

# North Northamptonshire Strategic Plan Scope and Issues March 2022

## *Foreword from Executive Member for Growth & Regeneration*

### **Introduction**

The [North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy \(JCS\)](#) was adopted in July 2016. It is the strategic part 1 Local Plan for North Northamptonshire, providing the big picture for development across North Northamptonshire in the period 2011-2031 and ensuring that an up-to-date decision-making and investment framework is in place. It contains policies to deliver sustainable development including 35,000 new homes and 31,100 new jobs to 2031. Additional local detail is provided by Part 2 Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans where these have been or are being produced.

### ***What is the North Northamptonshire Strategic Plan***

The Strategic Plan will cover the whole of North Northamptonshire. The plan will review and, where appropriate, replace the policies that address the strategic priorities for the area. The plan will not cover minerals and waste planning as this will be a matter for the Minerals and Waste Local Plan. The Strategic Plan will be supported by a combination of area-based or topic-based plans, which could include reviews and updates of the Part 2 Local Plans. This consultation on Scope and Issues is the first formal stage of preparing the Strategic Plan. The latest timetable is set out below:

- Scope and Issues Consultation - March 2022
- Options Consultation - November 2022
- Draft Plan Consultation - June 2023
- Publication Plan Consultation - November 2023
- Submission to the Secretary of State - April 2024
- Examination - September 2024
- Inspector's Report - April 2025
- Adoption - September 2025

### ***What is this document about***

The Scope and Issues consultation is the first stage of the Strategic Plan. At this stage we are looking for your views on whether we have identified the right issues facing North Northamptonshire and what the plan should cover.

There is a statutory requirement to undertake a review of the Local Plan within five years of adoption to ensure that planning policies are kept up to date and respond to changing local needs and circumstances.

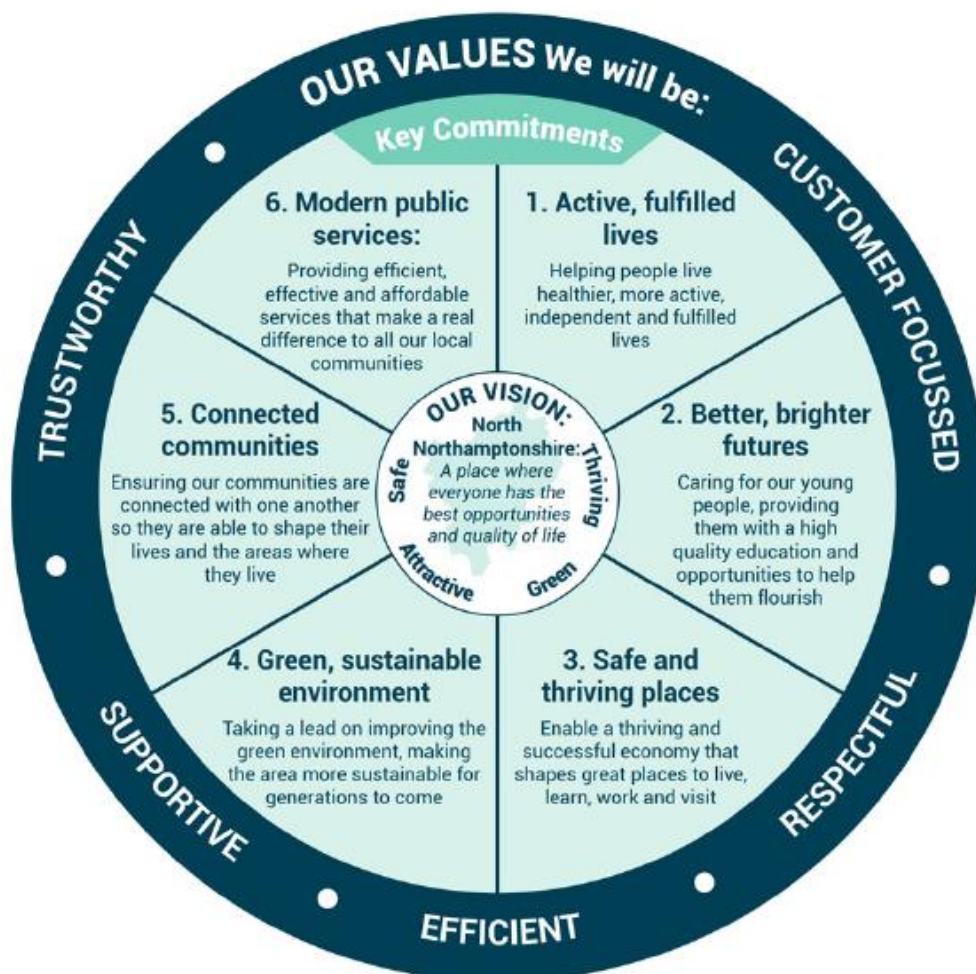
## Relationship with the North Northamptonshire Corporate Plan

The Strategic Plan will take forward the key commitments for the Council set out in the [Corporate Plan](#)<sup>1</sup>, that was adopted on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021 and provide the spatial dimension to it.

The Corporate Plan sets out the Vision for North Northamptonshire:

*“A place where everyone has the best opportunities and quality of life”*

In addition to its Vision, the Corporate Plan sets out the six key commitments (priorities) the Council is making to North Northamptonshire residents.



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.northnorthants.gov.uk/corporate-plan>

The Corporate Plan sets out further detail on what these priorities mean:

## Our priorities for North Northamptonshire

### 1. Active, fulfilled lives:

- Greater access to better quality adult social care
- Value and support our carers and volunteers
- Improve the accessibility and use of leisure, culture, art and sport
- Provide enhanced support to improve mental health and wellbeing
- Tackle the causes of complex problems such as poverty and homelessness

### 2. Better, brighter futures:

- Ensure every child has equal access to a high standard of education
- Support partners and the Children's Trust to provide higher standards of support
- Promote better training, further education and employment opportunities for young people

### 3. Safe and thriving places:

- Strengthen the cultural identity of towns, villages and rural communities
- Help town centres and villages respond to changing trends
- Attract tourism, visitors and inward investment
- Working with local businesses and partners to support the creation of high-quality, better-skilled jobs
- Improve the standard of new and existing homes and ensure housing supply meets demand
- Tackle the causes of difficult issues leading to nuisance, crime and anti-social behaviour
- Maintain our highways infrastructure to keep people moving safely around North Northamptonshire
- Enable people to travel across North Northamptonshire and beyond

### 4. Green, sustainable environment:

- Demonstrate clear leadership on tackling environmental sustainability
- Work with communities and businesses to tackle climate change and improve air quality
- Promote sustainable, active travel
- Embed low carbon technology, sustained and improved green infrastructure, and sustainable forms of transport fit for the future
- Educate, encourage re-use, harmonise our approaches and enforce to keep our environment free from litter
- Protect the countryside and open spaces, and enhance the natural environment and ecology

### 5. Connected communities:

- Inform and listen to our communities, giving them a greater say in their future
- Respect and engage our local diverse communities and town and parish councils
- Empower a thriving voluntary and community sector

### 6. Modern public services:

- Provide good quality and efficient services valued by our customers
- Enhance the services provided at our Community Hubs
- Invest in and value our staff to become an employer of choice
- Use our assets, skills, knowledge and technology most effectively
- Ensure very robust financial and performance management

*North Northamptonshire Corporate Plan priorities*

Whilst all the priorities are relevant to the Strategic Plan it is considered that priorities 3: *Safe and thriving places* and 4: *Green, sustainable environment* are of particular relevance to it.

## ***Scope of the Strategic Plan***

The Strategic Plan will focus on strategic matters which will, as a minimum, meet the requirement, set out in the NPPF<sup>2</sup>, for the Council to have a plan that addresses the strategic priorities for its area. The plan will also help to deliver the priorities set out in other Council plans and strategies, notably the Corporate Plan (discussed above). The plan will also need to respond to the challenges and opportunities presented by the Oxford-Cambridge Arc (discussed on page x).

