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North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Review

ISSUES CONSULTATION BACKGROUND PAPER:

PREVIOUS CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

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North Northamptonshire
Joint Planning Unit

INTRODUCTION:

This Background Paper provides an overview of the work undertaken to date by the Joint Planning Unit in the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) Review. As part of the Place Shaping approach that underpins this review, the JPU organised a series of Workshops with support from the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) to understand North Northamptonshire in more detail, and start to develop some spatial options. The paper sets out the key findings from these Workshops and provides more detail on how Spatial Options are being developed. Whilst providing a summary of the outcomes of Workshop Sessions this paper does not seek to repeat the key reports and studies that are referred to in this paper which form part of the technical evidence base for the JCS Review. These reports can be viewed on the Joint Planning Unit website www.nnjpu.org.uk.

ENGAGEMENT TO DATE AND OPTIONS FORMULATION PROCESS

BACKGROUND TO THE REVIEW

THE ADOPTED CORE STRATEGY:

The adopted Core Spatial Strategy (CSS) sets out the overall spatial strategy for North Northamptonshire for the period 2001-2021; including where development should be located and the standards it should aim to achieve. The adopted CSS plans for:

- 52,100 homes
- 47,400 jobs
- Large scale mixed use Sustainable Urban Extensions to Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough
- Significant infrastructure improvements
- High standards of energy efficiency
- Delivery of sustainable residential communities

The adopted core strategy seeks to make North Northamptonshire more self-sufficient. It sets out a framework within which the component parts of North Northamptonshire work closely together to secure more investment and a greater range of services and facilities than they would do by working alone. This will allow North Northamptonshire as a whole to become stronger and more self-sufficient, competing more effectively and stemming losses of people and spending.

REVIEW OF THE CORE STRATEGY:

The Inspector who examined the core strategy found it to be ‘sound’ but expressed concern about uncertainties with infrastructure provision. There was also a need to ‘roll’ the plan forward to at least 2026, in line with the revised Regional Plan, and to take a longer term view for 2031 and beyond. Development related matters that need to be addressed include making housing and strategic employment provision for the period 2021-2026. The Inspector therefore recommended that an early review of the core strategy should be undertaken, which should deal with the above matters and set out a clear infrastructure for the plan area.

CHANGING CONTEXT

The JCS Review is now being prepared under a different context and within a period of reform to the planning system. Although this will take time to implement, the government's commitment to localism and putting neighbourhoods at the heart of the planning system will influence the review. As part of this the government will be abolishing Regional Plans. Local authorities were invited to state their intentions in respect of the housing targets that are set out for them within the Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS). The housing targets in the RSS in the period to 2021 are adopted within the Core Strategy, and as a consequence, are part of the statutory development plan. The Joint Planning Committee (JPC) has set out a Statement of Intent, which outlines that housing targets will be stretched to 2026 and beyond. This was consulted on with the development industry, key infrastructure providers and local authorities. The responses to this consultation have informed the approach that has been taken to issues consultation.

The Localism Bill sets out the government's proposals to reform the planning system which at its heart means giving every neighbourhood the chance to shape its own development through the creation of neighbourhood plans. Neighbourhoods have been defined as villages, towns, estates, wards or other relevant local areas.



The localism agenda is challenging, particularly in relation to the preparation of a Core Strategy, which must be based on robust evidence and set out the overall vision for how the area and the places within it should develop; strategic objectives focussing on the key issues to be addressed; and a delivery strategy for achieving these objectives. This inevitably entails balancing local aspirations with the bigger picture on issues such as transport, economic development, climate change, and the needs of future residents. It also raises issues of the capacity of different neighbourhoods to engage and of the degree to which organisations and individuals that do get involved are representative of the wider community.

The 'place shaping' approach adopted for the JCS Review is aimed at tackling this problem, focusing on local aspirations and the potential of places and using new and more visual means of engaging people in the process. Thus far, extensive engagement has taken place with stakeholder organisations and delivery bodies but the approach to community engagement has focused on existing sources of feedback; seeking broader views through the www.atyourplace.org website; and ad-hoc visits to schools as opportunities arise.

