This report seeks Members agreement to the proposed consultation response to the Joint Planning Unit, as detailed in Appendix A. The response relates to the consultation on the North Northamptonshire Core Strategy Issues Paper.

1. Introduction and Background

1.1 The Core Spatial Strategy sets out the overall town planning strategy for the area covered by Corby, Kettering, Wellingborough and East Northamptonshire Councils. It is prepared by the North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit and agreed by the Joint Planning Committee.

1.2 The current Core Spatial Strategy came into effect in June 2008. Work has since started on the review of the Plan to 'roll' forward to 2031.

1.3 The Joint Planning Unit has worked together with the partner authorities at a number of different levels to produce a discussion document about issues that need to be tackled in reviewing the long term Plan for the area. The format and content of the Issues Paper was agreed for the purposes of public consultation at Joint Planning Committee on 20th January 2011.

2. The Issues Paper

2.1 The Issues Paper circulated to all members separately provides a basis upon which local communities can participate in the review of the strategic Plan. A copy of the Issues Paper is also available to view on-line at http://www.nnjpu.org.uk/publications/docdetail.asp?docid=1175

2.2 The Issues Paper is subject to six weeks public consultation. The consultation document proposes a series of questions for a response. The proposed responses to the questions are detailed in the appendix to this report. The consultation period closes on 28th March 2011, after which work will begin on drafting the draft Plan for consultation in July 2011.

2.3 It is inappropriate, at this stage, for the Council to take a definitive position on the consultation document because a great deal more information and evidence will emerge during the process. However it is reasonable for the Council to put down a marker where it currently stands on the Plan, particularly as it affects the Borough.

3. Options to be considered (if any)

The Council is not obliged to the respond to this consultation but by doing so, we are in a position to influence the content of the Core Strategy. There will be more opportunities to input into shaping the Core Strategy as it progresses towards adoption. The next stage of consultation is currently expected to take place in July 2011.

4. Issues to be taken into account:-

Policy Priorities

The review and adoption of the North Northamptonshire Core Strategy and Corby's constituent Local Development Documents is and will remain a Corby Borough Council priority.
Legal
It is a statutory requirement to produce a Local Development Framework under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The Local Development Framework process is regulated by the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 and subsequent amendments.

Human Rights, Equalities, Community Safety and Sustainability
These are basic requirements in a sustainable community. The Local Development Framework regards these as essential elements of any strategy

5. Recommendation
5.1 That Members agree the content of the response to the Joint Planning Unit as outlined in Appendix A.

Background Papers
Adopted North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy
http://www.nnjpu.org.uk/docs/Adopted%20CSS%20Final%20Proof.pdf

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Appendix A
Consultation Response
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1. How could your neighbourhood change for the better?
The Regeneration Framework provides a long-term vision for Corby and the changes required to improve the Borough, including the following five interlinking components:

- A framework to establish the town centre as a location for high quality commercial, leisure and civic facilities that enhance the quality of life as a whole and reposition it as a major regional centre;
- A strategy to improve and extend the housing market through new housing within and adjacent to the urban area;
- Regenerate the existing housing areas by making them high quality, safe places to live;
- A strategy to create the environment to attract added value jobs, broaden the economic structure and open-up opportunities; and
- A strategy to offer the best opportunity to create a critical mass of development to deliver better public transport across the town.

As the town expands the priorities of the community have evolved over recent years with growing aspirations reflecting success in the delivery of the Regeneration Framework. The second Community Plan, ‘More in Corby’ emphasised that expansion in Corby should be accompanied by complementary increase in jobs, prosperity and the quality of local public services.

2. Which parts of towns should be prioritised for change or regeneration?
The emerging Site Specific Allocations DPD identified the areas that should be prioritised for change and regeneration, including but not limited to transformation of the town centre and housing regeneration areas within Kingswood, Danesholme and Lodge Park that are amongst the most deprived in the Country.

