable) Neighbourhood Plans, should be refused unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
-

4.0 Spatial Development Strategy

- 4.1 The Joint Core Strategy sets out the overarching role that the urban and rural areas within North Northamptonshire will have in delivering the overall Local Plan vision. In order to provide a more detailed, local direction for the district, this Plan sets out a bespoke local spatial strategy for the Plan area; this will complement that set out in the Joint Core Strategy.
- 4.2 JCS Table 1 and Policy 11 define the overall spatial role for the urban and rural areas. Table 2 (below) explains settlement roles for the Plan area, applying JCS Table 1 within the context of the Local Plan Part 2.

Category	Location	Role
Growth Towns	Rushden	To provide the focus for major co-ordinated regeneration and growth in employment, housing, retail and higher order facilities.
Market Towns	Higham Ferrers, Irthlingborough, Oundle, Raunds and Thrapston	To provide a strong service role for their local community and wider rural hinterland. Higham Ferrers to provide a more localised convenience and service role, with growth pressures directed to the adjoining Growth Towns.
Villages	Villages other than settlements of a dispersed form, which may be designated as open countryside, outside the formal settlement hierarchy	To provide community infrastructure and services to meet day to day needs of residents and businesses in the rural areas. Focal points for development to meet locally identified needs, unless those needs can be met more sustainably at a nearby larger settlement.
Open countryside		A living, working countryside providing the green setting for the network of settlements and supporting the area's self-reliance and resilience through food production; leisure and tourism; biodiversity resources; renewable energy; flood risk management and carbon capture.

- 4.3 Critically, the Joint Core Strategy does not define specific spatial development strategies for individual settlements, aside from for the six urban areas. For this Plan to provide a distinctive local vision, it is necessary to set out a more specific local approach for the district.

Settlement development strategy

Spatial approach for the urban areas

- 4.4 As indicated above, the Joint Core Strategy (Table 1) sets out specific spatial development strategies for each of the six East Northamptonshire towns. The Local Plan recognises that:
- **Rushden**, as the Growth Town, is the major focus for new development;
 - **Irthlingborough and Raunds** were the focus for growth in the previous (2008) Core Strategy, and the emphasis of the current Joint Core Strategy is the regeneration of these two Market Towns and their local service role;
-

- **Higham Ferrers**, due to its proximity and relationship with Rushden (its larger neighbour and designated Growth Town), has a localised service role, with local growth pressures directed to Rushden;
- **Oundle** is regarded as having a successful town centre (Joint Core Strategy Table 1), so the focus for this Plan should be to consolidate and enhance the role of the town;
- **Thrapston** was a focus for regeneration through for the previous Local Plan (2008 Core Strategy and 2011 RNOTP), while the current Joint Core Strategy emphasises its local service role and ongoing regeneration.

4.5 Policy 29 (Table 5) of the Joint Core Strategy distributes housing requirements with reference to the overall spatial strategy (Policy 11), constraints and/ or existing commitments. A large portion of the overall North Northamptonshire development requirement is already committed (i.e. under construction or having extant planning permission), largely a reflection of the strategy for growth set out in the previous (2008) Core Spatial Strategy. Table 3 (below) demonstrates the percentages of the Joint Core Strategy requirement for the six urban areas (7,580 dwellings, 2011-2031) allocated to each town.

Table 3 (extracted from JCS Table 5)		Local Plan housing requirement (2011-31)	Percentage of total JCS requirement
Growth Town	Rushden	3,285	43.3%
Market Towns	Higham Ferrers	560	7.4%
	Irthlingborough	1,350	17.8%
	Raunds	1,060	14.0%
	Thrapston	680	9.0%
	Oundle	645	8.5%
TOTAL		7,580	100.0%

4.6 Policy 11 of the Joint Core Strategy provides a distinction between the overall development strategy for the urban areas (Policy 11(1)) and rural areas (Policy 11(2)). This Plan acknowledges this differentiation, through proposing clear settlement boundary criteria. The aim of which is to provide a distinction between the urban areas and the surrounding rural hinterland.

