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North Northamptonshire
Joint Planning Unit

Study Bulletin

Key evidence base studies that are currently underway and expected to be finalised by April 2009.

STRATEGIC HOUSING LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT (SHLAA)

Roger Tym and Partners (RTP) were commissioned in February 2008 to undertake a SHLAA for North Northamptonshire. The purpose of the SHLAA is to identify sufficient 'suitable', 'available' & 'achievable' land to meet each Council's 5 year housing land requirement and further sites to meet 10, 15 and 20 year dwelling targets, as required by PPS3.

The adopted Core Spatial Strategy (CSS) was the starting point for identifying settlements with housing potential. In total 40 towns and villages were considered and sources of information included urban capacity sites, sites previously identified in district/borough options consultation documents and alternative sites put forward by developers. To ensure the trawl for available sites was up to date, a 'call for sites' was also undertaken, which prompted landowners and developers to suggest further sites. An initial 'long' list contained well over 1,000 sites, and the list was filtered to remove duplicates, sites below the minimum size threshold of 0.25 hectares, and sites not in accordance with the adopted CSS. RTP visited and then assessed the 626 sites in the final list, of which 566 could potentially contribute to each Council's dwelling targets. The sites were also assessed against a range of key criteria, consistent with the SHLAA Practice Guidance published by the Government.

The detailed site assessment allowed sites to be classed as either Category 1, 2 or 3, with Category 1 being those sites which perform best in the assessment, and appear to be the most developable/deliverable. Initial findings indicate that each Council's entire 20-year housing land requirements can be met from a combination of Category 1 and Category 2 sites together with extant planning permissions and the Sustainable Urban Extensions. There is therefore no need for any Category 3 ('least deliverable') sites to be allocated in order to meet any Council's 20-year housing requirement, although there will still be a need to allocate large greenfield sites in each of the four local planning authority areas.

Following extensive checking by the district/ borough Councils, it is anticipated that the SHLAA will be finalised in February 2009. Its status is purely that of a technical study to inform decisions on allocating sites; inclusion in the SHLAA does not constitute a land allocation or mean that the site will automatically be included in the district/ borough site specific allocations development plan documents.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE STRATEGIC EMPLOYMENT LAND ASSESSMENT (SELA)

Atkins and Partners (Nortoft and Lambert Smith Hampton) were commissioned in November 2008 to undertake a Strategic Employment Land Assessment (SELA) across Northamptonshire. This will update the earlier Commercial Property and Employment Land Assessments (CoPELA) carried out in 2003 and 2006.

The purpose of the SELA study is to provide a single employment land review for Northamptonshire that will be widely used by partners and inform a range of policies and projects for the economic and spatial development of the County. The Study will be in line with government policy as stated in Employment Land Reviews: Guidance Note 2004. The study findings will provide information for the local planning authorities to inform development plan documents, including the preparation and review of the Core Spatial Strategies in North and West Northamptonshire, and to assist in annual monitoring of employment land.

The study will identify the amount of employment land required to 2026. It will also identify potential strategic employment sites to help deliver these requirements. Presently, the consultants are undertaking a 'call for sites', to ensure that all available sites are picked up. It is anticipated that the SELA will be finalised by the end of March.

STRATEGIC SPORTS FACILITIES STRATEGY

Nortoft were appointed in December 2008 by the Joint Planning Unit and Northamptonshire Sport to undertake a Sports Facilities Strategy for North Northamptonshire. The Strategy will build on the existing sports and recreation strategies of the individual local authorities, focusing in particular on the strategic level facilities, and will provide an assessment of the requirements for sub-regional sports facilities to serve North Northamptonshire and its growth agenda in the period to 2026. This will inform the review of the CSS and the plans and programmes of other key stakeholders. It will identify proposals to assist the national governing bodies with their own sports facility planning.

The Strategy will cover the whole of North Northamptonshire, with a focus on the growth towns, smaller towns and rural service centres, as well as guidance on meeting the needs of rural communities. It will consider the implications of the growth of Northamptonshire as a whole, and provision in the wider Milton Keynes and South Midlands sub-region and neighbouring counties, when looking at the scope for provision of major sports facilities for North Northamptonshire.