3. Where are there opportunities for development?
The emerging Site Specific Allocations DPD identified opportunities for development through proposed land allocations, including housing and employment sites that underpin the Councils ambitions for growth and regeneration over the next decade. Such opportunities include but are not limited to:

- Rockingham Motor Racing Circuit
- Parkland Gateway
- Corby Central Business Park
- West Corby Sustainable Urban Extension
- North East Sustainable Urban Extension
- Southern Gateway
- Danesholme/Flensburg Close
- Stanion Lane/Geddington Road

Beyond 2021 the Regeneration Framework and North Northamptonshire Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment draw attention to the significant development opportunities on the peripheral of Corby including Oakley extension, southern extension and northern extension.
Additionally interest has been expressed to the local planning authority about developing Brookfield Plantation.

**4. Are we right to scale back the housing targets for North Northamptonshire?**

House building in Corby has rapidly increased from under 100 dwellings completed in 2001 to over 500 dwellings expected to be completed this year. Nevertheless, information presented in the latest LDF Annual Monitoring Report demonstrates that the housing targets set out in the adopted Core Spatial Strategy are no longer considered deliverable by 2021. This is not due to a shortage of available land for housing because Corby currently has land committed for nearly 15,000 dwellings but because the Sustainable Urban Extensions are not coming forward as originally envisaged due to the impacts of the economic recession. Therefore despite the pace and momentum of development and the Councils strong commitment to growth it is considered appropriate and necessary to scale back the housing targets to reflect the change in the economy.

**5. Would you support additional housing being built where you live (bearing in mind that some will already have planning permission)?**

The well established regeneration agenda and appetite for growth have established a situation where the spatial strategy is already well developed and understood in Corby. Both the Regeneration Framework and Community Plan for Corby embrace additional housing and the benefits it can bring. Proactive planning and delivery work undertaken in the Borough has resulted in a significant supply of land and infrastructure to support the spatial strategy for growth.

**6. If so, what benefits would you want this to bring to your neighbourhood?**

**7. If not, what if anything, would make additional housing acceptable to you?**

The Community Plan for Corby expects the increase in population to be accompanied by a complementary increase in jobs, prosperity and the quality of local services.

By 2031 North Northamptonshire will have a population similar to the current population of Bristol. On the basis that the area will grow to the scale needed to compete effectively in UK and international markets there should be no limits to the ambition and benefits that growth can bring. Within Corby there are opportunities to build on its key strengths and delivery of investment on the ground. For example world class cultural and leisure activities to complement the existing Olympic Swimming Pool, Corby Cube, Adrenaline Alley and Rockingham Motor Racing Circuit.

**8. What sorts of jobs are needed in your town or village and where should employment sites be located?**

The Corby Employment Land and Buildings Study recommended that Corby should build on its existing strengths as an industrial location to maintain and enhance the competitiveness of the existing manufacturing base. However it also recommended that Corby aims to diversify the local economy to make the economy less vulnerable.

The emerging Site Specific Allocations DPD sets out the location of proposed employment land allocations over the next decade. The Regeneration Framework and Northamptonshire Strategic Employment Land Assessment provide a longer term framework and draw attention to the location of key economic development opportunities.

Corby has a strong industrial heritage and provides an important employment base for North Northamptonshire. Within the Borough there are many economic development opportunities to consolidate and build on the strong economic base, including:

- Motor sports and precision engineering clustered centred upon Rockingham Motor Racing Circuit and mix of high quality business locations;
- Processing parks and logistics uses adjacent to existing distribution land at Eurohub;
• Cultural and Leisure sector related to the international facilities in the Borough such as the Corby East Midlands International Swimming Pool, Adrenaline Alley, Corby Cube and Rockingham Motor Racing Circuit;
• Entrepreneurial companies based at the Corby Enterprise Centre which offers flexible office and studio space for new enterprise and business start-ups;
• Knowledge economy connected to improved educational facilities such as Corby Business Academy and Tresham College;
• A series of development sites will be available as part of the redevelopment of the town centre for the purpose of mixed use development, including prestigious offices that will meet the growing demand as Corby’s population and affluence expands.
• Renewable energy and green economy related to the concentration of integrated waste management facilities in the Borough; and
• The Rockingham Forest for Life project provides a valuable driver for job creation – both in the creation of the forest and in post-planting uses, including tourism, conservation, fuel harvesting and craft working.

