LOCAL PLANS COMMITTEE

12th September 2012

Review of the Joint Core Strategy

SYNOPSIS
This report updates Members on progress with the review of the Joint Core Strategy for North Northamptonshire and seeks agreement to the suggested consultation response as set out in this report.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Members received an update on the review of the Joint Core Strategy at the previous meeting on 4th July 2012. Members were advised that much work has been done by representatives of Corby Borough Council to influence the emerging document as much as possible and ensure that it takes sufficient account of meeting the needs and ambitions of the Borough.

1.2 The emerging document has since been published for public consultation. A copy of the consultation document has been placed in the Members Room. This is a non-statutory consultation stage that closes on 15th October 2012. The next stage of consultation will be the publication of the Pre Submission Joint Core Strategy expected around February next year and there will be an opportunity for people to comment further – this will be a formal statutory consultation. This draft planning strategy will then be examined by an independent Inspector from the Planning Inspectorate later in 2013.

1.3 The extended consultation period provides Members with another opportunity to feedback any comments to officers and for further internal consultation to be undertaken. Subsequent observations are reported below under Section 2.0.

1.4 The emerging draft policies for the Joint Core Strategy that were reported to Members in July excluded policies relating to development principles for the strategic employment and housing sites. This is because information was unavailable at that time.

1.5 Since that meeting further details have been published on some of the strategic sites. Appendix 2 sets out development principles for the West Corby Urban Extension as envisaged by the owners of Rockingham Castle and Great Oakley Estates, including site description, key objectives and land use. Further technical material is available at http://www.westcorby.com. It is important to stress that this material has not been endorsed by the Joint Committee or any of the Councils but is provided to inform discussion on the emerging proposals. Officer comments on the proposed development principles are reported below under Section 4.0.

2.0 Further Feedback on Emerging Policies

Members observations on the emerging policies

2.1 No comments have been received in response to the email to all members of the Local Plan Committee distributed on 6th August 2012.

Internal observations on the emerging policies

Policies 1 & 2 – Historic Environment & Landscape Character

2.2 Policies 1 and 2 refer to the need to protect and enhance views and vistas. Currently there is a lack of guidance on important view and vistas in Corby. Further evidence based guidance may need to be developed to ensure that these policies are applied consistently.
2.3 The requirements under policy 1 criteria a) to provide justification for works on the historic environment is unnecessary because this information is already a validation requirement for planning applications and other applications submitted under the Town and Country Planning Acts.

2.4 Sufficient flexibility should be incorporated within policy 1 b) to safeguard the best twentieth century architecture and design. This is particularly relevant to Corby where there are some iconic examples of contemporary buildings that have been commended for excellence in twentieth century architecture.

2.5 It should be noted that the protected area of tranquillity under policy 2 appears to include the East Northants Resource Management Facility Hazardous and Low Level Radioactive Waste Disposal site and the A43.

Policy 3 – Biodiversity & Geodiversity

2.6 The introductory text to policy 3 states that the policy specifically relates to the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area. However the policy is not specific to the Special Protection Area in the way that it is written or titled. It is therefore suggested that the introduction is rephrased.

2.7 Policy 3 duplicates statutory requirements by requiring compliance with the Habitats Regulations.

2.8 Policy 3 should be amended to comply with paragraph 118 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Part a) i) should read "Refusing development proposals where significant harm to an asset cannot be avoided, mitigated or as a last resort compensated through Biodiversity Offsetting."

2.9 The term ‘significant’ in policy 3 is an unhelpful phrase in implementation terms, even though it is acknowledged that this phrase is used in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Policy 4 – Water Environment & Flood Risk Management

2.10 The flood storage measures proposed under Policy 4 to enable future growth to be facilitated should reflect the mitigation measures identified in the Corby Water Cycle Strategy Update – Corby Culvert Options Assessment (May 2012). The strategy recommends the provision of additional storage and vegetation clearance at the location of the Sewage Treatment Works outfall and adjacent to the downstream end of the Corby Culvert. As a result works to the Flood Storage Reservoir is not required.

