North Northamptonshire Centres Project:

Final report

DTZ Pieda Consulting

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I Summary of results of information audit of centres carried out in Stage 1 report

II SWOT analysis of centres

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Executive summary

The project

- DTZ Pieda Consulting were commissioned in February 2004 by the North Northamptonshire local authorities and Northamptonshire County Council to work to define potential roles and relationships of centres across North Northants.
- This work was to comprise:
  - an audit of available data;
  - consideration of the implications of available data for potential future directions of centres; and
  - working with client organisations to understand aspirations for centres.

Data audit

- A Stage 1 report was produced in February 2004 which set out the results of the audit of secondary information available on the North Northants centres.
- Broadly speaking, the information base upon which future directions for centres can be built within the study area has significant gaps. Whilst a reasonable amount of information exists in a form which is comparable over time and across geographical boundaries for the larger centres in the study area, this consistency of data is not available for the other, smaller centres.

Executive summary

Future roles and relationships

- Due to gaps in knowledge, assembling a baseline position for the centres in the network and identifying potential future roles and relationships is challenging and – at present - has to be based on qualitative information (from site visits, discussions with stakeholders, etc.) where objective, quantitative gaps exist.
- Based on this approach, potential future roles for the North Northants centres have been identified in a very general sense. These have identified in terms of whether centres should follow a strategic direction of consolidation (focusing on qualitative improvement) or regeneration (focusing on quantitative growth) and are shown in summary on page 5. Particular foci for action within these broad directions have also been identified in terms of niche roles for certain centres, for example).
- Implications of these strategic directions and foci for action for relationships between centres have also been identified in the main body of this report.
- At this stage, gaps in knowledge mean that the strategic directions and foci for action should be seen as areas for further exploration rather than confirmed future roles for centres. This report recommends how gaps in knowledge relating to roles and relationships can be filled by a Working Group of stakeholder representatives from across North Northants. This will help to meet the requirements of draft PPS6 and create a robust polycentric network of centres across the sub-region and minimise leakage to competitor centres elsewhere.

Executive summary

Centre	Strategic role	Specialist roles
Corby	Regeneration	Improve retail offer, environment, accessibility, employment, leisure, housing & civic roles.
Kettering	Regeneration	Improve service, comparison retail and leisure offer. Environmental improvements to boost image.
Wellingborough	Regeneration	Improve quality of environment, retail, leisure and cultural offers.
Rushden	Regeneration	Leisure & cultural offer, plus retail quality/range. Environmental improvements & reduce traffic impact.
Burton Latimer	Regeneration	Convenience shopping role will remain and will complement Kettering.
Rothwell	Consolidation	Build on strengths serving local area and attractive heritage environment through MTI.
Desborough	Regeneration	Improve retail & leisure offer, environment, signage and accessibility/circulation.
Higham Ferrers	Consolidation	Build on existing specialist strengths serving local area and attractive heritage environment.
Irthlingborough	Regeneration	Improved environment should be a focus as should use of MTI partnership to promote regeneration.
Raunds	Consolidation	Comparison retail and leisure offers could be improved. Environmental improvements also required.
Oundle	Consolidation	Build on strengths serving local area (improve comparison) and heritage environment for visitors.
Thrapston	Regeneration	Retail, evening economy and cultural offer could be improved, exploiting potential of opportunity sites.
Kettering Venture Park	Consolidation	Need to improve links with rest of town (town centre and Wicksteed Park) and improve character.
Wellingborough Victoria Park/London Rd	Regeneration	Integration of site to improve pedestrian linkages between different elements. Parts of area could be re-configured in future to improve quality. Could develop a leisure role to complement town centre.
Corby Phoenix Parkway	Regeneration	Could improve quality of retail offer (perhaps as part of a mixed use scheme including residential).
Rushden Safeway A45 Retail Park	Consolidation	Improve integration within the site and pedestrian/cycle links to rest of urban area.

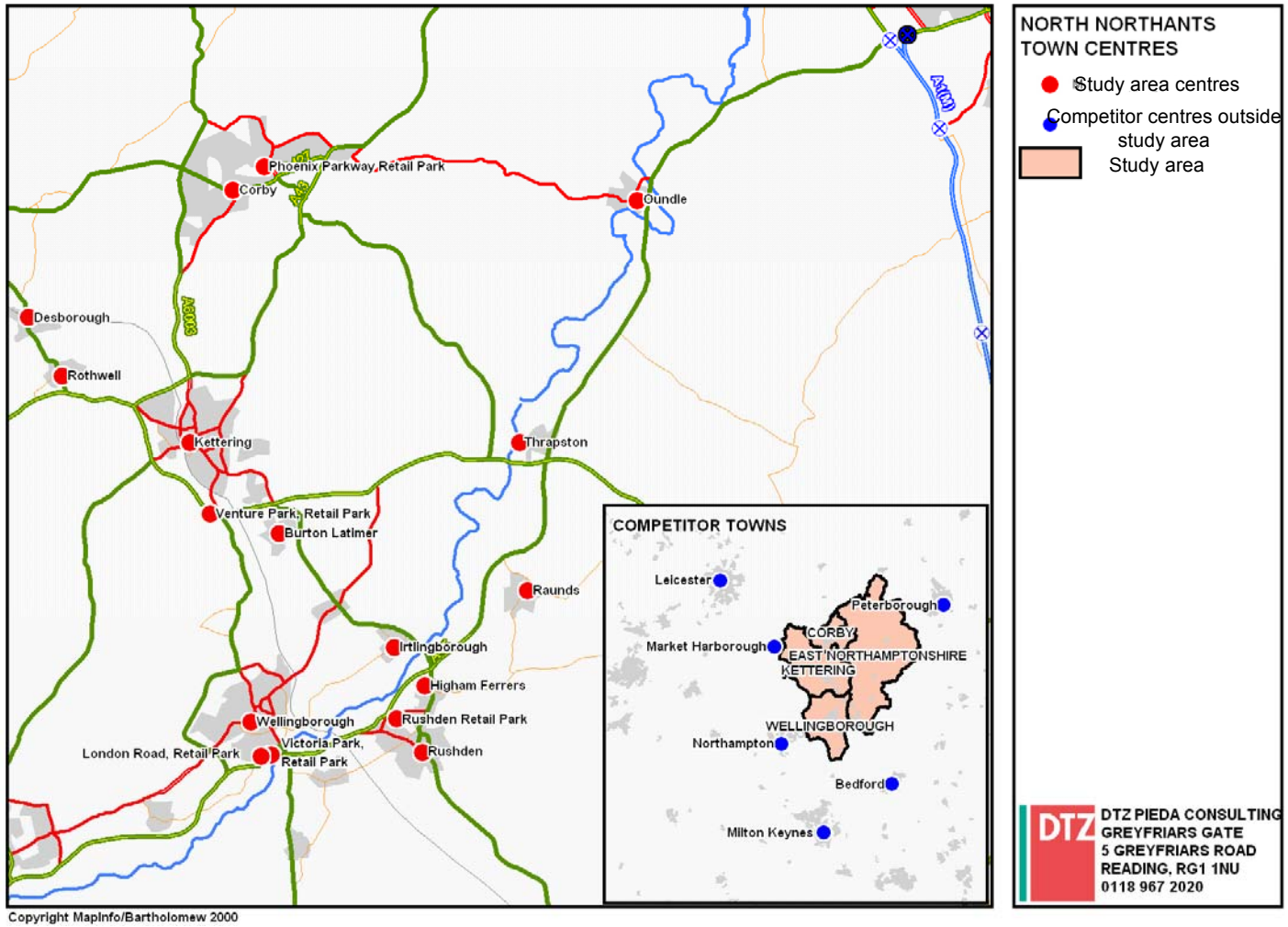
1) Background to the project

DTZ Pieda Consulting were commissioned in February 2004 by the North Northamptonshire local authorities to work to define potential roles & relationships of town centres and associated 'district centres' within North Northants. The centres (and competitor locations outside the immediate study area) are shown on page 7.

- This work was to comprise:
  - An audit of available data;
  - Consideration of the implications of available data for potential future directions of centres; and
  - Working with client organisations to understand aspirations for centres.

- The method which we have used to carry out this project is shown in three stages on page 8.

The network of centres



2) Method

Secondary data audit

- Analysis of background information from client group
- Analysis of other secondary data sources
- Site visits to centres
- Collection of relevant data on competitor centres
- Identification of gaps in knowledge
- Baseline position of centres

Identification of issues for the future

- Analysis of drivers of change in town centres
- SWOT analysis of centres
- Workshop with client steering group representatives
- Telephone consultations with local stakeholders

Conclusions & recommendations

- Options for future roles and relationships
- Next steps action plan

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3) Results of information audit

- A Stage 1 report was produced in February 2004 which set out the results of the audit of secondary information available on the North Northants centres.
- A background list of relevant documents and information was provided by the client team and is set out in Appendix 1 to the Stage 1 report.
- In addition, sources of data analysed included:
  - Sources of information held in-house at DTZ including Goad, Promis and Focus reports
  - Information relating to Growth Area issues and the future scales of housing and economic growth
  - Collection of relevant data from outside the study area in relation to competitor centres.

Results of information audit

- A summary of the results of the information audit carried out in Stage 1, showing the various types of data available for each of the towns in the study area, is set out in Appendix 1 to this report.
- The information audit highlights:
  - a good spread of information for the larger centres in the study area;
  - less information in general on smaller centres and retail parks;
  - good coverage of town centre healthcheck-style information for centres covered by the Market Towns Initiative (Thrapston, Irthlingborough, etc.);
  - very little information on retail capacity, the need for other town centre uses and floorspace or shopping and leisure patterns;
  - little comparable time series data (much of the information gathered provides snapshot pictures of performance); and
  - little evidence of collection of town centre information in a consistent way across the study area, making comparisons between centres difficult and having implications for identification of future roles for centres in the local network.
- As such, whilst valuable information on the centres in the study area exists, significant gaps remain, particularly in light of information requirements for setting future planning policy for centres outlines in draft PPS6 and the opportunity that draft PPS6 provides for ensuring growth is not merely concentrated in the largest centres in a network. This issue is considered further in Sections 6 and 7 of this report.

