

**Proposed NNC response to consultation questions**

***Draft proposed response from planning policy for further feedback***

**Section 1. Introduction: Creating a Vision for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc**

**What do you think?**

What is your positive vision for the Arc in the future?

**1. What place could it be? What words come to mind?**

- Sustainable
- Sense of community
- Equal/ inclusive
- Progressive
- Collaborates for better outcomes
- More life opportunities
- Better environment
- Eco-friendly
- Connected
- Better transport
- Better infrastructure
- Thriving economy
- Better place
- Better homes
- More available homes
- More affordable homes
- Other – please specify

**Response:**

**2. If you can, we would love you to tell us more about your vision for the Arc to 2050.**

**Response:**

*1. The vision for the Arc should be that all areas and the communities within it, benefit from being within it, with no area left behind. Previous discussions about what North Northamptonshire wants to achieve from being within the Arc were in relation to the delivery of the vision and outcomes set out in the adopted Joint Core Strategy (JCS), including North Northamptonshire in 2031 being:*

- *A showpiece for modern green living and well-managed sustainable development;*

- *A strong network of settlements within an enhanced green framework of living, working countryside*
- *Outward looking, taking advantage of its excellent transport connectivity to be a nationally important growth area and focus for inward investment*
- *More self-reliant...investment in infrastructure and jobs will have led to less need to travel and will have shaped places in a way that meets the needs and aspirations of local people*
- *An exemplar for construction-based innovation and the delivery of low carbon growth*

*2. North Northamptonshire has delivered a nationally significant scale of growth. We are determined to play our part in delivering the growth ambitions for the Arc in a way that benefits local communities, but we recognise that North Northamptonshire is peripheral to the main growth opportunities presented by investment in East-West connectivity, and that our main towns are secondary economic centres and the GVA is amongst the lowest in the Arc. New homes will need to be supported by significant investment in infrastructure, services and facilities, and growth in high quality jobs. There must also be a commitment to protecting, restoring and enhancing the environment across the Arc. The vision and ASF should facilitate this.*

*3. Central to the economic vision and overall growth strategy for North Northamptonshire is an ambitious agenda for place shaping, to ensure that development is genuinely sustainable and inclusive by creating places where people want to live, work and do business. New development will be guided by high quality design principles to create exemplar places that communities can feel proud of. This should underpin and be delivered by the ASF.*

### **3. How do you feel overall about the future of the Arc? What are your hopes and fears?**

#### **Response:**

*4. North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) recognises the opportunities provided by the Arc. As set out on page 5 of the North Northamptonshire Economic Prospectus, drawing on our success as a proven growth location, strong appetite exists within North Northamptonshire to continue to accommodate significant levels of sustainable growth and development in the future. Support from the government will be necessary to realise and deliver these ambitions.*

*5. NNC is actively involved in the development of the ASF at officer and member levels to maximise the opportunities and benefits for North Northamptonshire. It will be essential that the benefits of the Arc reach all areas within it.*

*6. The policy aspirations set out within the consultation document are welcomed. Given the lack of spatial detail in the current consultation, including on elements such as housing and employment growth, the specific implications or expectations for North Northamptonshire are unclear. It is noted that the document refers to the ASF identifying the most sustainable locations for new homes, including identifying*

*Opportunity Areas (para 5.6) and seeking to set policies to enable housing needs being met in full at para 5.7 but no further detail is provided on the implications of this. NNC and its residents would want to ensure that benefits for North Northamptonshire are maximised, when considering its contribution to meeting the growth objectives of the Arc.*

*7. It is critical that the Vision and policies within the ASF are delivered through sufficient investment in all areas and local authorities are not under pressure to deliver significant levels of housing without the necessary infrastructure and investment. We recognise that North Northamptonshire is at the geographic periphery of the Arc, relatively remote from the growth opportunities presented by investment in East-West Connectivity, and this remains a concern. Investment in key infrastructure, including an enhanced environment, will be critical to realising North Northamptonshire's contribution to the Arc by unlocking key sites for development and facilitating conditions for growth.*

We are preparing the OxCam Arc Spatial Framework to make the most of the area's unique potential for economic growth to 2050 and beyond.

