1. **Introduction**

1.1 This background paper has been prepared to support the Pre-Submission stage of the Part 2 Local Plan for Corby (P2LP). It explains how the town centre policies for the Plan have emerged and evolved over time, particularly since the Emerging Draft Options consultation in July 2018.

1.2 Development of the town centre policies have been subject to community and stakeholder engagement through public consultation, as well as engagement with specific key stakeholders throughout their production. In addition, engagement with Council members was undertaken at various Committee meetings covering the P2LP. The table below (Table 1) details the time in which engagement with key stakeholders occurred and what role that engagement had on helping to form the final chapter.

Table 1: Engagement on town centre policies for the Part 2 Local Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P2LP Engagement</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meeting with town centre owners to discuss Corby Town Centre priorities and how consider these could inform the emerging Local Plan</td>
<td>Initial discussions on issues and options relating to Corby Town Centre. Options for redevelopment sites, impact threshold and regeneration principles were discussed.</td>
<td>19 September 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scoping Consultation incorporating Issues and Options</strong> (first Regulation 18 consultation)</td>
<td>First formal consultation on P2LP. For the town centres chapter this involved seeking stakeholder views on what the P2LP should focus upon and what sites should be allocated for town centre uses.</td>
<td>November – December 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement with key town centre stakeholders</td>
<td>Engagement with town centre owners/management and local town centre tenants and residents association (CENTARA) to help refine the preferred options for town centre policies in P2LP.</td>
<td>November 2017 – January 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 2 Local Plan Emerging Draft Options Consultation (second Regulation 18 consultation)</td>
<td>Second formal consultation on P2LP. Setting out preferred options for town centres and town centre uses.</td>
<td>July – August 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting with Development Control colleagues</td>
<td>Internal liaison meeting to discuss the emerging town centre policies to inform the Pre-Submission Draft Plan.</td>
<td>29 November 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement with agents on behalf of town centre owners Sovereign Centros</td>
<td>Engagement with town centre owners to help refine the Pre-Submission policies.</td>
<td>March 2019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This background paper has been structured so that the community/stakeholder engagement is listed by each topic area within the town centres chapter. For example, all engagement relating to retail impact thresholds and the evolution of the policy can be found under the corresponding section. The topic areas are listed below:

- Retail Network and Hierarchy
- Change of Use of Shops Outside the Defined Centres
- Corby Town Centre Regeneration
- Corby Town Centre Redevelopment Opportunities
- Town Centre Retail Boundaries and Shopping Frontages
- Threshold for Impact Testing

2. **Retail Network and Hierarchy of Centres**

2.1 Paragraph 85 of the [National Planning Policy Framework](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework) (NPPF) states that local authorities should define a network and hierarchy of town centres and promote their long term vitality and viability, and be able to respond to economic change in the retail and leisure industry. In addition to the existing town centres, the adopted [North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy](https://www.northnorthamptonshirejcs.org.uk/) (JCS, 2016) supports the creation of new town centres to serve the committed Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUEs).

2.2 Responses to the Issues and Options consultation in 2016 were supportive for the adoption of a retail hierarchy in the P2LP, with Corby Town Centre as the main town centre at the top of the hierarchy in line with the JCS. This resulted in the inclusion of the following draft policy within the Emerging Draft Options document:

**Policy 15 - Retail Network and Hierarchy**

In accordance with the objectives of the NPPF and other policies within the Local Plan, town centre uses will be directed towards the Borough’s town centres. In addition, proposals for new retail uses will be directed to the Primary Shopping Area within the town centres.

Within Corby Borough, the hierarchy of town centres is identified as follows:

**Main Town Centre**
- Corby Town Centre

**District Centre**
- Danesholme
- Oakley Vale
- Priors Hall Park (proposed)
- Pytchley Court
- Western Corby Sustainable Urban Extension (proposed)

**Local Centre**
- Corby Old Village
- Farmstead Road
- Greenhill Rise
- Little Stanion (proposed)
- Oakley Vale Phase 8 & 9 (proposed)
The hierarchy set out above will be used for the application of the sequential and impact tests set out in the NPPF to the assessment of town centre uses that are proposed outside the defined town centre areas (other than small scale rural development and the creation of local centres to meet the day to day needs of residents in the Sustainable Urban Extensions).

Consultation

2.3 The consultation response to Draft Policy 15 was mostly positive. Cottingham Parish Council supported the preferred option of identifying a retail hierarchy in the P2LP. Barton Wilmore, on behalf of the promoters for the West Corby SUE, provided support for the hierarchy but requested for further clarity to be provided to explain the nature of the district centre allocation at the West Corby SUE. The outline planning application, currently being determined by the Council, provides detail of two separate local centres connected via a road. The site promoters indicate the combined local centres will form a district centre serving the SUE.

2.4 NJL Consulting on behalf of Peel Investment Properties Ltd raised concerns about the preferred retail hierarchy. In their response, they believed that the Corby Retail Park (identified as an out-of-centre retail location in the evidence base) should be identified within the hierarchy, on the grounds that it could help secure the 12,500m² floorspace requirement for new A1 retail use as required by the JCS.