Spatial approach for the rural areas

4.7 The Joint Core Strategy sets out a generic spatial development strategy for all established villages, focussing upon development that meets a locally identified need. It must be recognised, however, that rural settlements within the Plan area vary greatly in character, function and role. The Local Plan Part 2 will therefore give recognition to the variety of settlements throughout the rural areas.

4.8 Assessments of rural settlements beyond the main urban areas has revealed four distinct typologies:

- Larger freestanding villages;
 - Smaller freestanding villages;
 - Urban outliers;
 - Rural outliers.
-

4.9 The Local Plan Part 2 seeks to enhance the rural spatial strategy set out in Policy 11(2) of the Joint Core Strategy by identifying a more detailed settlement hierarchy, based on local evidence, to guide planning decisions and Neighbourhood Plan progression. The Plan therefore seeks to set out a clearly distinctive and local application of the Joint Core Strategy approach to the different typologies of rural settlement as set out in Table 4 (below).

Table 4: Functional roles for rural settlements		
Category/ settlement	Roles include:	Generic characteristics
Large villages (freestanding): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brigstock • Easton on the Hill • King's Cliffe • Nassington • Ringstead • Stanwick • Warmington • Woodford 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focal points for community infrastructure and services within the locality; • Local services and facilities may serve a cluster or network of rural settlements; • Emphasis upon development to meet locally occurring needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population >1000; • Local services and facilities – primary school, pub, Post Office, convenience retailer; • Defined by rural Parish, but serving a localised network of rural villages.
Small villages (freestanding): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most villages (Listed in Table 5) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited community infrastructure and facilities; • Emphasis upon smaller scale locally significant development opportunities where these are necessary to fulfil a defined local need. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population <1000; • Limited local services and facilities – 1-2 local services e.g. primary school, pub etc • Generally defined by rural Parish, with a Church of England Parish Church.
Urban outliers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crow Hill (Irthlingborough) • Elmington/ Laxton Drive (Oundle) • Avenue Road/ Bedford Road/ Newton Road (Rushden) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited community infrastructure and facilities; • Specific character areas – emphasis upon small scale managed infill development within the existing built form. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban/ suburban character; • Development management in accordance with an appropriate bespoke criteria-based policy; • May be regarded as part of a larger/ main urban area, or functional communities in their own right.
Restraint villages/ rural outliers (Open Countryside): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Armston • Ashton • Wigsthorpe • Wakerley • Various other groups of outlying buildings, or hamlets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Few/ no community infrastructure and facilities; • Small groups of properties serving 1-2 rural businesses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clusters of rural properties in open countryside locations, or special historic conservation interest (Ashton); • Close functional relationship to a larger village (Wakerley); • Development management in accordance with Open Countryside policies; or • Are normally regarded as part of a wider network of rural communities, rather than freestanding settlements.

4.10 The Joint Core Strategy (Table 5) sets out an overall rural housing requirement for **820 dwellings** for East Northamptonshire. This district-wide requirement is expected to be delivered through small scale infill development, 'rural exceptions' schemes and/ or Neighbourhood Plan allocations. It should be noted that the overall requirement should be distributed across approximately 50 villages within the district, so the numbers of units anticipated to be delivered to individual villages is likely to be modest and could expect to

be accommodated without the need for specific strategic site allocations being proposed in the Plan.

Large villages

- 4.11 The eight largest freestanding villages within the district are significantly larger than other villages located in East Northamptonshire. These are identified as large villages; each having a substantive range of services and facilities. In many cases these serve a wider local cluster or network of rural settlements and may have the capacity to accommodate additional local growth where promoted through neighbourhood planning.

Small villages

- 4.12 The majority of villages throughout the district are small freestanding communities. In most cases these are long established communities, normally centred upon a (Church of England) Parish Church. Neighbourhood Plans may seek to promote growth as a way to sustain or improve local services. Otherwise, development will be limited to small scale infill developments and/ or 'rural exceptions' affordable housing schemes.