To address the strategic priorities for the area it is expected that the scope of the plan will include the issues set out below. This may be refined subject to any changes to national and sub-regional guidance and in response to consultation feedback.

- **The spatial vision for North Northamptonshire** – extended to 2050 to reflect the Oxford-Cambridge Arc Spatial Framework (ASF) and meet the requirements of the NPPF.
- **The approach to climate change** – setting the framework for the local response to the climate emergency, building on existing initiatives and setting priorities to deliver net zero carbon.
- **The approach to Levelling Up** – setting the framework for the local response to addressing inequalities and setting priorities to level up.
- **The spatial strategy for the distribution of development** – including the roles of settlements and the distribution of housing, employment, retail, leisure, and other commercial development. Cooperation will be needed with adjoining authorities and other relevant agencies to ensure cross boundary issues, including options for the longer-term growth of Northampton, Bedford and Peterborough are considered.
- **The housing requirement** – the number of new homes to be provided across North Northamptonshire and the distribution of these. Within this context, the size, type, and tenure of housing needed for different groups will be identified, including addressing the proportion of the overall housing requirement that should be provided as affordable and planning for the needs of an ageing population.
- **Economic growth** – an economic vision to strengthen and diversify the economy of North Northamptonshire, taking account of existing sectoral strengths, opportunities provided by the Oxford-Cambridge Arc and implications of Covid-19, including changes to working patterns. An overall jobs target for North Northamptonshire, distribution of this and identification of new employment land capable of meeting a wide variety of needs.
- **Town Centres** - updated policy guidance and strategy for town centres and retail development taking account of the impact of policy changes and social/economic implications including Covid-19. This will focus on reimagining and redesigning town centres to support regeneration and economic recovery from Covid-19

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<sup>2</sup> National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Paras 20- 23, Strategic policies

including opportunities for town centres to become community service hubs with increased leisure and residential space.

- **Infrastructure** – key infrastructure projects that are required to deliver the strategy such as strategic transport schemes including active travel, utility networks, community facilities, health, emergency services infrastructure and site-specific requirements.
- **Strategic Development Locations and Opportunities** – strategic sites that are key to the delivery of the spatial strategy will be identified in the plan. The strategic site threshold<sup>3</sup> will be refined as the plan is progressed, including consultation on its scope. The location of these sites will be a key consideration in the context of climate-change related risks and ensuring future development contributes towards a reduction in carbon emissions. The plan will define clear development principles for these areas. These will provide the basis for design codes/frameworks.
- **Place-making/sustainable development** – key principles to ensure high quality development that is sustainable and supports local communities. The design and future sustainability of development will be a key consideration in the approach to climate change and the Strategic Plan will set out a stronger approach to integrating land-use and transport considerations. This will include a review and refresh of the Protecting Assets policies in the JCS to ensure they are locally distinctive with increased emphasis on health and wellbeing. It may be necessary to harmonise the approach to open space/sports provision across North Northamptonshire and the broad criteria for the delivery of these.
- **Natural and Historic Environment** – key principles and measures to achieve environmental net gain including the protection, restoration, and enhancement of natural, and historic assets. This will include natural capital benefits such as flood protection, recreation and improved water and air quality as well as ensuring appropriate measures for internationally, nationally and locally designated sites and priority habitats or protected species. The Strategic Plan will seek to maximise the health and wellbeing benefits of nature and accessibility to it. Opportunities to enhance the green and blue infrastructure network within North Northamptonshire and maximise its wider benefits and opportunities will be set out. The spatial strategy and place-making approach will be influenced by the importance of the natural and historic environment including the role they play in creating local distinctiveness.

These issues are discussed in more detail within the document along with questions to obtain feedback.

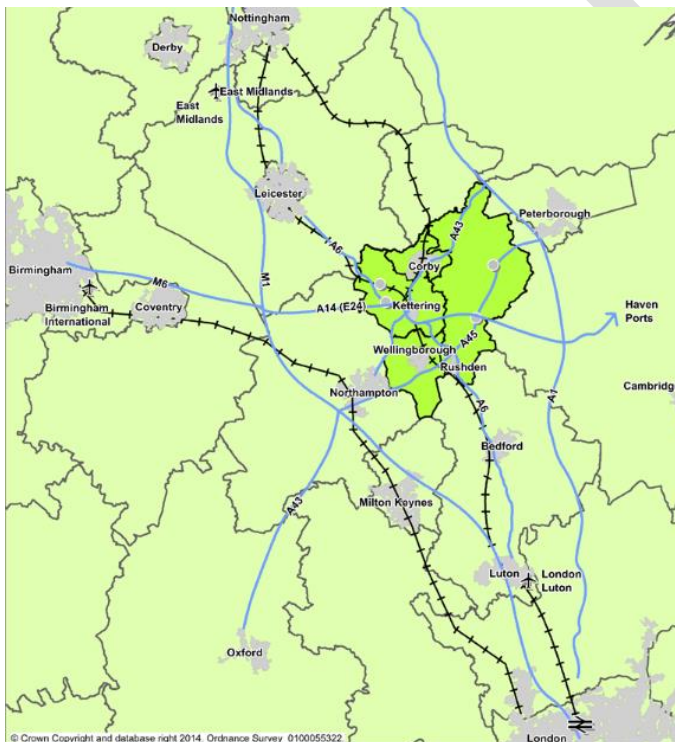
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<sup>3</sup> The current threshold in the JCS is 500+ dwellings or 5+ ha of employment land. This will be reviewed taking account of the thresholds for development proposals to be considered by the Council's Strategic Development Management Committee.

## Spatial context

North Northamptonshire is the area covered by the four former boroughs and districts of Corby, Kettering, East Northamptonshire and Wellingborough (see Image 1 below). It has a population of c.350,000<sup>4</sup>, which has grown at one of the fastest rates in the country during the last few years, spread across a distinctive network of settlements, from large (“growth”) and market towns through to villages (of which there are over 100). It is bordered by the local authority areas of West Northamptonshire (comprising the former local authority areas of Northampton, Daventry, South Northamptonshire), Rutland, Harborough, South Kesteven, Peterborough, Huntingdonshire, Milton Keynes and Bedford. It is also part of the Oxford - Cambridge Arc area identified by Government for its significant economic potential.

**Image 1: Location of North Northamptonshire**



North Northamptonshire benefits from a central location and excellent strategic transport connections. The A14 provides links to the M1, M6 and A1 as well as the East Coast Ports, while the Midland Main Line provides rail connections from Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough to London (with onward Eurostar trains) and north to Leicester, Nottingham and beyond. A range of international airports are all within 70 miles of North Northamptonshire.

<sup>4</sup> ONS (2020) Mid-2019 Population Estimates. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationestimatesforukenglandandwalesscotlandandnorthernireland>

Each settlement has its own role to play and contribution to make to the overall sense of place and character of North Northamptonshire. Many of the towns have undergone significant change and economic evolution in recent decades, following their expansion as centres for the boot and shoe industry or, in the case of Corby, for the steel industry, and subsequent decline of these industries.

The relationship between the network of settlements and the surrounding countryside is a distinctive feature of North Northamptonshire and one of the main attractions for residents and businesses seeking a **high-quality environment**. A marked contrast exists between the quiet rural character of much of the area, particularly the rural northeast of the area and the main settlements in the urban spine where the emphasis is on investment in growth and renewal. The countryside incorporates many of North Northamptonshire's environmental, cultural and heritage assets such as the Nene Valley and Rockingham Forest.