Changes Required

2.5 It is felt that due to mostly positive feedback, no significant changes are required to be made to the retail hierarchy. The inclusion of Corby Retail Park within the retail hierarchy is not considered appropriate. The JCS makes it clear in both Policy 12 and its main outcomes that the town centres should be the focus for new retail, leisure and cultural facilities. Corby Retail Park was not identified as a town centre in the 2016 Assessment of Retail Network and Hierarchy background paper, as it was found to not fit the definition of a town centre in the NPPF. The retail park is characterised by large-scale retail uses occupying warehouse units and draws much of its trade from car-borne consumers. On these grounds it was recommended to not form part of the retail network and hierarchy and proposals for town centre uses would be subject to the sequential and impact tests. It is important to note that Corby Retail Park can continue to make a contribution towards meeting the needs for retail and other town centre uses in the Borough subject to the NPPF tests.

2.6 In response to the information provided by Barton Wilmore in their representation, the proposed nature of West Corby SUEs planned town centre provision will be explained for the purposes of clarity within the supporting text.

2.7 The local threshold for applying the retail impact assessment was previously set out in a separate policy (Emerging Draft Options Policy 23); however, this has been consolidated so that the NPPF retail tests can be read together

2.8 It is recommended that the revised Retail Network and Hierarchy of Centres policy within the Pre-Submission P2LP is as follows:
Policy 19 – Network and Hierarchy of Centres

The defined centres will be the preferred location for the development of main town centre uses¹. Proposals must be appropriate to the size and function of the centre within which it is to be located. To guide this approach the following hierarchy is defined:

**Corby Town Centre** as defined on the Policies Map

The **District Centres** as defined on the Policies Map:

- Danesholme
- Oakley Vale
- Priors Hall Park (proposed)
- Pytchley Court
- West Corby Sustainable Urban Extension (proposed)

The **Local Centres** as defined on the Policies Map:

- Corby Old Village
- Farmstead Road
- Greenhill Rise
- Little Stanion (proposed)
- Oakley Vale Phase 8 & 9 (proposed)
- Studfall Avenue
- Weldon Park (proposed)
- Weldon Village Centre

This hierarchy should be used for the application of the sequential test set out in the NPPF to the assessment of main town centre uses that are proposed outside a defined centre and not in accordance with the Local Plan.

Applications for retail and leisure development outside of a centre, as defined on the Policies Map, which are not in accordance with the Local Plan, will require an impact assessment if the development exceeds the following thresholds:

- For Corby Town Centre – 400m² (gross floorspace)
- For District/Local Centre – 130m² (gross floorspace)

The sequential and impact tests will not be applied to small scale rural development and the creation of local centres to meet the day to day needs of residents in the Sustainable Urban Extensions.

3. **Change of Use of Shops Outside the Defined Centres**

3.1 The Assessment of Retail Network and Hierarchy background paper identified a number of shops that were not classified as town centres under the NPPF definition. These are of purely neighbourhood significance, but provide important services and community facilities for local

¹ Defined in the NPPF and the glossary of this plan
people. There is a requirement in the NPPF to provide for the needs of local communities through the provision of shops, shared spaces and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments. These shops were therefore identified in the Emerging Draft Options and a separate policy (Policy 22) proposed to manage permitted uses within them.

3.2 The neighbourhood centres identified comprised Burghley Drive, Cottingham Village Centre, Gretton Village Centre, Kingswood, Occupation Road, Rockingham Road South, Rockingham Road North, Welland Vale and Willow Brook Road. The following draft policy was included within the Emerging Draft Options document:

**Policy 22 – Neighbourhood Centres and other retail areas**

Neighbourhood Centres, as well as small scale shopping precincts and small shop rows within the Borough which do not fall into the retail hierarchy still provide an important role for the neighbourhoods they serve. Within these locations, proposals for change of use from retail (A class uses) will only be supported when it can be demonstrated that they are:

a) No longer viable
b) No longer required by the community they serve; or
c) The existing use is to be reinstated elsewhere within an alternative or improved unit

Consultation

3.3 In regards to the designation of neighbourhood centres and Draft Policy 22, the response was supportive of this approach. Cottingham Parish Council provided support for the identification of the named villages and their associated centre designations on the policies map.

Changes Required

3.4 The response to the Emerging Draft Policy was supportive, therefore the inclusion of a local policy for managing the uses within neighbourhood centres and other retail areas in order to provide for the day-to-day needs of local residents and supplement the facilities available in the defined town centres is retained; however, on reflection it is felt that the approach proposed in the Emerging Draft Options consultation too closely duplicated Policy 7 of the JCS. Therefore the policy has been refined to focus on safeguarding shops (A1 Use Class) that help to meet day-to-day needs of the local community, particularly the elderly and those with mobility difficulties to have access to a range of goods and to protect the function of these neighbourhood centres and residential environments.