9. How can we best meet the needs of local businesses and provide room for them to grow?

The provision of employment land that provides a good range and choice of appropriate sites and premises is essential to meet local business needs. The Plan should identify a supply of employment land that provides choice, flexibility and contingency in order to provide a platform for North Northamptonshire to benefit from the economic recovery and help stimulate local investment. A portfolio of different employment land opportunities in Corby are offered in the emerging Site Specific Allocations DPD and Regeneration Framework.

A model worth replicating is that supported by Northamptonshire Enterprise Ltd in its work creating industrial estate groups. Groups of companies local to each other have many needs in common, such as security, maintenance of un-adopted roads, provision of public transport, procurement of resources and utilities, improvement of upgrading infrastructure e.g. telephony, sewerage. Joint working can maximise benefit and value for money. The creation of Business Improvement Districts whereby all companies pay an additional percentage on top of their business rates, with the sum being used for communal projects could help improve the competitive environment of employment areas.

10. What practical measures can be taken to ensure that the rural areas are competitive and effective locations for businesses?

The rural area presents opportunities for the diversification of the local economy, increasing wages and prosperity and raising skill levels. Practical measures to support the rural economy would include policies to support appropriate agriculture and farm diversification schemes, expansion of existing businesses, creation of new rural enterprises, and the re-use of rural buildings for economic purposes, such as tourism. However it should also be recognised that the majority of new jobs and business activity will be focused on the Growth Towns. Measures to reduce the time and cost of travel and to improve the quality and reliability of services between the Growth Towns and rural areas will help businesses in the rural areas become more competitive and effective.

11. Where should warehousing development be allowed and under what conditions?

Areas for strategic distribution sites have been identified in the Regeneration Framework, in particular adjacent to existing distribution land at Eurohub. This is echoed by the Northamptonshire Strategic Employment Land Assessment which promotes land at Eurohub as a regionally important strategic distribution location with good inter-modal road/rail transfer.

The emerging Site Specific Allocations DPD promoted an innovative approach to strategic distributions sites to help enhance the image of Corby and encourage a diversification of employment opportunities in the area. The emerging DPD set a 70% limit on B8 uses at the
strategic distributions sites as a means of ensuring that the sites contain more than one use and provide diverse employment opportunities.

12. Should the new Plan identify key sites for large employment developments that are of more than local importance?

It is recognised that local authorities now have the option of including strategic allocations in Core Strategies and PPS12 encourages the allocation of sites that are considered central to the achievement of the strategy.

There are a number of advantages to this approach, including:

- Greater certainty in seeking to deliver large scale development and increased confidence for private investors e.g. decisions on planning applications can be given steer immediately;
- Promotion of key development opportunities linked to the regeneration of strategically important locations, such as the town centre and cross boundary sites;
- Encouraging more effective engagement of all necessary stakeholders;
- Identification of critical pieces of infrastructure needed to bring forward large scale developments; and
- Development will not need to be addressed in subsequent Development Plan Document which will provide significant costs savings and make the best use of resources and specialist skills.

Economic growth and diversification is critical to realising the spatial strategy for North Northamptonshire. There is a strong case for identification of strategic employment sites in North Northamptonshire because some of the sites that are central to the strategy will cross local authority boundaries. A joined up approach will assist the delivery and implementation of key strategic sites and ensure that the economic strategy is delivered in a coherent and sustainable manner.

13. What infrastructure is needed in your neighbourhood?

Currently the North Northamptonshire Programme of Development sets out the main infrastructure requirements required in Corby to deliver growth and regeneration, including the Corby Link Road, Parkland Gateway, Corby Walk, Rockingham Triangle and the Railway Bridge. Work has commenced on replacing the Programme of Development with the preparation of a comprehensive Infrastructure Delivery Plan that will help understand the infrastructure requirements in the Borough and provide a platform for charging schedule for CIL payments.