**4. What do you think are the most important things that it needs to do, as a strategic plan, to achieve this? Work at an Arc-wide level to tackle shared issues/ opportunities on:**

- Environment
- Economy
- Connectivity and growth
- Place-making
- Supporting monitoring and delivery

**Response:**

*8. Protecting and enhancing the quality of the natural environment, and high standards of place-making should be given equally billing with growth in the economy and connectivity, something that should be fundamental in shaping the Arc's strategic plan.*

**5. If there is anything you would like to add, we would love you to tell us.**

**Response:**

*9. The proposed scope of the ASF covers the expected range of issues and the status of the document as national policy will provide greater certainty for the preparation of Local Plans (including the NNSP) that will need to take account of it. However, as discussed above, it is unclear whether the ASF will identify the quantum of housing and economic development in the Arc and the potential distribution of this. The document makes no mention of housing targets, saying only that the framework will seek to set policies to enable housing needs to be met in full. Further*

clarity on this will be important as the ASF is developed and the lack of spatial detail makes understanding and commenting on potential implications difficult.

10. The proposed status of the ASF as national policy is supported in principle. This is consistent with the responses of the North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Committee and North Northamptonshire Shadow Executive to the Planning for the Future White Paper, which set out that focused, democratically produced regional/sub-regional policy guidance could help simplify Local Plans. The responses also expressed a preference for Local Housing Need (LHN) to be determined taking account of the wider context provided by the emerging Spatial Framework for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, where it can be considered alongside employment provision, strategic infrastructure, and the varying constraints, opportunities, and ambitions across the Arc.

## Section 2. The Environment

### What do you think?

Thinking about your vision for the future of the area, how important is it that the Spatial Framework focuses on:

*Green spaces, nature, and biodiversity*

**1. Making sure the natural environment is protected, restored, and improved. For example, improving new and existing green spaces.**

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

**Response:**

**2. Making sure the most is made of the natural environment and that all people can have access to it. For example, making improvements to woodlands, wetland, green space and water and making sure people can visit them if they want to.**

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

**Response:**

**3. Making sure new growth leaves the environment in a better state than before. For example, keeping land in its natural state, and making it more wild, where appropriate.**

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

**Response:**

**4. Anything else to add about your vision for green spaces, nature, and biodiversity?**

**Response:**

11. *The environment must be central to all activity within the Arc. The ASF represents a real opportunity to ensure this by taking a coordinated approach. The Arc should aim to be an exemplar for sustainable living. NNC has endorsed the shared regional principles for protecting, restoring and enhancing the environment in the Arc. The council also supports the development of an Arc Environment Strategy to provide further guidance on how these principles can be delivered.*

12. *Given the ambitious and challenging nature of the principles they will require the collective effort of all partners in the Arc if they are to be delivered. They seek to address some of the biggest challenges of our time including achieving net zero carbon, climate resilience, biodiversity net gain, environmental net gain and ensuring renewable natural capital remains available for future generations. These ambitions will not come without significant challenges. There will be practical delivery challenges particularly to ensure development remains viable in all areas across the Arc.*

13. *North Northamptonshire is well placed to be an exemplar of sustainable living and working. The North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy already includes a vision to be ‘a showpiece for modern green living and well managed sustainable development: a resilient area where local choices have increased the ability to adapt to the impacts of climate change and to global economic changes.’ There are considerable opportunities to engage with the desire to double nature and increase biodiversity gain through projects including within the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA and the Rockingham Forest. It is hoped that the Arc will become a place where significant funding and support will become available to test and develop projects to deliver these environmental benefits and North Northamptonshire will be well placed to deliver these opportunities.*

14. *The concept of natural capital lies at the heart of North Northamptonshire’s growth strategy which recognises the importance of the natural environment and the opportunities it provides to enhance economic prosperity, productivity and inward investment.*

15. *The approach to Sustainability Appraisal/ Habitats Regulation’s Assessment (HRA) is welcomed. It is important to ensure that sustainability is fully embedded in the ASF. NNC will be particularly interested in the development of the HRA, as the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA could potentially have a significant impact on development in the area. The HRA for the ASF is also likely to influence the HRAs of local plans. The impact on SPAs needs to be strategically addressed. There will be potentially significant adverse impacts from increased disturbance to waterbirds from human activity, loss of supporting habitat and changes in ecological condition. The Arc should support regional evidence gathering and the ASF should look to landscape scale solutions. Natural England needs to be appropriately resourced to support local planning authorities and plan making. Funding to support the necessary surveys to ensure an up-to-date robust evidence base will also be necessary. The role of Nature Recovery Strategies will be important to inform priorities and these need to be delivered alongside the ASF. Aspiration for the*