The economy tends to function as two distinct sub-areas, with the northern area focused on Corby and Kettering and the southern area on Wellingborough and Rushden, which has closer functional links with Northampton and Bedford. Whilst manufacturing still represents a key component of the area's economy, it has become significantly more advanced taking advantage of the latest innovative technology, with service-based sectors also playing an important role. The area has seen significant growth in, and demand for logistics floorspace.

North Northamptonshire is not uniform, socially or economically, with pockets of rural deprivation and three wards (Windmill Ward in Kettering (previously known as Avondale Grange), Kingswood & Hazel Leys in Corby, and Queensway in Wellingborough) are identified as 'left behind neighbourhoods' with significant levels of social and economic deprivation, typically characterised by lacking places to meet, barriers to active and engaged community and performing less well on measures of social connectivity<sup>5</sup>. Additionally, house prices are so high in some rural parts of North Northamptonshire that it is extremely difficult for lower incomes and new emerging households to be able to buy or rent affordable housing.

North Northamptonshire has a range of health inequalities, with a disproportionate number of negative health outcomes compared to the England average<sup>6</sup>. For example, North Northamptonshire is significantly worse than the average in England for adults who are overweight or obese, alcohol related hospital admissions, hospital admissions due to falls in 65+ years and adult smoking.

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<sup>5</sup> 'Left behind? Understanding communities on the edge', Local Trust and Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion, August 2019: <https://localtrust.org.uk/policy/left-behind-neighbourhoods/>

<sup>6</sup> Northamptonshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment - [Health and Wellbeing in Northamptonshire, April 2021](#)

## Current Spatial Strategy

The JCS sets out a spatial strategy for the area which outlines the role places play and how development is distributed between these places. This is an urban-focused strategy which identifies Corby, Kettering, Wellingborough and Rushden as Growth Towns providing the focus for co-ordinated regeneration and growth in jobs, housing, leisure, retail and services.

Burton Latimer, Desborough, Higham Ferrers, Irthlingborough, Oundle, Raunds, Rothwell and Thrapston are defined as Market Towns with a scale of development related to existing commitments, infrastructure capacity, regeneration needs and local character, allowing them to provide a strong service role for the local community and wider rural hinterland. Development in the rural areas is limited to that required to support a prosperous rural economy or to meet a locally arising need, which cannot be met more sustainably at a nearby larger settlement. A key objective of the JCS is to maintain distinctive and separate settlements by preventing coalescence.

The current spatial distribution of the housing requirement is set out in Table 1 which reproduces information from Table 5 of the JCS. One of the key issues for the Strategic Plan to consider is whether this spatial strategy remains appropriate or whether alternative options for the distribution of development need to be considered. This is discussed further in this document.

Table 1: Current spatial distribution of JCS housing requirement

Settlement/Area	Housing requirement 2011-31	Proportion
Corby	8,290	23.7%
Little Stanion	790	2.3%
Corby Rural	120	0.3%
<b>Corby Total</b>	<b>9,200</b>	<b>26.3%</b>
Kettering	6,190	17.7%
Burton Latimer	1,180	3.4%
Desborough	1,360	3.9%
Rothwell	1,190	3.4%
Kettering Rural	480	1.4%
<b>Kettering Total</b>	<b>10,400</b>	<b>29.7%</b>
Wellingborough	5,750	16.4%
Earls Barton	250	0.7%
Finedon	150	0.4%
Irchester	150	0.4%
Wollaston	160	0.5%
Wellingborough Rural	540	1.5%
<b>Wellingborough Total</b>	<b>7,000</b>	<b>20%</b>
Rushden	3,285	9.4%
Higham Ferrers	560	1.6%
Irthlingborough	1,350	3.9%
Raunds	1,060	3%
Thrapston	680	1.9%
Oundle	645	1.8%
East Northants Rural	820	2.3%
<b>East Northants Total</b>	<b>8,400</b>	<b>24%</b>
North Northants Total	35,000	100%



# Vision and Outcomes

## Spatial Vision

The JCS incorporates a vision for North Northamptonshire and sets out how the areas and settlements within it will contribute towards its delivery as follows:

### VISION

By 2031, North Northamptonshire will 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. The special mixed urban-rural character of North Northamptonshire will have been maintained through urban-focused growth supporting a strong network of vibrant and regenerated settlements, which each maintain their separate and distinct character within an enhanced green framework of living, working countryside.

North Northamptonshire will be outward looking, taking advantage of its excellent strategic transport connectivity to be a nationally important growth area and focus for inward investment. Plan led change will have made North Northamptonshire, its northern and southern sub-areas and individual settlements more self-reliant, with more choices available locally. Investment in infrastructure, services and facilities and growth in high quality 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. A strong focus on growing investment in tourism, leisure and green infrastructure will be balanced with the protection and enhancement of the area's landscape character and its valuable built and natural environment.

North Northamptonshire will be an exemplar for construction based innovation and the delivery of low carbon growth. Its high quality environment and prosperous economy will ensure it has a stronger profile within the UK and Europe; widely recognised as a safe, healthy, affordable and attractive area for residents and visitors, and an excellent place for business to invest in.

Ecosystems will be protected and enhanced and provision of ecosystem services increased where demand exists. The Rockingham Forest will be re-invigorated through major new tree planting, providing carbon storage and a focus for tourism, recreation and sustainable wood fuel production. Restored and newly created habitats in the Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area, will have delivered improvements for both wildlife and people and a step change in nature conservation whilst recognising its tourism potential.

### CONTRIBUTING TO THIS OVERALL VISION

- Corby will be well on the way to doubling its population and will offer international class culture and sport facilities. Enterprise areas will have promoted the town as a base for businesses leading the way in high performance technologies, creative industries and the green economy. Smart and innovative regeneration and growth will have delivered a transformed, vibrant and growing Town Centre and sustainable urban extensions; together with a network of accessible natural green spaces forming the urban gateway to the wider Rockingham Forest.

- East Northamptonshire will be the heartland of small and medium sized enterprises, based on regenerated and thriving market towns with an enhanced role for Rushden as the District's Growth Town. Implementation of the consented development at Rushden Lakes will have provided a new out of centre retail and leisure offer serving residents in the southern area of North Northamptonshire and delivering significant environmental benefits in the Nene Valley. Diverse, sustainable villages and a living, working countryside will provide the backdrop for tourism, creative industries and low carbon businesses to locate at the meeting point of the Nene Valley and Rockingham Forest.
- Kettering will be the largest retail centre and its vibrant town centre, regarded for being characterful, distinctive and fun, will provide a focus for its surrounding market towns and villages. The town will be the focus for healthcare and will lead the way in renewable energy investment to strengthen the green economy. Its business community will capitalise on its excellent connectivity, including its position on the Trans-European (E24 route) A14 and on the electrified Midland Mainline rail route.
- Wellingborough will be the gateway to North Northamptonshire for businesses looking for good rail connections to the south east and Europe, with a high profile office development centred on the railway station. Its historic core will be the heart of the community, serving the town and its prosperous satellite villages with a diversified retail, leisure and heritage offer.

As the Strategic Plan is updated it will be necessary to review the vision and consider how it can be extended to 2050. It is considered that whilst the existing vision remains relevant, it needs to take into consideration important issues and opportunities that have emerged since the JCS was adopted, such as significant and ongoing changes to the planning system, as well as changing patterns to lifestyles accelerated through the Covid 19 pandemic. The vision will also need to be reviewed by taking into account the impact that existing major planning permissions may have on the spatial strategy.

**Consultation question:**

**1. Is this vision still appropriate for guiding future development and growth in North Northamptonshire. Are there any changes you would like to see to the vision and why?**

## Spatial Outcomes

The JCS vision is supported by 10 Spatial Outcomes, the delivery of which is key to achieving the vision by 2031:

### 1. EMPOWERED AND PROACTIVE COMMUNITIES

The Plan sets out a framework for place shaping, focusing on the issues that matter to local communities and providing a context within which community led planning initiatives can flourish and prosper. It seeks to create successful, safe, strong, cohesive and sustainable communities where residents are actively involved in shaping the places where they live.