14. If there is limited money to go around for infrastructure, what would your priorities be?

The Northamptonshire Local Area Agreement for 2008-2011 is the action plan for priorities and improvements that will be made in Northamptonshire in the future. For Corby the priority outcomes include but are not limited to high quality employment, reduction in carbon emissions, reduced congestion and modal shift.

15. Why are these your priorities and do you think they will change over the years covered by the Plan?

The Northamptonshire Local Area Agreement for 2008-2011 has been signed up by all partners across the County and reflects the latest position in regard to priorities. However the Local Area Agreement is due to expire this year and it is inevitable that infrastructure priorities will change over the lifespan of the Plan, particularly as work on the Infrastructure Delivery Plan begins to evolve. Therefore the strategic Plan should be flexible and provide a framework to allow local discretion to respond to the latest local requirements and circumstances. At the same time, if we are to speed up the economic recovery and accelerate growth, it is essential that the Plan indicates longer-term planning for infrastructure in order to provide certainty and confidence.
16. How can we encourage more working from home, community hubs and mobile services, so there is less need to travel to the towns for jobs and services?

Good broadband facilities and public transport improvements will provide greater opportunities for working from home, community hubs and mobile services. This can help reduce unsustainable travel movements and foster greater community cohesion.

17. Do the countryside and villages need to attract more people to live, work and visit, to ensure a prosperous future?

There are rural areas of North Northamptonshire that are under threat of decline if positive steps are not taken to plan for their future. However care must be taken to ensure that the steps do not have a detrimental impact on the rural settlements and countryside. Attracting more people to live, work and visit the countryside will encourage dispersed development that will significantly increase the use of the private motor car and impact on the character of the countryside. In most cases the level of development would seldom be enough to enhance or maintain the role and function of the village. To illustrate this in general terms, for every development of 50 homes – a significant amount in any village – this would likely to generate demand for a maximum of 12 primary school places. This is less than two children per year group. The most sustainable way of supporting rural communities is to improve access to the key service centres, such as the Growth Towns. Extending and enhancing key service centres together with improvements to public transport connections will better serve the countryside and villages than dispersed growth.

18. What sort of housing and employment growth is needed? (Countryside and Villages)

A wide range of housing and employment opportunities should be created in the countryside and villages. The Housing Strategy 2008-2011 encourages a balance of high quality market and affordable housing, including flexibility to provide appropriately for an ‘ageing population’. The Regeneration Framework promotes a choice of housing that will broaden the social structure, including new housing that is attractive to higher income groups; and a range of different employment land opportunities to meet the quantity and quality demanded by the ever changing market.

19. Have village boundaries limited development and what effect has this had on communities – are boundaries necessary at all?

Village boundaries have not limited development in Corby, indeed the latest LDF Annual Monitoring Report indicates that development in the rural area has exceeded those levels envisaged through the current Core Strategy.

Village boundaries continue to provide opportunities for development and are well established in Corby and generally supported by members of the public, elected members and stakeholders. The ‘lines on a map’ distinguish the settlement from the countryside and provide clarity and certainty as to how planning policy will be operated. Retention of village boundaries is therefore supported.

A detailed assessment of village boundaries was undertaken by the Council to assist in the preparation of the Site Specific Allocations DPD. The Rural Strategy provides a desk based assessment of each village in order to ensure that the village boundaries are relevant and up-to-date. Officers will continue to work with the JPU to ensure that work undertaken in the development of the Site Specific Allocations DPD informs and compliments the review of the Core Strategy.

20. Could villages work in ‘clusters’ to share jobs, services and new housing opportunities – how and where would this work?

The principal of clustering and partnership working in the rural area is supported as a means to increase effectiveness through collaboration in services and resource sharing. Villages should be encouraged to come together to achieve better results for local communities, particularly where the collaboration is a product of neighbourhood planning. However scope within Corby is
relatively limited because the rural settlements tend to cluster around the town that provides a focal point for services and greater range of employment and business opportunities.

