Garden Communities

Synopsis
To seek approval to work with the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and potential partner agencies within Northamptonshire on the development of joint delivery arrangements to support possible designation as a “garden community”.

1. Relevant Background Details

In Summer 2014, the government invited expressions of interest in the creation of new “garden cities”. The aim was to generate new housing of a high and sustainable character, improving the quality as well as addressing under supply. It is founded in the original garden cities movement and the objectives of the eco – town proposals by a previous government.

2. Report

Given the objectives of Priors Hall and other consented urban extensions across North Northamptonshire it was considered that they would fit well with the concept. Initial discussions were held with government ministers and civil servants about designation.

Following discussions between Leaderships in Corby, Kettering, East Northants and Wellingborough an expression of the interest was submitted in October 2014. This comprised of an “ask” from a consortium of developers with interests in the four urban extensions involved and an “offer” from the four local authorities in terms of the scale and nature of development to be delivered. Other agencies such as the Homes and Community Agency (HCA), Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), County Council and the Joint Planning Unit were involved in formulating the expression of interest.

The offer and ask were on the basis of:–

- A description of the proposal as “garden communities”, not a garden city.
- Accelerated delivery of 16,700 homes in consented extensions, with the possibility of increasing supply.
- Government forward funded crucial infrastructure limited to early delivery of housing.
- Retaining the principals of high quality sustainable development.
- The management of growth being held by the consenting local authorities and not an external delivery vehicle.

The 16,700 homes comprised:–

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Homes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kettering East</td>
<td>5,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priors Hall</td>
<td>5,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanton Cross W’boro</td>
<td>3,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W’boro North</td>
<td>3,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>16,700</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The government has designated a garden city at Ebbsfleet in Kent and a garden town at Bicester, Oxfordshire. This augers well for the North Northants bid given the ambition and history of delivery in the areas.

Discussions on how delivery in North Northants could be achieved are at an early stage. There is a history of successful joint working via the Joint Planning Unit and Committee, and
North Northamptonshire Development Company. There is a lot of experience on which to build at both member and officer level.

Government has asked the local North Northants partners to work up joint delivery arrangements and more fully describe the complementarity of the extensions. Funding from the government is available to set up delivery arrangements for garden communities in the form of a capacity fund.

An initial proposal for the North Northants areas is that a Joint Delivery Committee (JDC) be established for Corby, East Northants (ENC), Kettering and Wellingborough. ENC shares Priors Hall (800 of 5100 new homes are in ENC) and also has a site, Rushden East, that could be included as part of an increased supply.

The JDC would be separate to the Joint Planning Committee, each with their own statutory responsibilities, one focused on planning and the other delivery.

Membership would comprise of appointees from the four District and Borough Councils, and from the County Council, with observer status for partner agencies such as the HCA and LEPs. The JDC would be accountable to the participating local authorities and when appropriate in respect of funding DCLG and HCA.

Voting rights could be limited to members with consented extensions; ENC only has the 800 homes as part of Priors Hall at present.

A first draft of Terms of Reference is shown at Appendix 1.

It is also proposed to set up a Joint Delivery Unit (JDU) for similar reasons to setting up the JDC. The JDU would be separate from the Joint Planning Unit (JPU).

The JDU would comprise of secondees from constituent local authorities, and/or staff brought in using the government supported capacity fund.

A draft remit for the JDU is shown at Appendix B. The unit would be accountable to the JDC and the North Northants Chief Planning Officers Group would manage it on a day-to-day basis.

3. Options

   1. Agree to the proposals as outlined in the report as a basis for delivering a successful garden communities bid.
   2. Do not agree the proposals
   3. Suggest alternative proposals.

Option 1 is recommended as there is already some consensus that the proposals are a reasonable start point for further discussion and deliberation, based on the successful Joint Planning arrangements.

4. Issues to be taken into account:

   Policy Priorities

   Potential designation for the area under a garden community banner increases the ability of the authorities and their partners to secure the quality of new homes they seek and the infrastructure to do so. It will further enable Corby, to regenerate through growth.

   Financial

   The capacity fund will pay for the new governance and delivery arrangements, but this needs to be secured as a pre-requisite to making progress.

   Legal

   None directly from this report but a formal parliamentary process will need to be undertaken to set up a joint delivery committee with any necessary functional statutory responsibilities. A timetable and process chart is shown at Appendix C.
Performance Information
The provision of new homes is very important to Corby and is a former National Indicator we have maintained as a key indicator of our growth.

Best Value
This will be continually assessed as part of the ongoing “garden communities” bid process.

Human Rights, Equalities and Community Safety
None from this report.

Risks
Corby aspires to double its population to around 100,000 by 2030; the “garden communities” initiatives would be a very important mechanism by which that aspiration is realised. By not pursuing the bid and not agreeing the proposals for delivery within the report, upon which the success of the bid could hinge, there is a substantial risk our aspiration will not be fulfilled.

5. Conclusion
The “garden communities” initiative is an important potential mechanism by which our aspirations to double our population by 2030 could be fulfilled. The proposed joint working arrangements within this report should be agreed in order that progress can continue to be made against the governments requirements for a successful garden communities bid.