### 2. ADAPTABILITY TO FUTURE CLIMATE CHANGE

The Plan will create more sustainable places that are naturally resilient to future climate change. Carbon footprints will be minimised and sustainable transport choice will be improved. Low carbon growth will be delivered through policies that seek the highest viable standards for energy efficiency, renewable energy and sustainable construction.

### 3. DISTINCTIVE ENVIRONMENTS THAT ENHANCE AND RESPECT LOCAL CHARACTER AND ENHANCE BIODIVERSITY

The Plan sets out a framework for retaining the area's distinctiveness, by maintaining and enhancing landscape and townscape character. It promotes an integrated approach to biodiversity management and a net gain in Green Infrastructure, strengthening links between the countryside and the towns.

### 4. EXCELLENT SERVICES AND FACILITIES EASILY ACCESSED BY LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND BUSINESSES

The Plan establishes the priorities for future public and private investment and collaboration. It will help to secure provision of the infrastructure, services and facilities needed to sustain and enhance communities and support new development.

### 5. A SUSTAINABLE BALANCE BETWEEN LOCAL JOBS AND WORKERS AND A MORE DIVERSE ECONOMY

The Plan provides for the workplaces, jobs, skills and sites to help build a more diverse, dynamic and self-reliant economy; one which is not overly dependent on in or out commuting. Higher skilled jobs will be facilitated through improved further education provision and enterprise and innovation will be enabled through next generation digital connectivity. Provision will be made to capitalise upon existing sectoral strengths in creating a stronger, greener economy.

## **6. TRANSFORMED CONNECTIVITY**

The Plan seeks transformed connectivity at all levels. It sets out measures to enhance Neighbourhood Connectivity, establishes the requirement for inter urban transport links and for improvements to the strategic road network and main-line rail connections. It identifies the growth locations that will provide connections to and support the longer-term opportunity for the Northamptonshire Arc Rapid Transit network.

## **7. MORE WALKABLE PLACES AND AN EXCELLENT CHOICE OF WAYS TO TRAVEL**

The Plan identifies the actions needed in order to make walking the first choice of transport to local services and jobs including increasing connectivity to and from new development and the countryside and centres and ensuring that developments allow movement through them. It makes the links to the Local Transport Plan for the county, which identifies improvements to public transport, cycling networks and travel information that will encourage a shift away from car use in the towns and increase transport choice in the rural area.

## **8. VIBRANT, WELL CONNECTED TOWNS AND A PRODUCTIVE COUNTRYSIDE**

The Plan proposes sustainable urban-focused development and a proactive approach to meeting rural needs, supporting greater self-reliance for the area as a whole. The network of settlements will be strengthened through transformed public transport services within the north-south urban spine and out to the market towns in the east, with demand responsive services in the rural areas. Superfast broadband will support rural businesses, enable more working from home and assist the development of local food and fuel supply chains.

## **9. STRONGER, MORE SELF-RELIANT TOWNS WITH THRIVING CENTRES**

The Plan proposes the regeneration of town centres and of older parts of towns will help to maximise the use of brownfield land for new development and inspire community confidence in the need for positive change. The Plan identifies the town centres at Kettering and Corby as areas of focus for leisure, retail and cultural facilities for the northern area, making them into real hearts for their communities. Implementation of the consented Rushden Lakes development will provide an additional retail and leisure focus serving the southern area, complementing Rushden and Wellingborough town centre, which will diversify and strengthen their convenience retail provision and cultural offers.

## 10. ENHANCED QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL RESIDENTS

The Plan identifies the quality and mix of housing needed to meet the full, objectively assessed needs of the housing market area, ensuring that a sufficient proportion is affordable and accessible to all. It supports initiatives that build stable, safe, healthy and strong communities, which means respecting cultural diversity and distinctiveness; planning new development to help reduce crime, anti-social behaviour and the fear of crime; promoting well-being and health; ensuring that development is of local character; and supporting area based renewal.

It is considered that the spatial outcomes remain relevant, but the Strategic Plan will need to consider what changes are needed to the spatial outcomes as it is developed.

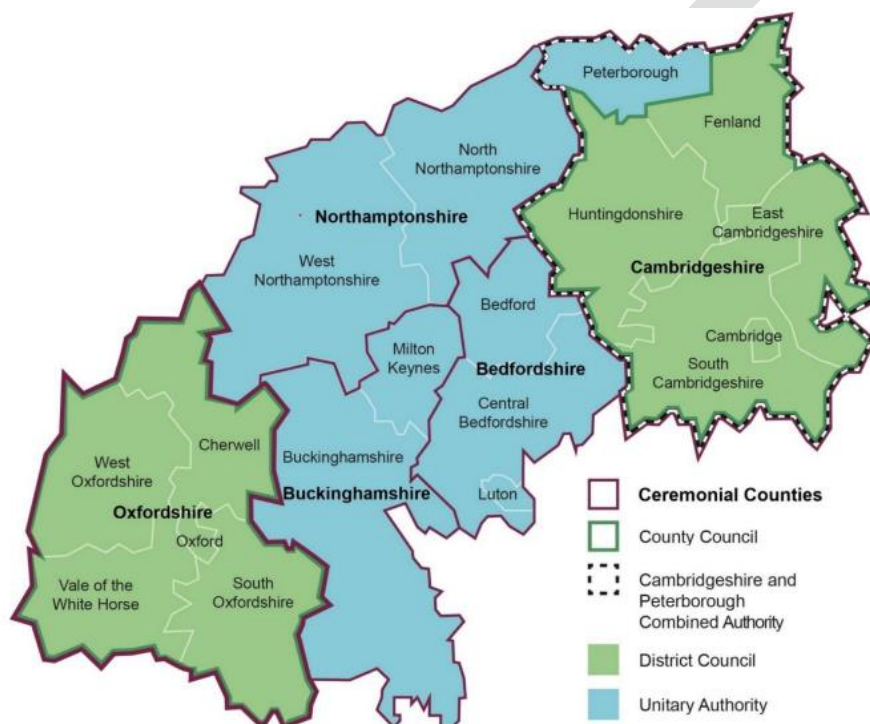
**Consultation question:**

**2. Are the above spatial outcomes still the most appropriate ones for guiding development and growth in North Northamptonshire in light of the issues discussed in this document. What changes to, or other outcomes would you like to see?**

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## Relationship with Oxford-Cambridge Arc

The Oxford-Cambridge Arc has been identified by the Government as a key economic priority. The Government wants to support sustainable economic growth in the Arc, so is developing the Arc Spatial Framework (ASF) to plan for that growth to 2050 and beyond. The ASF will form both national planning policy and transport policy for the Arc and local planning and local transport authorities must have regard to it when preparing local transport and local development plans and policies. It will also be capable of being a material consideration in relevant planning decisions in the area. The Strategic Plan will inform and be influenced by the development of the ASF.



*The Oxford-Cambridge Arc*

[Consultation on the Vision for the ASF](#) was undertaken between July and October 2021. The [consultation document](#)<sup>7</sup> set out that the ASF will have sustainability at its core and guide planning decisions and investment under four policy 'pillars' The Environment, The Economy, Connectivity and Infrastructure and Place-making. The Government is currently analysing the responses to the consultation and is preparing its response which is expected to be published imminently.

### Consultation question:

### 3. How should the Strategic Plan respond to the Oxford-Cambridge Arc?

<sup>7</sup> Creating a Vision for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc Consultation, HM Government, July 2021

## **What period should the Plan cover?**

### ***Timeframe for the Strategic Plan***

The NPPF expects strategic policies to look ahead at least 15 years post adoption and to ensure that large scale growth is set within a vision of at least 30 years. As previously discussed, Government is currently preparing the ASF which looks to 2050. It is proposed that the statutory period of the Strategic Plan will be 2021 to 2041, with the spatial vision extending to 2050 to align with the ASF and to meet the requirements of the NPPF.