21. How should we define ‘organic growth’ – does it mean up to 10% growth every ten years? What impact would this have?

A standard definition of ‘organic’ development is not appropriate in North Northamptonshire because of the diverse range of rural settlements. Instead of an arbitrary 10% the appropriate level of organic development should be determined through community based plans that are agreed by the local planning authority and compliant with the strategic planning documents.

22. Do you support the development of new villages? Please say where you think there is an opportunity for this?

Deenethorpe Airfield has been promoted through the Core Strategy process as a new village on the outskirts of Corby. Detailed information has not been provided but it is understood that the proposed new village is within proximity to the boundary of Weldon Park proposals for a mixed use development, comprising up to 1,000 dwellings, local centre, community facilities and employment land. The North Northamptonshire Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2009 identified opportunity at Weldon Park for expansion beyond the current boundary up to the ancient woodlands.

A new village at Deenethorpe Airfield would effectively function as an extension of the North-East Sustainable Urban Extension because of the relationship to Weldon Park.

Bringing forward a new village separately to the nearby Sustainable Urban Extension would reduce the contribution to the sustainability and regeneration of Corby as a whole. As a general rule, the Sustainable Urban Extensions offer the greatest potential to secure exemplary standards of sustainable design, achieve highest environmental standards and secure more development contributions.

Development at Deenethorpe Airfield should be considered through a comprehensive comparative study of potential Sustainable Urban Extensions. Detailed work should be undertaken as part of the analytical comparative assessment to show whether development could be accommodated without adverse transport impact on A43 and A427.

23. What else would you like to see in your town centre and what would make you visit more often, or for longer?

The Corby Town Centre Master Plan has been produced to guide the renaissance of the town centre, and establish a strategic vision. The Master Plan promotes a vision for Corby town centre, built on the centre becoming an active, dynamic town centre, offering a comprehensive range of new cultural, civic, retail, educational, residential and leisure facilities.

Transformational projects, including Corby East Midlands International Swimming Pool, iconic Corby Cube and Willow Place Shopping Centre have been implemented in line with the Master Plan. Delivery of the Master Plan has brought a renewed vitality to Corby town centre, but continued improvements and expansion is required to reinforce Corby’s position as a primary retail and leisure centre in North Northamptonshire.

North Northamptonshire Retail Capacity Update confirmed that Corby town centre is healthy and performing well although there are also signs of vulnerability. Corby remains the smallest town centre in terms of number of units within North Northamptonshire and there are a number of key attractors missing, including cinema, higher order fashion retailers and anchor department store.

The Corby Town Centre Master Plan demonstrates that there is considerable scope and clear opportunity to deliver managed growth in Corby that will serve the growing population and further improve the vitality and viability of the town centre. By 2031 the population of Corby is expected to be largest in North Northamptonshire. The leisure and retail offer and position in the retail hierarchy should reflect this.
24. For what reasons or products/services do you visit town centres outside North Northamptonshire?

North Northamptonshire Retail Capacity Update observed that shoppers are increasingly staying in Corby since the completion of Willow Place. However Northampton remains the biggest magnet for shoppers in North Northamptonshire because of its stronger retail offer.

25. Where is regeneration needed most in these towns and how can it be achieved? (Market Towns and Rushden)

Corby Borough Council has no observations to make in this instance.

26. Should Rushden play a bigger role in the new Plan and how will this relate to change at Wellingborough?

27. Should Rushden grow and, if so, in which direction?

The approach to development in Rushden should be carefully managed to ensure that the scale of development is commensurate with the role and function of the settlement and does not damaged the established spatial strategy in North Northamptonshire by competing with the Growth Towns.

28. How can market towns be improved as service centres for their surrounding villages?

The approach to development of the market towns should be carefully managed to ensure that the scale of development is commensurate with the role and function of the settlement and does not damaged the established spatial strategy in North Northamptonshire by competing with the Growth Towns.