2.11 There may be a practical issue with the implementation of policy 4 due to the requirement for development likely to impact on achievement of the EU Water Framework Directive to be accompanied by a suitable assessment and proposals for mitigation. The Environment Agency has standing advice which doesn't include this and Anglian Water does not generally provide comments on planning applications. Implementation of this policy will require alterations to consultation arrangements with both the Environment Agency and Anglian Water along with other parties with responsibility.

Policy 5 – Community Assets

2.12 In recognition of the fact that culture is a key dimension of sustainable communities, it is suggested that policy 5 is broadened to support and enhance community and cultural assets.

2.13 All sections of the community should benefit from new or enhanced community and cultural assets. It is therefore suggested that the word ‘enlarged’ is deleted from policy 5 a) and cultural is included.

2.14 Policy 5 c) ii) repeats existing policy 13 of the adopted Core Spatial Strategy in seeking to protect open space, allotments, sports and recreation facilities, unless a site of equivalent quality and accessibility can be provided, serviced and made available to the community prior to use of the existing site ceasing. In practice this policy has not prevented the incremental
loss of smaller areas of open space that form part of a larger area. Loss of these types of open spaces can have a negative and cumulative impact on environmental quality.

**Policy 6 – Designing Sustainable Places**

2.15 It might be useful to make reference to Manuel for Streets and Northamptonshire Place and Movement Guide in the preamble to policy 6.

2.16 It is suggested that policy 6 d) ii) should be rephrased along the lines of “Ensure that street layout and building siting takes priority to ensure that developments are not dominated by vehicle parking and roads.”

2.17 The emphasis on creating a strong sense of place by strengthening the distinctive historic and cultural qualities of settlements through design, landscaping and use of public art under Policy 6 e) iii) is strongly endorsed.

**Policy 7 – Sustainable Buildings**

2.18 Creating buildings with a diversity of uses, such as live-work units promoted by emerging draft policy 25 and the adopted Sustainable Design SPD, supports policy 7 and should be embedded in the policy or at least cross referenced.

**Policy 8 – Allowable Solutions**

2.19 The basis for the projects listed as acceptable Allowable Solutions under policy 8 b) is unclear and should be clarified.

2.20 It is suggested that the wording under policy 8 should be strengthened to read ‘Development that needs to contribute to Carbon Neutrality and allowable solutions will be required to do this through the North Northamptonshire Community Energy Fund.’

**Policy 9 – Provision of Infrastructure**

2.21 Policy 9 states that development should seek to minimise the demand for infrastructure and services. This statement could give the impression that local planning authorities do not want to support the growth of infrastructure and services. To avoid confusion and make it clear that the local planning authorities support the growth of infrastructure and services but want to direct development towards locations where most of the infrastructure is already in place e.g. Growth Towns, it is suggested that the policy is rephrased to emphasis that development should seek to make the best and most efficient use of infrastructure, facilities and services.

2.22 Support for the provision of infrastructure within policy 9 is endorsed although it should be acknowledged that infrastructure includes the full spectrum of social and cultural infrastructure.

**Policy 10 – Network of Rural & Urban Areas**

2.23 The second part of policy 10 indicates that rural development will be ‘focused on those villages which have a significant range of existing services and facilities’. It is assumed that villages with a significant range of existing services and facilities are categorised as ‘Principal Villages’ in Table 1. Therefore for clarity and consistency in decision making it would be helpful if the policy instead reads that development in the rural area will be ‘focused on the Principal Villages’.

2.24 Colleagues in Development Control question the need for point 2a under policy 10 because Deenethorpe Airfield already has a separate policy.

2.25 It is recommended that part 1 a) of policy 10 is rephrased to read ‘The Growth Towns will be the focus for infrastructure investment and higher order facilities to support major employment, housing, retail, recreational and cultural development’.

**Policy 11 – Settlement Design Principles**

2.26 It would appear that a word is missing from the final sentence in policy 11 a) iii).
Policy 11 b) i) prioritises the reuse or redevelopment of suitable previously developed land and buildings. As a general principal this is laudable but the replacement Joint Core Strategy should recognise that this will be difficult to achieve in Corby given the scale of growth and need for Sustainable Urban Extensions.