This is because those aspects of the plan which must be evidence based, such as housing and job numbers, are better suited to this shorter time horizon and it should help to demonstrate that the plan is deliverable. However, a longer-term view on climate change will also be evidenced as part of a holistic, long-term approach. It is proposed that where possible, evidence to inform the Strategic Plan will look to 2050.

### **Consultation question:**

**4. Do you agree that the plan-period should be 2021 to 2041? If not, what should it be and why?**

## Climate change

The Council declared a climate and environment emergency on 28th July 2021. Responding to the Climate Emergency is a priority area for the Council, with a Climate Change Task and Finish Group established to identify recommendations and actions the Council could undertake to facilitate climate change adaptation and mitigation locally, amongst other objectives. This work has culminated in the publication of a draft Climate Change Framework which contains several recommendations for the Council to implement (subject to public consultation)<sup>8</sup>. Within this draft framework, recommendations are made on a thematic basis across those areas the Council has influence over. With regards to “Planning, Transport, Energy, Natural and Built Environment”, the framework makes several recommendations of particular relevance to the Strategic Plan which are reflected in this document.

The Task and Finish Group recommended that the Council “*supports a growing North Northamptonshire that future developments embed proven low carbon technology, sustained and improved green infrastructure, and sustainable forms of transport fit for the future*”. These elements are already contained within the JCS and will be taken forward and refined as the Strategic Plan is developed.

Responding to climate change will be at the heart of the plan, with ambitious but deliverable policies, consistent with social, economic, and environmental objectives, and with legislation and national policy. The plan must be based on robust evidence, including a credible pathway which outlines how North Northamptonshire will achieve net zero by 2050 at the latest. Technical work will explore the potential to accelerate this to reach net zero sooner. Consideration will also need to be given to targets set out in the ASF which builds on England’s Economic Heartland transport strategy in aiming for net zero carbon emissions from transport by 2040, but no later than 2050.

Taking account of climatic projections, all elements of the Plan will need to deliver development, including patterns of development, which reduces greenhouse gas emissions locally as part of the area’s wider contribution to national objectives. This will include consideration of the amount and distribution of development, how people travel within and beyond North Northamptonshire, it’s environment and environmental opportunities and the approach to building design and standards. It will be important that the Strategic Plan focuses on elements that it can influence, which will form part of the Council’s wider approach to climate change.

### Corporate Plan Priorities:

#### 3. Safe and thriving places

- Improve the standard of new and existing homes and ensure housing supply meets demand
- Enable people to travel across North Northamptonshire and beyond

#### 4. Greener, sustainable environment

- Demonstrate clear leadership on tackling environmental sustainability
- Work with communities and businesses to tackle climate change and improve air quality
- Promote sustainable, active travel
- Embed low carbon technology, sustained and improved green infrastructure, and sustainable forms of transport fit for the future
- Protect the countryside and open spaces, and enhance the natural environment and ecology

<sup>8</sup> North Northamptonshire Shadow Overview & Scrutiny Committee. Item 7 (Climate Change Framework) and Appendix A (Climate Change Strategy): <https://cmis.northamptonshire.gov.uk/cmis5live/MeetingsCalendar/tabid/73/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/410/Meeting/3756/Committee/460/Default.aspx>



North Northamptonshire has been subject to serious flooding in recent years, including in areas that have not been previously known to flood, with climate change and extreme levels of rainfall playing a role in this. Despite this, 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.

The approach to climate change will consider both adaptation and mitigation measures across both the built and natural environment as well as ensuring resilience to climate change. These measures may include:

- The sustainability standards of buildings;
- Locating new development to minimise the risk of flooding, protecting water quality and maximising water efficiency;
- limiting the need to travel by car, particularly for short journeys;
- identification of priority areas for new energy infrastructure;
- multifunctional greenspace that can support carbon storage and address overheating, flooding and soil erosion

The plan will also look to build upon existing JCS policies and initiatives that respond to climate change, including the Rockingham Forest for Life<sup>9</sup>. The design and future sustainability of development will be a key consideration in the approach to climate change and the Strategic Plan presents an opportunity to fully integrate land-use and transport planning around efforts to address the Climate Emergency.

**Consultation questions:**

**5. What is a realistic and deliverable pathway for reaching net zero for the Strategic Plan?**

**6. What are the key measures that the plan should take to ensure appropriate climate change adaptation, mitigation and resilience?**

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.riverneneregionalpark.org/projects/nene-catchment-partnership-ncp/forest-for-life/>

## Levelling Up

The Corporate Plan announces the Council's intention to support our communities, recover from the pandemic and help them level-up.

The Government published the Levelling Up White Paper in February 2022. It sets out a detailed strategy to 'level up' and help 'left behind' areas of the country, including devolved powers and a series of wide-ranging national missions to be achieved by 2030. The national missions include: closing the gap in healthy lifestyle expectancy; improving local transport connectivity; providing access to 5G broadband for most of the population; improving people's satisfaction with town centres and local culture; and raising the level of high-quality skills training.

The opportunity for the Strategic Plan to contribute to the achievement of the national missions and reduce inequalities within and between communities and ensure a social and economic recovery from the pandemic is very significant. The pandemic has exposed and exacerbated existing inequalities, indicating a need for additional action to support communities most in need.

The JCS coordinates and facilitates a nationally significant scale of growth in North Northamptonshire, with significant levels of housing accompanied by new and improved infrastructure of all types. This has helped level up communities by increasing housing options, transforming town centres, improving access to open spaces and green infrastructure, spreading opportunities for employment, and enhancing access to community and cultural facilities. Yet there are still significant inequalities within North Northamptonshire with some 37,400 households experiencing some form of income deprivation, and 11,530 households in fuel poverty, whilst Kingswood and Hazel Leys in Corby, Windmill Ward in Kettering, and Queensway in Wellingborough are among the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country identified as 'left behind'<sup>10</sup>.

Reinforcing the approach to the levelling up agenda is important to residents and a priority area for the Council, who have established a Scrutiny Commission to review and understand data, engage local stakeholders, and make recommendations to develop a levelling up plan focussed on the three areas identified as 'left behind

### Corporate Plan Priorities:

#### 1. Active, fulfilled lives

- Improve the accessibility and use of leisure, culture, art and sport
- Tackle the causes of complex problems such as poverty and homelessness

#### 3. Safe and thriving places

- Strengthen the cultural identity of towns, villages and rural communities
- Help town centres and villages respond to changing trends
- Attract tourism, visitors and inward investment
- Working with local businesses and partners to support the creation of high-quality, better-skilled jobs
- Improve the standard of new and existing homes and ensure housing supply meets demand
- Tackle the causes of difficult issues leading to nuisance, crime and anti-social behaviour
- Maintain our highways infrastructure to keep people moving safely around North Northamptonshire
- Enable people to travel across North Northamptonshire and beyond

#### 4. Greener, sustainable environment

- Promote sustainable, active travel
- Embed low carbon technology, sustained and improved green infrastructure, and sustainable forms of transport fit for the future
- Protect the countryside and open spaces, and enhance the natural environment and ecology

#### 5. Connected Communities

- Inform and listen to our communities, giving them a greater say in their future

<sup>10</sup> 'Left behind? Understanding communities on the edge', Local Trust and Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion, August 2019: <https://localtrust.org.uk/policy/left-behind-neighbourhoods/>

neighbourhoods'. It is recognised that that any insights gathered through the scrutiny review could apply to other wards and areas across North Northamptonshire.

