1. **Introduction**

1.1 The Joint Core Strategy sets out the strategic elements of the Local Plan in North Northamptonshire, including housing and employment requirements, infrastructure priorities and proposals for improving the environment. It provides the context for plans prepared by the partner local planning authorities and also for neighbourhood plans.

1.2 The Joint Core Strategy is the responsibility of the North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Committee, set up by the Secretary of State in 2005. This is made up of three members from each of the councils (Corby Borough Council representation discussed under a separate agenda item). The Joint Planning Committee is supported by officers at the Joint Planning Unit who are managed through a Steering Group of the Chief Planning Officers from the councils. This well established partnership working helps meet the statutory ‘duty to cooperate’ and makes efficient use of resources across North Northamptonshire.

2. **Work Programme**

2.1 The Joint Planning Committee consulted on the outline of the emerging Joint Core Strategy in 2012 and on proposed strategic sites in 2013 as previously reported to this committee.

2.2 Work on completing the draft plan is an iterative process that involves the Joint Planning Committee considering elements of the plan over a series of meetings.

2.3 The 1st May 2014 meeting of the Joint Planning Committee considered draft policies relating to Protecting Assets and Ensuring High Quality Development. These draft policies, predominately related to development control and included input from agencies including English Heritage, Natural England, the Environment Agency, Anglian Water and the Wildlife Trust.

2.4 The most recent meeting on 24th July 2014 considered draft policies on connectivity and the green and blue infrastructure. A copy of the draft policies discussed by Members of the Joint Planning Committee is set out at Appendix 1.

2.5 Further draft elements from the emerging plan are expected to be released for consideration, in advance of the formal statutory consultation on the draft plan. The latest Joint Planning Committee timetable is set out below. Dates from submission onwards will depend on the complexity of the examination and the Planning Inspectors approach.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Joint Planning Committee Dates</th>
<th>Committee Business</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st May 2014</td>
<td>To agree draft development management policies for inclusion in the Joint Core Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24th July 2014</td>
<td>To consider the implications of the Rushden Lakes decision and to endorse sections of the Joint Core Strategy that are not impacted</td>
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3. **Opportunities to input in the review of the Joint Core Strategy**

3.1 The Council will be formally consulted on the draft plan when it is published towards the end of the year but it is important that we continue to have an input into the plan as it is developed. The views of this committee can be fed back to the Joint Planning Committee by the Council’s representatives.

4. **Options to be considered (if any)**

This report is presented for information and no alternatives, to noting the current position are identified.

5. **Issues to be taken into account:-**

   **Policy Priorities**
   The review and adoption of the Joint Core Strategy is and will remain a Corby Borough Council priority

   **Financial**
   None directly from this report

   **Risk, Legal, Performance Indicators, Best Value and Human Rights and Community Safety**
   None directly from this report

   **Equalities and Sustainability**
   None directly related to this report. The Joint Core Strategy review will be subject to an ongoing process of sustainability appraisal and equality impact assessment.

6. **Recommendation**

Members to note work on the Joint Core Strategy and that any comments on the emerging plan will be fed into the Joint Core Strategy process

**Background Papers**
North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Committee, 24th July 2014


**External Consultations**
None

**Officer to Contact**
Terry Begley
Principal Planner
01536 463185
North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Committee 24th July 2014
Item 6 - Appendix 2: Draft policies and text on Connections within and beyond North Northamptonshire and the Green and Blue Infrastructure Framework

**Connections within and beyond North Northamptonshire**

4.1 Good transport and communication connections underpin a strong network of settlements and are essential to the economic prosperity of North Northamptonshire, the quality of life of local people and enhancing the urban structure of settlements. This Plan addresses connectivity at the following levels:

- **Neighbourhood connectivity** - improving connections, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists, between and around local neighbourhoods and villages and between settlements and the adjoining countryside;

- **Local connectivity** - improving connections to their most accessible town centre from urban neighbourhoods and from the urban fringes and rural hinterlands of North Northamptonshire;

- **Area connectivity** – connecting key places in North Northamptonshire; and

- **Strategic connectivity** – connecting North Northamptonshire at a national and regional level.

4.2 This Plan has been informed by the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan¹ (The Local Transport Plan) which sets out the strategic aims and goals for transportation in Northamptonshire. The Transportation Plan comprises a suite of documents which include a series of thematic ‘daughter’ documents that provide more detail on specific strategies and policy for specific themes and areas.

**Achieving modal shift and reducing the need to travel**

4.3 The growth identified in the Plan will cause a significant increase in the demand for travel, particularly along the A14, A45 and A43 and on roads in towns, some of which are already congested at peak times. To alleviate the effects of growth on the transport network it will be necessary to increase levels of modal shift away from the private car towards other forms of travel including public transport, cycling and walking. The Plan takes forward the requirements of the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan by supporting the introduction of effective and attractive sustainable transport options that will encourage lasting modal shift in North Northamptonshire in order to deliver the following targets by 2031:

- A reduction of 5% in single occupancy car journeys to work from the existing built up areas of the Growth and Market towns; and

- A reduction of 20% in single occupancy car journeys to work from new developments

4.4 These targets are considered to be challenging but realistic. New, large developments, in particular the Sustainable Urban Extensions provide the greatest scope for achieving modal shift because it is possible to design-in appropriate measures from

the start. In contrast, it is much more difficult to achieve the same scale of change in existing areas, where a 5% target is considered more appropriate. In applying these targets to individual settlements and sites, account will be taken of local circumstances including existing levels of car use, the scale of development, the accessibility of the site and the viability of the development to sustain sustainable transport measures.

