

# PLANNING POLICY COMMITTEE

**Date:** 14 June 2010

**Venue:** East Northamptonshire House, Cedar Drive, Thrapston

**Time:** 7.30pm

**Present:** Councillors: - **David Brackenbury (Chairman)**  
**John Richardson MBE (Vice Chairman)**

**David Bateman**  
**Tony Boto**  
**Lisa Costello**  
**Michael Finch**  
**Roger Glithero JP**  
**Dudley Hughes JP**

**Eloise Lucille**  
**Steven North**  
**Roger Powell**  
**Phillip Stearn**  
**Pam Whiting**

## **47. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2010 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

## **48. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillor Andy Mercer sent his apologies.

## **49. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Monitoring Officer read out the following statement to clarify some issues regarding declarations of interests for matters to be considered under this Committee and its Area Working Parties:

“The Standards Board for East Northamptonshire has asked me to clarify issues in relation to the need for Members to declare interests at Planning Policy Committee and its associated Working Parties in relation to their place of residence or other land or property that they may own.

In general terms, the Code of Conduct requires Members to declare a personal interest if the subject of debate in a meeting relates to something they have declared on the Register of Interests. Since Area Plan Working Parties relate to specific parts of the District their discussions, and indeed those of Planning Policy, may relate to where you live and hence personal declarations of interest would be appropriate. Such declarations of personal interest of course do not stop you speaking or voting on any matter.

As it is recognised that the Area Plan Working Parties are single subject discussions, it is proposed that such declarations of interest will be captured at the first meeting in each civic year and then the committee clerk will just ask for any changes at each meeting thereafter.

Obviously in some circumstances discussions can become very specific to a particular piece of land. As Monitoring Officer my advice as to when a personal interest becomes prejudicial

would be to consider the position if an application was to come forward on that site. If you would be on the neighbour notification list or the development would result in an increase in traffic on the road where you live then the interest would in my view be prejudicial. The final decision of course remains yours.”

### **Personal Interests**

Members declared personal interests in the items below as indicated. They remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion and voting when the respective item was considered.

<b>Member</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Nature of Interest</b>
David Brackenbury	11(b) Conservation area Review - Thrapston	Lives in Thrapston
Roger Glithero	10 – Proposed Rockingham Masterplan	The area of the proposed Masterplan is within the Kings Forest Ward which he represents as a District Councillor
Dudley Hughes	All planning policy matters regarding Raunds	Lives in Raunds and his wife is also a District Councillor
Steven North	Item 8 – Rushden Regeneration	Lives in Rushden
Roger Powell	All planning policy matters regarding Rushden	Lives in Rushden
John Richardson	All planning policy matters regarding Oundle	Owns property in Oundle

### **50. MINUTES OF WORKING PARTY MEETINGS**

The minutes of the Raunds Area Working Party held on 23 February and 8 April 2010 and Three Towns Working Party held on 2 March 2010 were received and are attached to these minutes at pages 52 to 62.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the recommendation under Minute 4 (Membership of the Working Party) of the Raunds Area Working Party held on 23 February be approved.

### **51. APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO AREA WORKING PARTIES**

At the Annual Council meeting on 12 May 2010 (Minute 15(b)), this Committee was given authority to consider nominations to the Rural North, Oundle and Thrapston; Three Towns; and Raunds Area Working Parties, and co-opt, as necessary, Members not serving on this Committee (with full voting rights), and it was

## **RESOLVED:**

- (1) That meetings of the Three Towns and Raunds Area Working Parties only be held separately when site/area specific items are to be discussed.
- (2) That membership of the three Area Working Parties for 2010/11 be as follows:
  - (a) Rural North, Oundle and Thrapston – Councillors David Bateman, David Brackenbury, Roger Glithero, John Richardson and Phillip Stearn.
  - (b) Three Towns – Councillors David Brackenbury, Michael Finch, Sean Lever, Andy Mercer, Steven North, Roger Powell, Anna Sauntson and Pam Whiting.
  - (c) Raunds Area – Councillors Tony Boto, David Brackenbury, Albert Campbell, Lisa Costello, Sylvia Hughes, Michael Finch, Glenvil Greenwood Smith, Dudley Hughes and Eloise Lucille.