Policy 11 b) iv) encourages the location of large B8 units and heavy industrial uses within a traditional street structure to improve the structure and quality of settlements. This is not seen as practical.

Policy c) should cross reference to emerging draft policy 6 on designing sustainable places to establish relationship and mutual dependency between these two policies.

Policy 13 – Rural Exceptions

Policy 13 f) implies that functional and financial tests are provided. Details of the tests are not provided in the emerging document. It is suggested that the tests included in the revoked Planning Policy Statement 7 are incorporated to support policy 13.

Policy 14 – Deenethorpe Airfield Area of Opportunity

The proximity of Deenethorpe Airfield Area of Opportunity to Corby means that the development may have an impact on existing services and facilities in the town. Therefore, it is suggested that additional criteria should be included within policy 14 to ensure that developers provide appropriate mitigation for any negative impacts that they may have on services and facilities within Corby and the sustainable urban extensions.

Policy 16 – Connecting the Network of Settlements

Support for enhanced public transport provision under policy 16 a) is welcomed and should be used to encourage later train connections between Corby and Kettering.

Policy 16 c) is supported and should be used to encourage better bus connections to the train stations such as shuttle buses connecting the towns to the railway stations.

Policy 17 – Connecting North Northamptonshire with surrounding areas

Policy 17 a) ii) encourages station improvements, provision of additional capacity and improved frequency of services calling at Kettering and Wellingborough. Whilst this policy is welcomed the scope should be extended to apply to all the Growth Towns including Corby where there is a desire for extended services.

It is suggested that priorities for further work and investment under policy 17 are updated to include scope to consider east-west rail connections. The publication of the DfT’s review of network rail funding arrangements for 2014-2019 (the ‘High Level Output Statement’) in July 2012 has significantly changed the rail context at Corby, and offers the prospect of greatly improved rail freight connections.

Policy 17 should also refer to the possibility of a rail halt for Oakley Vale. The site is still available and is protected for a few more years under the s106 agreement. It is referred to in the 1997 Corby Local Plan. It is considered that this is more desirable and necessary with the increased population than it was then.

Policy 17 b) indicates the priorities for sub-regional bus network to the main towns in and around North Northamptonshire. It is suggested that strengthening links with Market Harborough/Leicester should be explicitly included within the priorities, especially at weekends and evenings.

Policy 19 – The Delivery of Green Infrastructure

Terminology within policy 19 b) iii) should be consistent with emerging draft policies 1 to 5 i.e. historic environment, community and cultural assets.

Policy 21 – Rockingham Forest

The commitment under policy 21 to secure 800 hectares of new tree planting seems very ambitious. Is this practical?
**Policy 22 – Delivering Economic Prosperity**

2.40 Policy 22 b) reflects paragraph 22 of the National Planning Policy Framework in seeking to avoid the long term protection of employment land unless there is no reasonable prospect of the site being used for that purpose. No time frame is given for reasonable prospect in either the emerging document or national framework. It would be helpful if the time period for considering if there is a reasonable prospect of the site being used for that purpose was clarified locally e.g. lifetime of plan or ten years from the application being made.

**Policy 24 – Strategic Distribution**

2.41 Policy 24 c) is supported especially safeguarding of rail and water freight opportunities. However it is requested that the policy is strengthened to read ‘Long term opportunities to provide facilities for transferring freight delivery to rail and water will be safeguarded.’

**Policy 25 – Rural Economic Development and Diversification**

2.42 In order to ensure consistency of language throughout document, it is recommended that part 1) a) is rephrased to read ‘The retention and development of local services and community and cultural facilities in villages, such as local shops, post offices, meeting places, sports venues, recreational and cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.’

**Policy 26 – Renewable Energy and Decentralised Energy Networks**

2.43 Policy 26 c) is seeking to ensure that proposals for renewable energy and low carbon energy generation avoid substantial harm to the significance of the historic environment. There may be appeals, particularly on turbines and it may be worth considering what may cause substantial harm especially given recent appeal decisions on turbines and historic sites. Further evidence based guidance may need to be developed to ensure that the policy is applied consistently.