4) The network of centres – baseline position

- The limitations of existing information on centres in the study area means that assembling a comprehensive baseline position for the centres in terms of their size, performance, etc. is challenging.
- Using the information that does exist, however, has allowed us to develop a picture in terms of comparing the larger centres against national retail ranks, competing centres outside the study area and against themselves in terms of retail offer. These comparisons are shown on pages 12 and 13.
- Beyond the hard data, we have sought to include a qualitative component in baselining the centres as they exist at present. This has been done by developing matrices to compare the centres in terms of their current vitality (using economic indicators) against their 'visionary score', a more subjective assessment based on how proactively the future of centres is being planned.
- Inevitably, given the limitations of existing data, this has involved a degree of judgement in terms of the smaller centres in the study area where less information exists. At this stage, therefore, our findings need to carry a health warning. Recommendations on how gaps in the data could be filled to provide a more robust picture are set out at the end of this report.

National Retail Ranks

Annual rankings of town centres nationwide are carried out by both Experian and Management Horizons (both indicators are based on a 'vitality score' that combines a variety of key indicators, although comprehensive Experian data only exists for the centres below to 2001). Since these rankings only feature centres above a certain size, only Corby, Kettering, Wellingborough and Rushden appear within them. In terms of the more up-to-date Management Horizons data, the table below shows that Kettering has recently improved its standing relative to Corby and Wellingborough, which have both slipped down the rankings. Rushden has improved significantly in the rankings, albeit from a relatively low base.

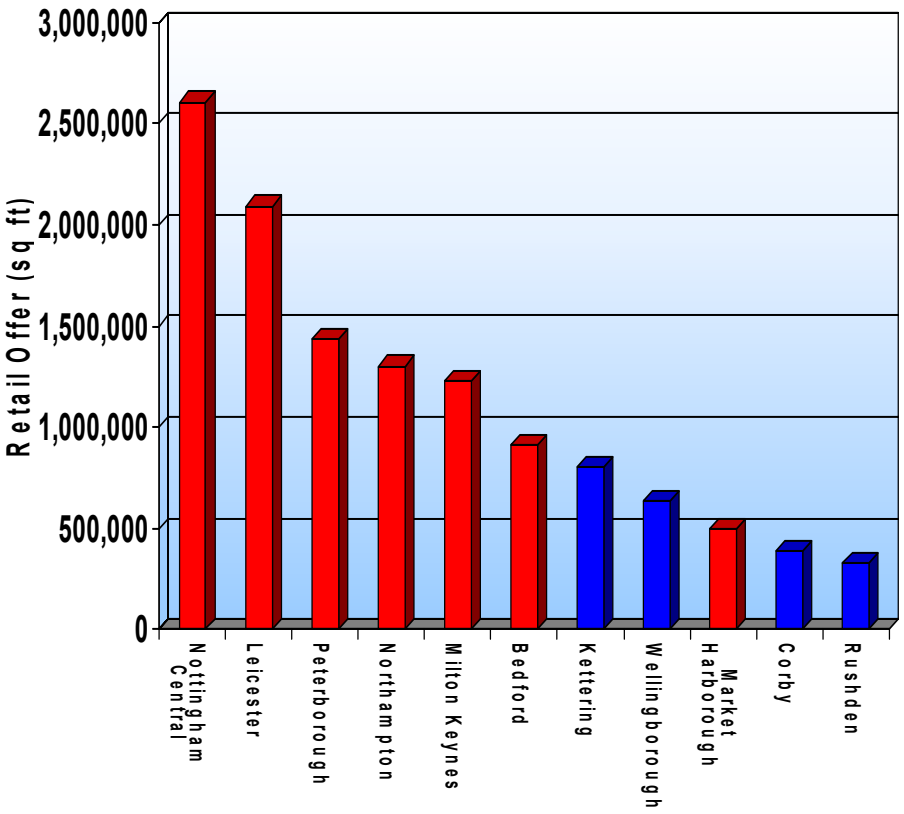
Centre	Experian 1998	Experian 2001	Management Horizons 2000	Management Horizons 2004
Kettering	143rd	180th	187th	171st
Wellingborough	286th	351st	282nd	360th
Corby	359th	323rd	259th	344th
Rushden	N/A	N/A	644th	502nd

National Retail Ranks – Competing Centres

Surrounding the study area are a range of major centres which are large national competitors. Many of these centres have recently experienced major investment which is maintaining their strong performance in the national rankings. Future planned improvements to these centres as highlighted in the Promis reports provided in the Stage 1 report of this project suggest that this strong performance is likely to continue, providing a major challenge to the future success of centres within North Northants.

Centre	Experian 1998	Experian 2001	Management Horizons 2000	Management Horizons 2004
Nottingham	4th	3rd	2nd	4th
Leicester	20th	10th	11th	10th
Peterborough	36th	33rd	42nd	46th
Milton Keynes	62nd	42nd	55th	29th
Northampton	65th	59th	37th	43rd
Bedford	93rd	98th	87th	118th

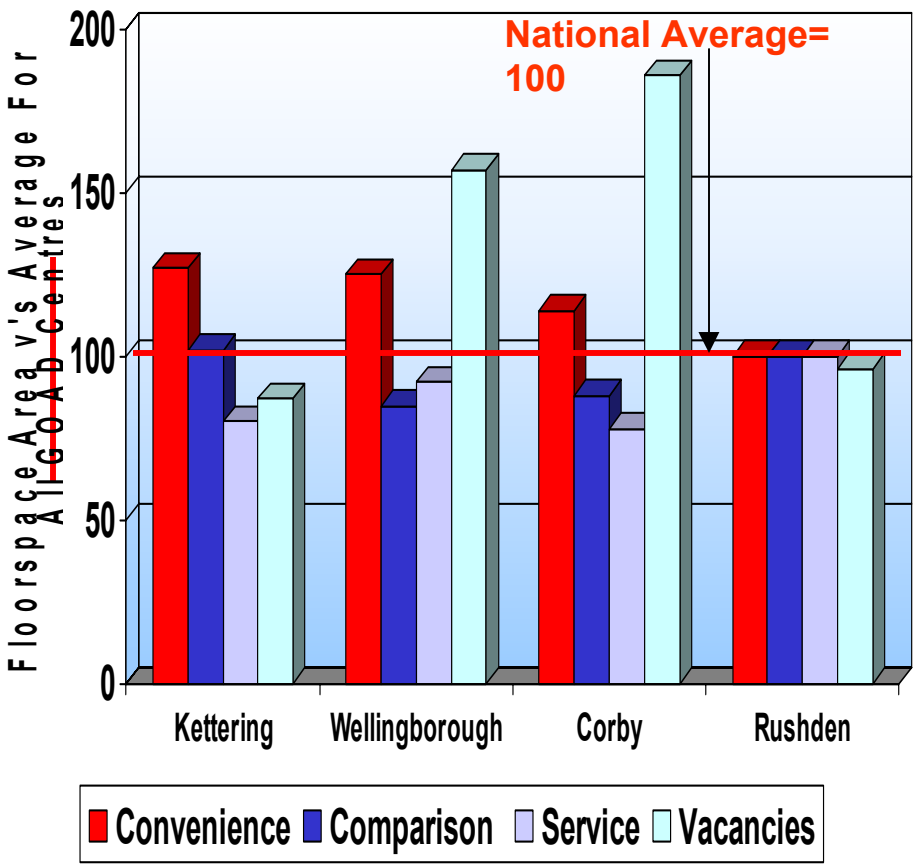
Size of retail offer



- This chart compares centres within and outside the study area in terms of the size of their retail offer.
- Again, Kettering's predominance in terms of size within the study area is clearly shown.
- However, the scale of competition from centres outside the immediate study area is highlighted further, with the size of retail offer in Nottingham, Leicester, Peterborough, Northampton and Milton Keynes greatly exceeding the retail offer in the study area centres.

Source: GOAD

Type of retail offer



- This chart compares each centre's types of floorspace versus the average for all Goad centres. It highlights:
  - the dominance of convenience uses in Kettering, Wellingborough & Corby;
  - the relatively weak comparison offer in Wellingborough & Corby compared to Kettering;
  - weak retail service offers in Kettering, Wellingborough & Corby – retail services are important in developing vibrant centres;
  - high levels of vacancies in Wellingborough &, in particular, Corby; and
  - an even retail spread in Rushden in keeping with its local centre status.

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Source: GOAD

The Vitality & Vision Performance Matrix

- To improve understanding of the centres, we have developed a matrix which compares the centres on two axes relating to:
  - vitality – a series of economic indicators measured on the normal distribution curve
  - vision – a subjective score based on each centres development plans and pipeline developments. The development of this score has been informed by the background document analysis in the Stage 1 report of this project together with views expressed during stakeholder consultations.

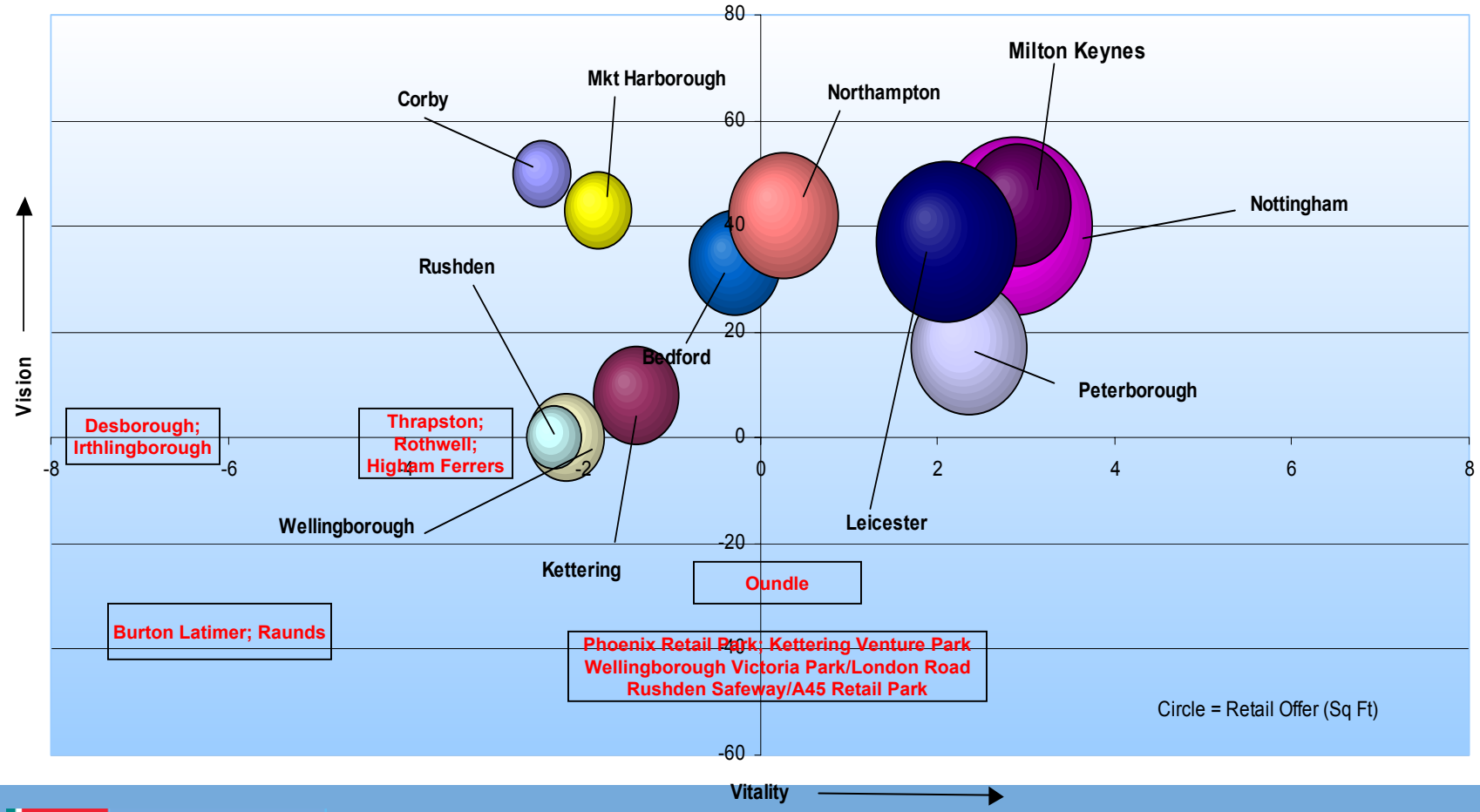
- Good scores on both axes are desirable, since this indicates centres that are successful in terms of current performance with clear momentum to future change and improvement.