Urban outliers

- 4.13 Urban outliers are built up areas with urban or suburban elements that are physically separated from the main built up areas of their respective towns, but are not historically considered to be freestanding communities or settlements. Three urban outliers have been identified within the district:
- Crow Hill (Irthlingborough);
 - Elmington/ Laxton Drive (Ashton Parish/ Oundle); and
 - Avenue Road/ Bedford Road/ Newton Road ribbon development (Rushden).
- 4.14 **Crow Hill** – Crow Hill has a predominantly urban/ suburban character. As such this area is regarded as “urban”, for the purposes of applying the spatial development strategy. It is part of the main urban area and is therefore covered by Policy EN1(1) (below) and Policy 11(1) of the Joint Core Strategy.
- 4.15 **Elmington/ Laxton Drive** – The Elmington/ Laxton Drive area which is located within the parish of Ashton, includes both rural and suburban parts. It is physically separated from Oundle by the River Nene and overall is considered to be predominantly rural in character. It does not, however, have the necessary characteristics for a functional settlement, so is accordingly considered to be “Open Countryside”. Therefore, Policy EN1(3) and Policy 11(2) of the Joint Core Strategy will apply.
- 4.16 **Avenue Road/ Bedford Road/ Newton Road** – The Avenue Road/ Bedford Road/ Newton Road ribbon development is a significant area of suburban character to the south-east of the main built up area of Rushden. The Rushden Neighbourhood Plan defines the area as part of Rushden’s rural hinterland, setting out a specific spatial strategy in Policy H1. Therefore, Policy H1 of the Neighbourhood Plan and Policy 11(2) of the Joint Core Strategy will apply.

Restraint villages

- 4.17 Four settlements are identified where policies of development restraint should be applied:
- Armston;
 - Ashton;
-

- Wakerley; and
- Wigsthorpe.

- 4.18 Armston and Wigsthorpe, while recognised as rural settlements within the settlement hierarchy, are hamlets of a size and rural character, such that open countryside policies will apply. For Wakerley, the emerging Neighbourhood Plan has assessed the character and built form of the village, but has concluded this to be unsuitable to accommodate further infill development.
- 4.19 The historic character of Ashton has recently undergone a detailed assessment through the Ashton Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (July 2017)³. This found that the character and special interest of Ashton and the Ashton Wold rural outlier is highly sensitive and therefore its capacity for change in the form of new development is very limited. As such development opportunities are limited on account of their prevailing architectural character and spatial form, while most of the historic stock of ancillary buildings within the village has already been converted. Therefore, this historic character is of such sensitivity that the Local Plan Part 2 should recognise this by way of a policy of development restraint, whereby open countryside policies (Policy EN1(3), below) should apply.
- 4.20 For the purposes of applying the spatial strategy through development management, the defined villages (large villages, small villages and restraint) are specified in Table 5 (below).

Table 5		
Large (service) villages		
Brigstock	Nassington	Warmington
Easton on the Hill	Ringstead	Woodford
King's Cliffe	Stanwick	
Small (other freestanding) villages		
Achurch	Duddington	Newton Bromswold
Aldwinckle	Fineshade	Pilton
Apethorpe	Fotheringhay	Polebrook
Barnwell	Glapthorn	Slipton
Benefield (Lower and Upper)	Great Addington	Southwick
Blatherwycke	Hargrave	Stoke Doyle
Bulwick	Harringworth	Sudborough
Clopton	Hemington	Tansor
Caldecott	Islip	Thorpe Waterville
Chelston Rise	Laxton	Thurning
Chelveston	Lilford	Titchmarsh
Collyweston	Little Addington	Twywell
Cotterstock	Lowick	Wadenhoe
Deene	Luddington in the Brook	Woodnewton
Deenethorpe	Lutton	Yarwell
Restraint villages		
Armston	Ashton	Wakerley
Wigsthorpe		

³ https://www.east-northamptonshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/9165/ashton_conservation_area_appraisal_and_management_plan