The Strategic Plan will take forward the findings of the Scrutiny Commission and build on the existing JCS policies and initiatives including support for well-designed, energy efficient and affordable housing, supporting regeneration of brownfield sites, and improving access to green spaces, health care and social infrastructure, that help to level up communities and ensure a social and economic recovery from the pandemic, in order to support the Council's priorities and respond to the Government's White Paper. It will support and deliver for all areas of North Northamptonshire. However, working with partners will also target those communities experiencing the greatest level of deprivation and health inequality.

**Consultation questions:**

**7. How can the Strategic Plan help to level up and ensure no community is left behind?**

**8. Are there priority areas for levelling up that the plan should focus on?**

DRAFT

## The spatial strategy for the distribution of development

The Strategic Plan will contain policies that set out the overall spatial strategy for the distribution of development.

The current urban-focused growth strategy set out in the JCS gives high priority to the reuse of suitable brownfield sites within the Growth Towns and Market Towns, particularly where they can be served by public transport. It is underpinned by Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUEs) (also known as Garden Communities) which will be delivered up to and beyond 2031.

As of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021, there have been 2,752 completions at the Garden Communities with outstanding commitments for 13,149 dwellings. Of these Garden Communities, the JCS identifies West Corby, Priors Hall and Weldon Park (North-East Corby), Hanwood Park (Kettering East), Glenvale Park (Wellingborough North), Stanton Cross (Wellingborough East) and Rushden East as Principal SUEs. The JCS sets out at paragraph 5.10 that “*Subject to detailed assessment, the expansion of the principal SUEs identified in Figure 16 is likely to make best use of infrastructure investment and support the viability of these developments*”.

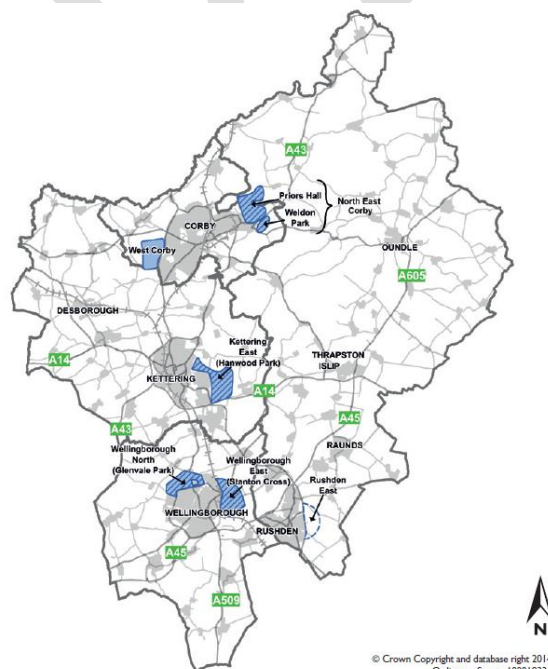


Figure xx: Principal Sustainable Urban Extensions

Monitoring shows that between 2011 and 2020 there has been less housing delivery at the Growth Towns than anticipated and more than anticipated at the Market

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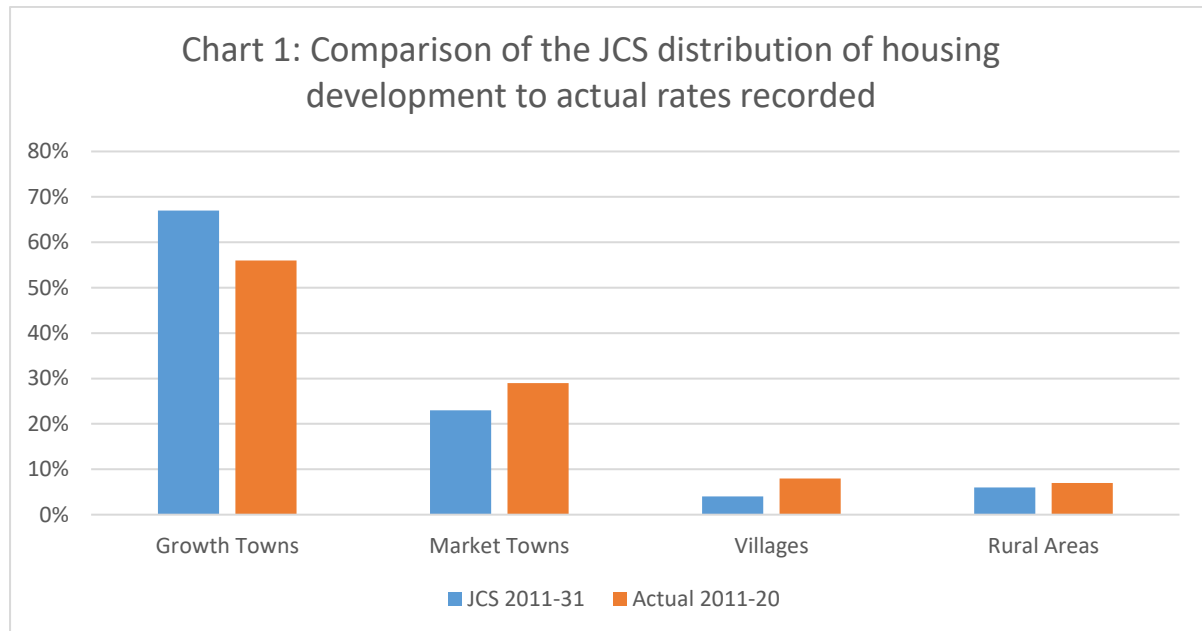
#### 3. Safe and thriving places

- Strengthen the cultural identity of towns, villages and rural communities
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- Attract tourism, visitors and inward investment
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Towns, 4 named villages and in rural areas<sup>11</sup>. This can be explained by the time taken for the Garden Communities to come forward and it is likely that the Growth Towns will continue to see further increases in the coming years as more of the Garden Communities begin to build at a more rapid pace. Chart 1 from the 19/20 Authorities' Monitoring Report is reproduced below:



Alongside the focus on Garden Communities as locations for large-scale growth, Policy 14 of the JCS identifies the opportunity to create an exemplary Garden Village at Deenethorpe airfield and sets out demanding standards for its design and operation. This is being taken forward as Tresham Garden Village, which is one of 14 garden village projects that the Government is supporting through capacity funding and assistance from Homes England. This support has enabled the preparation of a detailed masterplan and delivery strategy which will form the basis of a planning application.

The current approach for rural areas is for limited development required to support a prosperous rural economy or to meet a locally arising need, e.g. affordable housing, which cannot be met more sustainably at a nearby larger settlement.

Policies that set out the overall spatial strategy for the distribution of development in the Strategic Plan will need to facilitate sustainable development to meet local needs and support measures to both mitigate and adapt to climate change and address inequalities. They will be key to delivering levelling up in North Northamptonshire. Transport is the largest source of emissions that the Council can influence, so the plan will need to focus on a sustainable pattern of development that reduces the need to travel, encourages modal shift and facilitate other measures such as enabling a switch to electric vehicles, cycling and walking, including the provision of supporting infrastructure. The extent of existing commitments (sites with planning

<sup>11</sup> The JCS sets out housing requirements for Growth Towns, Market Towns, the four largest villages of Earls Barton, Finedon, Irchester and Wollaston in Wellingborough referred to as villages and baseline level of growth that should be planned for in the Rural Areas of each former district/borough

permission and allocated in local plans) will strongly influence the future spatial strategy alongside infrastructure capacity, the need to reduce carbon emissions and environmental opportunities and constraints.

Respecting and strengthening the different identities of the towns, villages and rural communities in North Northamptonshire is a key priority in the Corporate Plan. This will be underpinned by the spatial strategy of the Strategic Plan. It will continue to support suitable brownfield development and regeneration opportunities, particularly within town centres.