## **52. FOUR TOWNS PLAN – EVIDENCE GATHERING UPDATE**

A progress report was submitted evaluating the current evidence base for the development of the Four Towns Plan Development Plan Document (DPD).

An initial analysis of the policies required for the Four Towns Plan had been discussed by the Raunds Area and Three Towns Working Parties and they agreed that the following list of issues should be addressed in the Preferred Options document:

- Overall vision for the long term strategy of the area
- Settlement hierarchy
- Settlement boundaries criteria for towns and villages
- Employment and housing requirements
- Approach to housing density and mix
- Affordable housing-types, targets and thresholds
- Rural housing exception sites-criteria
- Environmental policies on biodiversity, flood risk and historic heritage
- Gypsy and traveller needs
- Residential car parking standards
- Town centre boundaries/primary shopping frontages criteria for towns and villages where appropriate
- Green infrastructure and other open space, recreation and sport
- Other infrastructure requirements
- Tourism
- Development principles for the market towns and villages
- Rural buildings, farm diversification
- Wind farms.

Wherever possible in-house resources would be used to gather evidence, but occasionally external mentoring would be used to carry out sustainability appraisals and landscape character assessments. It was estimated that this support would cost £5,000 and be funded from the Four Towns Plan budget for 2010/11.

There would also be areas of work requiring specialist technical expertise and modelling capability which could not be done in-house and this included:

- Strategic flood risk assessment
- Surface water management plan
- Housing needs survey (if affordable housing policies are to be refined)
- Habitats regulations assessment
- Retail assessment locality issues
- Mitigation testing for transport strategy options for development with possible funding through the County Council.

Members noted the potential costs of this external work and that a report would be submitted to a future meeting with further detailed costs for consideration.

The Chairman mentioned the Government's recent Green Paper 'Open Source Planning' and suggested that the Committee should support the principle of 'localism' as set out in the Green Paper which was being introduced by the new Government. It was considered that the proposed greater involvement of local communities in the planning of future developments which this statement embodied should be welcomed and be fully supported by this Council. However, it was still early days in terms of a new emerging planning framework and account would have to be taken of the changes as they occurred.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the list of policy areas for the Four Towns Plan identified in the preamble above be agreed.
- (2) That the use of mentors for evidence gathering projects which could be done in house be agreed.
- (3) That Officers be authorised to develop specifications for the areas of evidence requiring external support and a report be submitted to a future meeting with details of potential costs for consideration.
- (4) That Officers be thanked for their work so far in gathering evidence for the Four Towns Plan.
- (5) That the principle of localism in the Government's recent 'Open Source Planning' Green Paper be supported and that any local targets should reflect the wishes of local people and be adhered to wherever possible.

**53. RUSHDEN REGENERATION – ENQUIRY BY DESIGN REPORT**

The draft Enquiry by Design consultation, undertaken in February 2010 for Rushden town centre by the Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment, was submitted for consideration.

Members welcomed the document and considered that it had taken account of the views of Rushden people, including the wish for larger houses to be built instead of flats and the importance of an adequate transport infrastructure for the town.

The Head of Planning Services stated that the document would inform the Four Towns Plan and be part of the local planning framework for Rushden.

## **RESOLVED:**

That the Enquiry By Design consultation document for Rushden be approved and the Prince's Foundation be thanked for their work on the document.

### **54. DRAFT SHOP FRONT DESIGN SPD**

The draft Shop Front Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was submitted for consideration and approval for public consultation.