*environment beyond mandatory minimum is important, but must be realistic, deliverable and not result in development becoming unviable.*

*16. Whilst we welcome the statement regarding the natural environment being accessible to all, controlling public access to sensitive sites may be required and there is a role for creating alternative natural greenspaces. A balance between the needs of people and the environment will be necessary in some locations.*

*17. The pandemic has highlighted the importance of access to local greenspace. The provision of good quality greenspace for people and nature must be a fundamental component of good place making*

### **Climate change resilience and net zero**

**5. Making sure new development helps to achieve net zero carbon at an Arc level towards national net zero targets. For example, through good design, sustainable travel choices, renewable energy and trapping carbon.**

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

#### **Response:**

**6. Making sure that new development can respond to the current and future effects of climate change. For example, through new carbon emissions, water use, waste disposal and renewable energy targets.**

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

#### **Response:**

**7. Anything else to add about your vision for climate change and/ or the contribution to net zero?**

#### **Response:**

*18. North Northamptonshire Council declared a climate and environment emergency at its Full Council meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2021.*

*19. Plan making whilst important cannot achieve net zero without significant changes in national policy relating to all aspects of the environment and economy. Although it is imperative that future development is net zero, national and local ambitions cannot be achieved without retrofitting of the existing stock of development, and programmes to address this will also be required.*

*20. Measures within the ASF which focus on reducing reliance on the private car and work towards decarbonisation, whilst also taking into account needs of the user, would be supported given that the key emitter of CO2 in North Northamptonshire is transport. Recognition of rural connectivity is needed and the difficulties that people, particularly those on low incomes, living in these areas can face in terms of accessibility and/or moving away from the private car due to poor alternative sustainable transport options. Exploring options for centres of mobility/mobility hubs*

*in these areas to serve local communities as well as recognising the importance of investing in digital infrastructure to help reduce the need to travel would be supported.*

*21. Furthermore, moves to support modal shift through greater (electric) rail-based connectivity between centres, both within and outside the arc, would be welcomed. The work being undertaken by England's Economic Heartland on this is referred to elsewhere in this response and should be reflected in the ASF and recognition of this in para 4.5 is welcomed.*

*22. Decarbonisation of the road fleet and its electrification is an area that needs to be addressed before the banning of new petrol, diesel and hybrid cars in 2035.*

*23. Given the key role that decentralised and renewable heat and energy will play in future, the Arc provides a great opportunity to identify and coordinate areas of future network stress as well as opportunities to implement innovative solutions (for example district heat networks). Ensuring sufficient capacity exists in locations which want to deliver strategic scale interventions is imperative if the Arc is to deliver on its net zero ambitions and deliver development which is truly sustainable.*

*24. It is considered that the document could be more specific as to the Arc's Net Zero ambitions as it seems the key reference at para 4.5 seems non-committal. North Northamptonshire, although having recently declared a climate and environment emergency, has not set a date it seeks the area to reach net zero by. Having a clear target set through the Arc that has been tested through the ASF, including in relation to viability would help provide local clarity in this respect and provide a basis for local plan-making, and associated activities, to work towards.*

### **Air quality and waste**

**8. Making sure new development helps to improve air quality within the Arc. For example, through high quality design, low emission zones and sustainable transport.**

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

#### **Response:**

**9. Taking a combined approach to air quality across the Arc. For example, through being careful about where each land uses should go, supporting journeys via public transport and active travel and enhancing green spaces and routes across the area.**

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

#### **Response:**

**10. Making better use of resources and managing waste. For example, promoting the re-use of materials, and protecting and improving soil quality and minerals.**

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

#### **Response:**

## 11. Anything else to add about your vision for air quality and waste?

### **Response:**

25. A hierarchy of air quality mitigation is required (preventing/avoiding, reduction and minimisation and offsetting). A combination of local, regional and national mechanisms will be required.

26. The Arc would appear to be an ideal candidate to seek to promote and encourage the circular economy and thus helping to minimise waste and promote sustainable development.

27. Linked to the above responses, we note that the electrification of transport will have a key role in improving air quality albeit this will need be augmented by action in other areas. In this respect investment in natural capital can play a key role in improving air quality and efforts to deliver projects at the strategic and local scale are supported in this respect.