Open countryside

- 4.21 The open countryside includes many hamlets, agricultural complexes and other isolated groups of dwellings ('rural outliers'). Specifically, it also includes four defined villages – Armston, Ashton, Wakerley and Wigsthorpe – where policies of development restraint (i.e. open countryside policies) should be applied.
- 4.22 In practice this Plan regards the defined restraint villages and other rural outliers to be open countryside, where policies such as a general presumption against new build residential development should apply. However, where applicable, Neighbourhood Plans may provide the opportunity to adopt specific local spatial development strategies regarding the role of individual rural outliers or other groups of rural buildings in the open countryside, away from established settlements. Some Neighbourhood Plans have already taken a lead in this regard.
- 4.23 Policy EN1 (below) explains how the spatial development strategy should apply. It provides additional district-level direction to support the development management process, or provide further strategic direction for the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans.

Policy EN1: Spatial development strategy

Development will respect the network of settlements across the district, in accordance with the spatial roles set out in the Joint Core Strategy (Table 1) and Table 4, above. The mixed rural/ urban character of East Northamptonshire will be recognised, with growth directed in accordance with the urban focused spatial strategy.

1. Urban areas

- a) ***Rushden and Higham Ferrers – Rushden will be the focus for major development, concentrated upon the Rushden East Sustainable Urban Extension. Development at Higham Ferrers will take place within the current built up area of the town, with additional locally arising development needs directed towards Rushden.***
- b) ***Irthlingborough, Raunds and Thrapston – Development will be focused upon the major committed development sites at Irthlingborough (including Crow Hill), Raunds and Thrapston. Further development at these towns will focus upon urban re-imagination, to support job creation and secure and enhance the local service base.***
- c) ***Oundle – Development will be directed towards delivering the outstanding allocations. Further development proposals, to meet the Joint Core Strategy requirements for the latter half of the Plan period (2021-2031), will come forward in order to enhance Oundle's role as the main service centre for the rural north of the district.***

2. Villages

- a) To support and strengthen local services at the eight large villages (Table 4), small scale infill and windfall development opportunities will be supported. Other development of an appropriate scale will be supported, where it can be demonstrated that these are necessary to fulfil a defined local need. Additional development beyond the extent of the current built up areas will be resisted, unless promoted through a Neighbourhood Plan.***
- b) Development opportunities at the small (other freestanding) villages (Table 5) will be limited to small scale infill and windfall developments, 'rural exceptions' affordable housing schemes or other small scale employment or community focused proposals.***

3. Open countryside

- a) There is a general presumption against new build residential units in isolated locations away the defined villages, as shown in Table 5, although proposals for rural diversification or the appropriate re-use or conversion of rural buildings will be supported.***
- b) The four restraint villages (Armston, Ashton, Wakerley and Wigsthorpe), together with other rural outliers, are defined as open countryside. Rural diversification or the appropriate re-use or conversion of rural buildings will be supported.***

Settlement boundaries – differentiating between built up areas and the countryside

4.24 Managing development pressures around the periphery of settlements has long been a challenging issue for the planning system. The Joint Core Strategy recognises this, in particular through Policy 11 (Network of Urban and Rural Areas) which provides a clear distinction between urban areas and rural areas by setting specific urban (Policy 11(1)) and rural (Policy 11(2)) spatial strategies. It is the intention of the Local Plan Part 2 to similarly provide a practical means to differentiate between the built up areas and their surrounding rural hinterlands.

Urban areas

4.25 There has been no consistent district-wide policy approach to defining settlement boundaries in previous Local Plans. Linear boundaries were applied for Oundle and Thrapston, while a written definition was used for Higham Ferrers, Irthlingborough, Raunds and Rushden.

4.26 However, it is recognised that more recently Neighbourhood Plans have considered different approaches to defining settlement boundaries:

- Higham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan includes a written boundary⁴, reflecting the clear physical limits to that urban area;
- Raunds Neighbourhood Plan does not include an explicit urban/ rural distinction; and
- Rushden's linear settlement boundary is defined through the Rushden Neighbourhood Plan and shown on the adopted Policies Map.