The objectives of the SPD were to:

- Provide an integrated and consistent approach to shop front design
- Promote high quality shop fronts across the district
- Promote inclusive design
- Protect and enhance the character and appearance of town centres and conservation areas
- Ensure shop fronts contribute positively to the day and night-time economies in the district.

The document supplemented Policy 13 of the Core Spatial Strategy regarding high quality design which reflected and strengthened distinctive qualities and character of place.

The draft SPD included the following design principles:

- Basic design principles
- Security
- Blinds and canopies
- Advertisements.

The Committee noted that the design principles were not prescriptive, but would be a framework for considering the design of a new shop front within its immediate surroundings and the architectural whole of the building.

Members requested that shop owners be included in the consultation process.

## **RESOLVED:**

That, subject to the removal of leaflets from the shop window in figure 6 of the document, the draft Shop Front Design SPD be approved for public consultation.

### **55. PROPOSED ROCKINGHAM MASTERPLAN**

A proposed Masterplan Brief and draft protocol for the area around the Rockingham Motor Speedway was submitted for consideration.

The North Northants Development Company (NNDC) had allocated £80,000 to support the development of a Masterplan for the area surrounding the Rockingham Motor Speedway. This would be an opportunity to diversify the economy of the district and attract high skill and high wage jobs to this part of North Northamptonshire. The area covered the boundaries of East Northamptonshire Council and Corby Borough Council and the project would be managed by the NNDC on behalf of both Councils.

The draft protocol had been produced to take forward the outcomes of the Masterplan as a joint planning document (SPD) to guide the future development of the area. Both Councils would have to approve the Masterplan document and protocol for the project to proceed. A Councillor from each authority would be appointed to sit on the project board.

**RESOLVED:**

That the proposed Masterplan Brief and draft protocol, as submitted, be approved.

**R.2 RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND:**

That Councillor Roger Glithero be appointed as this Council's representative on the Masterplan's project board.

**56. CONSERVATION AREA REVIEWS**

The Committee considered reviews of conservation areas for Titchmarsh, Twywell and Woodford and extensions to the existing areas for Oundle and Thrapston.

Members considered that the Drill Hall building should not be included as a "positive building" in the proposed conservation area for Oundle because that, whilst it had some interesting features, overall these were not important enough to warrant this designation. However, the site itself and surrounding land should be included.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the Titchmarsh, Twywell and Woodford Conservation Areas be approved and designated in accordance with the submitted documents.
- (2) That the proposed extension to the Thrapston Conservation Area be approved in accordance with the submitted documents.
- (3) That, subject to the deletion of the Drill Hall building as a "positive building", the proposed extension to the Oundle Conservation Area be approved in accordance with the submitted documents.

**Chairman**



# Raunds Area Working Party

**Minutes of a meeting held on Tuesday 23 February 2010 at 7.00 pm, Members' Room, East Northamptonshire House, Thrapston**

**Present:**

Councillors:

Tony Boto (**Chairman**)  
Albert Campbell  
Michael Finch

Glenvil Greenwood Smith  
Dudley Hughes JP  
Eloise Lucille

**Officers:**

Trevor Watson (TGW)  
Elizabeth Wilson (EW)  
Peter Cooper (PC)

Head of Planning Services  
Interim Planning Policy and Conservation Manager  
Democratic Services (Minutes)

**Action**

**1.0 MINUTES**

**1.1 RESOLVED:**

That, subject to all reference to Raunds Town Council being removed from Minute 3.6, the minutes of the last meeting held on 21 January 2010 be received and approved.

**PC**

**2.0 APOLOGIES**

2.1 Councillor David Brackenbury sent his apologies.

**3.0 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

3.1 No interests were declared.

**4.0 MEMBERSHIP OF THE WORKING PARTY**

4.1 The Chairman proposed that Councillors Lisa Costello and Sylvia Hughes be appointed to the Working Party and it was

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND:**

That Councillors Lisa Costello and Sylvia Hughes be appointed to the Raunds Area Working Party.