28. An Arc wide approach to mineral extraction and restoration would be helpful to ensure not only a sufficient supply of aggregates for construction, but also to ensure a coordinated approach to environmental net gain through restoration of such sites.

## Water

12. Promoting a combined approach to managing water across the Arc, through protecting water resources, improving water quality and reducing the risk of flooding. For example, treating wastewater, improving water storage, and reusing surface runoff.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

### **Response:**

13. Making sure new development reduces existing flood risk and is resilient to future flooding. For example, through tree planting and multifunctional sustainable drainage.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

### **Response:**

14. Improving water availability and cutting the risk of drought. For example, through new sustainable water resources and infrastructure, and measures which reduce water use.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

### **Response:**



## 15. Anything else to add about your vision for water?

### **Response:**

29. A long-term water cycle approach is required underpinned by collaborative working between agencies and delivery partners.

30. North Northamptonshire has been subject to serious flooding in recent years, including in areas which have not been previously known to flood, with climate change and extreme levels of rainfall playing a role in this. It is imperative that the Arc Vision, in the context of growing existing and new areas, places great emphasis on safeguarding communities, be it through hard or soft infrastructure or other approaches.

31. Despite the above, North Northamptonshire is in the driest region of the UK with low rainfall (71% of the UK average) and high evaporation losses. Water resources are already under pressure and the region is designated as an area of serious water stress by the Environment Agency where opportunities for new water resources are limited. This is reflected in policy 9 of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy. New development opportunities/areas need to be mindful of this fact, with the potential for Arc scale infrastructure interventions flagged as potentially necessary in future if the area is to realise its true potential.

### **Section 3. The Economy**

#### What do you think?

Thinking about your vision for the future of the area, how important is it that the Spatial Framework focuses on:

#### *Education and training*

1. Making sure the Arc keeps growing as a place of educational excellence, partnership and research. For example, through growth which helps existing universities and colleges.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

### **Response:**

2. Making sure the economic benefits of growth are felt by all communities within the Arc. For example, through putting new education and training facilities in places where more people can easily get to go to them.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

### **Response:**

### 3. Anything else to add about your vision for education and training?

#### **Response:**

32. Education and training are the bedrock of an inclusive society. It is imperative that if the Arc is to realise its ambitions that all parts of society have the opportunity to play its role. Central to this is the ability of people to access education and training, either in person or remotely, with the necessary infrastructure (including superfast broadband) required to do so.

33. North Northamptonshire has consistently been one of the fastest growing areas in the UK yet despite this it has no Higher Education facility for local residents to access, the result being a net loss of people (particularly younger residents) from the area, and who often do not return. Given the continued growth aspirations of North Northamptonshire, it is imperative the Arc Vision recognises this local deficit and prioritises rectifying this in order to help the area level up and increase social mobility for its residents, to the benefit of the wider Arc area. Opportunities exist to deliver this in partnership with existing universities and colleges and to help deliver education in areas of expertise (for example, green technologies and motorsports).

#### **Jobs and businesses**

4. Making sure that the Arc keeps growing as a place for business, science and technology, and innovation. For example, through putting these types of new workspaces in places where they can make the most of cross-sector collaboration.  
[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

#### **Response:**

5. Making sure that existing industries keep growing within the Arc. For example, through putting industries in the best places to suit their needs.  
[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

#### **Response:**

6. Making sure the Arc builds upon and grows its skills, expertise and capabilities. For example, through making sure people can get around easily to bring the right people to the right job locations.  
[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

#### **Response:**

7. Making sure that the right types of buildings are provided in the Arc so that businesses can keep growing as well as supporting the green economy. For example, through building new flexible and adaptable workspaces meeting the needs of a range of different businesses of different sizes.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

**Response:**

8. Anything else to add about your vision for jobs and businesses?

**Response:**

34. North Northamptonshire has a strong economy that is underpinned by both existing established sectors and innovative breakthrough sectors which offer high growth potential. The area's strengths in these sectors are supported by a thriving start-up culture and the presence of major global brands. Existing sector strengths identified in the North Northamptonshire Economic Prospectus include Logistics, Manufacturing, Retail and leisure and Visitor economy.