As the localism proposals are put in place over the next few years, merely seeking responses through consultation will not be adequate in itself. In the longer term, a different approach will be required, which will involve using the planning authorities' limited resources in different, more proactive ways. In the short term, for the current JCS Review, the feedback received from all of the workshops and engagement so far gives a good idea of the issues and opportunities upon which there is already some agreement between stakeholders and this work is reflected within the Issues Paper. A package of measures is needed in order to build on the existing work and on the place shaping approach, to begin the transition to a more 'localist' approach. The revised Participation Action Plan sets out in detail how participation in the current JCS Review will be undertaken but also sets out an initial framework for increasing community participation over time.

REGULATION 25 CONSULTATION

The Joint Planning Unit consulted on the scope of the review of the JCS (Regulation 25 consultation) in March 2009. This consultation was framed by the inspectors recommendations set out in the Inspectors Report. Key messages arising from the Regulation 25 consultation included:

- Greater steer and more certainty is needed on rural issues, in particular the settlement hierarchy, agricultural diversification implications and housing affordability;
- Need to pick up on recent changes to national policy relating to Energy and Climate Change;
- Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUEs) should remain the area of focus (and additional SUEs were promoted);
- JCS should include strategic allocations in order to streamline the plan making process and to take advantage of the greater role of Core Strategies under updated national planning policy (PPS12);
- Smaller SUEs are needed in the smaller towns and the potential for a new village in the north of the area should be considered;
- The vision and objectives should be reviewed to take account of progress on the ground, particularly at Corby;
- Design is a cross-cutting issue

It was evident from the Regulation 25 consultation that a more detailed understanding of the role of the Smaller Towns and Rural area is needed in the Core Strategy review.

POSITION STATEMENTS

The Joint Planning Unit held a series of topic specific meetings with infrastructure and service providers in October 2009. The purpose of these meetings was to agree a position statement on their issues, needs and required actions that could inform the JCS Review and then be taken forward and considered within the replacement plan. Position Statements were drafted on a number of topics:

- Green Infrastructure
- Water Resources and Flooding
- Energy and Waste
- Town Centres and Economic Development
- Transport
- Emergency Services
- Culture and Sport
- Education including Higher and Further Education
- Housing
- Health

The key issues identified in the Position Statements informed the key thematic issues at Workshops in September 2009 and March 2010. The Position Statements were updated in October 2010 to ensure that all relevant issues were identified to allow them to be fed into options development and assessment process. This will be an on-going process to ensure that the key stakeholders will remain up to date with the JCS Review and also any issues that arise in terms of delivery and viability can be addressed at an early stage in the process. When finalised, the Position Statements will be available to view on the JPU website.

PLACE SHAPING

As previously referred to, the localism agenda places requirements on local authorities to understand local and neighbourhood aspirations when developing plans and making decisions. The Local Growth White Paper and Localism Bill set out how neighbourhoods will play a significant role in the future of their area including the ability to develop Neighbourhood Plans. This is a move away from 'top down' targets that communities feel have been imposed on them and requires 'bottom up' plan making.

The Joint Planning Unit has adopted a 'place shaping approach' to the review. This focuses on local aspirations and seeking to understand how places function and how they should change. This approach entails looking at the consequences of growth and long term change for the character and quality of individual places, to investigate how they can become more sustainable in the future, before stepping back to take a North Northamptonshire-wide view.

A place based approach is critical if the Joint Core Strategy is to embody 'bottom up' plan making. This will need to be addressed further though the wider engagement process which to date has included a focus on engaging young people; a rural workshop and a smaller towns workshop; discussions with individual district policy officers; and meetings with key members.

To understand the diverse nature of North Northamptonshire and the issues that affect neighbourhoods, the Joint Planning Unit has undertaken a series of workshops. These included:

- September 2009 '*Understanding Places'* Workshop
- January 2010 Rural Workshop
- February 2010 Small Towns Workshop
- March 2010 'Options Development' Workshop

SEPTEMBER WORKSHOP - UNDERSTANDING PLACES

The Understanding Places Workshop introduced the Place Shaping agenda as part of the Core Strategy Review.