3.5 The Written Ministerial Statement published alongside the Spring Statement in March 2019 announced the Government’s intended planning reforms to help local areas make better use of planning tools to support local high streets. The Government consultation on reforms to support the high street, including changes to permitted development rights closed in January 2019. The Government’s response to this consultation included changes to the general permitted development order (GPDO), which came into force on 25 May 2019, introducing a new permitted development right to allow shops (A1), financial and professional services (A2), hot food takeaways (A5), betting shops, pay day loan shops and launderettes to change to up
to 500 square metres of office use (B1), with prior approval by the local planning authority of certain planning impacts, including on the sustainability of the existing shopping area. The revisions also amend the existing permitted development right for change of use of up to 150 square metres of shops (A1), financial and professional services (A2), betting shops, pay day loan shops and launderettes to residential use (C3) to include change from hot food takeaways (A5).

3.6 The principle of safeguarding retail uses to serve local neighbourhoods is still relevant; however, the draft policies in the Plan will need to be read in the context of the most recent updates in legislation.

3.7 It is recommended the following revised Change of Use of Shops Outside the Defined Centres policy be included within the Pre-Submission P2LP:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy 20 – Change of Use of Shops Outside the Defined Centres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small scale retail development to serve the day-to-day needs of local neighbourhoods will normally be permitted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual shops not within the defined centres will be safeguarded for A1 retail purposes, unless an applicant can demonstrate:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Adequate alternative facilities are already within walking distance, which are capable of meeting the needs currently being met by the existing facility without leading to a shortfall in provision; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) A balance to the number and type of units within the settlement or neighbourhood area; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) The property has been marketed for its current use for a sufficient period of time at a reasonable price and that there has been no interest in the property, and that the existing use is no longer economically and/or socially viable; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) The replacement use will result in no harm to the character or amenity of the immediate area.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Corby Town Centre Regeneration

4.1 The NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should support the role town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation. The JCS supports maintaining the regeneration of the town centres of Corby and Kettering in order to support the growing populations of these towns over the plan period. Policy 12 of the JCS identifies Corby and Kettering centres as the focus for new high order facilities and retail investment, including a minimum increase of 12,500m² in comparison retail floorspace by 2031 for both town centres.

4.2 Significant investment over the past decade has helped regenerate and redevelop parts of Corby Town Centre and improve its public realm. Redevelopment has been mainly centred on the west side of the town centre, with the construction of the Corby Cube, Corby International Pool and Savoy Cinema. Further redevelopment is now commencing south east with an expansion of the Willow Place shopping precinct and new parking facilities. This redevelopment, known as Market Walk, has planning consent for 4,700m² of retail floorspace which means 7,800m² is now required to meet the requirements of the Joint Core Strategy.
4.3 Continuing the regeneration and transformation of Corby Town Centre is essential to ensure that Corby remains a competitive and attractive town centre that meets the needs of a growing population. A list of development principles were put forward for the Issues and Options consultation in 2016, drawn from numerous sources including the Town Centre Masterplan from 2006, the JCS, changes in national policy in regards to town centres and completed developments and planning approvals. Responses at the Issues and Options consultation were supportive of including development principles in the P2LP to guide the regeneration and redevelopment of Corby Town Centre.

4.4 The following draft policies were included within the Emerging Draft Options document for consultation:

**Policy 16 - Spatial Strategy for Corby Town Centre**

Development proposals in Corby Town Centre should seek to make a positive contribution to the implementation of the Spatial Strategy for Corby Town Centre Regeneration – Concept Plan as set out in Figure 6. Specific objectives are as follows:

- Opportunities should be identified and implemented to improve connectivity, particularly to the east, including the railway station and Old Village area.
- Opportunities should be identified and implemented to enhance the entrance to the railway station.
- Opportunities should be identified and implemented to strengthen the relationship between Hazelwood and the built form of the town centre.
- Opportunities should be identified and implemented to strengthen the relationship between West Glebe and Coronation Park to create linked green space.
- Opportunities should be identified and implemented to improve public transport provision, in particular to serve the railway station and enhance evening and Sunday service provision to meet the increased demand as a result of the improved retail and leisure offer.
- Opportunities should be identified and implemented to continue to improve the quality, character and pedestrian experience along George Street.

**Policy 17 - Regeneration Strategy for Corby Town Centre**

Corby Town Centre will continue to succeed as a sustainable centre for retail, business, recreation, leisure and culture and will support its high projected population growth. This will be delivered via a regeneration strategy for the town centre covering the following objectives:

- Preserving the retail functionality of Corby Town Centre so that it remains a competitive shopping destination.
- Encouraging the use of innovative and contemporary design solutions where it would complement the existing town centre.
- Encouraging new buildings and spaces in close proximity to the neighbouring woodland at Hazelwood to establish a stronger relationship between both the natural and built environments.
• Encouraging new development in Corby Town Centre to accommodate a more diverse range of appropriate main town centre uses, including uses which help develop the evening/night-time economy.
• Where appropriate, identify and implement gateway features that provide attractive entrances to the Primary Shopping Area.
• Identification of suitable measures to offset any reductions in parking provision on a short, medium and long term basis.
• Encourage improvements to pedestrian signage and walking routes from/to car parks to/from the town centre.
• Improving the public realm to ensure it is more accessible to disabled people and increase the amount of available disabled parking spaces within the town centre.