**Policy 27 – Rockingham Enterprise Area**

2.44 A large area on the southern part of Rockingham Enterprise Area specifically identified under policy 27 a) ii) for larger scale buildings for B8 storage and distribution development includes an area which has been backfilled with materials that have been identified as contaminated. The implications of this will need resolving if this part of the site is to be developed.

2.45 It is noted that a variety of protected species across the Rockingham Enterprise Area have relocated from adjacent areas on the site. This will need examining in relation to the relevant legislation.

2.46 Policy 27 a) i) states that priority will be given to proposals for B1 uses associated with motor sports within the first five years. However the policy provides no details on how this will be controlled or achieved.

2.47 Northern Orbital Road is essential infrastructure for the Rockingham Enterprise Area to come forward comprehensively and in line with the principals established in the Rockingham Development Framework. Therefore the flexibility given under b) of policy 27 that financial contributions should be subject to viability should be removed in terms of the Northern Orbital Road.

2.49 Criteria iii) and iv) within policy 27 should be cross referenced to emerging draft policy 6 e) that encourages legibility and diversity to create vibrant memorable places.

2.50 The footnote under the second table of policy 27 indicates that the housing figure for Corby includes contributions from Priors Hall that extends into East Northamptonshire district. This also applies to the first table which should be accompanied by a similar footnote.

**Policy 29 – Distribution of New Homes**

2.51 Members of the public may not understand the rationale behind treating Little Stanion as a new village under Table 5. It is suggested that explanation is provided given that half the development area has already been built out and it has a close relationship with the urban area.
Policy 31 – Gypsies and travellers and travelling show people

2.52 Criteria under policy 31 requires applications for gypsy and traveller or travelling showpeople sites to demonstrate that the site is required to meet identified need. It is not clear from the emerging document whether the identified need is based on the North Northamptonshire Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment or not. It is suggested that criteria b) is amended to read ‘the applicant can demonstrate the site is required to meet identified need in accordance with the most up to date North Northamptonshire Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment or an impartially assessed needs assessment based on the same criteria.’

3.0 Further Considerations

3.1 Member’s attention is drawn to policy 28 of the emerging document that provides the framework for housing provision in the Borough. It envisages a minimum target of 8,900 new homes between 2011 and 2031 with an ‘aspirational’ target of 14,200. The minimum housing target is based on the average amount of housing development that the market has brought forward over the past five years. The National Planning Policy Framework requires local planning authorities to significantly boost the supply of housing. To do this local planning authorities must identify and maintain a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years worth of housing against their housing targets with an additional buffer to ensure choice and competition in the market for land. Local planning authorities also need to identify sites for broad locations for growth for years 6-10 and where possible, years 11-15. Policy 28 of the emerging document states that the minimum housing requirements will be used for assessing the five year supply of deliverable housing land. It is therefore essential that the minimum housing requirements are based on realistic assumptions about what can be achieved in the Borough. The presumption in favour of sustainable development will apply if the Council is unable to demonstrate a supply of deliverable housing sites. This could lead to sites coming forward through appeals that had not previously been identified or supported.

3.2 To place the minimum housing requirements in context, Appendix 1 provides an extract from the housing trajectory that has been updated to show when the various development sites are expected to come forward and the rate at which they will be built out.

3.3 The updated housing trajectory reveals the scale of the challenge in meeting the minimum housing requirements. It is heavily reliant on the sustainable urban extensions coming forward and optimistically assumes that Corby Community College and Evolution Corby will deliver a significant supply of new homes. The minimum housing target exceeds locally generated requirements arising from the existing population (3,890) to help encourage economic growth and regeneration in the Borough and meet inward migration pressures. Retaining such a high minimum housing requirement sends a clear message that Corby Borough Council is very much open for business but it carries a greater risk that the numbers will not be delivered. The inability of the Council to demonstrate a five year supply of housing land against the minimum target will increase the risk that land owners/developers will submit speculative applications for their development outside the settlement boundaries. The implications of this will have to be carefully considered if the Council is to continue to support the minimum targets in policy 28.

