This report advises Members about consultation on North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy, and asks Members to consider and support the comments as the basis for the Council’s response to the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit is preparing the Core Spatial Strategy for North Northamptonshire. Once adopted the Core Spatial Strategy will become the key overarching policy document within the North Northamptonshire Local Development Framework, to which Corby Borough Council’s individual Development Plan Documents will need to have regard to and be in conformity.

1.2 Members of the Local Plan Committee considered the draft Core Spatial Strategy for North Northamptonshire at its meeting on 6th September 2006. In response, a number of areas were identified where the regeneration imperative for Corby could be strengthened; in particular the retail policies should be reviewed in order to provide the flexibility needed for the town centre redevelopment to occur early in the plan period.

1.3 The Core Spatial Strategy has evolved considerably since September 2006 in light of comments from consultees, the outcomes of technical studies, new and emerging national and regional policies, and lessons from Core Strategies prepared elsewhere in the country. At the North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Committee on the 1st February 2007 a revised document was approved subject to minor amendments to be submitted to the Secretary of State, subject to the public consultation period from the 12th February to the 26th March 2007.

1.4 North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy is available for inspection at http://nnjpu.org.uk

2. RELEVANT BACKGROUND DETAILS

2.1 This report describes the most significant changes since the draft Core Spatial Strategy was reported to Members in September 2006 that may have an impact on the Borough of Corby and, where appropriate, sets out officer comments. The examination of the Core Spatial Strategy, scheduled for Autumn 2007, will consider the Plan in the context of ‘whether it is sound’. The tests of soundness are set out in Planning Policy Statement 12 and are attached to this report as Appendix 1. Each of the officer comments set out in the report (other than those requesting minor word changes or offering support) will refer to the test(s) of soundness that it is considered the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy does not comply.

3. NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE CORE SPATIAL STRATEGY

3.1 The Plan expands on the spatial portrait for the area, setting out a comprehensive picture of North Northamptonshire including issues to be addressed in the Core Spatial Strategy.
Comments
Rates of house building in North Northamptonshire between 2001 and 2006 fell short of the Regional Spatial Strategy requirement, despite significant increases recently. As such, paragraph 2.21 should include the shortfall in the delivery of housing as an issue to be addressed in the Plan. This will provide further justification for Objective 10. (Tests 6 and 7)

Vision and Objectives
3.2 The vision and objectives includes increased emphasis on delivering the quantity and mix of housing to meet identified needs.

Comments
This increased emphasis on housing growth is strongly supported. Significant new housing developments are underway in the Borough and the Council remains committed to delivering the growth agenda in a timely manner.

Policy 2: Connecting North Northamptonshire with surrounding areas
3.3 Paragraph 3.16 indicates that the Plan aims for a modal shift away from car use and road freight haulage, towards more sustainable alternatives. For residential development the Plan has a target of a 20% reduction in car journeys in new developments over 200 dwellings (compared to adjoining areas) and a 5% reduction for existing areas.

3.4 The Plan continues to prioritise the re-opening of the passenger rail station at Corby and the A43 Corby Link Road. In addition, it supports the upgrading of rail infrastructure to increase capacity for rail freight, such as at Eurohub.

3.5 A427 Weldon Bypass remains excluded from the list of priorities although paragraph 3.28 indicates that the road may be facilitated by local development.

Comments
The local context is significant considering the variation in car driver mode share across North Northamptonshire, and even more so within the individual towns.

According to the 2001 Census, Corby has a much lower car use rate than the rest of Northamptonshire. Corby has 73.4% car use for journeys to work compared to Kettering and Wellingborough, which experienced car use levels of 78.8% and 78.9% respectively.

Based on 20% reduction, Corby's car driver mode share would be 53.4%. Thus, the effect of the proposed target – if it was achieved – would be to ensure that any new development in the Sustainable Urban Extensions was considerably above the national average, reaching levels similar to those currently in Manchester\(^1\). This is clearly challenging and places additional demands on developers.