4.27 The Joint Core Strategy sets generic criteria for defining the built up areas of villages (paragraph 5.17):

- Vacant and under-developed land within the main built-up area;
- Bounded by existing built curtilages on at least two sides, such as the filling in of a small gap in an otherwise substantially built up frontage.

4.28 These criteria could equally be applied for the urban areas. The default position for this Plan is that infill development will be generally supported within the urban areas. The settlement boundary criteria in Policy EN2 provide more detailed criteria to support those in the Joint Core Strategy.

Policy EN2: Settlement boundaries – urban areas

Whilst it is recognised that some made Neighbourhood Plans contain settlement boundaries, infill development will generally be supported in the urban areas where it meets the objectives of the following criteria:

- a) small in scale, relative to an otherwise substantially built up frontage;***
- b) well related to the urban area (existing or committed);***
- c) clearly distinct from the countryside physically and visually;***
- d) bounded by compatible development (existing or committed);***
- e) land on periphery of towns, if bounded by existing or committed development on two sides, which should be adjoined by a road (or other strong and distinct physical feature);***
- f) unlikely to be of any beneficial use as open land, including for agriculture; and***
- g) subject to a current planning permission or a proposed allocation for development.***

Freestanding villages

4.29 The eight large freestanding villages (Table 4) differ significantly from other villages, in terms of their services and facilities. While predominantly rural in character, the larger villages include both urban and suburban character areas within their overall built form.

4.30 The other (small) villages (Table 5) tend to be more rural in character and built form than the eight large freestanding villages. However, in terms of their built form, virtually all villages incorporate transitional areas at the periphery, between the built up core and the rural hinterland (open countryside) beyond.

⁴ For Higham Ferrers, the Neighbourhood Plan (made April 2016) defines the built up area of Higham Ferrers as that part of the town bounded by the A6 and A45, and to the south by the built up area of Rushden

- 4.31 Previous policy applied tightly defined settlement boundary criteria in order to protect the character of the existing built up areas and restrict small scale infill development beyond the existing built up cores of most villages. These have been reviewed to accord with the more flexible Joint Core Strategy criteria (paragraph 4.27, above).
- 4.32 At the freestanding villages, new infill development should occur within the existing built up areas, as defined by the Policy EN3 criteria (below). These criteria should be applied in managing small scale and/ or residential infilling at the periphery of villages. They may also be utilised for Neighbourhood Plans, where it has been decided to designate settlement boundaries, as is the case for the “made” Chelveston cum Caldecott, Glapthorn and Stanwick Neighbourhood Plans.
- 4.33 The settlement boundaries for the built up area(s) of designated freestanding villages do not necessarily need to be contiguous. These may consist of two or more separate elements. Small scale infill new-build development will be expected to take place within the defined settlement boundaries. These are defined by Policy EN3 (below) or (if designated through a Neighbourhood Plan) shown on the Policies Map.

Policy EN3: Settlement boundaries – freestanding villages (Table 5)

Small scale or infill development, will be supported within the existing confines of the built up area(s) of freestanding villages, as defined by the following criteria:

- a) existing employment uses, caravan sites or leisure uses on the edge of villages which are clearly detached from the main built up area are excluded;***
- b) free standing, individual or groups of less than 10 dwellings, nearby farm buildings or other structures which are clearly detached from the main built up area are excluded;***
- c) public open spaces on the edge of villages are excluded;***
- d) residential curtilages, where these are bounded by existing built curtilages on fewer than two sides, are excluded; and***
- e) areas of land committed for development adjoining the built up area are included.***

Ribbon developments

- 4.34 The Avenue Road/ Bedford Road/ Newton Road area of Rushden (population approximately 600) represents the most significant area of ribbon development. This lies to the south east of the main Rushden urban area and has a predominantly suburban character, but is physically detached from the main urban area (lying beyond the A6 Bypass). Its status was set through the Neighbourhood Plan, which defined the area as a part of Rushden’s rural hinterland. Policy H1 in the Neighbourhood Plan specifies the relevant development management criteria for this part of Rushden.
- 4.35 The rural hinterlands of Irthlingborough and Raunds also include areas of ribbon development which are similarly physically detached from the main urban area. Accordingly, two such areas are:

- Lower Crow Hill (Addington Road, Irthlingborough); and
- Brooks Road, Raunds.