3.4 Corby Borough Council has always supported high levels of growth and demonstrated a step change in housing delivery prior to the economic downturn. The minimum target outlined in the emerging document, against which a five year supply of deliverable housing sites will be assessed, is based on sustaining average past rates of development; however, it should be noted that meeting this target will require a large proportion of the Council’s housing supply to come forward through the sustainable urban extensions, the delivery of which is largely dependent on the housing market.

4.0 Feedback on Strategic Sites

4.1 The development principles suggested by the site promoters for West Corby Urban Extension broadly reflect the Councils ambition for the site as expressed in the emerging work on the
Local Development Framework. Support for mixed use development, integration with the existing town and retention of existing woodland are particularly welcomed.

4.2 The material prepared by the promoters of the West Corby Urban Extension states that a detailed master plan (including phasing, infrastructure and required obligations) will need to be endorsed by Corby Borough Council, Northamptonshire County Council and North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit. However it should be emphasised that Corby Borough Council is the responsible Authority in relation to planning applications and will ultimately have the final say on the Master Plan although collaboration with Northamptonshire County Council, North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit and other key stakeholders should be encouraged.

5.0 Issues to be taken into account:-

Policy Priorities
Planning decisions directly contribute to corporate priorities.

Financial
None directly related to this report.

Legal
There is a legal requirement for local planning authorities to prepare a Local Plan for their area. The replacement Joint Core Strategy will form an important part of the Local Plan and must be prepared in accordance with the development plan regulations.

Performance Information
None directly related to this report.

Best Value, Human Rights and Community Safety
None directly related to 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.

Risk Management
Failure to progress the review of the Core Strategy to examination and adoption is likely to increase the risk of planning proposals coming forward, possibly in locations that are not supported by the emerging strategy and potentially not delivering infrastructure and the growth of the town to support regeneration and development.

6.0 Conclusion

6.1 The publication of the emerging draft policies for the Joint Core Strategy is welcomed and represents a major step forward towards adoption of an up-to-date Local Plan. Non-statutory consultation presents an opportunity to identify any major issues prior to finalising a Pre-Submission plan at the end of the year. It is the result of significant amount of research, assessment and consultation. The Borough Council has been fully engaged throughout the process and has significantly influenced its development. A further round of internal consultation has not revealed any major issues.

7.0 Recommendation

7.1 Members views are requested and that subject to any amendments the comments set out in this report form the basis of the Council’s submission to the Joint Planning Units consultation on the emerging draft policies for the Joint Core Strategy.

Background Papers
North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy –Emerging Draft for Consultation, August 2012
The emergent draft Core Strategy will be supported by a number of other papers, reports and assessments that will be available for inspection on the North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit’s website at www.nnjpu.org.uk

**Officers to Contact**

Terry Begley  
Principal Planner
## Updated housing trajectory

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Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments, sometimes abbreviated as SHLAA, are required by the National Planning Policy Framework to establish realistic assumptions about the availability, suitability and the likely economic viability of land to meet the identified need for housing over the plan period.

The SHLAA for North Northamptonshire is being updated by the Joint Planning Unit to a base date of 1st April 2011. This will provide an updated picture of the total potential supply of housing land in the Borough.
As the sole landowners, our Vision is to create a quality and innovative development that supports the regeneration of Corby and enhances the distinctive identity of Northamptonshire.

We want to achieve a high quality built environment that creates and sustains a sense of community:

A place where people will want to live, work and play.

Above all, the urban extension must be founded upon meeting local needs; delivering local housing; creating local jobs; providing a good range of local services; building and supporting local markets and using local produce and goods through strong local links.

“The owners of Rockingham Castle and Great Oakley Estates share the common objective of delivering an exemplary sustainable urban extension, as part of their long term commitment to the growth and regeneration of Corby”
The Site

> The site is a generally flat area of arable land extending to about 368ha with few notable physical features.

> It is bordered to the north by Rockingham Park, to the west and south-west by semi-natural woodland and land in agricultural use.

> The whole site is directly adjacent to the built up area of Corby but separated from it by the A6003 to the east.

> The site is crossed by a series of shallow valleys running east-west which contain small watercourses.