35. The Economic Prospectus sets out that the key opportunity for North Northamptonshire going forward is to align new employment generation with sector opportunities identified across the wider Oxford-Cambridge Arc economic area, and in doing so, support higher value business growth and activity. This includes key growth sectors underpinning the South East Midlands Local Industrial Strategy such as those related to digital technologies and artificial intelligence, logistics, clean growth, precision engineering and autonomous vehicles, as well as life sciences specialisms which are starting to be realised across the wider Arc.

36. Despite being one of the fastest growing areas in the UK in recent years in terms of housing delivery, and with tens of thousands more houses in the pipeline, North Northamptonshire has struggled to deliver higher value jobs and has lagged behind other areas of the Arc in this respect with our GVA amongst the lowest in the Arc. The economic base of some parts of North Northamptonshire has been characterised by low skilled and low paid activities, with wages not keeping up with the cost of housing to create issues of local affordability, despite being one of the most affordable parts of the Arc.

37. If the Arc is to achieve its full potential, areas on its geographic periphery, such as North Northamptonshire, must be prioritised for investment including Education (see previous answer) and interventions to support economic growth. Doing so would make this part of the Arc even more attractive to prospective investors, be it from a homebuying or business/industrial perspective and help the area to level up to the benefit of the wider Arc.

38. Connectivity and the ability of residents to access employment opportunities will be key for the Arc and being at the forefront of systematic changes will be critical in future. Improved rail connectivity can play a role in this, as will improved access to, and speed of, digital infrastructure, be it in terms of superfast broadband and the opportunities this brings, to accessing on demand clean modes of transport.

## Section 4. Connectivity and Infrastructure

### What do you think?

Thinking about the future of the area, how important is it that the Spatial Framework focuses on:

#### Infrastructure

1. Making sure planning takes a combined approach to new development by providing the infrastructure and services required at the right time to support growth. For example, by planning for the need for utilities (e.g. water, energy, waste) and community infrastructure (e.g. schools, hospitals, GP surgeries).  
[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

#### Response:

2. Making sure new development makes the most of existing resources. For example, through making sure that materials are reused, renewable energy supplies are used, and waste is properly planned for.  
[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

#### Response:

3. Making sure that digital infrastructure is put in at the same time as other development takes place. For example, speeding up the fitting of high-speed broadband to support home-based work and help new ways of learning.  
[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

#### Response:

4. Anything else to add about your vision for infrastructure?

#### Response:

39. Development needs to be accompanied by all of the necessary infrastructure to support it, and it must be of high quality, sustainable design, meeting local needs and supporting the local economy, alongside maximising environmental net gain and mitigation to climate change. It is also critical that this is delivered alongside development in a timely manner to the benefit of existing and new residents (the “social” dimension of sustainable development).

40. In parts of North Northamptonshire, particularly areas with lower land values, viability impacts on the delivery of infrastructure and affordable housing. The North Northamptonshire Investment Framework (June 2019) identified that the highest priority infrastructure projects had a funding shortfall of just under £316m, based on a ‘point-in-time’ snapshot as at June 2019. This shortfall represents the tip of the iceberg for North Northamptonshire. Investment in key infrastructure will be critical to

*realise North Northamptonshire's contribution to the Arc. In this respect initiatives to aid the delivery of new infrastructure would be welcomed.*

### *New development*

**5. Making sure growth within the Arc is placed around areas with better transport links. For example, through having more development around stations and bus routes, supported by cycling and walking tracks.**

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

#### **Response:**

**6. Making sure new development cuts down the need to travel around the local area. For example, through providing safe and easy walking and cycling routes to town centres, shops and schools.**

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

#### **Response:**

**7. Making sure new developments reduce existing and future infrastructure demand and resources used. For example, making sure that designs leave enough space for existing and future measures which reduce energy and water use, and cut down on waste.**

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

#### **Response:**

**8. Making sure sustainable transport principles are included in the design of new developments. For example, by designing new developments in a way that enables people to walk or cycle all or part of their journeys.**

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

#### **Response:**

**9. Anything else to add about new developments in the context of connectivity and infrastructure?**

#### **Response:**

*41. North Northamptonshire is already making an important contribution to achieving wider growth objectives associated with its strategic location within a nationally*

important growth area. Connectivity and investment in infrastructure are key to delivery of sustainable growth.

42. The North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Committee was consistently supportive of any measures that seek the enhancement of sustainable transport and encourage walking and cycling. However, consideration must be given to developments in more rural areas where alternative sustainable modes of transport away from the private car are more limited in terms of availability, practicality and cost. Suitable measures to overcome these barriers need to be addressed.