- We have run the matrix twice, changing the vitality inputs each time. In the first matrix (page 17), these are based on size, whilst the second matrix (page 21) strips out the effects of size.

- The first matrix is based on the size of the centres and uses the size of retail offer, 2003 zone A rents, retailer demand for space and vacant floorspace figures to determine 'vitality' scores.

- Centres in red represent centres where insufficient data has been available to provide an accurate 'vitality' score and a judgement has had to be made regarding the quadrant of the matrix in which the centres would be most likely to fit. The positioning of these centres on the matrix is therefore only approximate.

DTZ Centre Performance Matrix Based on Size - E.Midlands & Northants



DTZ Pieda Consulting

The Vitality & Vision Performance Matrix

- This matrix clearly shows that:
- Perhaps unsurprisingly, the larger centres outside the study area (in particular Nottingham, Milton Keynes, Peterborough and Leicester) perform best in terms of their vitality scores;
- Of the larger centres within the study area:
  - Corby performs strongly in terms of its 'visionary' score (due largely to the direction set by Catalyst Corby's regeneration framework and the investment plans of Tops Estates) but less strongly in terms of its 'vitality' score;
  - Rushden, Kettering and Wellingborough perform to an average degree in terms of 'visionary scores' (emerging masterplans for Kettering, Rushden and Wellingborough have achieved this) but – similarly to Corby – do not perform as well as they might in terms of 'vitality' scores

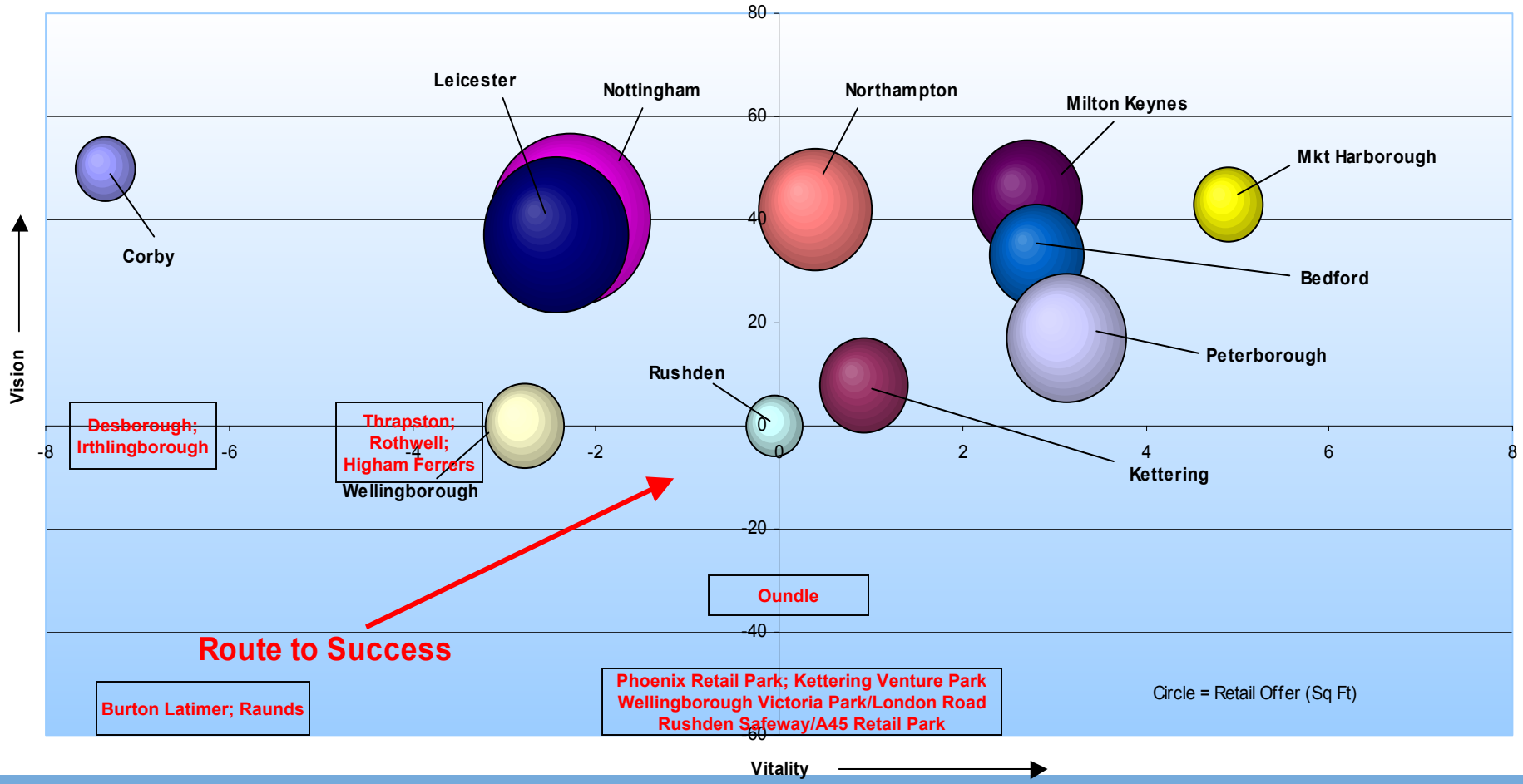
The Vitality & Vision Performance Matrix

- Of the smaller centres in the study area:
  - Thrapston, Irthlingborough, Desborough & Rothwell have reasonable 'vision' scores (boosted by the MTI work carried out there) but - in the absence of detailed data – it is felt that their economic vitality is below average;
  - Oundle and Higham Ferrers have lower 'vision' scores (since clear futures for these centres have not yet been articulated in detail) but – again, in the absence of detailed data – their economic vitality is understood to be only slightly below average;
  - A range of centres in the study area have no clear vision for their future and are understood to be performing at below average levels (in the absence of hard data). These include Burton Latimer, Raunds and all the retail parks studied.

The Vitality & Vision Performance Matrix

- The second matrix strips out the effects of size, using indicators that are percentage-based.
- For this matrix, to calculate the 'vitality' scores we have used:
  - %AB and %DE socio-economic groupings in the catchment areas for the centres;
  - % vacant floorspace;
  - % owner occupiers;
  - zone A rent % change 1998 – 2003; and
  - number of retailer requirements.
- These indicators give us a greater understanding of each centres vitality by eliminating the bias effect of size on vitality scores.
- Again, the lack of information on smaller centres in the study area has meant that it has not been possible to model them as accurately as the larger centres. As such a degree of judgement has been used in positioning these centres on the performance matrix where they are shown in red type.

DTZ Centre Performance Matrix - E.Midlands & Northants



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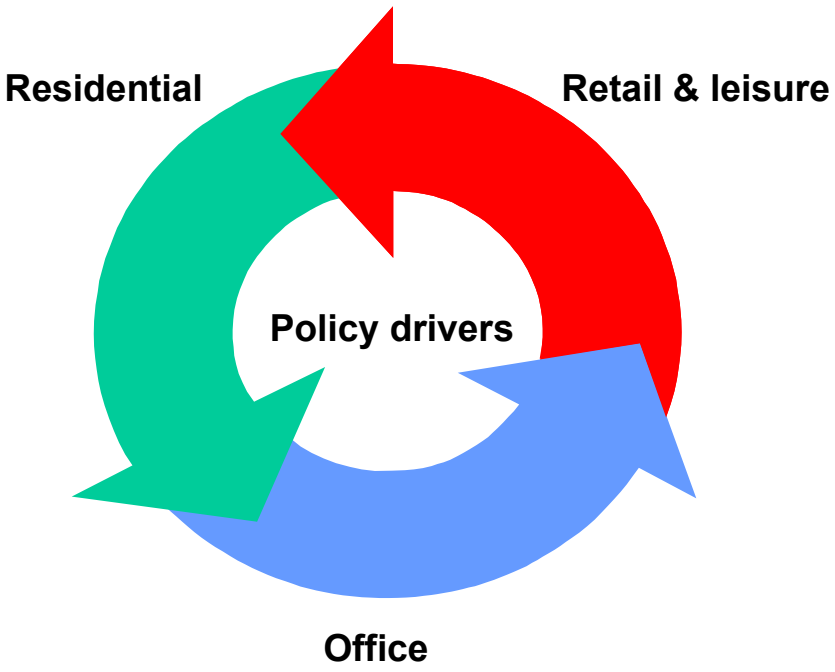
The Vitality & Vision Performance Matrix

- The second matrix shows the following differences to the first:
  - Improved vitality scores for Kettering and Rushden, suggesting that both fare reasonably well in terms of vitality indicators compared to other locations when the bias of size of centre is stripped away;
  - A poorer performance for Corby in terms of vitality, suggesting that the size of Corby's retail offer in the first performance matrix artificially inflated the town centre's performance in terms of vitality scores.