Consultation

4.5 Feedback from respondents at the Emerging Draft Options consultation on the development principles was positive. Cottingham Parish Council welcomed the inclusion of policy focused on improving connectivity in and around the town centre. Northamptonshire County Council Public Health provided support for the principles in Draft Policies 16 & 17 but requested that reference to the ‘Healthy Streets’ design guidance would be beneficial to further inform the development principles. ‘Healthy Streets’ is a policy initiative that aims to encourage improvements to people’s health through the design of streets and the public realm within built up areas.

Corby Town Centre Parking Study

4.6 Northamptonshire County Council has undertaken analysis of existing and future demand for car parking in the town centre to 2031. The report published in May 2019 estimates that car parking capacity within the town centre will be insufficient to meet future demand at the weekends but there is considerable capacity available at other times and additional capacity from car parks on the fringe of the town centre which have the potential to meet demand.

Changes Required

4.7 Respondents of the consultation were generally supportive of the draft regeneration and spatial strategies for Corby Town Centre though suggestions were put forward in helping make the principles more refined, particularly in regards to improving public realm and pedestrian connectivity, drawing inspiration from the ‘Healthy Streets’ design guidance. Some of the main principles of ‘Healthy Streets’ include ensuring that public streets are walking and cycling-friendly, limiting physical barriers between pedestrians and vehicles and providing an attractive multi-purpose street environment. Revisiting the Master Plan for Corby Town Centre (2006)\(^2\), key issues such as poor quality walking environment and strong physical barriers of car dominated streets remain in the town centre. Therefore, it is recommended the policy wording be refined to acknowledge the contribution of ‘Healthy Streets’ in helping to regenerate aspects of Corby Town Centre, in particular the Regeneration Strategy will encourage enhanced permeability and aim to improve pedestrian connectivity within the town centre. References will also be made to the principles of ‘Healthy Streets’ within the supporting text as these principles help to deliver the local outcome of encouraging healthier lifestyles that is set out within the P2LP.

\(^2\) Corby Town Centre Master Plan, March 2006
4.8 The site adjacent to the railway station has in principle support for residential development subject to legal agreement; therefore it is recommended the objective related to enhancing the entrance to the railway station be removed from the Spatial Framework.

4.9 Amendments are made to the objectives of the Regeneration Strategy to reflect the new evidence on car parking provision in the town centre. Instead of the ‘identification of suitable measures to offset any reductions in parking provision on a short, medium and long term basis’ this objective has been strengthened to safeguard off-street parking provision in order to ensure that capacity remains at a level to assist the ongoing regeneration of the town centre.

4.10 It is recommended the following revised Regeneration Strategy for Corby Town Centre and Spatial Framework for Corby Town Centre policies be included within the Pre-Submission P2LP:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy 23 - Regeneration Strategy for Corby Town Centre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corby Town Centre will continue to succeed as a sustainable centre for retail, business, recreation, leisure and culture for the sub-region of North Northamptonshire and will support its high projected population growth. This will be delivered via a regeneration strategy for the town centre covering the following objectives:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Encouraging new development in Corby Town Centre to accommodate a more diverse range of appropriate main town centre uses, including uses which help develop the evening/night-time economy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Ensuring that retail uses are maintained within Corby Town Centre so that it remains a competitive shopping destination, particularly for comparison retail, to support the planned growth for the town.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Encouraging the use of innovative and contemporary design solutions where it would complement the existing town centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Encouraging new buildings and spaces in proximity to the neighbouring woodland at Hazelwood to establish a stronger relationship between both the natural and built environments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Where appropriate, identify and implement gateway features that provide attractive entrances to the Primary Shopping Area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. There should be no net loss of off-street car parking unless it can be demonstrated that there is no long term demand for parking at the site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Encourage improvements to pedestrian signage and walking routes between public car parks and the town centre to enhance permeability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Improving pedestrian connectivity across the main streets in the town centre such as George Street and Elizabeth Street.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Improving the public realm to ensure it is more accessible to disabled people and increase the amount of available disabled parking spaces within the town centre.</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy 24 - Spatial Framework for Corby Town Centre</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development proposals that come forward within Corby Town Centre should seek to make a positive contribution to the implementation of the Spatial Framework for Corby Town Centre as set out in Figure 9.1. In particular:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10
1. Opportunities should be identified and implemented to improve connectivity, particularly to the east, including the railway station and Old Village area.

2. Opportunities should be identified and implemented to strengthen the relationship between Hazelwood and the built form of the town centre.

3. Opportunities should be identified and implemented to strengthen the relationship between West Glebe and Coronation Park to create linked green space.

4. Opportunities should be identified and implemented to improve public transport provision, in particular to serve the railway station and enhance evening and Sunday service provision to meet the increased demand as a result of the improved town centre offer.

5. Opportunities should be identified and implemented to continue to improve the quality, character and pedestrian experience along George Street.

5. **Corby Town Centre Redevelopment Opportunities**

5.1 The NPPF requires local planning authorities to allocate a range of suitable sites in order to meet the scale and type of retail, leisure, commercial, office, tourism, cultural, community and residential development needed to sustain town centres and that the needs for new retail and other town centre uses are not compromised by site availability.