The Workshop sought to develop:

- an understanding of how places have developed, opportunities for their continued change and identification of the main challenges to delivery;
- a shared view on the identity of the sub-region and the places within it;
- an agreement on the strategic themes to form the basis for development of spatial options in a further workshop;
- an understanding of how change could be managed in order to create the quality and character of places that is sought

Prior to this workshop delegates were provided with a Briefing Pack that set out issues and questions relating to seven key themes, and which were informed by responses to the Regulation 25 consultation. The 7 key themes were:

- Economic Development
- Energy and Climate Change
- Green Infrastructure and Water
- Housing
- Social Infrastructure
- Town Centres
- Transport and Modal Shift



These key themes were used to steer discussion and analysis of the specific issues that affect the places within North Northamptonshire, and the opportunities that these present.

The September Workshop identified a range of detailed place based issues, and 'Big Ideas'- major opportunities for North Northamptonshire to deliver change over the next 20-30 years. These included:

- 'Carbon Sink Forest' widespread tree planting in the Rockingham Forest area, which can not only capture carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, but also has a range of other benefits including promoting recreation and tourism, providing local timber and wood fuel supplies, and linking wildlife habitats.
- 'Northamptonshire Arc' building on significantly enhanced transport connections between the 3 Growth Towns and Rushden and Northampton, to provide a focus for regeneration activity aiming to make Northamptonshire an excellent place to live and work.
- 'New Eco Village' a high quality settlements where new jobs and services support around 1000 new homes, which could become a new 'service centre' for the villages around it.

Alongside a detailed analysis of specific place based issues, opportunities and aspirations, the workshop provided some guidance on 'must haves', or key objectives that should frame the development of spatial options:

- increasing robustness and resilience to long term change (e.g. climate change, economic pressures)
- increasing self-reliance- meeting more of people's needs locally (e.g. employment opportunities, retail attractions, energy supply)
- reinforcing the special mixed urban/rural character of the area (e.g. the roles played by the rural area and small towns, the integration of town and country)

Taking forward the key objectives listed above, the following is a short analysis of challenges:

INCREASING ROBUSTNESS & RESILIENCE TO UNFORSEEN CHANGE

An analysis of the context of North Northamptonshire highlighted its susceptibility to the vagaries of the global economy. Social changes will also arise from the increase in population, as well as tackling the social problems of some of its most vulnerable communities. Overlaying this is the impact of climate change which creates challenges for the area.

INCREASING SELF RELIANCE

The first two objectives are reinforced and complemented by recognising that the area is disproportionately dependent on other areas for goods and services. A climate change resilient economy requires unnecessary movements to be minimised; goods and services to be accessed more locally; town and country to be better integrated; as well as championing environmental technology industries. The issue is how self-sufficient can or should North Northamptonshire become and over what timescale?

The September Workshop provided an understanding of issues and opportunities to take these forward. It was evident from the Workshop sessions that more place based input is needed and further consideration of the Rural Area and the Small Towns was required.

REINFORCING THE SPECIAL MIXED URBAN/RURAL CHARACTER

The urban structure of the area has in the past constrained investment for jobs and services; due to its dependency upon relatively small towns which have not offered the critical mass for provision of high order services or economic infrastructure for growth and diversification. The cumulative potential of the urban area must therefore be recognised and fully harnessed; making North Northamptonshire greater than the sum of its parts. It may be that in some respects the future challenges can be more easily met in small urban centres than the highly centralised metropolitan or city based regions and as a result the quality of life that can be offered in the towns of North Northamptonshire is greater.

This potential is reinforced by the outstanding rural environment, which is under-valued as a resource and as a place to live- it is not merely somewhere which offers an ‘escape from the town’. There are opportunities to use green infrastructure to prevent coalescence and at the same time integrate town and country, in a way that larger urban areas cannot

RURAL AND SMALL TOWNS WORKSHOP

These workshops were held in January and February 2010 and took forward the issues identified from the Regulation 25 consultation and the September Workshop, and those arising from implementation of the CSS through planning applications and plan making by the districts/boroughs. The workshops sought to achieve the following outcomes:

- An understanding of the different components of the rural and small town areas and the diversity that exists within them
- An understanding of the potential of the countryside and the small towns set within it, and the ability to respond to global environments and economic changes; and
- Agreement about what future work will be needed in order to develop a more flexible and positive policy approach for the revised joint core strategy

KEY MESSAGES ARISING FROM RURAL WORKSHOP:

- The rural area is diverse, and the broader policy approach in the adopted core strategy will need to be revisited to ensure that different issues and opportunities are fully addressed in policy terms;
- In respect of services, a number of villages operate in clusters i.e. one village may not have a shop but people travel for day to day items to the neighbouring one which does.
- Differences in types of villages significantly affect their potential future role and opportunities;
- The rural service spine was considered a relevant concept, but how it functions and the suitability of public transport to link it together was questioned;
- Most stakeholders did not want to preserve the villages in aspic and were content that some development took place, so long as it did not change the character of the village or over-burden services or roads.
- Certain villages in North Northamptonshire are of such character that conservation should be the predominant aim;
- A key issue was the area's beauty and green spaces, with protection of these (including village greens and playing fields) identified as being necessary.
- Improving rights of way networks, particularly bridleways, and enhancing connectivity through green infrastructure is a significant opportunity;
- It will be important that the role of Rural Estates is fully considered, and there was agreement that the role of Estates is underplayed and there is more potential to work with them.
- Greater emphasis should be placed on stimulating economic development within the rural area. Ideas include the Carbon Sink Forest and North Northamptonshire becoming a centre of excellence for renewable technology;
- Planning Policy Statement 4 *Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth* was welcomed and groups considered that it could be positively taken forward to allow North Northamptonshire to become an exemplar of rural diversification;
- Enhanced public transport affects all elements of the rural area and connections need to be improved;

KEY MESSAGES ARISING FROM SMALL TOWNS WORKSHOP:

- The sense of community, social cohesion and good proximity to facilities were seen as positive elements of the small towns. The quality of life brought about by proximity/access to the countryside was also highlighted as a positive;
- Key negative issues related to the lack of services and infrastructure, lack of transport facilities, and the decline in retail. The impact of loss of industry/lack of jobs also raised a key concern that small towns increasingly act as dormitory settlements;
- Oundle was ranked as the most vibrant centre (scoring highly on quality of life and ability to meet needs). In contrast, Desborough and Irthlingborough were identified as the small towns most in need of regeneration;
- Rushden was acknowledged as the main small town, Waitrose is an important asset in drawing people from surrounding areas;
- General consensus that villages look towards the small towns for services and that Rushden acts as the main settlement being the biggest of the small towns.
- Desborough and Rothwell were considered to have a strong functional relationship, and important links with Market Harborough and Kettering, and out commuting is an issue;
- Burton Latimer was referred to as being 'joined at the hip with Kettering' a strong functional relationship strengthened by good public transport links. The town was felt to have a tight sphere of influence;
- Burton Latimer's future relationship with Kettering was discussed, and whether it would effectively become a suburb of Kettering. Ideas included the future role of Burton Wold Wind Farm and the potential for a renewable energy park to enhance environmental skills in North Northamptonshire;
- Most groups concluded that Irthlingborough, Rushden and Higham Ferrers (and to some extent Raunds) acted as one functional area;
- Raunds was considered to operate as a dormitory settlement, with people moving to Raunds for cheap housing and looking to Bedford for jobs;
- Oundle has a close functional relationship with Peterborough, for higher order shopping and work purposes but is increasingly looking to Corby for shopping. Local villages look to Oundle for services.
- The need for enhanced employment was a recurring issue in respect of the small towns, alongside the need for each town to have a clear vision. Similarly, the need to link new communities with the existing ones, and particularly to encourage use of town centres by residents, was a key issue/aspiration;
- The diverse range of small towns was evident. Preserving the high quality and character of Oundle was considered as the most important, with similar views expressed about Higham Ferrers, Rothwell and to a degree Thrapston. In contrast, the lack of jobs was identified as an important issue at Irthlingborough, Desborough, Rothwell and Raunds;
- The role of the River Nene and the connections that this provides between the small towns was identified as a key opportunity. An enhanced tourism role for the River Nene should be considered with the towns along the Nene each performing a distinct function. Capitalising on the *'Nene Valley Brand'* will be important.