4.36 In many regards the settlement boundary criteria for the smaller villages may not be appropriate in the case of the outlying ribbon developments. Indeed, these have a specific character and built form that differentiates them from the freestanding small villages, although it must be recognised that these have a linear built form which lends itself to accommodating appropriate windfall development. Accordingly, Policy EN4 (below) explains the circumstances where residential infill development would be appropriate in the case of the lower Crow Hill and Brooks Road ribbon developments.

Policy EN4: Settlement boundaries – ribbon developments

Within the ribbon development areas of lower Crow Hill (Irthlingborough) and Brooks Road (Raunds), as shown by a linear designation on the Policies Map, development will be supported provided that it:

- a) is bounded by existing built curtilages on at least two sides;***
- b) has a frontage to the highway and a depth similar to adjoining residential curtilages;***
- c) does not extend the built form away from the main highway to create a “backland” form of development; and***
- d) has regard to positive local character and distinctiveness.***

Development at the periphery of settlements

- 4.37 The NPPF (**paragraph xx**) emphasises a need to avoid new isolated homes in the countryside. The settlement boundaries and/ or criteria for the urban areas and rural settlements enable, for the purposes of development management, a distinction to be made between the predominantly built up core area (i.e. where small scale infill and windfall development would generally be appropriate) and areas of a more dispersed, rural character at the periphery of settlements.
- 4.38 The fringe areas around settlements (see Policy EN3, above) often contain groups of operational or redundant agricultural buildings, small groups of dwellings (less than 10 units) physically separated from the main built up area, caravan sites or other leisure uses. There is not always a clear distinction between core built up areas and the open countryside although in many locations physical features do provide a clear differentiation. Other peripheral areas may have potential to accommodate rural exceptions housing or small scale rural businesses, in accordance with JCS Policies 13 and 25.
- 4.39 It is recognised that several Neighbourhood Plans already define linear settlement boundaries. It would not fulfil the spirit of the NPPF if settlement boundaries are regarded as equivalent in status to the Green Belt, beyond which there is general presumption against most new build development. Rather, they are a development management tool, to provide a distinction between the core built up area and more sensitive peripheral and gateway parts of a settlement. Policy EN5 (below) sets out how

development proposals beyond a defined settlement boundary (where this exists) should be assessed.

Policy EN5: Development on the periphery of settlements with a defined settlement boundary

Beyond the defined settlement boundaries new build residential development will not generally be supported. However, rural diversification, the re-use or conversion of rural buildings, or rural exceptions housing schemes, will be supported where these fulfil the criteria set out in Joint Core Strategy Policies 13 and 25, and other relevant policies.

Policy EN6: Replacement Dwellings in the Open Countryside

Proposals for permanent new build replacement dwellings in the open countryside will be granted where they meet the following criteria:

- a) The original dwelling has not been abandoned or allowed to fall into a state of dereliction and disrepair, so that any replacement would in effect be treated as a 'new dwelling' (a structural survey will be required where any signs of dereliction or disrepair is seen or the building has been unoccupied for some time);***
- b) The original dwelling is not a temporary or mobile structure;***
- c) The replacement dwelling is located within the site boundary of the original dwelling;***
- d) The replacement is of a size, scale and massing similar to the original dwelling, the footprint and floor space should be a similar amount to the original dwelling;***
- e) Where an existing dwelling is considered too small for modern living standards, the floor space may be increased, however this should not be to the detriment of the open countryside or character of the area; and***
- f) The design, materials and layout of the replacement dwelling should be sympathetic to the surrounding area by preserving and/ or enhancing the immediate setting and the wider character area.***

Conditions or unilateral undertakings should be used to ensure the demolition and removal of the existing dwelling undertaken prior to the first occupation of the new dwelling or prior to construction of the new dwelling where more appropriate.