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North Northamptonshire
Joint Planning Unit

Study Bulletin

This bulletin summarises key evidence base studies that are currently underway to support the review of the Core Strategy and the Site Specific Plans of the District/Borough Councils.

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 SHLAA was published on 6th March 2009 and has a base date of April 2008.

The adopted Core 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 577 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. The study indicates that Kettering, Wellingborough and East Northamptonshire Council can meet their entire 20-year housing land requirements 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 the Councils' 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. For Corby Borough, the study concludes that to meet its 20-year requirement it will be necessary to explore the potential extension of the SUEs and look again at the potential of some Category 3 sites.

The SHLAA sets out a range of ways in which the LPAs can meet their housing supply requirements over the 20 year study period. This provides them with the flexibility to allocate sites in accordance with a range of policy considerations, including conformity with the CSS, plus other key considerations such as infrastructure capacity.

The North Northamptonshire SHLAA has considered all elements of potential housing supply and has identified a pool of potential sites with a theoretical capacity sufficient to achieve currently identified targets, if all constraints could be overcome. The SHLAA is a strategic study (to be updated annually) which serves as a starting point for the detailed technical assessment of sites by the districts/boroughs as part of the preparation of their Site Specific Plans. The implications of meeting growth requirements by 2021 will need to be considered through the review of the Core Strategy.

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 Strategies in West and North Northamptonshire respectively, 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. Two Stakeholder Workshops were undertaken on 9th February with both the public and private sectors. The 'call for sites' process has concluded and the sites put forward are currently being assessed. It is anticipated that a draft SELA will be published for consultation at the end of April.

STRATEGIC SPORTS FACILITIES STRATEGY

Nortoft was 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 Core Strategy 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, and will also provide guidance on meeting the needs of rural communities. It will consider the implications of the growth of Northamptonshire as a whole, plus 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.

A stakeholder workshop was held on 12th February to inform the development of the Strategy. To date work has focussed on ensuring the robustness of existing data and collecting information where there are gaps. Initial calculations have been undertaken to determine levels of facility provision per 1000 head of population. This will then enable comparisons with other similar authorities across the UK. Work has also been undertaken to provide an estimate of the number of facilities likely to be required in the future (i.e. up to 2026) based on the projected population growth. There has been initial contact with all of the 4 local authority planning and leisure officers and a round of consultation with governing bodies of key sports is about to start.

It is anticipated that the Strategy will be finalised will be finalised by the start of May to allow the outputs of the Corby and Kettering facilities strategies that are currently being progressed to inform the study.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE HGV PARKING STUDY

The final study produced by Faber Maunsell has been signed off by Northamptonshire County Council and the Highways Agency and presented to the Joint Planning Unit and partners for consideration.

The study outlines that that there is a substantial gap between the availability of formal lorry parking facilities and demand. In quantitative terms, it would appear that there is a minimum demand for lorry parking of at least 300 spaces. However, given that most existing lorry parks are fully utilised at night as most are lay bys on the Strategic Road Network (SRN), the potential need for quality lorry parking facilities could be double this level. The conclusion is reinforced by the high volumes of HGVs observed to be using the SRN in the County.

The study concludes that up to three new lorry parks are currently required within the Northamptonshire area to respond to the needs and problems identified and that at least one of these should be on the A14 route and one on the A45 route. However, a more comprehensive audit of existing levels of overnight lorry parking on key routes and at known “problem sites” would assist in providing a more comprehensive evidence base on the levels of need for lorry parking.

The study also considers the policy context for the provision of lorry parking. This has demonstrated the importance of providing for the safe and efficient distribution of goods on the highway network. Lorry parking is an important aspect of this and the study has identified that there is an inadequate local policy framework to guide and encourage the provision of lorry parking facilities at appropriate locations and to appropriate standards. The study therefore proposes a policy approach to address this gap.

Most importantly, an overarching policy is suggested for inclusion at the Core Strategy level to guide the location and provision of lorry parking across the County. Standards for provision of lorry parks are also suggested together with suggested planning conditions to ensure that there is sufficient control over the development of lorry parks; that the impacts of the proposed developments are appropriately addressed; and to prevent the redevelopment of such sites for other uses which could undermine lorry parking provision.

Within the scope of the study, it has not been possible to assess and recommend specific sites that may be appropriate for lorry parks. This would require an in depth consideration of site factors. The study therefore proposes a process for assessing sites, comprising use of a range of relevant factors in the form of a checklist for assessing the suitability of proposals coming forward for lorry parking. These criteria are set out in section 5 of the report. The use of these criteria should ensure that lorry parks are provided in appropriate locations and to a required minimum standard.

SUSTAINABLE ENERGY STRATEGY (SES)

Work on the Sustainable Energy Strategy is progressing in respect of understanding the potential for renewable energy in North Northamptonshire. Data from the four local authorities has been collated to allow a robust analysis to be undertaken. The data is now in the process of interpretation. The project is still at an early stage, with the potential Renewable Energy resource still to be estimated, and the financial modeling still to take place.

The programme has been revised to coincide with the outputs of the Government's Renewable Energy Strategy, which was due for publication in February, but is now likely to be published late in the spring. With this in mind, publication of the final SES is some time away. A draft report will be made available for discussion prior to final publication

WATER CYCLE STRATEGY (WCS)

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 demand scenario analysis.

The purpose of the Phase 2 (Detailed) Water Cycle Strategy is twofold. Firstly it aims to identify the water services infrastructure requirements to support the levels of growth identified within the Core Strategy. Secondly, it aims to provide a framework for the ongoing technical work and delivery programme needed to achieve these requirements.

The strategy outputs are in the form of an interactive PDF, which provides a comprehensive, non technical summary of the Strategy. Accompanying technical sections have been produced to support the interactive PDF by making available the detailed technical information used in the development of the Strategy, to inform any parties requiring further detail.

In total there are six supporting technical sections, covering the six key aspects of the urban water cycle in relation to planned growth:

- Planning and Development;
- Flood Risk Investigation Report;
- Water Resources;
- Water Supply Infrastructure;
- Wastewater and Water Quality;
- Ecological Appraisal.

These sections provide detailed information regarding data used for analysis; methodologies applied; results of the technical analysis; discussion of results; and conclusions drawn. The outputs of these sections have been used to generate the content of the non-technical summary provided in the interactive PDF.

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