**KO**

4.2 Councillor Lucille asked for the validity of this resolution to be referred to the Monitoring Officer and under Rule 16.6 of the Council's Procedure Rules, Councillors Michael Finch and Eloise Lucille requested that their vote against the above motion be recorded.

**5.0 UPDATE ON SITE SELECTION EVIDENCE**

5.1 Further to Minute 3 (21 January 2010), the Working Party received an update on site selection evidence and issues raised at the previous meeting, in particular, on Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUEs) and how this could affect future development in Raunds.

5.2 Raunds had been designated for a SUE under the Core Spatial Strategy. The main issue for the Working Party was that a single SUE adjacent to Raunds would concentrate all future housing and employment development for Raunds in one area. It was considered that this could have serious implications for the town and that one concentrated SUE would cause social and physical imbalance for the town. It was also considered that the town was not large enough to have one SUE and Members would prefer a number of smaller SUEs in different areas around the town to ensure a more balanced approach and make development more sustainable. At the last meeting on 21 January, EW was asked to discuss the possibility of this approach with the Joint Planning Unit (JPU).

5.3 EW reported that she had consulted the JPU about this issue and they had informally indicated that, so long as the principles of SUEs were adhered to and the development strategy contributed to the future vitality and sustainability of Raunds, they might consider this as an acceptable development strategy.

5.4 The issue of developer contributions towards infrastructure was also discussed. It was considered important that any development strategy of smaller SUEs should be robust enough with sufficient development to obtain adequate developer contributions towards the provision of infrastructure for the town. If the SUEs were too small or dispersed, it could decrease the “critical mass” for infrastructure provision and lead to or ‘open up’ development in other areas around or within Raunds.

5.5 It was suggested that the infrastructure issue for Raunds should be discussed at the next Working Party meeting and it was **agreed** that EW would prepare a skeleton of a draft Raunds Infrastructure Plan for consideration at that meeting.

EW

5.6 EW reported for information that the Council had received £50,000 from the national Rural Masterplan Fund. This money would go towards the production of a masterplan for Raunds. Members thanked EW for her work in obtaining this funding.

## **6.0 FOUR TOWNS PLAN – DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT**

### **(a) Affordable Housing Policies**

6.1 A report was submitted identifying the main issues on the formation of affordable housing policies for the Four Towns Plan.

6.2 Members briefly discussed the report and considered that the issue of part ownership should be included within any affordable housing policies. It was **agreed** that further evidence gathering for housing need was required for this issue and that EW would discuss the matter with Cat Hartley, the Housing Strategy Manager, and report back to the next meeting.

EW

6.3 A chart showing the market and affordable housing balance by Ward for the District was also considered.

### **(b) Town Centre Boundaries**

6.4 Members considered a draft methodology for determining the town centre boundaries for the main settlements within the Four Towns Plan area.

## Action

- 6.5 Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 4 set out the Government's policy for town centres and town centre uses. When preparing development plans, Local Planning Authorities should:
- identify primary shopping areas and town centre boundaries within which the Development Plan should locate other town centre uses
  - define other areas within town centres but outside the primary shopping frontage to encourage specific uses
  - ensure town centre uses would benefit from the centre's accessibility by not draw town centre boundaries too widely.

6.6 A draft map showing the proposed town centre boundary and primary shopping frontage for Raunds was submitted for Members' consideration.

6.7 EW stated that whilst the determination of the extent of the primary shopping frontages would be undertaken using the methodology attached to the report, if Members wanted a policy related to controlling the uses within the frontage then this should be a criteria based approach.

6.8 Members were asked to submit any views on the proposed methodology and boundaries to EW and the draft would be updated for further consideration. A possible future site visit to Raunds to assess the proposed boundaries was also discussed.