A blanket target across North Northamptonshire is considered too simplistic. It fails to take into account important local differences, such as existing levels of public transport usage, which are very high in the Borough. Indeed, the draft Transport Strategy for Growth states that a lower figure may be appropriate for developments in Corby. (Test 7)

Paragraph 3.16 of the Plan states that the draft Transport Strategy for Growth has been used to draw up a prioritised list of transport interventions. However the list of interventions provided within Policy 2 excludes dualling of A43 Corby Link Road and the A427 Weldon Bypass, which are both included in the draft document as strategic infrastructure improvements required to accommodate growth. (Tests 4 and 7)

Policy 6: Strategic Gaps

3.6 To avoid coalescence between settlements the Plan retains proposals for a strategic gap between Kettering and Corby.

Policy 7: Infrastructure Delivery and Developer Contributions

3.7 In order to ensure that infrastructure is planned and provided alongside development the Plan stipulates that planning permission for new Sustainable Urban Extensions (other than the initial development at North East Corby) will not be granted until infrastructure solutions have been addressed. The Plan is clear that growth is reliant upon infrastructure improvements; therefore new urban extensions may need to be held back pending infrastructure improvements.

3.8 The Plan supports the application of a standard charge or series of standard charges per dwelling to ensure the funding of strategic infrastructure. A Supplementary Planning Document on developer contributions will set out the costs, standards charges and thresholds for implementation of the policy. Significantly paragraph 3.60 states that in order to ensure the viability of development, different levels of Strategic Infrastructure charge may be applied to areas of different land values.

Comments

Inevitably, there will be significant costs to developers and it is important to ensure that they do not deter development and particularly regeneration. Therefore, provision within the policy to vary strategic infrastructure charge based on location, scale and financial viability is supported.

There is concern that the introduction of pooled planning contributions within North Northamptonshire may result in monies raised from developments within Corby being diverted to fund infrastructure requirements in the rest of North Northamptonshire. It therefore seems probable that the effect of Policy 7 would be to reduce the funds available to provide the necessary infrastructure locally. This could have a negative effect on regeneration in Corby, which has been given priority for redevelopment and renewal in the Regional Spatial Strategy and Community Strategy. (Tests 4, 5 and 7)

Table 2 provides examples of local and strategic infrastructure. A critical component of strategic infrastructure is the new railway station at Corby. Therefore the table should be amended to read ‘Transport – improvements to the strategic highway network and public transport infrastructure such as new railway station and investments…. This would support Policy 2 and emphasis the importance of providing a new railway station.

Policy 8: Delivering Housing

3.9 A new policy in relation to the delivery of housing is included to reflect the aspiration for a step change in the rate of house building. Policy 8 determines the broad phasing of development over five year periods and sets out the following annual rate of development for Corby:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2001-06</th>
<th>2006-11</th>
<th>2011-16</th>
<th>2016-21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>298</td>
<td>929</td>
<td>955</td>
<td>1178</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.10 Importantly Policy 8 indicates that the phasing of further Sustainable Urban Extensions at Corby may be reviewed and brought forward if required to maintain a continuous supply of housing.

Comments
The Plan continues to support increased rates of house building in Corby but at a rate of development that is considered more realistic and deliverable than the phasing set out in the Regional Spatial Strategy. The development rate reflects the current position, where Corby’s current under provision is projected to change to an over provision in the near future due to the Priors Hall and Land West of Stanion developments coming on stream.

Reference to Priors Hall in Figure 13 is inconsistent with Policy 10 that indicates that initial urban extensions will take place to the north-east of Corby. Moreover, it is contrary to PPS12 (paragraph 2.10) that advises that a Core Strategy should contain policies for broad locations, but it should not identify individual sites as these will be dealt with in other Development Plan Documents. Therefore, Figure 13 should refer to the location of the initial Sustainable Urban Extension as ‘North East Corby’. (Test 4 and 6)

Preferred Option reports for both North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy and Corby Borough Site Specific Proposals. Both include plans showing the general location of growth on both sides of the A43 and indeed paragraph 3.46 of the Corby Borough Site Specific Proposals report states that Priors Hall forms part of the area shown as the possible north-eastern extension in previous reports and studies. Figure 15 should be amended to reflect the above plans and text. (Tests 4, 6 and 7)

**Policy 9: Economic Prosperity**

3.11 The Plan suggests that 47,400 jobs need to be created within North Northamptonshire between 2001 and 2021 to achieve a broad balance between homes and jobs. This North Northamptonshire wide target is translated into district targets in Policy 12.