SWOT analysis

- An analysis of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats facing each of the centres in the study area has also been carried out to add to our knowledge of the baseline position of the centres in the study area.
- The findings of the SWOT analysis are based on:
  - The data compiled for the Stage 1 report of this project;
  - The analysis of this data as outlined in this report;
  - Discussions with stakeholders (both at a workshop with steering group organisations held on 19 March 2004 and through telephone discussions with a wider group of stakeholders listed in Appendix 3 to this report); and
  - Site visits to each of the centre by DTZ staff.
- SWOT proformas for all of the centres in the study area are set out in Appendix 2 to this report.

5) The drivers of change in town centres



- Following the analysis of the performance of the centres in the study area at present, this section of the report examines future drivers of change in the centres. In particular, these comprise:
  - the retail and leisure markets (including e-commerce);
  - the residential market;
  - the office market; and
  - public policy drivers at national, regional, sub-regional and local levels.

- The remainder of this section sets out likely future trends in terms of these drivers, setting these against likely implications for the centres in the study area.

Retail

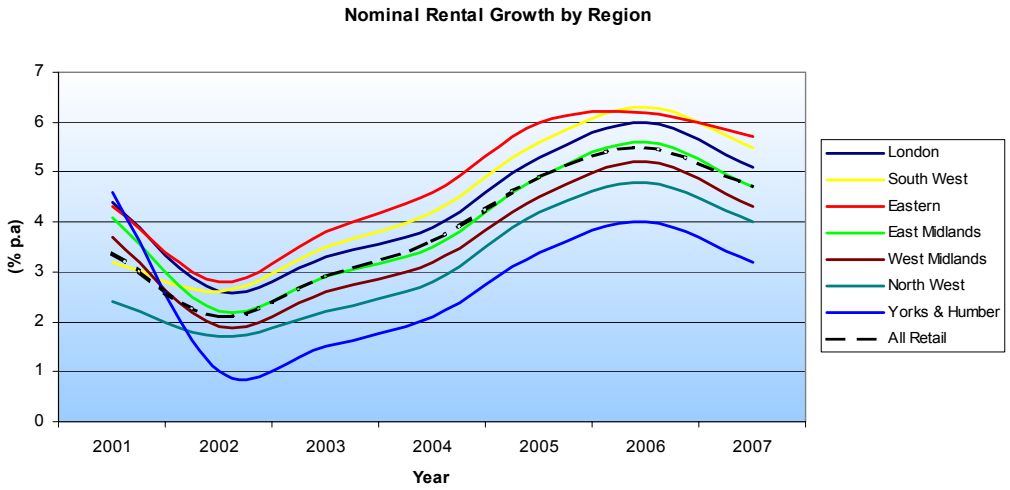
Current trends

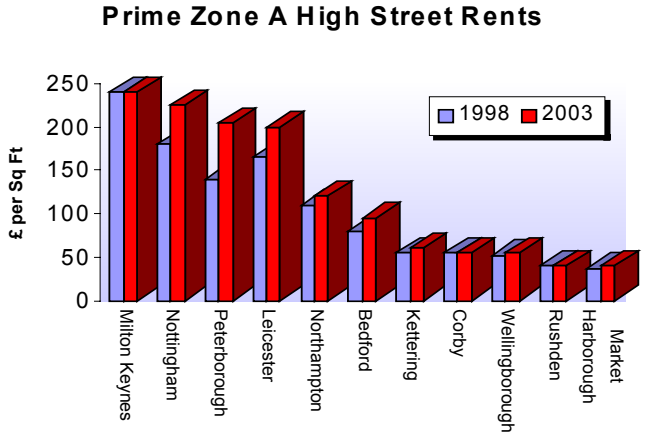
- Consumers' expenditure slowing but stable;
- Demand/supply in balance;
- Value retailing still strong;
- Overall, retailer expansion still positive;
- Shopping centre investment strong;
- Rental growth remains positive but stock selection still crucial.

Implications for centres

- Positive outlook for retail sector in 2004/5;
- Dominant centres likely to be regional centres and value centres since whilst overall market prospects still fair, investors will want to minimise risks;
- Retailers focusing on larger floorspace units as investment opportunities and divesting of smaller, less profitable units;
- Corporate activity still strong (e.g. Morrisons) and as such the dynamism of the retail sector needs to continue to be taken into account.

Regional Rental Growth & Prime Zone A





- Average UK retail rental growth has been declining since 1997;
- Recovery anticipated;
- East Midlands expected to experience modest growth during the next 6 years to 2007;
- East Midlands growth outperforms UK average and neighbouring regions - West Midlands and Yorkshire & Humberside;
- Prime zone A rental levels mirror the retail hierarchy.

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Source: Focus, DTZ Research

E-Commerce

Current trends	Implications for centres
• UK has largest number of active adult internet users in Europe;	• Uncertain impact on the UK High Street;
• 20% of UK households have access to internet; expected to increase to 60% by 2005;	• Most at risk - retail sub-sectors like books, CDs, DVDs etc; retail services (banks, travel agents);
• Online sales in the UK estimated to reach 3.5% of total retail sales in 2004, 7.5% in 2005 and 12.5% in 2009;	• Least at risk - prime, standard shops, large city shopping centres, out of town regional shopping centres,strong convenience and niche goods town centres;
• The proportion of people with access to internet for the East Midlands is above UK average.	• Increased emphasis on town centre management to create successful centres.

Commercial leisure

Current trends

- Rapid growth in leisure industry since mid 1980s, characterised by fragmented market
- Growth driven by select number of leisure activities
  - Cafes & restaurants
  - Health & fitness
  - Hotels
  - Gaming
  - Cinemas
- Demand for new facilities potentially strengthened by change to licensing laws

Implications for centres

- Leisure uses can contribute to vitality & viability
- ……but is a need to secure right balance between retail and leisure
- Management of centre as leisure uses extend into evening
- Environment and image of centres an important issue in attracting and sustaining leisure uses

Office market

Current trends	Implications for centres
• Decreasing space requirements through new technology;	• North Northants centres not prime office locations;
• Globalisation of markets providing flexibility of location;	• But do have important local office functions;
• Increasing number of relocations overseas (call centres, etc.);	• Focus on facilitating future office opportunities as part of remodelling centres linked to transport accessibility.
• Lease structures increasingly flexible to cater for growing SME market.	

Residential market

Current trends

- Unprecedented UK house price inflation since 1997;
- Buyer confidence remains high;
- Supply of housing being outstripped by demand – Barker Review;
- Major issues around housing affordability;
- Buy-to-let market has risen;
- Government policy expanding housing provision e.g. MKSM.

Implications for centres

- Opportunities to use housing agenda to help revitalise town centres across North Northants;
- Town centres also good locations for residential development to meet housing needs;
- Potential for use of vacant floors above shops for residential use in centres;
- Density & design issues key considerations.

National Policy Drivers

- The following national policy drivers will influence the future of centres within the study area:
- **Sustainable Communities Plan** – the Government's Communities Plan sets a clear agenda for housing growth across the Milton Keynes/South Midlands area, together with a requirement for that growth to be implemented in a way that achieves more sustainable patterns of development and high quality environments. Special delivery vehicles are being set up to implement this change.
- **'Urban Renaissance' agenda** – the Urban White Paper and the Urban Task Force report both set an emphasis on vital and viable town centres providing high quality environments, encouraging mixed use development and brownfield regeneration.
- **New Planning System** – the Government's proposed changes to the planning system will involve Local Development Frameworks providing a more holistic approach to spatial planning, with 'Area Action Plans' providing a greater focus for investment in areas of change, which in many cases could include town centres.
- **Draft PPS6 –** the Government's draft revised planning guidance for town centres provides for:
  - Continued sequential test for retail and leisure (lack of guidance on offices)
  - Extensions/redevelopments of out-of-town facilities;
  - Large store formats to return;
  - Rebalance of the network of centres, with less emphasis on the retail hierarchy.
- **Impending changes to Use Class Orders** – in addressing the UCO, the Government is understood to be looking for more control with pubs/restaurants; hot food takeaways; and night clubs having separate use class categories.

Sub-Regional Policy Drivers

- The key sub-regional driver for change is the **Draft MKSM Sub-Regional Strategy** (July 2003) which – in relation to the study area – proposes:
  - an increase of 40,000 dwellings focused on Principal Urban Areas of Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough to 2021
  - sub-regional centres/urban hubs identified at: Burton Latimer, Desborough, Higham Ferrers, Irthlingborough, Rothwell and Rushden – the role of these centres is to complement the central areas in the PUA
  - five rural service centres identified, including Oundle and Thrapston - priority is to maintain retail and community service provision
  - framework for future development:
    - **Corby** - redevelopment of town centre is a priority;
    - **Kettering** - focus on maintaining existing role through promotion and protection of existing provision, development of regionally important niche retail offer and of cultural attractions;
    - **Wellingborough** - strengthen existing role through provision of a diverse range of quality comparison shopping.

Local Policy Drivers

- A number of local initiatives are being pursued to set future directions for the towns in the study area. These include:

- **Masterplans** – Masterplanning exercises are being carried out for Wellingborough, Rushden & Higham Ferrers, and Kettering town centres. A masterplan has already been produced for Thrapston.

- **Market Towns Initiative** – Regeneration programmes and projects under the MTI have been developed for Irthlingborough, Desborough, Rothwell and Thrapston

- **Regeneration Strategies** – Catalyst Corby URC have produced a Regeneration Framework for the future of Corby which proposes radical change for the town including a doubling of population, a new rail station and extensive mixed use redevelopment of the town centre.

6) Potential future roles & relationships

- The above analysis of drivers of change sets the context for future trends in centres across North Northants.
- Using the information outlined in this report (including the analysis of drivers of change and the SWOT analysis of centres in Appendix 2 which were informed by site visits and discussions with stakeholders) and in the Stage 1 report (data sources set out in Appendix 1), we have sought to identify future roles and relationships for the centres in the study area. The centres have been grouped as closely as possible to the directions set in draft sub-regional planning guidance, with retail parks treated separately.
- The lack of sufficient comprehensive and consistent data for the centres means that the roles and relationships between centres in the study area cannot be clearly defined in terms of their current relationships with each other, let alone making future projections of roles with any certainty.
- For example, there is no robust data defining the extent of the catchment areas for the centres or their capacity to accommodate further activity or people's shopping patterns. Inevitably, therefore, examining possible roles and relationships involves a degree of uncertainty at this stage and our suggestions therefore need to carry an appropriate health warning. We make recommendations later in this report regarding how these gaps in knowledge can be addressed in order to improve understanding of current and future roles of centres.