5.2 Four redevelopment opportunity sites were identified for the Issues and Options consultation. Outline site development principles were also put forward for each site. The consultation responses were generally supportive of allocating the sites for redevelopment in the P2LP. One site (South East Gateway/Market Walk East) was omitted from further consideration for allocation in November 2017 due to outline planning permission being granted on the site for a new surface car park and retail allocation of up to 4,700m².

5.3 Sites allocated within Corby Town Centre should be allocated for town centre uses, in line with the NPPF strategy for accommodating a more diverse range of uses within town centre environments. In addition to this, any allocated town centre site within the P2LP should also contribute towards delivering the 12,500m² minimum floorspace for retail provision as set by the JCS, of which 7,800m² remains to be delivered following the consented scheme at Market Walk.

5.4 The following three redevelopment opportunity sites and their respective development principles were included within the Emerging Draft Options document for consultation:

### Policy 18 – Corby Town Centre Key Redevelopment Opportunities

The following sites have been identified as the main locations for new development growth within Corby Town Centre and are allocated for mixed use redevelopment. Schemes coming forward on these sites must contribute towards the provision of the 7,800m² minimum increase of net comparison shopping floorspace required by Policy 12 of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ref</th>
<th>Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TC1</td>
<td>Parkland Gateway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TC2</td>
<td>Oasis Retail Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TC3</td>
<td>Everest Lane</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Each allocation is supported by site-specific policies TC1 to TC3 below to provide further detailed guidance on the development of these sites. These site specific policies also form part of this policy.

Policy TC1 Parkland Gateway

A site of 0.98 hectares is allocated for mixed use development, including around 100 dwellings

Site Design Principles

- Innovative and contemporary proposals that include a range of appropriate main town centre uses will be encouraged where these are consistent with other policies in the Plan
- Proposals should consider incorporating a higher density residential scheme to make the most efficient use of land
- Active frontages that create an urban edge onto George Street are encouraged
- High quality architectural design that compliments the neighbouring modern buildings will be encouraged
- The modern character of the area should also be reflected; connections to the existing high quality public realm should follow a similar theme
- Careful consideration of Hazelwood protected woodland to the west of the site (TPO 50/4); proposals should provide natural surveillance to the woodland
- Where possible, proposals should include buffering to the neighbouring woodland, in the form of gardens or open space planting, to soften the edge and minimise the impact of development
- Consideration should also be given to the impact of development on bats at the woodland edge; more specifically, the lighting scheme should be carefully designed with these considerations in mind
A site specific Flood Risk Assessment would be required to accompany any future development proposals.

Policy TC2 Oasis Retail Park

A site of 1.15 hectares is allocated for mixed use development

Site Design Principles

- Creation of a landmark building at the corner of Alexandra Road and George Street
- Development massing along Alexandra Street frontage
- Improve connections to Everest Lane and New Post Office Square
- Create commercial frontage onto George Street to complement the character on the opposite side of the street
Policy TC3 Everest Lane

A site of 0.89 hectares is allocated for mixed use development

Site Design Principles

- Retention of existing community services and facilities in accordance with Policy 7 of the Joint Core Strategy
- Creation of active frontage onto New Post Office Square, Alexandra Road and Elizabeth Street
- Strengthen connectivity to New Post Office Square

Consultation

5.5 At the Emerging Draft Options consultation, the feedback from respondents was generally positive in regards to the site allocations and their respective principles. Suggestions on refining the selected development principles were put forward by respondents – Anglian Water stated that the principles for Site TC1 (Parkland Gateway) needed to be amended to make reference to water supply and foul sewerage network improvements required for the site. Homes England responded in regards to Site TC3 (Everest Lane), suggesting that the policy wording should be altered to clarify the site’s ability to deliver residential development. Cottingham Parish Council expressed concerns about the woodlands surrounding the Town Centre were not adversely affected by redevelopment proposals. Finally, the Forestry Commission suggested refinement of the principles for Site TC1 (Parkland Gateway), removing reference of requiring development proposals to include planting buffering in the form of gardens to residences backing onto the woodland, suggesting instead that public pathways lined with shrubbery would produce a more appropriate buffer.

Changes Required

5.6 Respondents were in favour of the preferred sites being allocated for town centre redevelopment but suggested refinement was needed on some of their associated design principles.

5.7 The design principles for TC1 Parkland Gateway have been amended to reflect suggested changes by the Forestry Commission and also to encourage a net gain in biodiversity and habitat connectivity to reflect the recommendations within the Interim Sustainability Appraisal report. Further detailed review with design officers as part of the assessment process have suggested refinement of the principles to encourage proposals to create a strong
physical presence at the south-east corner of the site featuring non-residential uses at the ground floor to complement neighbouring commercial uses.

5.8 A number of sites were promoted for residential uses as part of the Emerging Draft Options consultation alongside TC3 Everest Lane. These were assessed as part of the Site Selection process to determine their suitability for housing, and where considered suitable as part of the assessment work these sites were considered as part of the second-stage assessment with design officers and specialist advisors, representing Highways, Archaeology, Ecology/Biodiversity, Environmental Health, Police and Development Management colleagues. This process has resulted in the addition of the Former Co-op site, Alexandra Road within the town centre redevelopment opportunity sites and the amendment of Everest Lane to include residential uses. The associated design principles for both sites have been developed as part of the second-stage assessment work in consultation with design officers and specialist advisors.