6. Recommendation
It is Recommended that – approval in principal be given for the Borough Council to participate in the establishment of a joint delivery committee to support the bid for the potential designation of the area as a garden community, and for the creation of a joint delivery unit, in both of which some of the Borough Council’s functions and responsibilities may be vested, subject to satisfactory arrangements being agreed in respect of capacity fund, infrastructures support and other detailed matters.

Background Papers
Report to KBC Executive Committee January 2015

External Consultations
None

List of Appendices
A. Terms of reference
B. Draft remit of Joint Delivery Unit
C. Timetable and Process Chart for Joint Delivery Committee set-up.

Officer to Contact
Norman Stronach, Chief Executive.
FUNCTIONS OF A GARDEN COMMUNITIES JOINT COMMITTEE

Terms of Reference

Overall scope

To provide democratic oversight and partner support for the delivery of the following urban extensions and associated infrastructure, which make up the North Northamptonshire Garden Communities programme:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development</th>
<th>Number of homes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consented</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kettering East</td>
<td>5,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priors Hall, Corby</td>
<td>5,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanton Cross, Wellingborough</td>
<td>3,100</td>
</tr>
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<td>Wellingborough North</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>16,700</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Potential</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corby West</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rushden East (East Northants)</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weldon Park (near Corby)</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rothwell North (Kettering Borough)</td>
<td>1,000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>8,500</strong></td>
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Quality and stewardship

To ensure that the development of the various urban extensions adheres to agreed delivery standards in terms of design, build quality, sustainability, security and inter-connectivity, in accordance with the principles of the garden cities initiative.

To ensure arrangements for long term stewardship for the communities are in place as they develop.

Inter-connectivity and coherence

To ensure that the various urban extensions are complementary to each other and the towns to which they are attached, work together as a coherent entity and serve to benefit the existing communities in which they are located.

Ownership and commitment

To ensure that the local authority partners maintain a shared vision for the urban extensions, and that this is fully understood by other public sector agencies, government departments, developers, service providers, contractors, local communities, residents and businesses.

To champion the garden communities concept within the area and beyond it.
To ensure long term community engagement is embedded in the development and delivery process and develop ways in which community ownership of land and assets can be enabled.

**Infrastructure**

To support sustainable energy provision and facilities, sustainable highway and transport solutions, strategic green infrastructure, sustainable and low impact utility provision and integrated employment, education, health and community facilities within and beyond developments.

To consider how to overcome any blockages to the timely delivery of development.

To secure appropriate levels of developer contributions towards infrastructure.

To be creative about drawing in resources and capacity from other sources to ensure a greater level of infrastructure is available than relying on developer contributions alone.

**Financial accountability**

To be accountable for the allocation of dedicated public funds for infrastructure projects and to ensure their effective management and utilisation.

To be accountable for the effective use of capacity funds to ensure that delivery takes place without delays.

**Liaison**

To be the statutory body with which government and other partners liaise.
FUNCTIONS OF A JOINT DELIVERY UNIT (JDU)

To support the functioning of the Joint Committee, and provide advice and support to its members.

To progress planning applications, through to local authority planning committees, in respect of all those urban extensions detailed within the terms of reference of the joint committee, (including for infrastructure which is off site but which is a function of the effective delivery of the SUE, or a consequence of an agreed developer contribution).

To negotiate S106 developer contributions and inform CIL policies from the urban extensions.

To ensure the smoothest possible delivery of infrastructure and local facilities to speed up the pace of development, including highway approval and adoption processes, utilities provision and adoption processes and engage private and public agencies to address needs and resolve problems.

To ensure that developers are supported, informed, and guided to deliver the highest quality developments that are possible, and challenged where appropriate to

To ensure residents, communities and businesses are engaged and informed about developments and that they have the opportunity to influence and shape developments and take ownership of solutions and facilities.

To support the creation of vehicles which embed community stewardship and/or ownership of land, facilities or assets.

To work in partnership with the North Northants local planning authorities and their Joint Planning Unit to ensure there is a coordinated approach to the delivery of development and planning policy creation across the North Northants sub-region.

Accountability

The JDU will be accountable for resource use to the partner authorities, in the form of a body comprising chief planning officers for the five authorities, and to the joint committee for policy matters in the domain of elected members.

Structure

To ensure the Unit is adequately resourced

  a) planning resources from constituent local authorities – existing and new
b) highway and public transport resource from NCC

c) development viability, negotiation and project management resource from NNDC

d) community engagement resource (funded by S106 provisions)

Ensure supporting legal, finance and administrative support is available to committee and JDU.

Draw down specialist advice on conservation, green infrastructure and other topics from JPU or other specialist consultancies when required.

Ideally, co-location with Joint Planning Unit
Set out outline ToR & functions of a joint committee

Local Authority

Broad agreement of partners

CLG, HCA

Consult stakeholders: NNDC, JPU, LEPs, etc.

Identify resource requirements, staffing levels, etc.

Finalise ToR & functions

Finalise ToR & functions

CLG to agree

CLG to agree

Parliamentary process?

CLG to agree & allocate capacity funds

Staff appointed / seconded

Premises identified

Functioning as a team

First meeting

LAs to agree & appoint members

DEC  JAN  FEB  MAR  APR  MAY  JUN  JUL  AUG  SEP