Potential future roles & relationships

- Given the proximity of the centres within the study area, it is likely that a degree of competition exists between the centres at present. Since initiatives to plan for the futures of the centres in a co-ordinated way are only embryonic, it is unlikely that planning, economic development and regeneration activity to date in relation to the individual centres has had sufficient regard to how the centres might complement each other.
- Addressing how the centres might complement each other in the future is particularly important given the aggressive competition from centres outside North Northants, where investment and expansion are being targeted. The centres in North Northants are very unlikely to be able to attract investment on the scale of competitor locations such as Northampton, Peterborough and Milton Keynes.
- The solution for centres in North Northants will be to work together in order for the whole to become more than the sum of the parts.

Potential future roles & relationships

- Working together will require the roles and relationships of centres to be precisely defined. At present, a lack of robust data severely limits the ability to do this and there is an urgent need for survey work to be carried out to assess shopping, work and leisure patterns in particular, leading to a robust assessment of catchment areas, associated relationships between centres and their capacity for further retail, leisure and other appropriate uses.
- What can be done at this stage, however, is to identify a conceptual framework within which the North Northants centres might move forward in a co-ordinated way.
- It is considered that the concept of **polycentricity** provides the most suitable framework within which to map out the future direction for centres in the network.
- The European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP – adopted 1999) has polycentricity as a central tenet of its approach. At its most simple, polycentricity involves connecting a number of places so that they form a network. This will require co-ordinated planning of roles of centres together with improved communications to ensure that a network can operate effectively.

Potential future roles & relationships

- Whilst still to be fully tested as an approach to spatial planning within the UK, a polycentric approach has several attractions when considering the future for North Northants centres:
  - Accordance with the thrust of draft revised PPG6 towards creating a balanced network of centres
  - Recognition of the need for North Northants centres to have regard to linkages between themselves in order to perform more successfully in future, as well as a recognition that North Northants is unlikely to ever be a self-sustaining sub-region and that functional linkages to centres outside the study area are likely to continue
  - There is unlikely to be a single, predominant centre within North Northants in the future and centres will thus be reliant on each other to provide an attractive retail, leisure and employment offer within the sub-region. This will require difficult decisions to be made regarding the specific functions of each centre. Whilst this will need to be informed by further research, pointers towards potential future roles within an overall strategic direction for each centre are set out later in this section.
  - A clear policy direction to achieve a successful polycentric network of centres facilitated by supporting communications infrastructure will help to justify bids for funding packages for town centre improvements, including public transport links (such as a rail connection to Corby), broadband infrastructure, etc.
- To start to exploit these advantages, we have therefore taken the principles of a polycentric approach on board in setting our recommendations on potential future roles and relationships, even though at this stage these are generic due to the absence of a suitable evidence base.

Potential future roles & relationships

- In identifying potential future roles for centres we have addressed the following issues:
- **Strategic roles** – we have identified whether centres should focus on the following strategic directions in the future:
  - **Consolidation** - an emphasis on enhancing quality of the offer rather than quantity; and
  - **Regeneration -** an emphasis on enhancing both quality and quantity of offer;
- **Specialist roles** – within the strategic directions of consolidation and regeneration, we have identified areas which certain centres should consider focusing on in the future, either to develop as a niche centre with a specific role or to develop more well-rounded offers by focusing on areas in which they are presently weak.
- **Relationships** – where either the strategic direction or focus issues are likely to raise issues regarding relationships between centres, these have been highlighted.
- Strategic and specialist roles and relationship issues are set out for each centre below.

Potential future roles & relationships – Principal Urban Areas

- All the PUAs of Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough will experience significant growth in their catchment areas as a result of the MKSM sub-regional planning guidance. This growth will require improvements to each town centre which will be critical in order to prevent further leakage of expenditure to competitor centres outside the study area which are already moving forward. However, improvements required will be different in each centre.
- The case for regeneration in Corby is clear. Significant regeneration effort is being prioritised on the town to effect a step change in population, employment, housing and environmental quality. Improving the town centre in qualitative and quantitative terms will form an important part of this change. Inevitably, socio-economic change will take time and Corby will need to retain its value retail role to a degree in the shorter term. Corby's office market should improve with the provision of a rail station and development of a Civic Quarter should allow a more holistic centre to develop.
- Kettering and Wellingborough will also both experience growth in their catchments. Our SWOT analysis highlights several opportunities to address weaknesses in the towns. Most notably, these include improving the quality of the retail offer and of the town centre environment. Also, gaps in the leisure and cultural offer need to be plugged and there are opportunities to improve the provision of social infrastructure such as at the Tresham Institute in Wellingborough.
- Urban extensions relating to the PUA central areas may require new neighbourhood or district centres to serve them. Detailed impact analysis will be required to accompany such proposals in order to minimise effects on the vitality and viability of existing centres.

Potential future roles & relationships – Principal Urban Areas

Centre	Strategic roles	Specialist roles	Relationships
Corby	Regeneration to provide more floorspace and better quality environment.	Corby will maintain a key role as a value retail centre initially but this role will fade as the catchment area benefits from regeneration and socio-demographic change. Employment and housing roles of Corby centre could also grow as new rail service would improve office & housing markets. Leisure, entertainment and civic functions should grow.	Changes at Corby town centre will need to be co-ordinated with those at Kettering and Wellingborough to maximise benefits for North Northants as a whole and prevent further leakage of spend outside North Northants. New neighbourhood/local centres (such as current application for local centre to serve Oakley Vale) may be needed to serve larger urban extensions.
Kettering	Regeneration to improve environment and quality of offer, may include growth in floorspace.	Service and leisure offer should be a focus for improvement. Environmental improvements will help to boost image & housing market. Better comparison retail offer required. Masterplan will provide focus for change.	As above.
Wellingborough	Regeneration to improve environment and quality of offer, may include growth in floorspace.	Quality of retail, leisure and cultural offers should be foci. Environmental improvements will help to provide stronger identity. Particular opportunities include civic role (Tresham/Innovation Centre), opportunity to develop town centre housing & arts.	As above. In terms of additional retail development required to serve WEAST, the results of the emerging masterplan for Wellingborough should be used to help determine the scale of local centre needed to serve WEAST which would not jeopardise the vitality and viability of Wellingborough town centre.

Potential future roles & relationships – Urban Hubs

- The sub-regional centres/urban hubs have a role to complement the main centres of the PUA.
- However, this does not mean that they should remain static. In particular, Rushden, Burton Latimer and Irthlingborough are likely to see significant housing growth in their catchments. This will create extra demand for town centre functions and these centres need to respond by improving their retail offer and developing a greater leisure and cultural role. Improved shopping environments in these centres will help to minimise leakage of spend outside the study area.
- Change at Burton Latimer needs to be closely co-ordinated with developments at Kettering, whilst Rushden, Irthlingborough and Higham Ferrers need to be moved forward in a consistent way.
- Rothwell and Higham Ferrers should continue to enhance their historic environments and consolidate their offer in serving local communities.
- Desborough is unlikely to see significant capacity for growth in town centre functions. Consolidation of the existing offer and improving the environment should be priorities and should be carefully co-ordinated with change at Rothwell and Kettering.

Potential future roles & relationships – Urban Hubs

Centre	Strategic roles	Specialist roles	Relationships
Rushden	Regeneration to improve environment and serve MKSM-led catchment growth	Leisure and cultural offer, plus improved quality and range of retail. Opportunity sites can be developed to achieve this. Environmental improvements and amelioration of traffic congestion will help to boost image in accordance with Masterplan. Tresham links will improve civic role.	Co-ordinate change with Higham Ferrers, Irthlingborough, Wellingborough & any new centres serving Wellingborough East (WEAST).
Burton Latimer	Regeneration to serve MKSM-led catchment growth	Convenience shopping role will remain and will complement offer at Kettering. Physical environmental improvements will improve image.	Co-ordinate change at Burton Latimer with that at Kettering.
Rothwell	Consolidation	Build on strengths serving local area and attractive heritage environment through MTI. Business accommodation, community and leisure facilities could be improved.	Co-ordination with Desborough and Kettering required.
Desborough	Regeneration	Improved environment, signage and accessibility/circulation should be focus through MTI. Quality of retail offer and leisure could be addressed through realising potential of opportunity sites.	Co-ordination with Rothwell and Kettering required.
Higham Ferrers	Consolidation	Build on existing specialist strengths serving local area and attractive heritage environment. Improvements could include addressing traffic issues, community facilities.	Co-ordination with Rushden and Irthlingborough required.
Irthlingborough	Regeneration to serve MKSM-led catchment growth	Improved environment should be a focus as should use of MTI partnership to provide innovative solutions to centre's problems (links with Rushden & Diamonds, farmers market)	Co-ordination with Rushden, Higham Ferrers and WEAST centre
Raunds	Consolidation	Comparison retail and leisure offers could be improved. Environmental improvements also required. TCM partnership would help.	Co-ordination with regeneration of Rushden required

Potential future roles & relationships – Rural Service Centres

- Thrapston and Oundle centres serve their rural hinterlands but have very different strengths and opportunities for future change. Thrapston town centre is in a better position to benefit from a growing catchment area as housing growth under the MKSM sub-regional planning guidance comes forward. It also has opportunity sites which can be exploited. Regeneration of Thrapston's centre to take advantage of these opportunities is therefore important.
- Oundle has a strong heritage offer in terms of the built environment, and should consolidate its strengths by continuing to exploit the niche visitor/public school role as well as continuing to serve the town centre needs of its rural hinterland.

Potential future roles & relationships – Rural Service Centres

Centre	Strategic roles	Specialist roles	Relationships
Oundle	Consolidation	Build on strengths serving local area and attractive heritage environment encouraging visitors. Comparison offer could be improved as could congestion and parking.	Links to Thrapston – complementarity in terms of events and activities. Peterborough growth a potential threat.
Thrapston	Regeneration to service MKSM-led catchment growth	Retail, evening economy and cultural offer could be improved, exploiting potential of opportunity sites as part of mixed use development including housing. Is a need to address traffic circulation and parking issues.	As above in terms of complementarity with Oundle.

Potential future roles & relationships – Retail Parks

- The retail parks in the study are perform an important role in fulfilling the shopping and leisure needs of their catchment populations.
- Their future roles, however, are likely to differ depending on the opportunities offered by each location. Opportunities for quantitative growth at Kettering Venture Park and at the Rushden Safeway A45 retail park are limited and the future focus should therefore be upon integrating these areas better within the existing urban areas and improving linkages within the retail parks themselves.
- At Wellingborough Victoria Park/London Road and at Phoenix Parkway, Corby, however, there are opportunities for the retail parks to expand as well as improving their quality of offer. This expansion needs to be co-ordinated with initiatives to improve both Wellingborough and Corby town centres as well as potential development of other centres to serve urban extensions in both towns.