5.9 To reflect comments made by Anglian Water; further explanation will be provided in the supporting text emphasising that the site design principles should be read in conjunction with the JCS and other relevant policies and that dependent on scale or location there may be a requirement for technical assessments, where appropriate.

5.10 It is recommended the following four revised Corby Town Centre Redevelopment Opportunity Sites and their respective development principles be included within the Pre-Submission Draft P2LP:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ref</th>
<th>Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TC1</td>
<td>Parkland Gateway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TC2</td>
<td>Everest Lane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TC3</td>
<td>Former Co-op, Alexandra Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TC4</td>
<td>Oasis Retail Park</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The allocations are supported by site-specific policies TC1 to TC4 below to provide further detailed guidance on the development of these sites. These site specific policies also form part of this policy.

**Policy TC1 Parkland Gateway**

A site of 0.98 hectares is allocated for mixed use development that subject to viability will include a policy compliant mix of around 100 dwellings.

In addition to according with relevant development plan policies and material considerations, applications will be supported where the following site design principles are addressed:

a) Innovative and contemporary proposals that include a range of appropriate main town centre uses will be encouraged where these are consistent with other policies in the Plan;
b) Proposals should consider incorporating a higher density residential scheme to make the most efficient use of land;

c) Active frontages that create an urban edge onto George Street are encouraged;

d) High quality architectural design that complements the neighbouring modern buildings will be encouraged, in particular proposals should create a strong physical presence towards the south-east corner of the site;

e) The modern character of the area should also be reflected; connections to the existing high quality public realm should follow a similar theme;

f) Careful consideration of Hazel wood protected woodland to the west of the site (TPO 50/4); proposals should provide natural surveillance to the woodland and provide links in the forms of paths to connect the development with the woodland where possible;

g) Where possible, proposals should include buffering to the neighbouring woodland, in the form of houses facing the woods with paths or a road between them and a shrub layer or tree buffer on the wood-side, to soften the edge and minimise the impact of development;

h) Proposals should provide a net gain in biodiversity and incorporate habitat connectivity due to the site’s proximity to the Ancient Woodland; and

i) Consideration should also be given to the impact of development on bats at the woodland edge; more specifically, the lighting scheme should be carefully designed with these considerations in mind.

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Policy TC2 Everest Lane

A site of 0.89 hectares is allocated for mixed use development that subject to viability will include a policy compliant mix of around 70 dwellings.
In addition to according with relevant development plan policies and material considerations, applications will be supported where the following site design principles are addressed:

a) Innovative and contemporary proposals that include a range of appropriate town centre uses will be encouraged where these are consistent with other policies in the Plan, including the requirement to support and enhance existing community facilities;

b) Proposals should consider incorporating a higher density residential scheme to make the most efficient use of land;

c) Consideration should be given to providing flats or apartments with varying heights that complements the surrounding mix of uses. Proposals should maximise the opportunity to provide a key feature building towards the north-eastern corner of the site to create a gateway into the town centre;

d) High quality architectural design that continues the regeneration and complements other modern buildings within the town centre will be encouraged;

e) Proposals should seek to open up the site to improve the physical landscape and public realm and encourage natural surveillance within the site; consideration should be given to providing vehicular access from the north of the site off Alexandra Road;

f) Connectivity within and beyond the site is of key importance, particularly links to the town centre and other town centre redevelopment opportunity sites; and

g) Noise attenuation measures due to proximity to neighbouring commercial uses and Elizabeth Street.

Policy TC3 Former Co-op site, Alexandra Road

A site of 0.84 hectares is allocated for mixed use development that subject to viability will include a policy compliant mix of around 150 dwellings.
In addition to according with relevant development plan policies and material considerations, applications will be supported where the following site design principles are addressed:

a) Innovative and contemporary proposals that include a range of appropriate town centre uses will be encouraged where these are consistent with other policies in the Plan;
b) The layout and density of any proposed scheme should aim to maximise the town centre location and in doing so make the most efficient use of land;
c) Consideration should be given to providing flats or apartments with varying heights that complements the surrounding mix of uses. A scheme involving the stepping down of building blocks from the south-western corner towards the eastern boundary would be welcomed in design terms to minimise the impact on neighbouring residential properties;
d) High quality architectural design that continues the regeneration and complements other modern buildings within the town centre will be encouraged;
e) Proposals should improve the overall appearance of the site, in particular fronting Alexandra Road;
f) Connectivity within and beyond the site is of key importance, particularly links to the town centre with connections from this site to the Cube. Proposals should take advantage of the clear visibility between the front of the site and the Cube;
g) Proposals should consider incorporating innovative solutions such as basement parking to utilise the gradient of the site and make the most efficient use of land, or deck parking with green walls to improve the quality of the public realm, taking into consideration the security and safety of all site users;
h) Where possible, proposals should maximise opportunities for biodiversity enhancement and habitat connectivity by improving green infrastructure links to the nearby Hazel and Thoroughsale woodland and providing bat/bird boxes within the fabric of the building; and
i) Noise attenuation measures due to proximity to neighbouring commercial uses and Alexandra Road.
Policy TC4 Oasis Retail Park

A site of 1.15 hectares is allocated for mixed use development.