43. In terms of distance, the main towns of North Northamptonshire are located relatively closely to one another, and this presents opportunities to deliver modal shift for travel between these locations. Green Infrastructure and new cycle routes provide a particular opportunity to facilitate modal shift in a location where travel to work area is relatively contained (people travel small distances) but car use dominates. The relatively rural nature of North Northamptonshire as found between settlements provides the opportunity to deliver net zero transport links to the benefit of residents and could provide an exemplar for the wider Arc area.

44. Changing working habits such as increased remote working are likely to lead to reduced demand for journeys to work, particularly as result of homeworking becoming the norm for many people during the Covid-19 pandemic. The impacts of this will need to be considered in the development of the ASF.

45. There is a need to improve access to digital connectivity (such as in rural areas), by, for example, securing efficient broadband provision for all. This is now even more critical given the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and the shift for many people and businesses to home working. Addressing this matter is vital in ensuring the continuation of business growth and improving access for residents to services and opportunities in ways that reduce the need to travel, which in turn also contribute to the decarbonisation of the transport network.

## Getting around

**10. Creating better transport connections across the Arc and making sure they are provided in a way which supports sustainable new growth. For example, by planning for public transport and physical transport infrastructure requirements.**  
[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

### **Response:**

**11. Making sure there are more opportunities for active travel such as walking and cycling across the Arc. For example, wider pavements, segregated cycle lanes, improved network of cycle lanes, and better pedestrian crossings.**  
[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

### **Response:**

12. Making sure that there is the right form of public transport in the right areas across the Arc and can be used by all travellers, including people with any particular needs.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

**Response:**

13. Cutting down on the impact of cars and other private vehicles within the Arc. For example, by supporting more sustainable forms of private travel like cycling.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

**Response:**

14. Anything else to add about your vision of getting around?

**Response:**

46. North Northamptonshire has previously raised concerns through the North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Committee in respect of both the Arc and to England's Economic Heartland that as the area is on the geographic periphery of the Arc/ England's Economic Heartland (EEH) area it was at risk of being marginalised in terms of its role within it. We welcome the work being undertaken by EEH in relation to this, including the development of connectivity studies and welcome recognition in para 4.5 that the ASF will set strategic policies which build on the EEH transport strategy. It is important that key strategic routes that have previously been identified as requiring more recognition and potential improvement such as the A43, A45, A14, A6 and A509, as well as potential new rail opportunities are encompassed in this work. We welcome the identification of a north East-West Arc in the EEH transport strategy and the opportunity this potentially brings to enhance the Nuneaton to Felixstowe Line. In addition, we are fully supportive of opening the line between Corby and Peterborough in the short to medium term. These improvements will improve access for residents of North Northamptonshire to the greater East-West rail corridor.

47. Long-term strategic planning is vital to ensure connectivity is embedded into plan-making at all scales. The full environmental impact of transport schemes needs to be addressed. The pricing of ticketing on public transport (particularly trains) needs to be addressed as it is a disincentive to use (for example it costs more to travel to London from North Northamptonshire using East Midlands Railway than comparable journeys using adjacent rail franchises). Finding space for active travel, particularly segregated areas, in existing built-up areas can be challenging. Greater funding for walking and cycling schemes will be required to provide new attractive facilities to encourage use. Alternatives to fossil fuel use in vehicles will play a key role. A strategy for freight and distribution is required and the work being undertaken by EEH in this regard is noted.

## Section 5. Place-making

### What do you think?

Thinking about the future of the area, how important is it that the Spatial Framework focuses on:

#### *Location of growth*

1. Making sure new developments are built in the most sustainable locations, for the environment, the economy and communities. For example, by developing brownfield redevelopment and making sure they have good access to town centres, shops and schools.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

#### **Response:**

2. Anything else to add about your vision for location of growth?

#### **Response:**

48. Growth should be located at the most sustainable locations and facilitate the conditions for settlements to be more sustainable. Environmental constraints and opportunities must be fully considered in determining the locations of growth. The Joint Core Strategy and Part 2 Local Plans set out the vision for the location of growth in North Northamptonshire and given the emphasis on strategic scale growth, these locations will play their part in terms of delivery over the long term.