4.5 Reducing the need to travel and securing modal shift is dependent upon joint working between public and private sectors to design and implement an extensive range of measures in order to reduce the need to travel and, in particular, the need to travel by car.

4.6 In all matters of land use planning, priority will be given to sustainable means of transport with consideration given to user groups in accordance with the following user priority order: pedestrian – cyclist – public transport – private vehicle. Reducing design speeds on residential roads, where appropriate and economically viable can support sustainable modes of transport. Planning policies will contribute to securing modal shift by:

- Increasing the ‘self-sufficiency’ of the area and individual settlements by maximising opportunities to access employment, services and facilities as locally as possible;

- Ensuring that new developments are well connected to existing towns, services and facilities and that, where feasible, they contain an appropriate mix of land-uses;

- Improving travel options for public transport, cycling and walking; requiring development to be designed around easy access to these modes including the provision of new services and facilities and prioritised routes within existing urban areas;

- Improving the quality of parking in town centres, so it is convenient safe and secure, but where convenient and attractive alternatives to car use exist, or can be created managing parking supply at key destinations such as town centres and major retail and employment areas, in order to reduce congestion and level the playing field between the car and other travel options;

- Promoting the transfer of road based freight transport to rail and water where it is feasible to do so; and

- Promoting high speed electronic communications within all developments, allowing businesses to communicate effectively without travel and providing the opportunity for residents to work at home and more locally.

4.7 Parking standards for non-residential developments can be found within the Parking Supplementary Planning Guidance (March 2003) and for residential development within the Northamptonshire Place and Movement Guide (December 2008). The Northamptonshire Parking Strategy (January 2013)\(^2\) sets out that all developments will be assessed against these standards in order to determine the maximum parking requirement.

4.8 The funding and investment framework provided by the Plan will be critical to the successful delivery of a modal shift over its lifetime. The Sustainable Urban Extensions provide a major opportunity to forge new travel patterns and habits for new and existing communities. Alternatives to car use will need to be championed here and elsewhere through marketing, the use of technology such as smartcards and seed-funding or kick start funding of public transport, alongside the hard infrastructure provision.

**Well Connected Towns, Villages & Neighbourhoods:**

The connectivity framework

4.9 A key ingredient of successful places is their 'connectivity'. This section deals with physical connectivity; the ability of new developments to be integrated with the existing/established built up area and ensuring that facilities can be easily accessed. Digital connectivity is also an important part of supporting economic growth and reducing the need to travel as set out in Policy 10. The Urban Structure Study\(^3\) (USS) examines the scope for greater sustainable movement through the towns. The way settlements are designed and laid out has a dramatic effect on travel, which in turn affects the climate. Cars and lorries generate about a third of Northamptonshire's carbon dioxide (\(\text{CO}_2\)) emissions. Reducing the need to travel by car is best tackled through well-planned places where shops and services are located in the most accessible places and where streets, squares and open spaces are pleasant, safe and direct so that walking, cycling and public transport are an automatic choice.

4.10 Better connectivity to the town centres will support their economic performance; improved links through suburban areas will support more travel by foot, bike and public transport; and enhanced connectivity to the rural area will improve access to the countryside and strengthen the urban-rural links which are a vital part of North Northamptonshire's character.

The USS indicates that places should:

- Be well connected to the centre and to the countryside;
- Include a mix of land uses; and
- Provide 'Streets for All', which are designed to be safe, pleasant, lively and characterful.

**Connectivity across major roads**

4.11 The USS and work undertaken by the Highways Agency\(^4\) has identified particular issues with development located alongside ring roads which often comprise dual carriageways with speed limits of 40-60 mph and very little frontage development. These routes can be intimidating to non-motorised users, creating a barrier to pedestrian movement. Furthermore, the design also limits opportunities for other modes of transport along them. In particular, these routes have sometimes been built without footways or provision for cycling.

4.12 It is imperative that opportunities are taken, particularly where major development is being planned along or beyond such roads, to re-address the balance between place and movement and enhance connectivity across such routes. There is a strong

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\(^4\) HA Felixstowe to the Midlands Route Strategy Evidence Report April 2014
preference for this to be achieved through the use of at-grade crossings along desire lines to ensure safer crossing points, combined with measures to improve the visual appearance of the road, reduce traffic speeds and enhance the safety of pedestrians and cyclists. These objectives will, however, need to be balanced against any demonstrable and detrimental impacts on the capacity of the road and the surrounding highway network and on the safety and technical and economic viability of solutions.