In addition to according with relevant development plan policies and material considerations, applications will be supported where the following site design principles are addressed:

a) Creation of a landmark building at the corner of Alexandra Road and George Street;
b) Development massing along Alexandra Street frontage;
c) Improve connections to Everest Lane and New Post Office Square; and
d) Create commercial frontage onto George Street to complement the character on the opposite side of the street.
6. **Town Centre Retail Boundaries and Shopping Frontages**

6.1 Background work undertaken in 2016 identified options for town centre boundaries, Primary Shopping Areas and shopping frontages within the town centres in Corby Borough. These options were consulted upon at the Issues and Options consultation where respondents were mainly supportive of the preferred approach of identifying town centre boundaries, primary shopping areas and shopping frontages for each town centre within the retail hierarchy. The feedback received at the Issues and Options consultation helped develop the preferred policies below that have been subject to sustainability appraisal and were included within the Emerging Draft Options document for consultation:

**Policy 19 – Primary Shopping Area**

The Primary Shopping Areas for the town centres in the Borough are defined on the Policies Map. The Primary Shopping Areas will be used for the interpretation of the sequential test for main town centre uses apart from retail.

**Policy 20 - Town Centre Shopping Frontages**

Primary frontages are likely to include a high proportion of retail uses which may include food, drink, clothing and household goods. Secondary frontages provide greater opportunities for a diversity of uses such as restaurants, cinemas and businesses.

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3 Assessment of Retail Network & Hierarchy (June 2016) & Review of Boundaries in Corby Town Centre (July 2016)
In the Borough’s primary shopping frontages, proposals for A class retail uses (A1, A2, A3, A4 and A5 Use Classes) will be supported. Proposals for non-A class uses will be supported providing that the proposal does not lead to the predominance of A class uses becoming critically undermined.

In the Borough’s secondary shopping frontages, proposals for all main town centre uses will be supported.

For both primary and secondary shopping frontages within the town centres, the re-use or conversion of upper storeys will be encouraged.

**Policy 21 – Primary Shopping Frontages within the Main Town Centre**

In Corby Town Centre’s primary shopping frontages, proposals for non-A1 uses will be supported provided that:

a) they would not undermine the predominance of A1 uses in the town centre, by reducing their proportion below 50% or;

b) it would not represent a significant severance in the identified cluster of A1 uses present within Corby Town Centre’s primary shopping area, focused around the following streets:
   i. Corporation Street/New Post Office Square
   ii. Willow Place/Queens Square

Consultation

6.2 Responses to the draft policies above were mixed. Cushman and Wakefield on behalf of Sovereign Centros were supportive of the flexible approach to permitted uses within Corby Town Centre as well as the identification of shopping frontages to retain retail uses. They asked for clarity to be provided in Policy 20 regarding permitted uses for upper storeys in town centres. NJL Consulting on behalf of Peel Investment Properties Ltd raised concerns regarding Policy 19 on Primary Shopping Areas and how the sequential test was applied to retail uses within the designations. Finally, Cottingham Parish Council provided comments on the decision to not apply restrictions upon hot-food takeaway uses in the P2LP. They stated that while the current proliferation of these uses is low across the Borough, this may not be the case in the future and ignoring this in the P2LP could be a mistake.

National Planning Policy Framework

6.3 The revised NPPF published in July 2018 and updated in February 2019, removed the expectation for local planning authorities to define shopping frontages in Local Plans. Definitions of both primary and secondary shopping frontages, which clarified supported uses, have also been removed from Annex 2 of the NPPF. However, this amendment does not preclude authorities from applying frontages where their use can be justified.

Changes Required

6.4 The approach set out within the Emerging Options Draft for consultation was to identify shopping frontages for all the identified town centres, restrict permitted uses in the primary shopping frontages in general and allow for all appropriate town centre uses within the secondary frontages. However the approach to defining the Primary Shopping Areas and Town Centre Shopping Frontages has been revisited to take account of consultation responses and
to reflect revisions to the NPPF. It is no longer considered necessary to define Primary Shopping Frontages as this would duplicate the role of the identified Primary Shopping Areas, or the Secondary Shopping Frontages, as this would duplicate the function of town centre boundaries. The revised Network and Hierarchy of Centres policy clarifies the town centre boundaries for the application of the sequential and impact tests. Therefore, it is recommended the previous Shopping Frontages policies be removed.

6.5 The approach to Primary Shopping Areas has evolved in response to these changes and to remove reference to the retail tests in the NPPF as this is already covered in Policy 19 (Network and Hierarchy of Centres). Further detail has been added to reflect Policy 12 of the JCS and to encourage the change of use of upper floors in response to the comments provided on behalf of Sovereign Centros.

6.6 Updated survey work undertaken in May 2019 shows that Corby Town Centre is in good condition, with a dominance of 73% ground floor A1 retail use within the Primary Shopping Area and only 7% vacant units.

6.7 No changes have been made relating to hot food takeaways as there is not sufficient evidence to specifically justify placing restrictions on their growth and it is felt this is already addressed by limiting the over concentration of any one particular use.