**EW**

## 7.0 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

7.1 It was **agreed** that the next meeting would be held on 8 April 2010 starting at 7.00pm in the Members' Room.

**PC**



# Raunds Area Working Party

Minutes of a meeting held on Thursday 8 April 2010 at 7.00 pm, Members' Room, East Northamptonshire House, Thrapston

**Present:**

Councillors:

Tony Boto ( <b>Chairman</b> )	Dudley Hughes JP
David Brackenbury	Eloise Lucille
Glenvil Greenwood Smith	

Officers:

Sharn Matthews (SM)	Executive Director
Trevor Watson (TGW)	Head of Planning Services
Elizabeth Wilson (EW)	Interim Planning Policy and Conservation Manager
Peter Cooper (PC)	Democratic Services (Minutes)

**Action**

**1.0 MINUTES**

1.1 The minutes of the last meeting held on 23 February 2010 were received and approved. **PC**

**2.0 APOLOGIES**

2.1 Councillors Albert Campbell and Michael Finch sent their apologies.

**3.0 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

3.1 Councillors Tony Boto, Eloise Lucille, Glenvil Greenwood Smith and Dudley Hughes JP declared personal interests because they owned properties in Raunds or Stanwick. They remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion and voting on all the agenda items.

3.2 Councillor David Brackenbury gave a view that the Raunds Area Working Party relied on the experience and expertise of Members who lived in the Raunds area and he suggested that these Members should not have to declare interests for any properties they owned in Raunds, unless any matter being considered by the Working Party directly affected the area where their property was located.

3.3 The Working Party noted Councillor Brackenbury's comments.

**4.0 FOUR TOWNS PLAN – DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT (DPD)**

**(a) Policy Position Update**

4.1 An update on policies being developed for the Four Towns Plan DPD was submitted for consideration and approval.

4.2 Members welcomed the document as a useful indicator of progress being made with policies for the Plan. It was noted that the document would be updated after every meeting of the Raunds and Three Towns Working Parties

to take account of any comments or amendments made by Members.

4.3 Some of the main policy issues affecting Raunds were discussed and Members made the following points:

- Raunds Master Plan - EW mentioned that work on the Brief would start in mid May and the consultation process would take place by the end of June/early July. There would then be further consultation on the outcome (of the consultation) which could continue until the autumn
- Employment Requirements Criteria – clarification on the types of jobs and employment opportunities required for Raunds should be made. Stanwick should have its town centre employment area protected.
- Housing Requirements Criteria – Members were concerned with the numbers of new dwellings proposed for Raunds and that the town's infrastructure would be unable to cope
- Housing Site Assessment – future housing should be dispersed around various sites in Raunds
- Affordable Housing – affordable housing should be for people living in Raunds and the percentage of affordable housing should be looked at based on evidence e.g. the housing waiting list
- Treatment of Windfall Sites – this policy was important for Stanwick and the other surrounding villages adjacent to Raunds.

4.4 It was **agreed** that a fourth column showing relevant and achievable policies having regard to both national advice and previous plan progression experience should be added to the updated document.

EW

**RESOLVED:**

EW

That, subject to the comments made by Members being incorporated into the document, the submitted policy update be noted and approved.

**(b) Infrastructure Planning**

4.5 Members considered a report on infrastructure planning that was being undertaken for the Four Towns Plan DPD to enable the Local Development Framework to create and deliver sustainable communities.

4.6 The four main aims of an Infrastructure Plan were to:

- identify the existing infrastructure in the towns and assess whether there was spare/over capacity
- identify existing shortfalls in capacity irrespective of further growth
- identify the infrastructure needed to support future developments
- help infrastructure providers identify requirements and plan provision.

4.7 The first draft of the Position Statement for Raunds was submitted for consideration; this included an initial assessment of any current or likely deficiencies over the Plan period. Members noted that there were a number of infrastructure types that had to be assessed against the relevant standard.

4.8 A similar Position Statement would be prepared for each of the four towns in the DPD area and a strategic position on infrastructure issues covering the four towns would also be prepared. Once this had been completed, infrastructure delivery by providers would be identified and matched to cover any shortfall.