Potential future roles & relationships – Retail Parks

Centre	Strategic roles	Specialist roles	Relationships
Kettering Venture Park	Consolidation	Need to improve links with rest of town (town centre and Wicksteed Park) and improve character and pedestrian environment.	Address issue of competition with town centre's future aspirations for improved retail and leisure offer.
Wellingborough Victoria Park/London Rd	Regeneration to exploit capacity at London Rd.	Integration of site to improve pedestrian linkages between different elements. Parts of area could be re-configured in future to improve quality. Could develop a leisure role to complement town centre.	Development must be co-ordinated with change in town centre and development of centre to serve WEAST.
Corby Phoenix Parkway	Regeneration to exploit growth of catchment as Corby's regeneration programme is implemented	Could improve quality of retail offer (perhaps as part of a mixed use scheme including residential) and develop links with older nearby centre in Corby.	Co-ordination of change with town centre regeneration and development of other local centres to serve Corby urban extensions is required.
Rushden Safeway A45 Retail Park	Consolidation	Improve integration within the site and pedestrian/cycle links to rest of urban area.	

7) Conclusions

- The key conclusions to emerge from this project are as follows:
  - Whilst all the centres in the study area face certain issues in common (such as the threat of competition from centres outside North Northants and the opportunity provided by growth planned for the MKSM sub-region) each centre has a range of specific strengths and weaknesses that contribute to shaping its future prospects. These issues are highlighted in the SWOT analysis carried out for each centre in the network.
  - The information base upon which future directions for centres can be built within the study area has significant gaps. Whilst a reasonable amount of information exists in a form which is comparable over time and across geographical boundaries for the larger centres in the study area, this consistency of data is not available for the other, smaller centres.
  - As such, assembling a baseline position for the centres in the network and identifying potential future roles and relationships is challenging and has had to be based on qualitative information (from site visits, discussions with stakeholders, etc.) where quantitative gaps exist.
  - Based on this approach, potential future roles and relationships for the North Northants centres have been identified in a very general sense. These have identified whether centres should follow a broad direction of consolidation (focusing on qualitative improvement) or regeneration (focusing on quantitative growth) and particular specialist roles within these broad directions have also been identified. A summary of the findings of this analysis is shown on page 49.
  - Implications of these strategic directions and foci for action for relationships between centres have also been identified in the main body of this report.

Conclusions

- Clearly, the outline strategic directions and foci for action identified above need to carry a 'health warning' since they are based on an incomplete evidence base. At this stage, therefore, they should merely form priorities for further exploration before robust roles can be set and precise relationships determined.
- More clarity on the roles and relationships of centres within the North Northants area is required so that the centres in the area can act as a polycentric network operating for the benefit of North Northants as a whole and minimising leakage to competitor centres outside the study area.
- So that these roles and relationships can be set more clearly, an action plan in terms of filling gaps in knowledge needs to be identified and carried out. Our recommendations in terms of an next steps action plan are outlined on Page 50.
- Filling such gaps in knowledge will also be required to meet the potential demands of draft PPS6.

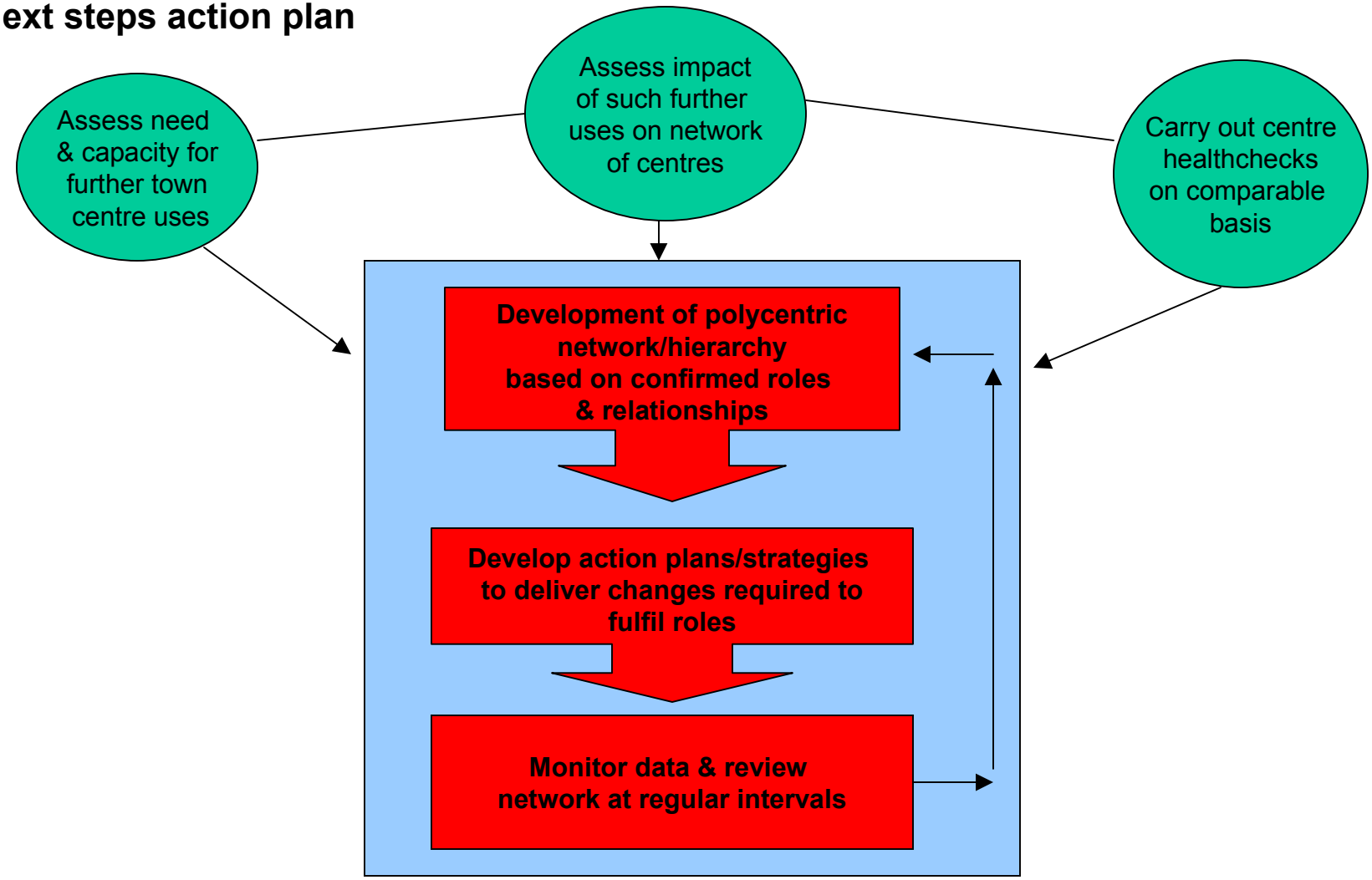
Conclusions

Centre	Strategic role	Specialist roles
Corby	Regeneration	Improve retail offer, environment, accessibility, employment, leisure, housing & civic roles.
Kettering	Regeneration	Improve service, comparison retail and leisure offer. Environmental improvements to boost image.
Wellingborough	Regeneration	Improve quality of environment, retail, leisure and cultural offers.
Rushden	Regeneration	Leisure & cultural offer, plus retail quality/range. Environmental improvements & reduce traffic impact
Burton Latimer	Regeneration	Convenience shopping role will remain and will complement Kettering.
Rothwell	Consolidation	Build on strengths serving local area and attractive heritage environment through MTI.
Desborough	Regeneration	Improve retail & leisure offer, environment, signage and accessibility/circulation
Higham Ferrers	Consolidation	Build on existing specialist strengths serving local area and attractive heritage environment.
Irthlingborough	Regeneration	Improved environment should be a focus as should use of MTI partnership to promote regeneration
Raunds	Consolidation	Comparison retail and leisure offers could be improved. Environmental improvements also required.
Oundle	Consolidation	Build on strengths serving local area (improve comparison) and heritage environment for visitors.
Thrapston	Regeneration	Retail, evening economy and cultural offer could be improved, exploiting potential of opportunity sites.
Kettering Venture Park	Consolidation	Need to improve links with rest of town (town centre and Wicksteed Park) and improve character;
Wellingborough Victoria Park/London Rd	Regeneration	Integration of site to improve pedestrian linkages between different elements. Parts of area could be re-configured in future to improve quality. Could develop a leisure role to complement town centre.
Corby Phoenix Parkway	Regeneration	Could improve quality of retail offer (perhaps as part of a mixed use scheme including residential)
Rushden Safeway A45 Retail Park	Consolidation	Improve integration within the site and pedestrian/cycle links to rest of urban area.

8) Next steps action plan

- This project has identified the need for more consistent, comprehensive and robust data to be gathered on centres in the North Northants network for the effective future identification of roles for centres and the relationships between them. Such data will also be required to fulfil demands of draft PPS6 and to produce defensible planning policies in LDFs across the sub-region.
- Our recommendations in terms of next steps are shown diagramatically on page 51 and comprise:
  - Assessment of need and capacity for further town centre uses (including analysis of shopping patterns across catchment areas) on a consistent basis across North Northants;
  - Assessment of impact of such further uses on the network of centres;
  - Regular town centre healthchecks carried out on comparable basis across the sub-region;
- The information provided from the above exercises should inform the:
  - Development of a polycentric network/hierarchy of centres for North Northants based on confirmed roles and relationships;
  - Development of action plans/strategies to deliver changes required for centres to fulfil roles; (linking to local delivery vehicles where necessary); and
  - Monitoring of data and review of network at regular intervals.
- We recommend that a Working Group of key stakeholder representatives is constituted to move this agenda forward across North Northants.