6.8 Recent changes in legislation that came into force in May 2019 include updated permitted development rights allowing change of use from shops (A1) to offices (B1a) up to 500m², subject to prior approval from the local planning authority; therefore the proposed policies in the Plan should be read in the context of the most recent updates in legislation.

6.9 It is recommended the following revised Primary Shopping Areas policy be included within the Pre-Submission Draft P2LP:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Policy 21 – Primary Shopping Areas</th>
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| Development within the Primary Shopping Areas, as shown on the Policies Map will be supported where it will add to the attractiveness of the centre and not critically undermine the dominance of A1 retail use. In order to add to the attractiveness of the centre, development should:
| • Complement the retail function and make a positive contribution to the vitality and viability of the town centre; and
| • Avoid an over concentration of a particular non A1 use which risks undermining the vitality and viability of the town centre. |
| Change of use of upper floors to working space and/or residential will be encouraged, subject to compliance with other development management policies, and provided that the development does not result in the loss of ancillary storage space or other beneficial use to the extent that it would make a ground floor unit unviable, and that the development would not prevent off street servicing of any ground floor unit. |

7. **Threshold for Impact Testing**

7.1 The scale of some retail and leisure development outside of existing centres have the potential to affect the vitality and viability of existing centres, potentially diverting investment away
from these important areas. The NPPF requires impact assessments to be provided for developments over a gross floorspace of 2,500m² but allows for local authorities to set their own different threshold based upon local evidence.

7.2 Evidence presented for the Issues and Options consultation in 2016 stated that the 2,500m² threshold figure in the NPPF was likely to be too high in the context of Corby. Representations received at the Issues and Options consultation were partly in support of adopting a lower threshold figure and partly in support of maintaining the NPPF default figure. As such, due to the mix in viewpoints on the matter, further evidence was gathered to assess the options for retail impact thresholds.

7.3 The background paper supported the adoption of a locally set threshold figure in the P2LP, lower than the NPPF default threshold and based upon average unit sizes in the centres. This resulted in the inclusion of the following policy within the Emerging Draft Options document for consultation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy 23 – Local Retail Impact Threshold</th>
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<tr>
<td>Applications for retail and leisure development outside of a defined centre shown on the Policies map, which are not in accordance with the Local Plan, will require an impact assessment when the proposed development is over the following floorspace thresholds;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) For Corby Town Centre – 400m² (net floorspace)</td>
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<tr>
<td>b) For district centres and local centres – 130m² (net floorspace)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The Council will take into consideration the cumulative impact of the sub-division of retail units or extensions for existing floorspace. In the latter case, the impact assessment will be required based upon the total floorspace, not the extension alone.

The retail impact assessment will not apply to the following types of development:

- small scale rural development
- retail and leisure development within defined neighbourhood centres
- the creation of local centres to meet the day to day needs of residents in the Sustainable Urban Extensions

Consultation

7.4 Two responses were received on Draft Policy 23 (Local Retail Impact Threshold) and the supporting evidence at the Emerging Draft Options consultation. Cottingham Parish Council supported the rejection of the NPPF default threshold of 2,500m² to be applied to Corby Borough in the P2LP. NJL Consulting on behalf of Peel Investment Properties Ltd objected to both the preferred thresholds and the supporting evidence. In addition, Peel put forward suggestions on alternative thresholds to be considered including suggestion of a 2,000m² threshold to be applied to new development at the Corby Retail Park.

Changes Required

7.5 It is considered unnecessary to significantly alter the draft local impact threshold policy for the P2LP. The P2LP is required to align with the adopted JCS, a strategic goal of which is to preserve the vitality and viability of town centres, regenerating them into real hearts for their

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4 Threshold for Retail Impact Testing Background Paper (April 2018)
communities. Part of this strategy is directing new retail, leisure and other main town centre facilities towards town centres. Corby Town Centre is forecasted to require further retail investment during the plan period in order to respond to the population growth of the town. On this basis, it is important that appropriate mechanisms are put in place in the P2LP to ensure that town centre viability and vitality is not compromised.

7.6 Despite most town centres in Corby performing reasonably well and exhibiting signs of ‘good’ health in the assessment, it is considered that due to their relatively small size, their low number of total units and the low average sizes of those units, out-of-centre proposals being approved without an appropriate appraisal of impact may make them vulnerable to decline.

7.7 Responding to objections raised by Peel on the methodology used to set the thresholds, the basis of using average unit sizes has been found sound in Local Plan examinations elsewhere (see Swindon Borough Local Plan⁵) and is therefore considered a robust methodology to use for this purpose.

7.8 In response to the alternative option outlined by Peel to set a 2,000m² impact threshold on new development at Corby Retail Park, restricting the application of the retail impact test to an individual location risks out-of-centre proposals in other locations across the Borough not being assessed for their impact on town centre vitality and viability.

7.9 As such, the thresholds for applying the retail impact assessment remain unchanged; however, this policy has been consolidated with the revised Network and Hierarchy of Centres policy, so that the retails tests can be read together.

⁵ Swindon Borough Local Plan (adopted March 2015)