**Policy 10: Location of Development**

3.12 The overall target for residential development on previously developed land and buildings in North Northamptonshire has been reduced from 40% to 30%.

3.13 Policy 10 indicates that once the initial Sustainable Urban Extensions are successfully established, further Sustainable Urban Extensions may be brought forward to the West of Corby.

**Comments**

In order to support the delivery of housing set out in Policy 8, the above policy should provide a greater degree of certainty. Policy 10 should read ‘Once the initial Sustainable Urban Extensions are successfully established, further Sustainable Urban Extensions will be brought forward to the west of Corby’. (Test 6)

**Policy 12: The Distribution of Jobs**

3.14 Overall, job creation targets in Corby have been reduced from 14,400 to 13,580. Policy 12 sets out the following distribution of jobs between employment uses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Net Job Growth (in all sectors)</th>
<th>Of which B use classes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corby</td>
<td>13,580</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Industrial</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution</td>
<td></td>
<td>3,640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offices</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,450</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comments**
The above distribution of jobs represents a slight increase in general industrial and distribution jobs in the Borough and a reduction in office jobs. It equates to the following ratio for B use classes; general industrial 23%, distribution 46% and offices 31%. This broadly reflects the mix of uses proposed in Corby’s Site Specific Proposals Development Plan Document, which seeks to provide a balanced land portfolio that will contribute towards the economic diversification required to support the regeneration of Corby.

Paragraph 3.77 promotes the provision of additional high quality land and buildings to support a prosperous and diverse economy, including the identification of a premium office site in each growth town. Explanatory text under paragraph 3.94 outlines the approach to selecting sites. This is partly taken forward through policy 12 which supports the identification of sites that meet the Technology Realm initiative but it doesn’t make it clear within the policy how sites will be allocated or support the identification of a premium office site. The policy should set out the criteria for the selection of sites and clarify whether sites will be allocated through individual Development Plan Documents.

**Policy 13: Distribution of Retail Development**

3.15 All three growth towns continue to be regarded as potential sub regional centres and the focus for new retail development. The indicative range of net increases in comparison shopping floorspace included in the previous draft Core Spatial Strategy has been replaced with the following **minimum** net increase in comparison retail floorspace requirements: 15,500 m² each for Corby and Wellingborough and 20,500 for Kettering.

**Comments**

The above amendments to the Plan allow the necessary growth and regeneration of Corby town centre and are supported.

Paragraph 3.104 is supported, which suggests that the redevelopment of Corby town centre is underway and its completion early in the plan period is key to regenerating the town and helping to stem the loss of trade from North Northamptonshire. Policy 13 should reflect this and support the regeneration of Corby as required by the Regional Spatial Strategy by ensuring that proposals for retail development and their phasing in the other growth town centres will be held back if it would threaten the redevelopment of Corby town centre. Therefore, in order to make the Core Spatial Strategy sound under tests 4 and 6, it is suggested that Policy 13 should read.

“Accordingly, proposals for retail development and their phasing will be assessed to ensure that they do not have an adverse impact on the long term vitality and viability of other town centres, threaten regeneration objectives or the ability of North Northamptonshire to retain expenditure”. (Test 4 and 6)

Figure 14 has been amended to separate Corby and Wellingborough. This provides an opportunity to clearly define the objectives for each centre. As such, text under Corby should read.

“Substantially remodelled and expanded town centre to be brought forward early within the timeframe of the Plan to achieve key regeneration objectives”. (Test 6)

**Policy 14: Sustainable Development Principles**

3.16 No significant change and policy largely repeats national and regional policy statements. However, a criterion (e) has been added that expects developments over 200 dwellings to incorporate measures to contribute to an overall target of 20% modal shift.