4.13 The USS also identifies the need to improve key radial routes, which provide the most direct access to the town centres. Improvements to these routes are likely to occur incrementally, as changes associated with development or local improvements are implemented. Corridor management plans can provide a mechanism for ensuring that incremental improvements form part of a comprehensive plan for the whole route, designed to improve pedestrian and cycle access and their overall quality and character through measures to lower speeds, encourage tree planting and provide active frontages. Local authorities may develop these plans in consultation with NCC.

4.14 Enhanced connectivity can also be achieved through areas of open space, which can provide pleasant routes through towns and villages. Routes are, however, often fragmented and opportunities to link these areas will be pursued, in accordance with policy 19. Where there is little scope to achieve this, other local streets should be improved with public realm enhancements to make them much greener. These “green streets” will help to link open green spaces with additional street tree and shrub planting and reduced vehicular speeds that create a safer environment with greater emphasis on pedestrian and cycle movement.

Policy 15 – Well-Connected Towns, Villages and Neighbourhoods

Connectivity will be strengthened within and around settlements through an emphasis on:

a) Improving access from the edge of towns to their centres by focusing activity and investment on the main radial routes and rebalancing design towards pedestrians, cyclists and public transport;

b) Creating safe, direct and convenient crossing points on major roads that form a barrier to connectivity, where feasible;

c) Designing development to give priority to sustainable means of transport, including measures to contribute towards meeting the modal shift targets in the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan

d) Improving local integration by ensuring well-connected street networks, very limited use of cul-de-sacs (which should be short in length) and low design speeds for residential roads to allow cycling on street and pedestrian priority;

e) Extending the existing Green Infrastructure network into new development and linking existing open spaces together through the provision of either new Green Infrastructure or “Green Streets”.
Connecting the Network of Settlements:

The role of public transport

4.15 Enhanced public transport provision, both in terms of frequency and speed is fundamental to alleviating the impacts of development in North Northamptonshire and strengthening the network of settlements. Improving public transport links across North Northamptonshire will assist in mitigating any adverse impacts of development upon traffic flows along the key transport corridors such as the A14, A45 and A43. The Northamptonshire Bus Strategy outlines that to accommodate the levels of growth set out in the Plan the number of passengers will need to increase by around 50% from a 2012 base figure. The Strategy identifies a range of inter urban services that should be enhanced which provide linkages between the Growth Towns and across the County and beyond together with minimum levels of provision at the Market Towns and within the rural area, proportionate to population.

Northamptonshire Arc Transit Network

4.16 The Northamptonshire Arc\(^5\) concept seeks to increase connections between Corby, Kettering, Rushden and Wellingborough to Northampton and Daventry. Detailed local studies and investigations co-ordinated by the County Council indicate that a new rapid-transit alternative is needed to help meet the forecast increase in demand for travel and manage its impact on the transport network.

4.17 The proposal is to develop and implement a strategy for a high quality Northamptonshire Arc Transit Network (NAT) utilising the latest technology (such as active demand management and real time information) to provide an attractive, practical, affordable and low carbon alternative to the private car not only for urban travel, but also for inter-urban journeys. This will link the urban spine of North Northamptonshire (the four Growth towns), with Northampton and Daventry.

4.18 The NAT will incorporate bus based rapid transit links, which will be introduced between the town centres, major employment sites and major new developments such as the Sustainable Urban Extensions where commercially feasible. This will help to transform internal connectivity and improve access to transport hubs and the strategic network. This is a long term objective and it is likely that the network would be implemented in phases within and beyond the period of this plan.

Local Highways improvements

4.19 Planned improvements to the A509 between the A45 at Wellingborough and A14 at Kettering will reduce congestion along this route and enhance transport links between the two towns. The proposals (known as the Isham bypass) will bypass the settlements of Isham and Great Harrowden and bring traffic relief to these villages. Funding has been secured through the Northamptonshire Growth deal, and the scheme is scheduled for completion by 2019 which will support the delivery of the Wellingborough North SUE. Implementation of this scheme, together with the completed A43 Corby Link Road, will mean that there will be few settlements still lying on North Northamptonshire's strategic road network. It is not therefore proposed to build further village bypasses or other roads in North Northamptonshire unless improvements are needed due to the proximity to major new development.

4.20 The provision of a link road between Rothwell North and the A6 bypass and the Wellingborough Eastern Distributor Road, providing a link between the A509 and the A45, will be brought forward as part of the sustainable urban extensions at those towns. Similarly, the A427 Weldon Relief Road will be facilitated by proposed development at Weldon Park, which forms part of the North-East Corby sustainable urban extension.

4.21 Funding has been secured for Phase 2 of the Corby Northern Orbital Road, which will serve development to the north east of Corby and facilitate development at Rockingham Enterprise Area as set out in Policy 27.