A key consideration for the Strategic Plan will be whether to continue with an urban focused growth strategy or consider other spatial options for development such as:

- Dispersal- Growth in villages with appropriate infrastructure and sufficient access to services and facilities.
- New settlements- The potential for freestanding new settlements and the future role of Tresham Garden Village.
- Corridor-based growth- The potential to focus growth alongside infrastructure improvements alongside key transport corridors either existing or proposed.
- Employment focus- The potential to focus residential development alongside existing or proposed strategic employment areas.

**Consultation questions:**

**9. Should future needs be met by continuing with the current strategy of urban-focused growth. If not, why?**

**10. Are there any other spatial options that should be considered?**

## Housing

Ensuring that the right number and type of houses are delivered across North Northamptonshire are key issues for the Strategic Plan to address and can play a leading role in addressing the dual challenge of levelling up and climate change. The Strategic Plan will set out the number of new homes to be provided across North Northamptonshire and the distribution of these based on the spatial strategy for the distribution of development.

Within this context, the size, type, and tenure of housing needed for different groups will be identified including the proportion of the overall housing requirement that should be affordable.

In the JCS housing figures are provided by former LPA area and distributed in a way that supports the settlement hierarchy. Housing requirements are provided for Growth Towns, Market Towns and named villages with rural housing requirements also set out. The NPPF sets out at paragraph 66 that within the overall housing requirement, strategic policies should also set out a housing requirement for designated neighbourhood areas which reflects the overall strategy for the pattern and scale of development and any relevant allocations.

From 15<sup>th</sup> July 2021 five-year housing supply is being measured against Local Housing Need (LHN) for the North Northamptonshire Housing Market area as whole based on a calculation in accordance with the Government's standard methodology. The Strategic Plan will need to consider the future approach for assessing housing land supply (HLS).

*How much housing do we need to plan for?*

### *Local Housing Need*

In terms of the overall scale of housing growth that the plan needs to plan for, the NPPF identifies at paragraph 61 that to determine the minimum number of homes needed, strategic policies should be informed by a local housing need assessment, conducted using the standard method in national planning guidance unless exceptional circumstances justify an alternative approach. The latest LHN for North Northamptonshire is 1,784 net additional dwellings per annum which would equate to 35,680 dwellings over the period 2021-2041. This is very similar to the 35,000 new dwellings identified in the JCS for the period 2011-2031.

LHN could change over the plan period or if the standard methodology changes. The Council has commissioned consultants to update evidence on housing and economic needs in North Northamptonshire, referred to as a Housing and Economic Needs Assessment (HENA).

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- Tackle the causes of difficult issues leading to nuisance, crime and anti-social behaviour

### *Uplift for contingencies*

The LHN figure provides a minimum starting point in determining the number of homes needed in an area. It will be important for the Strategic Plan to consider whether an uplift should be provided to the LHN to provide additional choice and flexibility and contingency for any delivery issues that may arise or to assist with delivering key aims for the area.

In considering potential levels of uplift, issues such as impact on infrastructure, market saturation, etc will need to be assessed. It will also be necessary to consider the distribution of potential uplift. Feedback is sought on whether North Northamptonshire should plan for an uplift above LHN, and what the extent of this should be. To determine the most appropriate level of housing it will be important to factor in the outcomes of further work regarding specific housing needs (including mix of housing sizes, types and tenures for different groups, including proportion of affordable housing) which will be informed by the HENA and the relationship with the economy of the area, recognising the need for a sustainable balance between homes and jobs, as set out in the current JCS.

### *Current housing supply*

To identify what provision the plan will need to make it is important to look at existing housing supply as this will determine the number of sites that will need to be identified. As described above, this existing supply will also strongly influence the spatial strategy of the Strategic Plan. Given the plan will run from 2021 to 2041 there is clearly a significant level of supply already identified to come forward through the JCS, specifically at the Garden Communities and additional site allocations within the Part 2 Local Plans. The evidence base informing the Strategic Plan will need to demonstrate that there is sufficient supply of deliverable housing sites to meet the requirements. This will be informed by monitoring of housing delivery and a technical assessment in a Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (HELAA). Across North Northamptonshire as at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 existing supply amounts to 30,457 dwellings. When considering this supply against the LHN requirement of 35,680 (1,784 x 20) dwellings between 2021-41, this leaves a shortfall of 5,223 dwellings to be found in this period to meet the requirement.

The NPPF sets out that any housing needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas should be taken account in establishing the amount of housing to be planned for. The Council has and will continue to work across geographical boundaries and with adjoining authorities through the duty to cooperate to establish if any unmet need should be provided for in the plan. However, this has not been raised as an issue to address through ongoing discussions with adjoining authorities and local plan development to date.

### **Consultation question:**

**11. Should the Strategic Plan set out a provision for housing above Local Housing Need? If so, what should this uplift be?**



### *How to diversify the Market?*

The issue of delivery, particularly on larger sites is a nationwide issue that has been recognised by Government. A number of the Garden Communities have not progressed as quickly as expected. Substantial work has gone into progressing the Garden Communities including seeking to resolve viability and infrastructure issues with support from Homes England. It is expected that delivery at the Garden Communities will accelerate and will be a key element of the Strategic Plan. Reliance on a small number of large developers and housebuilders is identified in the North Northamptonshire Infrastructure Framework (NNIF) as a factor affecting delivery. Several of the same volume housebuilders are particularly active across the area's key development sites, and whilst they offer scale of operation and speed of progress, residential build out rates can often be affected by capacity pinch points, customer sales and competition. This points to a potential need to broaden the range of house builders operating across North Northamptonshire's main development sites, making these opportunities available to a diverse range of providers including SMEs, custom and self-builders and potentially the Council.

A series of government reviews into housing supply, including the Letwin review<sup>12</sup> (October 2018) and Bacon review<sup>13</sup> (August 2021), identified possible measures to seek to increase the supply of new homes to the market, including Modern Methods of Construction and diversifying the housing offer on strategic sites through different tenures and house types including ensuring sufficient plots for self-build/custom-build housing. This will be an important issue for this plan to address.

#### **Consultation question:**

#### **12. What measures could the plan include to diversify the housing offer or otherwise increase the rates of housing delivery?**

*What type of housing do we need to plan for?*

Locally, there are some wide variations in house prices, however generally prices have increased at a faster rate than the England average. Although cheaper than the rest of the country, prices are higher than the average for the East Midlands and remain unaffordable to many local households<sup>14</sup>. An average priced property in North Northamptonshire is significantly higher than the average income. North Northamptonshire is not delivering the amount of affordable housing sought in the JCS, and the economic viability of delivering affordable housing has been identified as a key issue in the Garden Communities and other sites. The unaffordability of housing can have significant social consequences, including for those on low incomes and key workers.

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<sup>12</sup> Independent Review of Build Out – Final Report, Rt Hon. Sir Oliver Letwin, October 2018  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/752124/Letwin\\_review\\_web\\_version.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/752124/Letwin_review_web_version.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Independent Review into scaling up self-build and custom housebuilding, Richard Bacon MP, August 2021  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1013928/Bacon\\_Review.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1013928/Bacon_Review.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> <https://landregistry.data.gov.uk/app/ukhpi>

Within the context of the overall housing requirement, the NPPF sets out that the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies. This work will be informed by the HENA, and will also inform the following:

- The level of affordable housing that needs to be provided for and the size, type and tenure, including what threshold should be applied.
- What the specific needs are for specialist accommodation, such as sheltered housing, extra care housing and care homes, residential care and supported living. This will need to take account of the age profile of the area and recognise an increasingly ageing population.
- Types and tenures of housing.

#### **Consultation question:**

### **13. Are there any particular types of specialist housing that you feel there should be more of. Do you have any evidence to support this?**

*How do we ensure the houses are of good quality and fit for purpose?*

To ensure that North Northamptonshire continues to be an attractive place to live the quality of housing is important. The government recognised this by introducing the following optional national standards:

- Accessibility and wheelchair housing standards
- Water efficiency standards
- Internal space standards

The JCS applies these optional standards and some of the Part 2 Local Plans take this forward. The evidence being undertaken to identify specific housing needs will need to consider the need for, and how these standards should be applied moving forward.

