North Northamptonshire
Joint Planning Unit

Kettering Borough Council

Corby Borough Council

Northamptonshire County Council

Borough Council of Wellingborough

East Northamptonshire Council

NorthNorthants Development Company

CABE

TransForm MKSM

North Northamptonshire Place Shaping Workshop 2:

OPTIONS DEVELOPMENT

16th - 18th March 2010

Kettering Conference Centre

BRIEFING PAPER

1. INTRODUCTION

The Joint Core Strategy (JCS) review is based on a 'place shaping' approach, which plans for sustainable communities across North Northamptonshire and is not simply about growth targets. 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. At the heart of this process is the definition of an overall urban design vision for the area: this will be developed in partnership with local and strategic organisations and will be the basis upon which the revised spatial planning framework will then be developed.

To start to develop this strategic urban design vision, a three day Place Shaping Workshop took place in September 2009. This drew together local knowledge and technical skills; provided a shared understanding of North Northamptonshire; and shared knowledge of strategic choices for the review. The Outcomes Report from the September workshop can be viewed at: http://www.nnjpu.org.uk/docs/Outcomes%20Report.pdf.
The briefing notes produced for the September workshop also remain relevant: http://www.nnjpu.org.uk/docs/Workshop%20Briefing%20Notes.pdf

Maintaining and creating high quality places underpins the place shaping approach. In addition, three key themes emerged from the September workshop:

a. achieving greater self reliance (offering more lifestyle choices locally);
b. building in resilience to global and long term change;
c. maintaining the special mixed urban/rural character of North Northamptonshire.

Some Big Ideas emerged at the September workshop which have since been developed in more detail:

- Northamptonshire Arc http://www.nnjpu.org.uk/publications/docdetail.asp?docid=1135
- Carbon Sink Forest http://www.riverneneregionalpark.org/default.asp?PageID=309
- River Nene strategic opportunities http://www.nnjpu.org.uk/publications/docdetail.asp?docid=1136

Building on the workshop findings, further events were arranged for the Rural Area and the Small Towns; a report of these will shortly be on the joint planning unit's website: www.nnjpu.org.uk

Visioning sessions with local authority officers have also taken place recently and have been used to produce some 'ideas mapping' for use at the workshop. There has been a focus on the following key questions:

- How do existing communities and centres work? (*roles and relationships*)
- What changes are sought? (*aspirations for 'places'*)
- To what extent do existing places need fixing/re-engineering?
- What holds places together? (*connectivity and Green Infrastructure*)
- Following on from all of the above, where is the right place to put growth?

Information arising from all of the events and meetings so far has been used to develop the material to be used at the workshop sessions. As a taster, section 4 of this briefing paper contains a short summary of issues facing each of the sub areas within North Northamptonshire.

2. WORKSHOP AIMS

The Options Development workshop is designed to achieve the following:

a. A range of reasonable options for the future of North Northamptonshire that can be refined ahead of public consultation in autumn 2010. These will be recorded on plans, illustrative material and in writing.
b. The outline of a quality agenda - issues that need to be addressed to build on character, deal with existing problems/deficiencies and respond to the potential of places.
c. A brief for further work required to develop and test options.

3. WORKSHOP STRUCTURE

TIMINGS

Day*	Registration (with coffee & pastries)	Lunch	Close
Tuesday 16th	9.00 for a 9.30 start	13.00	17.00
Wednesday 17th	9.00 for a 9.30 start	12.30	17.00
Thursday 18th	-	13.00	15.30

*Coffee and tea will be provided continuously throughout

OUTLINE PROGRAMME:

DAY ONE

1. Introduction and briefing session
2. Design session: Sub Regional Scenarios
3. Presentations by groups
4. Lunch
5. Briefing
6. Design session: Place Character and Potential
7. Presentations by groups
8. Feedback and Close

DAY TWO

1. Design session: Developing Sub Regional Options
2. Lunch
3. Presentations by groups
4. Review of options
5. Design session: Draft Briefs for Testing Options/Agreeing the Contents of a Quality Agenda
6. Feedback and Close

DAY THREE

A wider group of invitees, including senior officers and Members, are invited to the feedback session (afternoon only) with an opportunity to view the workshop outputs and comment informally on these prior to the feedback presentation.

At the workshop sessions, participants will be asked to:

1. Identify options that:
   a. Will deliver Core Strategy objectives and have a strategic fit with Sustainable Community Strategies and the Regional Spatial Strategy
   b. Address the strategic themes arising from the first workshop
   c. Are based on an understanding of the character and potential of places within North Northamptonshire and tackle existing issues and deficiencies identified through previous workshops and consultation
   d. Have a reasonable prospect of delivery (taking a long term view).
2. Think creatively. The job at this stage is to identify reasonable technical options, which can be worked up to provide elected members and the communities they represent with genuine choices about the future of North Northamptonshire.
3. Focus on the quality of places that we are ultimately trying to create throughout North Northamptonshire. The implications of different levels of growth will then be considered in relation to this.