4.22 The provision of a distributor road to the east of Kettering, linking the A43 Northern Bypass and a new junction on the A14 (Weekley-Warkton Avenue) will be brought forward as part of the proposed Kettering East sustainable urban extension. As well as providing this connection (to the A43), enabling access to/from the north of the site it also provides substantial relief to the villages of Weekley and Warkton. Transport modelling indicates that this road will be required prior to the completion of 2,700 dwellings, in order to improve access to the sustainable urban extension and provide some traffic relief to Kettering town centre, villages to the east and the A14. Development proposals should safeguard the potential for this distributor road.

Multi modal interchanges

4.23 The Transportation Plan and its Bus and Rail Strategy daughter documents emphasise the importance of improving and developing bus interchanges in the Growth Towns and ensuring that the railway stations are improved and enhanced. Significant improvements are proposed at both Kettering and Wellingborough Rail Stations, which will act as focal points for major committed development around the stations and are important components to ensure the economic prosperity of North Northamptonshire. The development of multi-modal interchanges and increased access to stations by walking and cycling is supported as part of the wider package of station improvements.
Policy 16 – Connecting the Network of Settlements

Connections between the towns in the Northamptonshire Arc will be strengthened and links between the Market Towns and the train stations improved. This will be achieved through:

a) Priority being given to enhanced public transport provision, including the Northamptonshire Arc Transit Network and its phased implementation for the introduction of rapid transit links between the town centres, major employment sites and Sustainable Urban Extensions where feasible;

b) Improving and developing centrally located bus interchanges at Corby, Kettering, Wellingborough and Rushden;

c) Developing multi modal interchanges at the railway stations to include facilities for service information, good access by foot and bicycle, provision for buses and taxis, and secure parking facilities; and

d) The provision of road infrastructure associated with development in order to strengthen connections between settlements and/or, relieve existing communities from traffic, where appropriate including the following improvements:
   I. A43/A14 as part of the Kettering East sustainable urban extension;
   II. Rothwell North/A6 as part of the Rothwell North sustainable urban extension;
   III. A509/A45 Wellingborough Eastern Distributor Road as part of the Wellingborough East sustainable urban extension;
   IV. Corby Northern Orbital Road (phase 2) as part of the Rockingham Enterprise Area; and
   V. A427 Weldon Relief Road as part of the North East Corby sustainable urban extension.

North Northamptonshire’s Strategic Connections

4.24 Whilst improved self-reliance is a key aim of this Plan, North Northamptonshire will not meet all of the needs of local people. In particular, health and higher education facilities; retail and leisure services at surrounding large towns and cities; and employment opportunities will continue to draw people out of North Northamptonshire. Investment in strategic transport infrastructure to ensure that people and goods can move around is crucial to the future success and functioning of North Northamptonshire and its ability to attract and accommodate growth. North Northamptonshire’s key strategic connections include the A14, A45 and A43 corridors and the Midland Main Line railway.

4.25 North Northamptonshire needs to be accessible for inward investors and local businesses need to be able to compete both in national and international markets. Arrival gateways to the area, and particularly to the Growth Towns utilising employment opportunities around the Stations, will be critical in presenting a competitive image for
the area. Additionally, strategic transport routes, both road and rail, need to provide a high quality service without congestion or overcrowding.

**Improving strategic connections**

4.26 Improvements to North Northamptonshire’s strategic connections will incorporate enhancements to increase the capacity of roads, including the creation of new roads, widening of existing roads and junction improvements alongside improvements to bus and rail services.

4.27 Extensive technical work has been undertaken with the County Council (the Local Highways Authority) who are responsible for the Primary Road network, and the Highways Agency (HA) who is responsible for the trunk road network, including A14, and A45 to determine the cumulative highway impacts of future developments, including any requirements for highways infrastructure to mitigate these impacts and to ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place for the timely delivery of these.

4.28 The Joint Planning Unit is working, closely with the County Council, Highways Agency, adjoining local authorities Northamptonshire Enterprise Partnership (NEP) and South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP). This work will ensure consistency between the JCS and priority schemes identified in strategic economic plans, in order to support the funding and delivery of transport priorities required for the sustainable growth of North Northamptonshire within its wider context.

4.29 North Northamptonshire is dependent on investment beyond its boundaries to improve its connectivity. A key initiative for Northamptonshire and a major infrastructure gap in the national strategic road network is an ‘all moves’ interchange between the M1, M6 and A14 at Junction 19 of the M1. This is critical to the logistics sector and the national economy. Work on this scheme, known as ‘the M1 J19 Improvement’ commenced in January 2014 and is scheduled to be completed by Autumn 2016. The comprehensive upgrading of the A14 between Huntingdon and Cambridge (including the new Huntingdon southern bypass) is supported as part of the strengthening of the A14 as a trans-european network route that serves North Northamptonshire.

4.30 Policy 17 lists schemes included in the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan (major Roads Strategy). Many of these schemes are important to area connectivity, and strengthening connections between places in North Northamptonshire and beyond. Widening of the A14 between junctions 7 and 9 of the A14 around Kettering is a key priority for North Northamptonshire. Work commenced in 2013 and is scheduled to be completed in 2015.