CONCLUSIONS FROM RURAL & SMALL TOWNS WORKSHOPS

- The overarching conclusion from the two workshops is the significant complexities that exist within North Northamptonshire and the different issues faced by settlements, with specific opportunities that arise from this.
- A number of ideas were raised at both workshops, and these will need to be fully tested through the review process, particularly in respect of deliverability. It is evident that there is broad commitment and agreement from Stakeholders to ideas such as the Carbon Sink Forest, and an enhanced tourism role for the River Nene. The revised core strategy provides an opportunity to embed these ideas within policy.
- The different elements and issues will be tested and explored through the joint core strategy review. As set out in this Background Paper they have informed the review to date. The place shaping focus of the review will help to develop a strategic framework that reflects these locally distinctive elements. Employment, public transport and infrastructure investment are recurrent themes and will be fundamental parts of the review.
- A number of recommendations for further work arose from the two workshops relevant to both the JPU and the local authorities. The JPU has taken forward a number of these actions, to develop the issues consultation and inform the JCS review.

MARCH "OPTIONS DEVELOPMENT" WORKSHOP

The March Workshop sought to take forward the information and issues, including 'Big Ideas', that arose from the previous workshops to use these to identify a set of 'reasonable alternatives' for the future of North Northamptonshire to aid wider public involvement. The Workshop also sought to outline a quality agenda to address place specific issues and help focus further technical work needed to test the options.

The strategic 'themes' that arose at the September Workshop, informed the March options development workshop:

- increasing robustness and resilience to long term change (e.g. climate change, economic pressures)
- increasing self-reliance- meeting more of people's needs locally (e.g. employment opportunities, retail attractions, energy supply)
- reinforcing the special mixed urban/rural character of the area (e.g. the roles played by the rural area and small towns, the integration of town and country)

The outline options that emerged from the workshop discussions were different combinations based on having *four* main centres (Corby, Kettering, Wellingborough and Rushden) with higher or lower levels of economic and social dependency on Northampton. They have working titles of:

1. ***Core Strategy Plus*****-** concentrates on Corby, Kettering, Wellingborough and Rushden and is about building a more integrated urban core as a distinct functional area less influenced by Northampton.

2. ***Twin Poles***- seeks greater economic self reliance for Wellingborough and Rushden areas but sees a significant amount of housing growth in Corby and Kettering.

3. ***Northern Focus***- concentrates more on Corby and Kettering and providing a counterpoint to Northampton, with Wellingborough and Rushden becoming more dependent on Northampton.

4. ***External Links***- is about improving connectivity between Northampton and the urban core, recognising the dominant role of Northampton and planning for growth along key transport corridors, complemented by new rapid transit systems.

TAKING THE MARCH WORKSHOP FORWARD

The government has re-stated its intention to revoke regional strategies in the Localism Bill. The removal of regional strategies clearly re-opens the debate about the level of growth that may be needed or required and gives flexibility to reconsider the level of growth that is appropriate over and above existing commitments (or if existing commitments are not viable). In particular housing commitments beyond 2021 (the indicative regional requirement or 28,000 dwellings by 2031) are back in the melting pot.

The Place Shaping focus of the review fits well with the Government's localism agenda; but there is now a need to assess what alternative provisions may replace the regional strategy targets. In developing the options further, the focus should be on addressing the issues about quality of place and on taking forward the common elements where there is widespread support:

- Further work on the existing urban areas and the potential for revitalisation or change
- An enhanced role for Rushden, along with more clarity on the potential of the smaller towns
- Planning positively for the rural area as a living, working countryside
- The green agenda- enhancing the potential and different characters of the riverside towns and the forest towns, including delivery of the Nene Strategy and the Carbon Sink Forest
- The role of environmental technologies in diversifying the economy

The outline options deal with the broad spatial issues that must be addressed through the review, in particular connectivity, both within North Northamptonshire and to the surrounding areas. The options now have to be developed further through Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment in relation to potential effects on the proposed Upper Nene Valley Special Protection Area.

The changing government context has informed how the March Workshop and the Spatial Options arising from it could be taken forward. At a seminar on 7th December 2010, Members of the Joint Planning Committee considered how the forthcoming consultation could be framed in order to emerging principles of neighbourhood planning being proposed through the Localism Bill. At the same time, it will be necessary for technical work to be undertaken on options (or 'reasonable alternatives') in order to meet the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Regulations.

The Joint Planning Committee agreed that public consultation should be refocused around local issues, with consultation on an Issues Paper. The content of the Issues Paper has been based around questions and general issues that have arisen from the workshops that are referred to in this paper, and on technical work undertaken since 2009. The format is intentionally short and written in a non technical way as far as possible and the '@yourplace' branding has been used to make it more user-friendly.