Next steps action plan



North Northamptonshire Centres Project:

Appendix 1 -

Summary of information audit

DTZ Pieda Consulting

Summary of information audit

	Policy		Vitality & viability																				Environment					Transport						
Centre	Vision or policy framework	Allocations for town centre uses	National ranking	Floorspace	Floorspace trends	Housing units in centre	Market	Managed shopping centre	Community facilities	Vacancies	Town centre employment	Planning pipeline	Retail turnover	Rental levels	Yield	Demand for property	Partnership working	Regeneration funding/initiatives	Survey (customer, business)	Capacity assessment	Catchment area information (socio-economic)	Air quality	Public spaces (availability & quality)	Safety & security	Built environment - quality	Cleanliness	Public transport information	Pedestrian access	Cycle accessibility & facilities	Parking	Traffic flows & congestion	Road access	Accidents
Corby	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓				✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Phoenix Parkway	✓		✓	✓								✓									✓											✓	
Proposed Oakley Vale Neighbourhood Centre												✓																				✓	
Kettering	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kettering Venture Park			✓	✓																	✓											✓	✓
Burton Latimer	✓	✓	✓																							✓					✓	✓
Rothwell	✓	✓															✓	✓								✓					✓	✓
Desborough	✓	✓															✓	✓								✓					✓	✓
Wellingborough	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Wellingborough Victoria Park	✓		✓	✓																		✓										✓	✓
Wellingborough London Rd	✓		✓																			✓										✓	✓
Proposed WEAST neighbourhood centre	✓	✓	✓																			✓										✓	✓
Rushden	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓		✓				✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Higham Ferrers	✓						✓		✓									✓			✓	✓			✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Irthlingborough	✓	✓							✓								✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Oundle	✓	✓					✓		✓													✓					✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
Raunds	✓	✓					✓		✓													✓					✓			✓		✓	✓
Thrapston	✓	✓					✓		✓	✓							✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rushden - Safeway area off A45 adj Crown Pk	✓																					✓										✓	✓

North Northamptonshire Centres Project:

Appendix 2 -

SWOT analysis of centres

DTZ Pieda Consulting

Corby town centre

Strengths

- Representation of variety stores
- Large average unit sizes
- Presence of a URC to aid regeneration
- Good sized town centre, which is accessible by foot
- Accessible by bus and car and plentiful parking (which is free)
- Good identity
- Vacant units imply capacity to attract additional retail

Weaknesses

- Urban deprivation issues within catchment
- Dated physical environment
- Recent decline in both Experian and Management Horizons national ranks
- Retail rents falling as is demand in town centre
- Vacancy rate twice the national average @ 20%
- Poor services/leisure offer in the TC e.g. eating out and health
- Poor perceptions of safety and security - particularly after 5.30
- Poor image
- Dominance of value retailing - lack of choice

Opportunities

- A relatively cheap pool of labour is attracting significant investment, especially in distribution/logistics centres
- Delivery of Catalyst Corby Regeneration Framework inc. new station and growth of catchment population
- Growth planned as a result of MKSM study
- Build on existing Council services to create a stronger civic presence in the town centre
- Corby should be able to offer something different because of its New Town status e.g. Milton Keynes
- Vision - Corby to serve the local area, with high quality services and an improved environment. Develop to a size which is appropriate

Threats

- Funding for rail station
- Competition from Market Harborough
- Major upgrading of retail offers in Leicester, Northampton, and Peterborough Town Centres
- Single ownership of town centre may be a barrier to investment
- Urgency to attract investment may mean that Corby does not hold out for quality

Kettering

Strengths

- Low vacancy rates and strong comparison goods offer
- Recent rises up both Experian and Management Horizons national ranks
- Large average unit sizes - but some gaps within Kettering
- Relatively affluent catchment population
- Good road and rail connections
- Good Architecture of buildings above eye level
- Buoyant Evening Economy
- Good security and cleanliness in town centre
- Regarded as second major shopping destination in Northants
- Good service infrastructure e.g. General Hospital and Tresham College

Weaknesses

- Poor perception as a shopping destination of significance
- Relatively small service & leisure offer particularly for families
- Poor links between town centre and rail station
- Lack of good sized retail units within certain parts of Kettering e.g. high street
- Car Parking - issues over accessing car parks and poor linkages between car parks and town centre
- Tired streetscene, particularly around pedestrian zone
- Shop fronts do not enhance historical buildings
- Poor pedestrian controls
- Market - no longer vibrant and concern over future
- Retail - variation and quality of comparison could be improved and lack of specialist/niche retail
- Footfall low in the south of town centre

Opportunities

- Vision - to keep Ketterings ranking as the second major shopping centre in Northants or improve on this. Ensure that Kettering can offer a full range of facilities to serve local areas, including greater comparison shopping, leisure and cultural facilities
- Differentiate Ketterings offer through developing its character. In particular enhancing the streetscene and civic/cultural facilities
- Develop Heritage and Cultural offer
- Maximise architecture and restore shop fronts
- Kettering Masterplan - identifies 8 key development sites around the town centre

Threats

- Leisure offer at Kettering Retail Park
- Competing centres e.g. Peterborough, Leicester, Milton Keynes and Northampton. Corby and Market Harborough have also been cited
- Good Evening Economy - caution that it does not mitigate against other uses during the day
- Future development at North of town centre would further affect footfall in south

Wellingborough

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Good range and choice of convenience and comparison goods • Wide variety of eating and drinking estabs • Good provision of cultural and community facilities, e.g. The Castle, Tresham Institute, Innovation Centre • Good balance between independent and multiple traders • Free and ample car parking, plus shopmobility • Some strong architectural features e.g. Church and High Street • Good pedestrian and cycle links • Green spaces and Parks	• Town centre lacks identity • Market Square has dated appearance (best practice examples include Alnwick, Ludlow) • Dated Swansgate Centre (1970s) has high vacancies • Retail offer lacks mid-range (e.g. Next) & high-end operators • Lack of larger shop units, no departmernt stores • Potential for congestion along High Street at peak times • Street market appears to be not very successful • Poor setting of landmarks (e.g. view of All Hallows Church from Market Square)
Opportunities (inc potential future roles)	**Threats**
• MKSM sub-regional growth to swell size of catchment • Refurbish/redevelop sites to upgrade existing shops and provide larger unit sizes e.g. Midland Rd and Swansgate Centre • Environmental improvements of Market Square • Cambridge St. - niche role e.g. independent retail, food & drink • Enhance street market/events • New build Tresham Institute/Innovation Centre • Tapping into the ethnic dimension with niche shopping • Develop a strong arts and leisure economy e.g. new cinema • Maximise benefits from re-located heritage centre in a cultural quarter adjacent to Castle Theatre • Potential for considering a BID • More housing in town centre to create all day activity • Produce design guide for centre & brand town through public art	• Improvements in retail offer at Rushden and Northampton/Corby/Kettering • Increasing congestion along London Road • Lack of new investment to revitalise the town centre visual appeal

Rushden

Strengths	Weaknesses
• District centre serving the southern East Northants area • Good balance between independents and national multiples • Good provision of food retailers • Even spread of retail offer compared to national averages • Low vacancy rate • Good signage • Recent rise up Management Horizon rankings • Growth in retail demand • Growing evening economy for the town and wider area • Rushden radio link between traders to combat shoplifting • Tresham Institute establishing greater links in the town centre	• For the size of town it has a limited offer • Lack of mid-range comparison retailers • Limited range of eating and drinking establishments • Congested high street with on-street parking • Lack of pedestrianisation • Untidy appearance with litter • Mixed architectural styles • Lacking strong local partnership to drive initiatives • Anti social behaviour
Opportunities (inc potential future roles)	**Threats**
• Maintaining its role as a service centre for town and nearby villages • Increasing population to help provide a higher quality offer •Upgrade environment with new paving and street furniture and creation of new town square, plus tidying up of back accesses, rationalisation of on-street parking & some pedestrianisation • Redeveloping public sector land assets for mix of uses • CCTV • Providing more residential in town centre - above shops • Establishing local partnership to drive the Masterplan • New town centre link road addressing the congestion issues • Building on the links with Tresham Institute	• Improvement of offer at Well./Kett./Corby • PPS6 and more out-of-town investment • Land assembly and viability • Continued apathy amongst local traders

Burton Latimer

Strengths	Weaknesses
•Accessible - jn 10 A14 on A6 •Good convenience offer for size - Budgens/Somerfield • Some character retained • Nearby employment opportunities at Burton Latimer Business Park. •Strong local community •Good restaurants and pubs - attracts people into centre •Good security within town centre •Good bus service	• Closeness to Kettering - people will travel for retail, and so not as developed as it could be • Poor environment in parts • Lack of parking • Perception and character could be improved • Poor cycle provision •Underdeveloped leisure offer •Lack of small business opportunities
Opportunities •Housing growth planned as result of MKSM Study - greater than other parts of Kettering •Housing growth will provide opportunities to develop infrastructure e.g. plans for a secondary school • Local Plan - policy for a new district centre to the north of BL in association with planned housing growth •Vision - initially ensuring that there is a high quality of varied service provision (including retail) to meet local needs, and in the long term, developing a niche role which will support Kettering and encourage people to visit Burton Latimer	**Threats** •Success of nearby centres, particularly Kettering •Recent decline in local employment opportunities •There has been strong emphasis on protecting green space and with growth plans, need to ensure that this continues

Rothwell

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Easily accessible from A14 • Historic environment and Conservation area - wide range of listed buildings/monuments •Good quality retail e.g. grocers, butchers and specialist retail e.g. coffee •Good quality and range of restaurants, and a café • A6 bypass has mitigated against congestion •Annual Fair and Market - creates good community and cultural identity	•Lack of local employment opportunities •Close to Kettering, so difficult to develop retail e.g. supermarket. •Provision of community and leisure facilities could be improved, particularly for young people •Lack of move on premises for small businesses •No late bus services to Rothwell
Opportunities	**Threats**
• Vision - develop a tourism role for Rothwell, with people visiting the town to view listed buildings/monuments and enjoy quality and specialist retail •Rothwell and Desborough MTI •Growth planned through MKSM Strategy and a SDA. •Leisure - planning permission provided for redevelopment of sports hall and swimming pool •Market could be developed •15ha of development land close to the A14 provides opportunity for employment opportunities	• A6 bypass - may have a negative impact on food trade •Future as a dormitory/commuter town if local employment is not provided •Inability to attract investment and realise vision set out under the MTI

Desborough

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Good accessibility from A14/A6 • Good community spirit •Town centre partnership •Vision and direction for the future set out within Urban Design Framework	• Poor image. •Proximity to Market Harborough, and Kettering •Poor quality and choice of convenience (Budgens/Co-op) • A6 divides Desborough •Poor quality of environment and derelict sites • Poor range and quality of retail and archaic trading patterns •Lack of good quality pubs and restaurants • Absence of civic space • Poor signage into town centre and absence of heart • Lack of parking
Opportunities •Vision - increase the range of quality of services (including retail) to meet the needs of local people whilst retaining the overall character and on a limited basis encourage people to visit Desborough. Improving the general environment, identity and barrier presented by A6 initally •Desborough UDF- KBC invest £200,000 in 2003/4 •Desborough and Rothwell MTI •Strategic Development Area •Identified for growth as a result of MKSM study •A number of opportunity sites - Lawrence St, Station Rd, Tolbot Court	**Threats** • Proximity to Market Harborough and and Kettering will affect future development • Opportunity sites could be a threat if not utilised. • High expectations for Desborough - may be a threat if not realised