4.31 There is also a need for junction improvements at Junctions 9 and 10 of the A14. As part of the Kettering East development the provision of a new junction to the east of A14 junction 10 (known as Junction 10a) is required, which will replace the east facing slip roads at Junction 10 and support the future growth of Kettering. Funding has been awarded through the Governments Local Infrastructure Fund to support this improvement and there is a strong commitment from the Government and LEPs to ensure the scheme is delivered.

4.32 Improvements are needed to the A43 between Northampton and the A14 at Kettering and further northwards at Corby. Essential improvements to the A45 include

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improvements to the Nene Valley Way between the M1 and Wellingborough and a number of A45 junctions between the A509 Wilby Way and B663 at Raunds, notably Chowns Mill have been identified as priority junctions requiring improvement. These improvements form part of a wider package of improvements for the A43/A45 artery. The dualling of the A45 between Stanwick and Thrapston has been identified by local stakeholders as an important priority. The scheme is identified in the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan and is supported by the JPC and other stakeholders. Whilst the Highways Agency does not have any current proposals to improve this section of the A45 to dual carriageway standard it remains an important local priority for North Northamptonshire, and measures to secure funding will continue to be strongly supported.

The role of rail

4.33 The re-opening of Corby Station to provide a rail link to the town has been a significant part of the Corby growth and regeneration strategy. The Northamptonshire Rail Strategy identifies a range of priorities to enhance rail provision within North Northamptonshire including the electrification of the Midland Main Line which has commenced and is due to be completed by 2019, with improved north and south bound services. The potential for provision of mainline services to new rail stations at Desborough and Irchester will be considered at a later date and the feasibility should be investigated. Whilst the proposed HS2 rail network does not pass through North Northamptonshire it will be important that current services on the Midland Main Line are maintained and potential opportunities to access HS2 routes from the Midland Main Line and exploit additional network capacity to reduce journey times and increase frequencies are supported.
Policy 17 - North Northamptonshire’s Strategic Connections

North Northamptonshire’s strategic connections with surrounding areas will be strengthened and enhanced to ensure that they are to the standard necessary to fulfil the role expected of them. New development that would prejudice their role will not be permitted.

The priorities for further work and investment within North Northamptonshire in the period to 2031 are:

a) Rail (Midland Main Line)

Upgrading of the rail infrastructure to increase capacity for passengers and rail freight, including:
   i. Electrification and line speed improvements northbound, including from Corby, and southbound from all stations to London St Pancras International and Europe;
   ii. Station improvements, the provision of additional capacity and improved frequency of services calling at Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough;
   iii. Ensuring continuation of through services to Leicester, Derby and Nottingham and connecting with HS2 for onwards northbound travel; and
   iv. Investigation of the longer term potential for railway stations at Irchester (to serve Irchester, Higham Ferrers and Rushden) and Desborough (to serve Desborough and Rothwell).

b) Bus Services

   i. A sub-regional bus network with priorities for investment being Bedford to Market Harborough, linking the towns in the urban core with the Midland Main Line stations; and Peterborough to Northampton providing a direct strategic link along the A605/A45 spine;
   ii. Express coach services linking North Northamptonshire to the West Midlands and East Anglia along the A14; and
   iii. Real Time information at key boarding stops to give passengers details as to the expected likely arrival times of buses.

c) Road Network

   i. A14 Kettering Bypass improvements between junctions 7 and 9;
   ii. A14 improvements at A509 junction 9 and A6 junction 10 including the provision of Junction 10a to serve the Kettering East SUE;
   iii. A45 improvements including the A45/A6 Chowns Mill junction and dualling between Stanwick and Thrapston;
   iv. A509 between A14 Kettering and A45 Wellingborough (including Isham Bypass); and
   v. A43 Kettering to Northampton improvements.
**HGV Parking**

4.34 Lorry parking facilities need to be available to serve strategic routes and freight attractors within the Plan area to assist in achieving the efficient, safe and secure movement of freight and reduce crime related to Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) parked in unsecure locations.

**The need for HGV Parking**

4.35 The Northamptonshire HGV Parking Study\(^7\) considered the need for HGV parking facilities to meet strategic needs and to address existing local needs associated with major freight generators, particularly in the logistics sectors. The Study identified a substantial gap between the availability of formal lorry parking facilities and demand and concluded that up to three lorry parks are required in Northamptonshire. The A14, A45 and A43 strategic corridors provide the preferred locations for new, designated truck stops and at least one facility should be located on both the A14 and A45 routes, each with provision for a minimum of 200 lorries. Research undertaken as part of the Study also illustrated that most drivers are not willing to travel more than 5kms from these strategic corridors to find suitable parking facilities. The Study concluded that truck stops may also be provided in other locations where a need can be demonstrated, including sites close to major freight attractors such as concentrations of distribution and industrial activities.

4.36 Subsequently, a detailed assessment of potential HGV parking sites along the A14 corridor has been undertaken and planning permission has been granted (2012) for a 24 hour, secure HGV parking facility with 204 spaces at junction 3 of the A14 near Rothwell. This provision will meet a significant proportion of the identified strategic need along the A14 corridor in North Northamptonshire.