4.9 The Working Party welcomed the document and requested that the issues of provision of broadband and number of school spaces be investigated further.

- 4.10 Members requested that a copy of the draft Infrastructure Plan for Raunds be circulated by email to the Working Party and they were asked to submit any further comments they might have on the draft document to EW.

EW

### **(c) Transport Assessment Note**

- 4.11 The Working Party received a draft Transport Assessment Note prepared by the County Council on the current transport position for East Northamptonshire, as part of the infrastructure work being undertaken for the Four Towns Plan DPD.
- 4.12 Once options for growth had been considered and agreed then these would be tested by the County Council using the Northamptonshire traffic model.
- 4.13 Any comments made by Members would then be discussed with the County Council before the draft document was finalised.
- 4.14 Members noted that some of the assumptions made in the document about vehicle movements and travel to work trips made in Raunds and the south of the district were based on findings in the 2001 Census.
- 4.15 The Working Party agreed that the Chowns Mill roundabout was the major highway problem to be resolved and the situation would only get worse. It was also acknowledged that whilst the A45 and A14 had brought growth to the district, they had also brought extra traffic and congestion, especially at peak travel to work times.

## **5.0 REVIEW OF HOUSING AND INDUSTRIAL ALLOCATIONS**

- 5.1 Councillor Greenwood Smith proposed three areas that would be the Working Party's preferred sites for future development around Raunds:
- (a) Land to the south of the former RPC site for a mix of retail, industry and housing;
  - (b) Land to the south of Meadow Lane for housing with industry situated to the north of the site adjacent to the existing industrial site at Warth Park; and
  - (c) Land adjacent to Brick Kiln Road, with the west of the site allocated for industrial use and the east for housing (a possible 285 dwellings) and community use.
- 5.2 He emphasised that the three separate sites would be preferable than one large site allocated for the Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE) proposed for Raunds in the Core Spatial Strategy.
- 5.3 Councillor Boto suggested that the RPC site could be a possible mini SUE with mainly housing and industry. It had the advantage of being near to the town centre. He also suggested that the site could be linked to include land to the south of Manor School.
- 5.4 TW stated that it was important that any proposed sites for Raunds would have to be backed up by evidence before they could be considered for inclusion in a refreshed Preferred Options document. EW proposed that the same site assessment process used for the RNOT Plan could also be used to assess potential sites in Raunds. In this way the advantages and disadvantages of

**Action**

each site could be properly assessed and withstand scrutiny at the Examination stage. Members noted that any work on the site assessments could be undertaken using in house resources.

It was **agreed** that work on a draft Site Assessment for Raunds be proceeded with and that a progress report on this document be made to the next meeting of this Working Party.

**EW**

**6.0 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

6.1 It was **agreed** that the next meeting be held on a date to be arranged in consultation with the Chairman.

**PC**



## Three Towns Working Party

Minutes of a meeting held on 2 March 2010 at 7.00 pm, Members' Room, East Northamptonshire House, Thrapston

### Present:

Councillors:

David Brackenbury	Roger Powell
Michael Finch	Anna Sauntson
Sean Lever	Robin Underwood
Andy Mercer	Pam Whiting
Steven North	

Officers:

Trevor Watson (TGW)	Head of Planning Services
Elizabeth Wilson (EW)	Interim Planning Policy and Conservation Manager
Cat Hartley (CH)	Housing Strategy Manager
Peter Cooper (PC)	Democratic Services (Minutes)