In relation to strategic sports facilities, the strategy and background evidence will provide support for public inquiries, the assessment of planning applications and the negotiation of developer contributions. Where appropriate, the strategy will make recommendations on the location of facilities which can be taken forward through development plan documents.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE HGV PARKING STUDY

Following concern from key stakeholders over the issue of HGV parking, and increasing developer pressure, it was decided that an independent study was required to assess the strategic and local need for HGV parking in Northamptonshire. The Joint Planning Unit worked closely with Northamptonshire County Council and the Highways Agency who respectively project managed and procured the study, with Faber Maunsell commissioned in September 2008 to undertake the technical work, building on previous work that they have undertaken in this area

The study has focused predominantly on the strategic road network in Northamptonshire. Draft conclusions are that there is a clearly identified need for HGV parking within Northamptonshire and that strategic facilities should be provided along the A14 and A45 corridors.

Alongside a broad assessment of need, the study also incorporates a policy review, and draft planning application assessment checklist that local authorities can use to assist in the determination of planning applications. The policy review concludes that although national, regional and a number of local policy documents deal with the need for lorry park facilities, there is currently no firm or consistent approach for the Northamptonshire area. A strategic policy on lorry parks should be promoted through the preparation of both the West and North Northamptonshire Core Strategies and the partial review of the East Midlands Regional Plan.

The draft study was presented to stakeholders on 15th December for discussion and it is anticipated that it will be finalised by the end of January. Due to the short timescale for the study and its focus on the assessment of strategic parking needs, it may be necessary for further work to be undertaken to provide a more robust assessment of local HGV parking issues

SUSTAINABLE ENERGY STRATEGY (SES)

Parsons Brinkerhoff (PB) has been commissioned to produce a sustainable energy strategy for North Northamptonshire. The energy strategy will identify local opportunities to promote renewable, low carbon and decentralised energy systems, and build on the minimum targets that are set out in policy 14 of the adopted CSS. The SES will inform the review of the CSS, particularly the requirements of Policy 14 and the preparation of other development plan documents.

The SES is driven by the incoming policy requirements at national, regional and local level, in which it must be demonstrated that development can achieve specific carbon and renewable energy targets in advance of receiving planning application approval.

New development also provides an opportunity to stimulate an investment in cost-effective technologies and ideas, and the creation of constructive partnerships between the various stakeholder groups. It creates a potential route to low carbon energy supply for existing buildings, which is where the large gains are to be made in respect of reductions of greenhouse gas emissions associated with building use. Developers are now required to look at energy issues due to the Code for Sustainable Homes (and the forthcoming Code for Sustainable Buildings); this strategy aims to identify cost effective methods of meeting the requirements.

The SES will be finalised at the end of February 2009.

WATER CYCLE STRATEGY (WCS)

In January 2007 Halcrow produced an outline water cycle strategy to establish a high level overview of the capacity of the existing water and sewerage infrastructures in relation to the planned levels of growth established through the CSS. This study was jointly commissioned by the Environment Agency, Anglian Water, NNJPU and NNDC in order to understand and mitigate the effects of the growth agenda so as to not overwhelm existing infrastructure. It also provided a timeline which highlighted, at an early stage, any potential infrastructure constraints which may affect delivery of the overall growth agenda (using the CSS housing trajectory as a guide) plus when and how this needs be addressed. The study considered the practical implications of the planned growth in terms of all aspects of the water cycle, including flood risk, water resources, sewage treatment and water/wastewater infrastructure.

This outline study provided the basis for a follow-up Waste Water Capacity study published in September 2007, to address the identified wastewater capacity issues. This identified that the Broadholme Wastewater Treatment Works (WwTW) near Irthlingborough and its sewer catchment, was at or near capacity in many areas. The works could only accommodate development already planned up to around 2013, in contrast with the more significant and longer term development rates set through the CSS. This study identified a technical solution that could address the waste water capacity issues without delaying the growth agenda. The technical proposal involves significant upgrade works including the expansion of Broadholme, the construction of new pumping stations and the construction of a new trunk sewer running from Kettering up to Broadholme and picking up on the sustainable urban extensions at Kettering and Wellingborough.

Presently, a Phase 2 Water Cycle Strategy is being finalised by Halcrow. This builds upon the earlier studies and factors in the impacts of water efficiency initiatives (such as metering and the implementation of the Code for Sustainable Homes), through undertaking demand scenario analysis to assess the impacts of the growth agenda on water demand.

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