Higham Ferrers

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Historic high quality environment • Specialist shops • Good range of eating and drinking places • Attractive market square • Several important community facilities • Landmark buildings - Churches • Farmers market	• Lack of multiples • Lack of leisure and community facilities, esp. for the young • Congestion and heavy traffic through centre • Prime frontages interrupted with residential • No active partnership to drive initiatives • Under utilised market square • Lack of signage • Low parking provision • Lack of own identity with Rushden in close proximity
Opportunities (inc potential future roles)	**Threats**
• Maintain existing local centre role and creating own identity • Enhance specialist shops to cater for tourism e.g antiques • Traffic calming to reduce impact of vehicles • Creation of pedestrian-friendly environment • Promote living above shop • Additional street markets eg. Arts and crafts, books etc. • Community police • New/improved community facilities eg. youth; meeting rooms • Greater level of car parking provision	• Housing development in Rushden increasing congestion in the town centre • Additional conversions to residential impacting on provision at ground floor level • Lack of place identity with Rushden • Anti-social behaviour

Irthlingborough

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Easy access by car with free and ample parking • Local centre serving the town • Convenience retail • Eating and drinking establishments • Clean and tidy • Historic buildings • Community facilities - health centre, library, schools	• Unattractive pedestrian environment, noisy and busy with heavy traffic through the centre • Lack of choice, especially for comparison • Lack of leisure facilities • 1960s parade and vacant buildings creates poor image • Lack of street events • High turnover of shops, as centre struggles commercially • No benefits from the Rushden & Diamonds Football Club
Opportunities (inc potential future roles)	**Threats**
• Maintain its role as a local centre with little if any retail growth • Redevelopment of 1960s Parade for mixed-use, incl. residential • Traffic calming and speed restrictions in centre • Other environmental improvements to the public realm • Improving shop fronts • Youth resource centre working withTresham Institute • Improved links between the Football Stadium centre • Establishing a farmers market • Using Market Town Initiative Group to drive projects	• Lack of investment • Land assembly viability issues • Pull of Wellingborough East (WEAST) development for shops and services • Increasing offer at Rushden • Anti-social behaviour • Loss of Secondary school as part of WEAST • Additional loss of local businesses

Oundle

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Self-contained local centre serving wealthy surrounding villages • High quality townscape with historic buildings • Presence of Oundle Private School key driver in success of the town centre • Specialist high quality retail • Tourist centre • Pleasant shopping environment, clean and tidy • Good leisure and community facilities • Successful farmers market and other events eg. Books/music • Very few vacancies	• Food offer is limited • Comparison offer is limited • Lack of opportunity sites • Lighting and security is lacking • Parking provision is limited • Congestion issues in the centre with narrow streets • No local partnership • Some problems of burglaries/vandalism of shops
Opportunities (inc potential future roles)	**Threats**
• Maintain specialist/tourist role for wider benefit of East Northants economy • Enhance its tourist appeal • Link with nearby Thrapston in terms of complimentary events and activities • Larger foodstore in catchment may decrease potential leakage to Peterborough • CCTV or greater policing • Local partnership group to implement initiatives	• Future success of the Private School • Erosion of the prime retail frontage with residential

Raunds

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Self-contained local centre for town and surrounding rural hinterland • Good proportion of independent traders • Some historic buildings • Accessible centre with free car parking areas • Pleasant shopping environment, clean and tidy • Low number of vacant shops • Increasing number of A3 restaurants	• Limited comparison offer • Limited number of multiples • Lack of cultural and leisure facilities • Lack of street events • Mixed frontages with residential • Lack of a local partnership to drive initiatives
Opportunities (inc potential future roles)	**Threats**
• Maintain local centre role with demand from housing growth making shops more viable • Improvements to A45 • Regular street events • Increase in car parking provision and traffic calming • Environmental improvements to town square • Linking any housing growth to the town centre • Further assessment required eg. Health Check • A local partnership to drive initiatives in the town centre	• Lack of investment • Land assembly viability issues • Increasing offer at Rushden • Anti-social behaviour

Thrapston

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Historic market town with high quality townscape • Good provision of community facilities • Clean and tidy environment • Several landmark buildings, such as Church • Low number of vacant shops • Well located on A14/A45 junction • Some specialist shops • Cattle market brings in a lot of trade on Tues/Thurs • 2020 Partnership and Masterplan driving initiatives	• Narrow pavements and noisy and busy ambience • Limited retail offer with predominance of non-A1 uses • Limited evening economy • No cultural facilities • Limited parking provision near High Street • Traffic flows with congestion at peak times • Cattle market is under-used resource • Services have not kept pace with housing development
Opportunities (inc potential future roles)	**Threats**
• Enhance role as local service centre with the increasing demand from housing developments • Enhance specialist retail/tourism role linking with Oundle • Several Opportunity sites for mixed-use development • Relocating cattle market out of the town centre • Environmental improvements to enhance attractiveness • Traffic calming and increased parking provision • Enhance evening economy • Resource drop-in centre for young people in association with Tresham Institute	• Lack of investment to bring forward development • Site assembly and viability issues • Increased traffic through centre with new housing developments • Cattle Market remaining in-situ

Wellingborough Victoria Park

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Cluster of multiples • One of the principal foodstores in the town • Some leisure uses - ten pin bowling • Adjacent site under construction for retail warehouses for B&Q etc. • Immediate access off A45 with ample free parking • Cycle lane along London Road provide access • Clean and safe shopping environment • Gateway site to the town centre • Tesco runs a free bus to surrounding villages • Retains expenditure within Wellingborough	• Fragmented sites • Poor pedestrian links between the different areas of the retail park • Low quality built form • Limited access to non-car borne shoppers
Opportunities (inc potential future roles)	**Threats**
• Eastern Urban extension • Expanding Victoria Park with development of additional retail warehouses at London Rd, such as DIY, tiles, electrical, and Pets • Better pedestrian and cycle links between the fragmented sites • Extension to the Tesco foodstore under new draft PPS6 • More leisure attractions	• District centre within the Eastern Urban Extension could be developed, although this is likely to be a neighbourhood centre as set out in the Local Plan Review • Development of retail warehouses within the catchment

Corby - Phoenix Retail Park

Strengths	Weaknesses
•Easy access by car and plentiful parking. •Asda - largest foodstore in Corby •Good mix of comparison goods. •Retailers - thought to be operating successfully. •Pleasant environment in which to shop, particularly compared to town centre.	•Mainly value retail offer. •Opportunity for growth is limited.
Opportunities	**Threats**
•Opportunity for development to the North. •Potential for diversification of use towards higher quality. •Opportunity for improved performance as a result of regeneration and growth of Corby as a whole. • Close to old town centre, which provides an opportunity to develop linkages, and expand to the north.	•Potential for other new developments nearby to compete. •Local Plan states that development restricted until town centre is improved. •Weight attached to owners of town centre - may inhibit growth out of town if competing.

Kettering Venture Park

Strengths	Weaknesses
•Easily accessible - jn 9 on A14. •Good range of comparison shopping with large outlets •Good family offer e.g. cinema, frankie & benny's, cinema and gym. •Good parking.	• Close to capacity and no additional retail allowed. • Shopping area separated by roads - difficult for pedestrians and cyclists. • Lack of character. • Competing with town centre to some extent. •Flooding issues. •Weak linkages between the Venture Park and the town centre.
Opportunities	**Threats**
•Opportunities for linkages with other parts of town e.g. Wicksteed Park, which will develop the Leisure aspect and complement activities in Town Centre. •Build on existing hopper service to develop linkages with the town centre. • Opportunity site close to Tesco.	•Congestion on A14. •Lack of sites to expand. •Future development may affect the future of Kettering town centre to develop leisure aspect. •Competition from Kettering or Wellingborough.

Rushden Retail Park A45

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Accommodates the principal foodstore and DIY store for the town • Easy road access off A45 • Ample free car parking • No congestion • Clean and safe shopping environment	• Fragmented developments • Poor pedestrian and cycle links between the two sections of the retail park • Low quality built form • Limited access to non-car borne shoppers
Opportunities (inc potential future roles)	**Threats**
• Maintain its present role • Unlikely to grow significantly in future with a lack of development sites in close proximity • Draft PPS6 allows existing out-of-town stores to be extended/redeveloped	• Enhancements to the town centre • New ASDA foodstore within Rushden • New B&Q at Wellingborough

North Northamptonshire Centres Project:

Appendix 3 -

List of telephone consultees

DTZ Pieda Consulting

List of telephone consultees

Telephone consultations carried out

- B Stacey (ENC)
- N Stronach (CBC)
- M Haybyrne (WBC)
- S Richardson (KBC)
- S Blow (Oundle Assoc of Chamber & Trade)
- Cllr S Peacock (ENC)
- J Day (Desborough Business Club)
- P Woolmer (Burton Latimer Chamber of Commerce)
- D Scott (Thrapston Chamber of trade)
- Emda
- D Dixon (East Northants Business Partnership)
- L Fisher (Heartlands PCT)
- Sian McDonald (Tresham Institute)
- P Crossley (ENC)
- R Matthews (Desborough & Rothwell towns officer)
- C Bonnie (KBC)
- N Chapman (KBC)
- D Hallam (KBC)
- P Ansell (Kettering Civic Society)
- Cllr Parker (KBC)
- Cllr Lamb (KBC)
- Cllr Freer (KBC)
- A Pearson (EP)
- K Gwilliam (Swansgate Centre, Wellingborough)
- Cllr Higgins (WBC)
- Cllr Raymond (WBC)
- Cllr Ridge (WBC)
- Cllr Timms (WBC)
- S Levell (NCC)
- J Cushing (NCC)
- J Butlin (NCC)
- A Clark (NCC)
- D Brierley (WS Atkins)

Consultees contacted but unable to respond during study period

- K Storey (Northants Chamber)
- S Evans (Catalyst Corby)
- N Wakefield (WS Atkins)
- Cllr Woods (Rushden Amenity Society)
- D Cross (Wellingborough TCM)
- D Sharp (TOPS Estates)
- N Griffin (Newlands Centre, Kettering)
- J Nichols (KBC)
- J Pearson (Police, Wellingborough)
- J Wilson (WBC)
- R Pulling (WBC)