29. Which of the following bullet points would you prioritise, and is there any missing?

- better standards for existing buildings (insulation, heating, water use) as over 80% of the existing stock is expected to still be standing in 2050;
- higher energy standards for new development, both housing and businesses
- finding locations for new ‘renewable energy’ developments – wind, biomass, waste etc
- built in ‘adaptation’ measures such as ‘green roofs’ and more tree planting in new developments
- in towns – bigger gardens, more public parks and green routes, river restoration (taking rivers back out of culverts)
- greater focus on local food production by communities and businesses
- large scale tree planting along main roads and in the wider countryside
- more attractive, safer and easier to use routes for walking and cycling within and between towns and for leisure use in the countryside.
- public transport that is better joined up, faster and runs more often, both within and between towns;
- more services and jobs provided locally, reducing people’s need to travel.

The priority order of the above bullet points will vary from community to community and could change over time. However all bullet points are important and should be taken forward in a co-ordinated and integrated manner. Within Corby the anticipated level of new development presents enormous opportunities to take forward the priority actions, such as built in adaptation measures, green routes, improved connectivity and tree planting. However regard has to be taken of the resources likely to be available for implementation and that the climate change and green infrastructure agenda does not derail ambitions for regeneration and growth.

30. How can your priority actions be taken forward and who needs to be involved?
31. Should there be a coordinated overall approach, for instance a ‘Carbon Fund’ paid into by the local developers and businesses, to help pay for things like the ‘Rockingham Forest for Life’ project?

Initiatives to fight climate change and take forward the priorities have to start at a local level which requires the engagement of community groups and local politicians. However the priorities are interrelated and will be delivered most effectively through a holistic and joined up approach that can be provided by the Core Strategy and subsidiary planning documents.

32. Which neighbourhoods need more green space, or better links to it?

An expanding population brings added pressure on existing green space. This heightens the importance of protecting and enhancing green space and urban tree shading.

In July 2002, the Council appointed consultants to undertake an Open Space, Sport and Recreation Needs Assessment. The study included an audit of green space throughout Corby. The study concluded that there is an adequate provision of most types of green space in Corby but that there is undersupply of provision for children and young people and indoor sports facilities. Since the study, a shortfall of cemeteries has been identified through the preparation of the Site Specific Allocations DPD, particularly in the east of the Borough.

Opportunities exist to link Rockingham Forest to Corby, Kettering and the Nene Valley, creating a ‘forest town’s’ concept, with green infrastructure corridors linking town centre woodlands through rural areas of East Northamptonshire to the Nene Valley. This will contribute to enhanced biodiversity, through linking habitat fragments and increasing forest coverage, combat climate change by acting as a carbon sink, aid connectivity by providing walking and cycling opportunities, and facilitate a stronger, greener economy by boosting tourism, renewable fuel provision and wood-product / forestry enterprises.

33. What would encourage you to travel by car less?

Directing new development to locations where the need to travel can be minimised can help reduce the need for unnecessary car use. Corby provides a mix of housing, jobs, services and facilities that should reduce the need to travel.

Making walking, cycling and public transport easier and more attractive will also help reduce the need to travel by car. It can be achieved through the continued development of initiatives and projects that improve the connectivity and accessibility of the transport system, including Corby Walk, improved rail connections and development of a cycle network in Corby.

General Observations

Corby Borough Council would like to draw your attention to the following additional points:

Page 12 presents population estimates for Corby that do not reflect the ONS mid year population estimates, which give a figure of 55,200 for 2009, rather than 55,150 (http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/product.asp?vlnk=15106)

Page 4 of the consultation document cites ‘green living’ as one of three key themes, and describes it as follows: “creating an environment and a way of life that is more resilient to the effects of global influences, such as climate change and a move away from an oil-based economy.” Two other key items also fall into this theme and should not be forgotten – efficiency (and therefore economic savings) and quality of life (green spaces).

One of the other two key themes is ‘self reliance’. It is important that this can not be interpreted as a downscaling of the public sector placing greater onus for services on the third sector and members of the community, but rather the context in which it was prioritised which is the self-reliance of the sub-region, i.e. minimising the need to look elsewhere for resources, jobs and services.