- Action**
- 1.0 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN**
- 1.1 **RESOLVED:** That Councillor Steven North be appointed Chairman of the Working Party for 2009/10. **PC**
- 2.0 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
- 2.1 No interests were declared.
- 3.0 FOUR TOWNS PLAN - DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT**
- (a) Three Towns Issues**
- 3.1 Further to Minute 4 (Joint Working Party) 10 December 2009, Members received a report on planning policies to be considered for the three towns (Rushden, Higham Ferrers and Irthlingborough) and surrounding area, as part of the Four Towns Development Plan Document (DPD).
- 3.2 Members noted the policy issues covering all four towns (including Raunds) in the Four Towns Plan area to be discussed at future meetings of the Joint Working Party, and that consideration would be given to a wind farm policy as part of the Four Towns Plan.
- 3.3 Some policy areas specific to the three towns were proposed for discussion and it was **agreed** that the following issues be considered at future meetings of this Working Party: **EW**
- Local distinctiveness for each of the towns in a pen portrait
  - Vision for the long term strategy of a "successful" Rushden, Higham Ferrers and Irthlingborough area
  - Settlement boundaries - consideration of detailed boundaries

## Action

- Site assessment - housing and employment requirements for Rushden, Higham Ferrers and Irthlingborough
- Housing density and mix for the area - possible differentiated policy for each settlement
- Specific affordable housing sites/rural exception sites in the area
- Town centre/retail frontage-specific boundary issues
- Specific development principles for the Three Towns and surrounding villages
- Chelveston airfield.

3.4 Councillor Mercer considered that the following three issues were important and it was **agreed** that these should be included in the Working Party's deliberations: **EW**

- The treatment of windfall sites in housing requirement figures and the need to avoid densification in urban areas through using housing infill sites especially in Rushden and Irthlingborough
- Whether the existing utilities infrastructure in Rushden and Irthlingborough was adequate to deal with future development needs
- Transportation links, especially public transport in the three towns.

3.5 It was **agreed** that the following issues should also be considered by the Working Party: **EW**

- Existing Town Boundaries – review these to allow for potential development to the east of the A6 Rushden and Higham Bypass
- Residential Parking Standards – whether these should be linked to the availability of public transport and whether there was enough evidence to depart from Government guidance of 1.5 car parking spaces per property and base the standard on the size of the property
- Settlement Hierarchy – should there be a different approach taken on defining the boundaries of the three towns (compared to the RNOT Plan) but this would have to be justified.

3.6 It was **agreed** that the following issues be added to the draft Four Towns Development Plan Document (DPD) for future discussion: **EW**

- Section 5 – a Wind Farm Policy should be added
- Section 6 – Affordable Housing – both housing and planning policies needed to be developed to address the concerns of the Working Party to ensure that there was a spread of type, size and mix of affordable/intermediate housing
- Section 7 – wildlife corridors should be added to green infrastructure and further work should be done on deliverability and consideration of existing tourist assets under the tourism policy. The possible provision of a cycleway/walkway link using the disused railway line running alongside the Rushden Greenway should be investigated
- Section 8 – targets for housing site allocations in Higham Ferrers could be achieved without further major site allocations
- Section 9 – it was considered that the 1003 outstanding target under the housing site allocations in Irthlingborough would be unsustainable because the required infrastructure was not in place. Lack of Section 106 money for education could also prevent further development in Irthlingborough. EW said that the 1003 target figure was part of the Core Spatial Strategy (CSS) and suggested this issue could be considered as part of the CSS Review
- Section 11 – future development of Rushden must not be constrained by the major roads around the town and consideration should be given to allowing development to the east of the A6 Bypass. Land should be

potentially brought forward for development including a possible site for a new Rushden cemetery

- Section 12 – a policy for the future development of Chelveston Airfield was required and it was important that the Council took a lead on this.

3.7 The Working Party requested that the following issues should also be considered: **EW**

- The possibility of Crow Hill becoming a separate settlement from Irthlingborough. EW said that a small consultation exercise on this matter could take place with Crow Hill residents in June 2010, in liaison with Irthlingborough Town Council if considered appropriate
- Car parking issues in Higham Ferrers High Street to be investigated
- Possible increase in retail development in the High Street and the issue of numbers of affordable housing proposed at Irthlingborough.