Options will be assessed against Desirability (whether they meet sustainability objectives); Deliverability (how, when and by whom); and their implications for the Quality of life and places in North Northamptonshire. All options will need to address relationships with the rural area and small towns and with Northampton and other adjacent centres.

Finally, the Workshop will need to identify a brief for further work required to develop and test options ahead of consultation in the autumn. The aim is to secure the commitment of partners in taking this work forward.

A full report on outcomes will be published following the workshop, including visual materials and analysis that can form part of the evidence base for the Core Strategy and a resource for consultation.

4. PLACE ISSUES ARISING FROM WORKSHOPS AND CONSULTATIONS

Place	Issues
Corby	Doubling in population to 2031 – and then what? Long term growth options would mean expansion into Kettering Borough – is the administrative boundary a constraint? How to achieve an improved quality of employment offer Better walking/cycling connectivity needed to the town centre from existing and new residential areas Considerable scope for further town centre expansion – what role will the centre play in the sub region in future? Long term future of older industrial areas – potential for new uses? Making more of the green infrastructure network and improving links with the countryside/treatment of the urban edge Main functional relationships are with Leicester/Rutland and Peterborough, not particularly with Northampton
Kettering including A6 towns of Burton Latimer, Desborough and Rothwell	Kettering's growth to the west and north is constrained by the line of the A14 and A43, and by the pinch points caused by rail bridges. Apart from this the areas are quite close to the town centre – what scale and mix of growth would be necessary to break through these manmade barriers? The River Ise valley is both an asset and a barrier - how can green infrastructure connections be enhanced and better integration achieved with the wider countryside/ Rockingham Forest? What is the future role of the town centre and where could it grow next? Long term future of older industrial areas and hospital site – scope for relocation, long term change or re-invention? Functional links with both Corby and Northampton, weaker links with Wellingborough Desborough - centre in decline and needing regeneration, Rothwell – scope for heritage based tourism. Retain and build on specialist industries Burton Latimer – thriving restaurant and local service centre. What is its future in relation to Kettering's long term growth? A6 towns look to Kettering and Corby but also to Market Harborough Need to improve links between the smaller towns and with Kettering

Place	Issues
Wellingborough and surrounding villages	Seeking heritage led regeneration and creating a 'gateway' around the rail station Refurbishment of deprived areas to secure social equity Future role of the town centre? Long term future of older industrial areas – potential for new uses? Connectivity and walkability between employment and housing areas Linking up green infrastructure within the town and making more use of the Nene Valley for employment opportunities Clear functional relationship with Northampton - what would be the impact of better public transport links? Clear preference for development to the East first and opposition to westward growth/coalescence with villages Largest 'villages' in North Northamptonshire – Earls Barton, Finedon, Wollaston – what is their future role?
'Four Towns' of Rushden, Higham Ferrers, Irthlingborough and Raunds	Previous role in growth has not been recognised and infrastructure has not matched housing development Clear functional relationships with Bedford, Wellingborough, Northampton (for employment) and Milton Keynes (for shopping) Long term growth options for Rushden and Higham Ferrers would need to cross A6 bypass and/or administrative boundaries with Wellingborough and Bedfordshire (river valley a constraint to north) No rail based transport but potential to join to Wellingborough station via the Greenway cycle link and potential for new parkway station at Irchester Halt (in Wellingborough) Local transport linkages between the four towns need improvement 'Walkable' towns – scope for better walking and cycling provision Long term future of older industrial areas – potential for new uses and reinvention? Nene Valley – need to capitalise on Green Infrastructure, tourism and economic development potential (Rushden Lakes, Diamond Centre, Stanwick Lakes) but is the proposed Special Protection Area an issue? Rushden is the key town and much larger than the others, serving a wide rural area in north Bedfordshire, but the centre is in need of major regeneration and enhancement Higham Ferrers – further scope for heritage based tourism Irthlingborough – regeneration works have helped lift the centre but more required Raunds – level of growth proposed (and further scope) proportionally very high but town centre and services not keeping up

Place	Issues
Rural North, Oundle and Thrapston	Two market towns – Oundle thriving and with heritage tourism assets, Thrapston requiring town centre regeneration but has potential to capitalise on riverside location Oundle – growth constrained in longer term? Focus for economic activity in north but how to facilitate development of employment sites? Thrapston – still further potential? A14 and river Nene are barriers Accessibility a major issue for villages, particularly north of Oundle Area as a whole looks more to Peterborough and Stamford than to the North Northamptonshire urban core (though Oundle increasingly looks to Corby and Thrapston has links with Kettering) Organic growth of villages supported – plan for clusters of villages sharing services? Green Infrastructure, heritage and tourism assets need to be comprehensively viewed and managed for economic and environmental benefits Largest remnants of Rockingham Forest – scope for further planting and carbon sink forest? Food production – scope to meet more local needs in future but does this conflict with ambition to increase tree cover?