> Harpers Brook, coinciding with the Kettering boundary, lies to the south.

> The Harborough Road (A427) provides the opportunity for connection to the north.

> The existing water towers and associated infrastructure along the eastern boundary adjacent to A6003 effectively create a no-build zone.

> The site is relatively unconstrained given its size, but provides a pleasant green setting for new development.
Key Objectives

➢ To develop a strong and distinct new community which is an intrinsic part of Corby.

➢ Establish a new community which is responsive and sensitive to the local environment.

➢ Creation of a sustainable and permeable urban form providing an appropriate mix of land uses to serve the new population.

➢ It should benefit nearby areas through the provision of accessible open space, employment, community facilities, new bus services and links to the wider countryside.

➢ It should be a well-connected urban extension which integrates with the existing town and provides a cohesive community.

➢ To incorporate an interventionist strategy which positively addresses the A6003 corridor.

➢ It should be a high quality urban extension which assists in raising the profile of Corby.

➢ Positively address the surface water drainage requirements to the benefit of the wider urban area.
Land Use & Scale

> The site has adequate capacity to deliver 4,000 dwellings with associated infrastructure and facilities in a phased manner by 2031.

> There is the potential for further growth beyond 4,000 dwellings in the longer term should this be appropriate.

> West Corby will include a hierarchy of local centres designed to cater for local needs including retail, commercial and leisure provision.

> The development will provide a range of employment opportunities to achieve at least 0.6 jobs/dwelling in dedicated employment areas as well as other opportunities integrated within the development.

> An appropriate level of facilities and services for education, recreation, community needs, public transport and connections to Corby will be provided.
Key Infrastructure includes:

- New vehicular access initially from the A6003 to the east and in later phases, from the A427 to the north.
- A District Centre and a Neighbourhood Centre.
- Phased provision of a secondary school and three new primary schools.
- Health and social provision within the District Centre.
- Generous Green Infrastructure including appropriate formal and informal recreational facilities and incorporating the existing woodlands.
- Surface water drainage improvements which result in a reduction of the existing run-off flowing into Corby as part of an overall SUDS strategy.
- Pedestrian and cycleway links within the development and to connect with Corby. Upgrading of local utilities as required.
The underlying design principles are:
- To create a distinctive place with a sense of community
- To respond to and be sensitive to context
- To create a sustainable urban form
- To be permeable and well-connected
- To be integrated with wider Corby
- To help raise the profile of Corby
- To be an exemplary and high quality development
- To help deliver wider community benefits
- To be robust overall but to be flexible and adaptable to respond to changing circumstances and demands over time
- The average gross density of residential areas will be 35 dwellings per hectare, but this will graduate from a higher “urban” density near A6003 to much lower densities on the western “countryside” edge.
A comprehensive and integrated transport network catering for all travel modes will underpin the development. Particular emphasis will be given to creating excellent east-west links with the existing urban area.

Strategic Green Infrastructure corridors be established within the shallow valleys and alongside the A6003 to include: open space; footpaths; cycleways; surface water drainage network; wildlife areas; and sports facilities.

Housing will be set-back from A6003 (due to existing utilities) which will avoid significant noise impacts from traffic for new residents.

The layout and design will reduce any negative impacts on the historic Rockingham Park to the north.

Existing woodland will be retained and brought into public use and hedgerows will be retained within new development areas wherever possible.

Development will be based on a series of distinct “villages” focussed on walking catchments to primary schools.

A full range of housing including starter homes, family housing and housing for the elderly is proposed.

Development of employment, open space, local centres, public transport and community facilities will be provided progressively alongside housing as required.
Delivery

> The whole site is owned by two landowners who are collaborating closely to bring development forward.

> No significant physical or other constraints and no major ‘upfront’ costs that are likely to delay development have been identified.

> A detailed masterplan (including phasing, infrastructure & required obligations) will need to be endorsed by Corby Borough Council, Northamptonshire County Council and North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit.

> Individual outline planning applications will be sought for phases of the development in accordance with an overarching detailed masterplan.

> The Rockingham Castle Estate and The Great Oakley Estate look forward to delivering this exemplar new community.