**Reviewing the need for HGV parking**

4.37 The need for HGV parking should be regularly reviewed to ensure that contributory factors that can impact on need such as changes in the provision of HGV parking facilities, the level of freight transferred from road to rail and additional freight generators are fully understood. Planning applications for new facilities should be accompanied by robust assessments of need.

4.38 Strategic distribution businesses within North Northamptonshire attract significant HGV traffic and generate a need for HGV parking facilities, both overnight and for drivers awaiting their collection or delivery time slot. Where new developments are likely to create a demand for such provision or exacerbate an existing problem the local planning authority may require suitable on-site provision or provide a financial contribution towards an appropriate facility.

**Ensuring safe and secure HGV provision**

4.39 Lorry parks must include effective measures to create a safe and secure environment which restricts opportunities for crime to be committed. Proposals should incorporate ‘Secured by Design’ principles and applicants are encouraged to seek ‘Park Mark’ accreditation by Northamptonshire Police.

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\(^7\) [http://www.nnjpu.org.uk/docs/HGV%20Parking%20Updated%20Feb%202009%20Final.pdf]
4.40 Where a new truck stop is proposed in open countryside the need for the facility must outweigh the need to protect the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside in accordance with national policies and this Plan. Should sites be granted planning permission in an open countryside location a restoration plan, which sets out how the site will be restored to its previous use in the event that the HGV parking operation ceases, will need to be agreed with the local planning authority.

Policy 18 - HGV Parking

A net increase in HGV parking will be sought to address an existing shortfall and to meet the needs arising from new employment development by:

a) Resisting the loss of lorry parks unless it can be demonstrated that:
   i. The facility is no longer required; or
   ii. An alternative use of the site is beneficial and replacement lorry parking will be provided in an appropriate location before the existing use ceases.

b) Ensuring that developments likely to lead to an associated demand for lorry parking which is not already provided for by an appropriate facility, contribute towards the provision of formal lorry parking facilities which could include lorry stacking areas within the proposed development or financial contributions towards extending or providing an appropriate facility.

c) Granting planning permission for HGV parking facilities where it can be demonstrated that the proposal:
   i. Is supported by robust, up-to-date evidence of need;
   ii. Is of a size that is viable and makes a significant contribution to meeting the identified need;
   iii. Is located within 5kms of the trunk road network or a major freight attractor;
   iv. Is designed and laid out to a high standard and incorporates ‘Secured by Design’ principles;
   v. Will provide a level of on-site facilities for lorry drivers appropriate to the size of the scheme, with any ancillary uses being of a type and scale appropriate to the main use of the site as a truck stop;
   vi. Incorporates suitable arrangements for the management and maintenance of the facility; and
   vii. Where located in the open countryside, incorporates a restoration plan agreed by the local planning authority for the after-use of the site to be implemented in the event of the cessation of the use of the site for HGV parking operations.
The Green and Blue Infrastructure Framework

4.41 The green and blue infrastructure network provides a range of ecosystem services and is vital in maintaining the rural/urban character of North Northamptonshire. The focus is on the strategic corridors of the Rivers Nene and Ise, and the Rockingham Forest area and includes the open countryside around urban areas, which is important to maintain distinct and separate settlements. In some instances there is limited connectivity to access the natural greenspace from the main towns and opportunities need to be taken to link urban parks and woodland into the wider countryside.

4.42 The network also provides opportunities to enhance tourism in North Northamptonshire, while ensuring that its most sensitive assets are protected. The Special Policy Areas of the Nene and Ise Valleys and Rockingham Forest will be important in stimulating sustainable economic growth through tourism and rural diversification.

4.43 The Special Policy areas will be a focus for promoting:
- Recreation and tourism
- Public access
- Environmental education
- Biodiversity
- Water management
- Climate change mitigation
- Green economic uses
- Sustainable land management.

Green Infrastructure

4.44 Green infrastructure (GI) is a strategically planned and delivered network comprising the broadest range of high quality green spaces and other environmental features. It should be designed and managed as a multifunctional resource capable of delivering ecosystem services and quality of life benefits. For example GI supports healthier lifestyles, manages flood water, improves air quality and helps to mitigate the effects of climate change. Green infrastructure should thread through and surround the built environment and connect the urban area to its wider rural hinterland.

4.45 Green infrastructure networks have been identified at both strategic (i.e. sub-regional) and local scales across Northamptonshire (GI NETWORK WILL BE SHOWN ON DIAGRAM AND ON KEY DIAGRAM/POLICIES MAP). The sub-regional network consists of a series of interlinked corridors which broadly follow the main river valleys and tributaries and extend beyond the boundary of North Northamptonshire. These corridors connect areas of particular natural heritage, greenspace, biodiversity or other environmental interest. The sub-regional corridors are priority areas for investment and enhancement.