49. Appropriate brownfield development should be encouraged, whilst recognising that some brownfield sites represent important habitats. The Part 1 Brownfield Register\* for North Northamptonshire details a number of potential sites which, if redeveloped, could regenerate and enhance the vitality of settlements across the area and assist in the delivery of, for example, new affordable housing, custom and self-build opportunities, as well as in the viability of local services and facilities (\*this will be augmented by a local Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment which is due to commence this year). The main reason that many of these sites have not been delivered to date centres around their viability, this needs to be addressed.

#### *Homes in your area*



**3. Ensuring the right types of housing are delivered in the right locations to meet the needs of both renters and buyers. For example, family houses, first-time buyers, specialist housing, student accommodation and opportunities for people to build their own homes.**

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

**Response:**

**4. Increasing the amount and availability of affordable homes within the Arc.**

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

**Response:**

**5. Anything else to add about your vision for homes in your area?**

**Response:**

50. *Central to the economic vision and overall growth strategy for North Northamptonshire is an ambitious agenda for place shaping, to ensure that development is genuinely sustainable and inclusive by creating places where people want to live, work and do business. New development will be guided by high quality design principles to create exemplar places that communities can feel proud of. This should underpin and be delivered by the ASF.*

51. *Residents share similar concerns to the Council regarding the need for high-quality development that meets local needs and is supported by the necessary infrastructure investment.*

52. *Development needs to incorporate an appropriate amount of affordable housing to meet locally identified needs, be supported by all of the necessary infrastructure, and be of high-quality, sustainable design. In parts of North Northamptonshire, particularly areas with lower land values, viability constraints often undermine these objectives, for example resulting in less than 10% affordable housing in large Garden Community developments.*

53. *While house prices in North Northamptonshire are relatively affordable in a wider context, median household incomes are also relatively low and have not kept pace with house price inflation. Alongside access to bespoke affordable housing products, opportunities for higher paid employment (as sought by the JCS focus on higher skilled jobs) will be the most effective ways of improving the affordability of market housing for the existing community.*

54. *New housing which meets the needs of older persons is also a concern locally, particularly for affordable needs, and it is imperative that a greater supply of this is provided given what is known about future demographics, particularly across North Northamptonshire.*

55. *Assistance with the delivery of brownfield sites could provide ability to unlock constrained sites and deliver more housing, which in many instances is located in*

sustainable locations, to the benefit of existing communities and initiatives to prioritise this would be supported.

### *Design of new developments and streets*

**6. Making sure a coordinated approach is taken to the design and delivery of new developments to ensure they are supported by new and existing infrastructure.**  
[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

**Response:**

**7. Making sure the environment and sustainability is at the heart of new developments. For example, by improving the built and natural environment, making sure development complements surrounding areas, and is supported by the right level of infrastructure.**  
[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

**Response:**

**8. Making sure there is the right mix of uses in new developments to help make high quality and thriving new places.**  
[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

**Response:**

**9. Making sure new developments help support healthy lifestyles for existing and future communities. For example, through walking and cycling, high quality green spaces, and accessible streets.**  
[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

**Response:**

**10. Making sure new developments promote resilience to climate change. For example, through green roofs, managing surface water, tree planting, storing rainwater and new green spaces.**  
[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

**Response:**

**11. Anything else to add about your vision for the design of new developments and streets?**

**Response:**

56. It is welcomed that the document recognises that the essential ingredients of successful placemaking, and that design quality is not simply about housing delivery. Great places go beyond aesthetics and visual appearance, encompassing other important principles such as social opportunity/integration, community, health/wellbeing, and local economy. North Northamptonshire supports Building for a Healthy Life (BHL) 2020 as a valuable tool in assessing and shaping development proposals.

57. Access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities and can deliver wider benefits for nature and efforts to address climate change. Access to this type of space is considered particularly important in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and supports the delivery of high-quality sustainable design (as highlighted in the North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Committee and North Northamptonshire Shadow Executive responses to the Planning White Paper).

58. An important consideration in terms of future climate change is leaving space within development to accommodate the impacts of this – for example, having an area to accommodate future flood defences, fallow land to serve as a flood plain etc.

59. As also raised in the responses to the Planning White Paper, significant resources will be required (in both public and private sectors) to implement these measures through local design policy. Additional resources will be needed given capacity issues and the pressure already on the design service in North Northamptonshire.