**Comments**

See earlier comments concerning modal shift (Policy 2).
Furthermore there is concern that the modal shift proposals are not practical and will be difficult to implement. The Plan needs to clarify how the modal shift target will be measured and defined i.e. is it based on single occupancy journeys and will the destination and type of journeys be taken into account.

**Policy 15: Energy Efficiency and Sustainable Construction**

3.17 Policy 15 incorporates more stringent standards in construction and design consistent with the draft Regional Spatial Strategy including requirements for larger schemes to meet high standards of construction and design (Building and Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method – BREEAM – ‘very good’ rating and for schemes that require an Environmental Impact Assessment to be operationally ‘carbon neutral’. The requirement in respect to average rates of potable water consumption has been relaxed.

**Comments**

It has been agreed that at Priors Hall and Land West of Stanion a ‘good’ standard would be acceptable. This may put extra financial pressure on future development together with the requirement that all new development must be ‘carbon neutral’.

The explanatory text under paragraph 4.17 explains that the implementation of Policy 15 will be closely monitored to ensure that it is not acting as a constraint to inward investment or development. However, this is not reflected in the monitoring framework in chapter 5, which doesn’t include a measure to record lost opportunities. (Test 6 and 8)

**Policy 16: Sustainable Housing Provision**

3.18 The conclusions from the draft Housing Market Assessment commissioned by Corby and the three other local authorities in North Northamptonshire, provides the basis for affordable housing targets set out in Policy 16. For Corby, this indicates that 20% of all new development should be genuinely affordable to meet identified needs.

3.19 Development Plan Documents will set out more detailed affordable housing requirements, including the mix and types and tenures of housing required to meet local needs.

**Comments**

Policy 16 is generally supported. The affordable housing requirement matches the Council’s current target set out in the Housing Strategy and is lower than the target in the other growth towns to reflect the identified need in Corby compared to total planned housing provision.

The discretion proposed for setting local targets in individual Development Plan Documents (within overall national guidance) rather than in the Core Spatial Strategy will enable targets to reflect local needs information and can be welcomed.

Notwithstanding, the policy should take account of long term management issues. Corby Borough Council are progressing an innovative approach towards local stock operation and management, in particular Local Housing Management Agreements between the Council and the Registered Social Landlord sector for a dedicated number of Registered Social Landlords to carry out housing management and maintenance role for new affordable housing in the future.

**Policy 17: Sustainable Urban Extensions**

3.20 Master Plans are expected to incorporate a package of measures to reduce car usage and achieve a 20% modal shift away from car use (see comments in respect to Policy 2). Policy 17 stipulates that Sustainable Urban Extensions should achieve an overall minimum housing density of at least 35 dwellings per hectare. This is above the national minimum density standard of 30 dwellings per hectare.
Comments

A key priority of Corby’s Housing Strategy 2005-08 is to change the current imbalance of the local housing market, with its predominance of low- to medium-value properties, and to widen housing opportunities and thereby attract higher-income households into the Borough. Therefore, it is imperative that the Core Spatial Strategy provides the flexibility to enable the Council to promote a range of residential density standards at the Sustainable Urban Extensions and to raise the profile of modern high-quality mixed tenure neighbourhoods. As such, the Core Spatial Strategy should echo national guidance (national minimum density standard of 30 dwellings per hectare) unless it can be demonstrated that local circumstances support a departure from national standards. (Test 4 and 7)

Policy 18: Gypsies and Travellers

3.21 Policy 18 sets out the criteria for selecting sites to meet the accommodation needs for gypsies, travellers or travelling show people.

Monitoring and Review of the Plan

3.22 Table 7 sets out the performance indicators and targets that will form the basis for monitoring the Plan.

Comments

Table 7 indicates that a key indicator for measuring Policy 1 is the ‘% of development at Growth Towns (Housing, Retail, Leisure)’. Delivering economic prosperity through the provision of high quality employment sites is a key component of sustainable communities as recognised in Policy 1 and Table 1. Therefore, employment development should be regarded as a key indicator.