The Issues Paper includes a brief introduction on the purpose of the document and where we are starting from, to give some context. A section called 'Your Issues' introduces people some of the place shaping factors that the Plan needs to consider, and asks what issues and opportunities are in their area/ neighbourhood.

A section on wider issues summarises some of the 'larger than local' considerations that the Plan will need to tackle. Questions are set out under each heading, with the aim of moving the debate further on from what we already know through previous work.
The areas covered, set out below, build on and reflect the key policy areas that have arisen from the workshops to date:

- countryside and villages
- town centres
- market towns and the role of Rushden
- climate change and green infrastructure
- services and facilities
- new homes and population growth

THE EVIDENCE BASE AND CONSIDERATION OF OPTIONS DEVELOPMENT

The JCS Review needs to be based on a robust evidence base to inform the choices that are made. The Joint Planning Unit has commissioned a range of technical studies to inform the review. The scope for technical work has been informed by the Workshop Sessions. The issues identified at these sessions have also informed the content of the issues document and the questions within it.

The Workshops set out a number of actions which the Joint Planning Unit is taking forward. These will need to be addressed as the JCS Review is progressed and a range of issues were set out to address in developing options.

- Work with Action for Market Towns to utilise and share national best practice and influence wider policy for smaller towns.

- Work with the Local Planning Authorities to:
  - Assess village capacity
  - Define what 'organic growth' may mean in practice
  - Identify the location of 'village clusters'

- Connectivity- prioritise cycling and walking, enhancing public transport and work with NCC on transport initiatives, including consideration of the Northamptonshire Arc Transit scheme.

- Develop a more proactive approach to the roles of smaller towns and rural areas to help retain the special mixed urban-rural character of the area.

- Pursue the wider green agenda- building self reliance and resilience to global changes means that local provision of energy, adaptation to climate change and the maintenance of biodiversity must be at the heart of the replacement strategy.

- Take forward the River Nene Strategy and Carbon Sink Forest- these ideas have huge potential and most stakeholders have endorsed them.

- More focus on the existing urban areas- examine the revitalisation of older residential and industrial areas to fully realise urban potential and review urban structures to ensure better connectivity between old and new.
- Testing of different levels of growth in different places- understand housing market needs and demands, how local aspirations can be met and the physical/infrastructure capacity of the area.

- Ensure that the scale of development supports appropriate infrastructure and service provision and, where possible, captures higher order functions (e.g. university, large music venue).

- Examine functional relationships between groups of settlements (e.g. Corby/Kettering and Wellingborough/Rushden) and the potential for complementary working.

- Delivering a jobs/people balance – consideration of the interventions already identified in the Sustainable Northamptonshire Economic Action Plan (SNEAP) and Northamptonshire Strategic Employment Land Assessment (SELA) and the policy response needed to deliver a step change in employment provision.

- Explore with partners different delivery models and innovative ways of funding.

Most of the above work is already underway, either within the Joint Planning Unit or through its work with partner authorities and agencies. The issues that are covered in the Issues Paper have been framed in a way that will promote further debate and assist with the development of the replacement JCS.

CONSULTATION & ENGAGEMENT

Whilst a range of key stakeholders were involved in the Workshops, it will be necessary to secure wider community engagement in the JCS review. It is expected that the Issues consultation will be a focus for securing this involvement.

The Small Towns and Rural Workshop had a range of consultation actions that have been taken forward by the JPU or will inform the consultation

- Work with Northamptonshire Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) and local communities to identify the location of 'village clusters'
- Work with a Groundwork 'Young Advisor' to engage with young people
- Link into the school curriculum and gain the co-operation of schools in promoting the @your place web site
- Work with town councils and partnerships to consider the regeneration needs of small towns



CONCLUSIONS

The Joint Planning Unit considers that its work to date has allowed a good understanding of the issues and opportunities that affect the places within North Northamptonshire and fits well with the Government's 'Localism' agenda. The development of Options will be an iterative process with the conclusions from the Workshops being fed into the next stage of the process, allowing the JPU to shape future Workshops and the outcomes to be achieved from them.

It is clear from the work to date, that the role of the rural area and the smaller towns needs further consideration, and this forms a key part of the issues consultation paper. Employment is another key issue addressed within the document.

As this Background Paper identifies, ongoing technical work will build on the consultation outcomes as the JCS Review progresses.

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