## **Section 6. Our commitment to engaging communities**

### **What do you think?**

#### **1. How can government engage the public better?**

[Communication materials/ Social listening/ Focus groups/ 1-1 interviews and experiments/ Ethnography/ Citizen assemblies and citizen juries/ Other types of engagement]

#### **Response:**

#### **2. Before this consultation, I was familiar with the area known as the Oxford-Cambridge Arc.**

[Yes/ No]

#### **Response:**

#### **3. Do you have anything else to add on engaging communities?**

#### **Response:**

60. *There is no one size fits all for properly engaging with all parts of the community on all aspects of planning. An increased use of social media and digital tools may help to engage with younger people but could be a disincentive to others. For the plan making process these digital methods need to be supplemented by more proactive methods such as workshops, exhibitions and other consultation events*

61. *The commitments in the document regarding consultation and engagement are supported, as are the measures to ensure sustainability is at the heart of the ASF. It is critical that these matters underpin the preparation of the ASF. The timetable for the ASF is challenging and will require significant input from North Northamptonshire Council and other stakeholders (including an anticipated three consultations in 18 months). It is important that this time pressure does not undermine engagement and robust testing of the ASF and the evidence base that underpins it. It is noted that the current timetable does not include for an independent examination of the proposals or an end date for the ASF to be finalised as national policy.*

### **Section 7. Our commitment to data, evidence and digital tools**

## What do you think?

**1. To what extent do you agree with our proposed approach on data and evidence?**  
[Strongly disagree/ Disagree/ Neutral/ Agree/ Strongly agree]

### **Response:**

**2. Do you have anything else to add on data, evidence and digital tools?**

### **Response:**

62. *The commitment to developing a robust, accessible evidence base is strongly supported and should assist implementation of the ASF and support local plan development. Officers from North Northamptonshire Council have participated in useful discussions with MHCLG to discuss how this can best be achieved. Evidence produced for the North Northamptonshire Strategic Plan will inform the Council's input into the ASF. The Joint Core Strategy and other strategies endorsed by the Joint Planning Committee/ Joint Delivery Committee, including the North Northamptonshire [Investment Framework](#) and [Economic Prospectus](#), are all a strong starting point. As discussed earlier in this response, it is critical that the ASF evidence base addresses and seeks to resolve key issues that could constrain sustainable growth within the Arc such as the impact of Special Protection Areas (SPAs), infrastructure constraints, etc. This will help support Local Plan development and implementation.*

63. *The use of digital tools is welcomed and will help to ensure that key data and information can be shared to a wider audience and encourage active participation.*

## Section 8. How we will monitor and deliver the Framework

# Delivery and funding

What do you think?

1. To what extent do you agree with our proposed approach on delivery and funding?

[Strongly disagree/ Disagree/ Neutral/ Agree/ Strongly agree]

**Response:**

2. Do you have anything else to add on delivery and funding?

**Response:**

64. *The approach to assessing viability and identifying key infrastructure within the development of the ASF at para 8.5 is supported as the approach and policies in the ASF need to be deliverable. It will be essential that it is delivered on the ground and sufficiently funded. In parts of North Northamptonshire, particularly areas with lower land values, viability impacts on the delivery of infrastructure, design quality and affordable housing. As set out earlier in this response, the North Northamptonshire Investment Framework (June 2019) identified that the highest priority infrastructure projects had a funding shortfall of just under £316m, based on a 'point-in-time' snapshot as at June 2019. This shortfall represents the tip of the iceberg for North Northamptonshire.*

65. *Alongside the provision of sufficient infrastructure funding, local authorities will require sufficient resources to implement the ASF locally.*

# Monitoring and evaluation

What do you think?

1. To what extent do you agree with our proposed approach on monitoring and evaluation?

[Strongly disagree/ Disagree/ Neutral/ Agree/ Strongly agree]

**Response:**

2. Do you have anything else to add on monitoring and evaluation?

**Response:**

66. *It is unclear who will undertake the monitoring and provide the data. If local authorities are to have a role they will need to be appropriately resourced. Clear*

*definitions of indicators and methodologies will be needed to ensure consistency. There will also need to be sufficient lead in time to gather any data or information to inform the monitoring process.*

*67. It is suggested that potential indicators are considered when drafting policies to provide a fit between the two, and to ensure the former can genuinely provide meaningful outputs from which changes can be identified.*

*68. Further clarity on whether there will be an Arc databank for local authorities to use/input into would be useful.*

DRAFT