In connection with Policy 1 the monitoring framework provides an arbitrary 66% target for development at the Growth Towns. This is at odds with Policy 11 that broadly indicates that Corby will accommodate 92% development at Corby and 8% in the rural area.

In terms of Policy 16, the key indicators do not correlate to the density requirements set out in the policy. (Test 7 and 8)

4. Options to be Considered

The consultation requires comment, the only real option is to comment on the document from the Corby position. This is set out within the report.

5. Issues to be taken into account :-

Policy Priorities

The adoption of the North Northamptonshire Local Development Framework and Corby’s constituent Local Development Document’s is and will remain a Corby Borough Council priority.

Financial

There are no direct financial implications due to the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy but the Council contributes to the Joint Planning Unit.

Legal

It is a requirement that Corby Local Development Documents are in conformity with the Core Spatial Strategy.

Performance Information

None directly relevant to this report.
Sustainability, Best Value, Community Safety, Human Rights, Equalities

These are basic requirements in a sustainable community. The Local Development Framework regards these as essential elements of any strategy.

6. Conclusions

The Core Spatial Strategy will become the key overarching policy document within the North Northamptonshire Local Development Framework, to which Corby Borough Council’s individual Development Plan Documents will need to have regard to and be in conformity.

There are issues raised by the Core Spatial Strategy which have implications for Corby.

In general terms the following key responses are proposed:

a) A ‘one solution’ approach across all areas of North Northamptonshire in respect to a modal shift is considered too simplistic and a lower figure i.e. less than 20% will be appropriate for developments in Corby (Policy 2);

b) Object to the approach to planning contributions within North Northamptonshire that may reduce the funds available to provide the necessary infrastructure locally, which could have a negative effect on regeneration in Corby (Policy 7);

c) Site specific reference to Priors Hall should be replaced by ‘north east Corby’ in line with national guidance that advises that a Core Strategy should contain policies for broad locations, but it should not identify individual sites as these will be dealt with in other Development Plan Documents (Policy 8);

d) In order to support the delivery of housing, the Plan should indicate that once initial Sustainable Urban Extensions are successfully established, further Sustainable Urban Extensions will be brought forward to the west of Corby (Policy 10);

e) The Plan should clearly define the objectives for each centre, emphasising that Corby should be substantially remodelled with expanded town centre brought forward early to achieve key regeneration objectives (Policy 13); and

f) It is imperative that the Core Spatial Strategy provides the flexibility to enable the Council to promote a range of residential density standards at the Sustainable Urban Extensions (Policy 17).

7.0 Recommendations

That the comments, as amended by Members set out in the report form the basis of response to be forwarded to the Joint Planning Unit by 26th March as Corby’s response to the Submission Core Spatial Strategy for North Northamptonshire.

Background Papers

None

External Consultation

None – full consultation carried out by Joint Planning Unit

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Appendix 1 – Test of Soundness

Objections to the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy (CSS), or part of the CSS should make it clear why the document is not sound, by making reference to the tests of soundness listed below:

Test 1: It has been prepared in accordance with the North Northamptonshire Local Development Scheme (LDS);

Test 2: It has been prepared in compliance with the North Northamptonshire Statement of Community Involvement (SCI);

Test 3: The Core Spatial Strategy and its policies have been subjected to Sustainability Appraisal (Baker Associates, January 2007);

Test 4: It is a spatial plan which is consistent with national planning policy and in general conformity with the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the East Midlands and it has properly had regard to any other relevant plans, policies and strategies relating to the area;

Test 5: It has had regard to the Kettering, Corby, Wellingborough, East Northamptonshire and Northamptonshire Community Strategies;

Test 6: The strategies/policies/allocations in the plan are coherent and consistent within and between Development Plan Document (DPDs) prepared by neighbouring authorities, where cross boundary issues are relevant;

Test 7: The strategies/policies/allocations represent the most appropriate in all the Circumstances, having considered the relevant alternatives, and they are founded on a robust and credible evidence base;

Test 8: There are clear mechanisms for implementation and monitoring

Test 9: It is reasonably flexible to enable it to deal with changing circumstances.