4.46 The sub-regional GI network is complemented by local GI corridors. These cover a variety of land uses and provide opportunities for projects and investment at a smaller, more local scale. Increasing the range of uses within each local corridor will improve benefits at the community level. The local corridor locations are indicative; their alignment and extent can be defined further through more detailed studies, including Sustainable Urban Extension master plans, site specific Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans.
4.47 The development proposed in North Northamptonshire presents an opportunity to contribute to the green infrastructure network. Natural England encourages the integration of green infrastructure at the outset of development so that the greatest benefits will be gained. Development located within the GI network will be expected to contribute towards its enhancement. The JPU and local planning authorities will liaise with adjoining authorities to ensure that green infrastructure corridors are harmonised and enhanced across administrative boundaries and recognised in the development of specific proposals.

4.48 The Green Infrastructure Delivery Plan identifies key green infrastructure projects planned or underway in North Northamptonshire. These projects are primarily a response to growth and development, which increase the number of visitors to nature reserves and other natural areas. Creating new green infrastructure is one way to mitigate this pressure. Where not managed appropriately, visitor pressure can damage the features that made a site special and attractive to visit in the first place. The projects will help to reduce recreational impacts in key sensitive locations, notably within the Upper Nene Valley Special Protection Area (SPA). Many also address local deficiencies in access to natural green space (see Policy 7). Projects will be delivered by a wide range of partners, who must be prepared to take ownership of and commit to taking forward specific projects.

4.49 The Northamptonshire Local Nature Partnership is strengthening leadership on landscape and other environmental matters, and raising awareness of the services and benefits a healthy natural environment brings to economic, social and ecological wellbeing. The designation of the Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area is helping to develop the next phase of environmental improvements to enhance and reconnect nature across the Nene Valley landscape.
Policy 19 – The Delivery of Green Infrastructure

The special mixed urban and rural character of North Northamptonshire will be maintained and enhanced through its green infrastructure assets. This will be achieved by:

a) Seeking a net gain in green infrastructure through:
   i. Establishing multi-functional greenspaces within the GI network;
   ii. Providing where opportunities exist, new habitats, facilities and routes to enhance assets and the linkages between them;
   iii. Supporting the strategic green infrastructure priorities of
        1. The Nene and Ise Valleys (Policy 20)
        2. The Rockingham Forest (Policy 21).

b) Safeguarding identified sub-regional green infrastructure corridors by:
   i. Not permitting development that compromises their integrity and therefore that of the overall green infrastructure network;
   ii. Using developer contributions to facilitate improvements to their quality and robustness;
   iii. Investing in enhancement and restoration where opportunities exist.

c) Contributing towards the enhancement or ongoing management of local green infrastructure corridors by:
   i. Prioritising green infrastructure investment in areas where net gains can be made to the range of functions, particularly those that improve access between the towns and their surrounding countryside and remedy local deficiencies in open space provision and quality.

Nene/Ise Valleys

4.50 The Nene and Ise Valleys are the green and blue threads linking North Northamptonshire’s urban centres with its countryside and containing many of its key environmental and green infrastructure assets. The Valleys include the settlements of:

   • Wellingborough, Irthlingborough, Ringstead, Thrapston and Oundle (Nene Valley);
   • Desborough/Rothwell, Geddington, Kettering and Burton Latimer (Ise Valley)

4.51 This special policy area offers opportunities to use and enjoy the rivers and lakes, increase waterway-based tourism, strengthen biodiversity conservation and management, create new and improve existing green infrastructure, enhance connections between settlements and create a sense of place in and around the river valleys.

4.52 The Nene Valley and Ise Valleys have a diversity of attractions like historic mills, tourist attractions including Wicksteed Park, water based country parks, nature reserves and traditional market towns alongside larger towns of Kettering and Wellingborough. Some such as Stanwick Lakes and Oundle have become destinations in their own right. Others have the potential to be better appreciated and provide tourism opportunities.
4.53 The Nene Valley Strategic Plan\textsuperscript{8} identifies specific economic opportunities at each settlement in the Nene Valley. The riverside towns provide the main opportunities for tourism... The vision in the Strategic Plan is of a gradual transition from more formal activities in the urban centres to informal, dispersed activities in the rural area. The preparation of Town-River Plans for the urban areas (or inclusion of guidance within site specific Local Plans or Neighbourhood Plans) to develop the potential of the towns as gateways to the river and the wider valleys could help to identify site opportunities and proposals to improve visual and physical linkages with the waterways, including floodplain re-naturalisation and de-culverting within the urban area.

4.54 Increased visitor pressure must be managed to conserve the area’s environmental assets particularly within and around the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA. Certain locations within the SPA are more easily accessible, particularly close to the urbanised areas. Some of these areas are able to support higher levels of visitors than other areas as they contain suitable infrastructure to support visitors, whilst ensuring that biodiversity is protected. Development within the Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area (NIA) is expected to take account of the natural environment early in the design process and that ecological connection through and around the development site to the wider habitat networks is delivered.