3.8 Members noted that a skeleton draft Infrastructure Plan for the three towns would be brought to a future meeting for this Working Party to discuss. **EW**

#### **(b) Affordable Housing Policies**

3.9 A report was submitted identifying the main issues on the formation of affordable housing policies for the Four Towns Plan. There was a discussion about what was meant by affordable housing (social rented and intermediate) and the problems of concentration of this housing in particular areas.

3.10 The Working Party considered the main issue to be the concentration and volume of affordable housing and that this type of housing should be spread around a number of sites in the four towns and not be concentrated on a few sites. More affordable housing should be built in villages in the rural settlements as well as the towns. Developers should also be encouraged to produce more imaginative designs for affordable housing.

3.11 CH confirmed that, as required by CSS Policy 15, the Four Towns Plan would aim for 40% of affordable housing on major housing development sites. Under Section 106 agreements, developers were being encouraged to build no more than 20 to 30 affordable dwellings on each site.

3.12 Councillor Powell considered that too much affordable housing was being built in Rushden and Irthlingborough and questioned the number of units under the Housing Market Assessment. Too many flats had been built in these towns which were now standing empty. CH stated that the focus of the affordable housing policies was on sustainability and there must be evidence produced to challenge developers' proposals.

3.13 The issue of ensuring a good mix of age groups allocated to social housing was also discussed. CH confirmed that the Council's Choice Based Lettings Policy had been successful in controlling this matter by achieving a more sustainable occupancy/age mix.

3.14 Councillor Mercer proposed that any policies on affordable housing should differentiate between social and intermediate housing. EW mentioned that some aspects of the differentiation (into social and intermediate housing) could be dealt with by planning policies and some by housing policies. The DPD could not deal with all of these issues. EW was requested to report back on this matter. Councillor Mercer also raised the potential for future strategic housing issues to be considered by the Planning Policy Committee rather than **EW**

the Policy and Resources Committee.

### **(c) Town Centre Boundaries**

- 3.15 Members considered a draft methodology for determining the town centre boundaries for the main settlements within the Four Towns Plan area.
- 3.16 Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 4 set out the Government's policy for town centres and town centre uses. When preparing development plans, Local Planning Authorities should:
- identify primary shopping areas and town centre boundaries within which the Development Plan should locate other town centre uses
  - define other areas within town centres but outside the primary shopping frontage to encourage specific uses
  - ensure town centre uses would benefit from the centre's accessibility by not draw town centre boundaries too widely.
- 3.17 Draft maps showing the proposed town centre boundary and primary shopping frontages for Rushden, Higham Ferrers and Irthlingborough were submitted for Members consideration.
- 3.18 Councillor Mercer questioned the need to treat this as a priority and was concerned about using up scarce resources and proposed that work on defining town centre boundaries should be deferred. He also referenced the amount of work undertaken in producing the village boundaries under the RNOT Plan, especially the time taken to determine them and the subsequent problems since the Examination Hearings in 2008.
- 3.19 EW emphasised that under PPS 4 there was a requirement for all Local Authorities to undertake this work. She assured Members that work on the proposed town boundaries could be undertaken fairly quickly.
- 3.20 It was proposed that Officers would contact Members for their views on the proposed methodology and boundaries and the draft would be updated for further consideration. Possible future site visits to the towns to assess the proposed boundaries were also discussed. However, the Working Party considered that the work should be deferred for now, subject to the further views of the Raunds Area Working party on this issue being considered either by a future joint working party meeting or through the Planning Policy Committee. EW

### **4.0 Date Of Next Meeting**

- 4.1 It was **agreed** that the date of the next meeting would be decided in consultation with the Chairman, and that Members of the Working Party would then be informed. This view was taken having regard to the need to ensure that the work of the individual working parties was appropriately focused and the need for further joint meetings to deal with the main aspects of policy development. PC