4.55 Environmental designations including the Special Protection Area, nature reserves and wildlife sites, determine the level of protection at some locations and the subsequent level of visitor access. A study undertaken to understand the impacts of visitor access in the SPA emphasises that within the SPA, visitor activity should be focussed on existing key sites such as Stanwick Lakes, and opportunities exist to enhance provision at other locations outside the SPA. Away from the ‘honeypots’ access should be more low key, with measures put in place to ensure access levels remain low, particularly at the most sensitive sites.

\textsuperscript{8} River Nene Regional Park- Nene Valley Strategic Plan Final Report October 2010
Policy 20 - The Nene and Ise Valleys

The Nene and Ise Valleys will be priorities for investment in green infrastructure to strengthen biodiversity and landscape character, support a prosperous local economy, provide leisure and recreational opportunities and support the revitalisation of towns and the protection and enhancement of their surrounding countryside. This will be achieved by:

a) Developing stronger links, orientation and integration of the towns within the Nene Valley, or directly with the River Nene where possible, and ensuring enhanced connections to settlements close to the river;

b) Developing the tourism a potential of Wellingborough, Thrapston and Oundle as gateways to the rivers and the wider valleys as focal points for the provision of waterside facilities, including provision of marinas, moorings, and boat hire;

c) Prioritising the protection and enhancement of existing visitor attractions and facilities with appropriate infrastructure to ensure that these remain the focal points for visitors, particularly within the SPA;

d) Supporting new green infrastructure and heritage based attractions of a type and scale that can be accommodated by existing or new infrastructure and which strike an appropriate balance between visitor numbers and biodiversity, landscape, local amenity and heritage interests;

e) Providing along the River Nene a focus for improved navigation and enhanced waterways;

f) Improving visual and physical linkages with the waterways, improving strategic recreation trails along the length of the Nene Valley and developing these where possible in the Ise Valley.

g) Identifying opportunities and proposals for floodplain and river re- naturalisation, de-culverting within urban areas and river habitat improvements.

Rockingham Forest

4.56 To address the issue of woodland fragmentation across North Northamptonshire and to align with the many other benefits of increasing tree planting, the Rockingham Forest area has been identified as a special policy area. In addition the Rockingham Forest was selected by Defra as one of only five climate change projects nationally, to support the UK Low Carbon Transition Plan and the government’s Carbon Plan to pilot a Carbon Sink Forestry Project. The Forestry Commission, Woodland Trust and other key partners established the Rockingham Forest for Life (Forest for Life: Rockingham) project, which aims to:

- Protect, enhance and increase existing ancient woodland through linkages and buffering;
- Reinstate woodland on previously wooded sites;
- Capture carbon dioxide by creating 40 hectares of new woodland each year;
- Community engagement with local woodlands; and
- Reinvigorate traditional woodland activities and food from the forest.
4.57 The project encompasses the community, land owning and business sectors. It seeks to secure private sector investment to provide additional funding and encourage the planting of sites that would not otherwise come forward. To date, significant tree planting through the project has already taken place, with over 15,000 trees planted at two sites in the Rockingham Forest north of Kettering. The planting has used a mix of native trees to provide a range of environmental and landscape benefits. Alongside the creation of new woodland, the protection and buffering of ancient woodland will be important.

4.58 In addition to carbon capture, the establishment of new woodland will provide many other benefits associated with the creation of green infrastructure including reinforcing green infrastructure corridors, aid surface water management and improve landscape, urban and village settings. It also has the potential to play a major role in climate change adaption by increasing connectivity and enhancing existing and create new wildlife corridors.

4.59 The Rockingham Forest provides a range of tourism and recreational opportunities largely focussed around green infrastructure and heritage. The development of additional tourism facilities, including the provision of additional accommodation will need to be balanced with the need to protect and enhance environmental assets and ecosystem services as set out in policies 1-4 and infrastructure capacity. Resource opportunities from biofuels and renewables will have to be balanced with food production needs. Such land-uses should be focused on lower grade agricultural land and incorporate opportunities to increase biodiversity. It will be important that new tree planting is appropriately sited and uses suitable species to ensure the successful enhancement of the forest.
Policy 21 - Rockingham Forest

The Rockingham Forest will be regenerated to increase carbon storage, strengthen biodiversity, landscape character and green infrastructure, support a prosperous rural economy and provide appropriate leisure and recreational opportunities. This will be achieved through:

a) 40ha a year of new tree planting appropriately sited and using suitable species secured through direct input of landowners, local communities and businesses, supported by funding mechanisms including development contributions;

b) Linking fragmented habitats and protecting and reinforcing ancient woodland, particularly in and around urban areas supported through landscaping associated with development proposals;

c) Supporting rural economic development in accordance with Policy 25, with a focus on woodland based activities including sustainable food and fuel production;

d) Protecting or enhancing tourism and recreation attractions and supporting new green infrastructure and heritage attractions of a type and scale that can be accommodated by existing or new infrastructure and which strike an appropriate balance between visitor numbers and biodiversity, landscape, local amenity and heritage interests;

e) Enhancing green links in accordance with Policy 19 to enable residents of towns and villages easy access to the forest on foot, horseback or bicycle.