Following a public consultation on measures to reduce personal water use in 2019, the Government published a Written Ministerial Statement<sup>15</sup> in July 2021 encouraging local authorities to adopt a tighter standard of 110 litres per person per day for new homes where appropriate, and a roadmap towards greater water efficiency in new developments and through retrofits, including options such as rainwater harvesting, water re-use and storage options. These measures will help meet the ambitions set out in the Environment Agency's National Framework for Water Resources. Policy 9 of the JCS includes the tighter water efficiency standard which sets out that all residential development should incorporate measures to limit use of water to 110 litres per person per day for areas of water stress.

Government announced changes to the Building Regulations that will take effect in June 2022 as part of its [response to the Future Building Standards consultation](#). Under the new regulations, CO2 emissions from new build homes must be around 30% lower than current standards and emissions from other new buildings, including

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<sup>15</sup> Reducing demand for water, 1 July 2021 <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2021-07-01/hcws140>

offices and shops, must be reduced by 27%. These changes will raise standards and are an important step towards a cleaner greener built environment, paving the way for the Future Homes and Buildings Standard in 2025, which will mean all future homes are net zero ready and will not need retrofitting.

The Strategic Plan will explore the potential to exceed Building Regulation energy efficiency standards in advance of the introduction of the Future Homes and Buildings Standard.

### **Consultation questions:**

**14. Should the Strategic Plan maintain the approach to accessibility and space standards that are set out in the JCS? Is there any evidence to support exceeding these?**

**15. Could the Strategic Plan improve the approach to environmental standards in homes? If so, what could be improved and is there any evidence to support this?**

### *Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation*

A Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment for North Northamptonshire was published in March 2019<sup>16</sup>. It sets out pitch and plot requirements for the period 2018 to 2033 for the permanent and temporary accommodation needs for both gypsies and travellers and travelling show people.

Currently a dual approach to traveller site/pitch provision is adopted in North Northamptonshire. The JCS includes Policy 31 that allows sites coming forward through the planning application process to be considered. The Part 2 Local Plans and emerging Local Development Scheme refer to the preparation of a North Northamptonshire Gypsy and Traveller Sites Allocation Policy Development Plan Document that will identify sites to meet the accommodation needs of gypsies and travellers and travelling show people.

Improving the standard of new and existing homes and ensuring housing supply meets demand is a priority for the Corporate Plan. Having no permanent accommodation can adversely affect any traveller. Providing permanent and temporary accommodation improves the ability to meet other primary needs, especially health, education, and access to employment.

The Council is seeking to commission consultants to undertake additional work to better understand the accommodation needs and a variety of options to meet these needs. Options for making provision, which will be properly assessed through the development plan process and planning applications, could include extensions of existing lawful sites, accommodating additional pitches on existing lawful sites, potential enforcement of sites occupied by non-travellers, and new site provision.

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<sup>16</sup> North Northamptonshire Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment, March 2019  
<https://www.corby.gov.uk/sites/default/files/files/North%20Northamptonshire%20Gypsy%20%26%20Traveller%20Accommodation%20Assessment.pdf>

A key issue to consider is whether the criteria for assessing planning applications and site allocations set out in Policy 31 of the JCS remains appropriate and relevant to inform these options.

**Consultation questions:**

**16. Do you agree with the current policy approach to accommodating gypsies and travellers and travelling show people? Please explain your answer.**

**17. Is Policy 31 of the Joint Core Strategy still appropriate for assessing planning applications? Are there any changes you would like to see and why?**

*Housing in Multiple Occupation*

Houses in Multiple Occupation, or HMOs as they are commonly referred to, are recognised as meeting important and specific housing needs. However, concern has been expressed by local councillors and residents in some areas of North Northamptonshire about the number, distribution and impact of HMOs. Some of these comments have suggested that it may be appropriate to restrict the scope of permitted development rights with the application of Article 4 direction to enable the creation of new HMOs to be managed in these areas.

In response to these concerns and suggestions, the Council is undertaking an exercise to investigate the options available to effectively control and manage HMOs. Initial investigative work has highlighted that there is no specific policy in the existing Local Plan that relates specifically to HMOs applications.

It is recognised that there are policies that relate to the considerations required to assess the suitability of an application for HMOs, such as Policy 8 of the JCS which ensures that development responds to the site's immediate character and protects the amenity by not resulting in an unacceptable impact upon future occupiers or neighbouring residents, however, strengthening the planning policy position through the inclusion of a specific policy within the Strategic Plan for assessing the suitability of an application for HMOs is potentially an option that could be explored further. This could comprise clear guidance to prospective developers of HMOs on the key standards, assessments, and evidence that the Council require to properly consider and assess applications.

**Consultation question:**

**18. Should the Strategic Plan contain a policy regarding Housing in Multiple Occupation? If yes, please explain.**

## Economic Growth

The Strategic Plan will set out an economic vision and strategy to strengthen and diversify the economy. Existing sectoral strengths, opportunities provided by the Oxford-Cambridge Arc and implications arising from the Covid-19 pandemic including changes to working patterns will be important considerations.

The plan will also set out an overall jobs target for North Northamptonshire, distribution of this and identification of strategic locations for new employment land. The HENA will provide evidence to inform the employment strategy and land requirements.

The JCS aims to make North Northamptonshire more economically self-reliant by achieving a sustainable balance between local jobs and workers and a more prosperous and diverse economy. Key elements of this strategy include planning for enough jobs to match the forecast growth in labour force plus an additional number in the southern area of North Northamptonshire to reduce reliance on out-commuting, resulting in a target for 31,100 net additional jobs over the period 2011-2031. In addition, the JCS aims to ensure the right amount and type of employment land is available in locations that balance the demands of the market with the capacity of infrastructure and the need to protect and where possible enhance the environment.

[Business Register and Employment Survey](#) (BRES) data indicates that in the period 2011-2020 North Northamptonshire has delivered a net increase of 22,000 jobs and would appear to be well on its way to meeting job targets. However, this data does not take account of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, and it will be important to monitor this closely.

### *Sectoral strengths and opportunities*

The JCS identifies sectoral strengths and opportunities in logistics, high performance technologies, particularly related to motorsport and renewable and low carbon energy and green technologies. Existing sector strengths identified in the North Northamptonshire Economic prospectus<sup>17</sup> include Logistics, Manufacturing, Retail and Leisure and Visitor economy including tourism.

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<sup>17</sup> This Economic Prospectus presents an overarching economic narrative for North Northamptonshire to articulate existing economic strengths and USPs and focus attention on key opportunity areas to maximise its growth potential and realise growth priorities. It is placed within the context of the area's wider amenity offer and underpinning place shaping ambitions which seek to ensure that development is genuinely sustainable and inclusive by creating places where people want to live, work and do business.

From a commercial property market perspective<sup>18</sup>, North Northamptonshire accommodates two broad market areas. The main focus of market activity is industrial (General Industrial and Logistics), with office markets considered to be weaker and more secondary.

North Northamptonshire has seen strong growth and demand for logistics due to its central location and excellent strategic road connections. As land supply has tightened in the 'Golden Triangle'<sup>19</sup>, availability of sites has decreased and occupation costs have increased, making sites in areas such as North Northamptonshire more attractive. The Strategic Plan and evidence being developed will need to consider how to respond to the demand for logistics floorspace and consider how the potential economic benefits can be balanced against impacts, including impacts of HGV movements including emissions, visual, landscape and amenity impacts.

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 Gross Value Added<sup>20</sup> (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. There are a number of constraints which are hampering development in the wider area, including viability, electrical capacity and access to suitable workforce.

A key challenge for the Strategic Plan will be to deliver higher-value, higher skilled employment and routes into such employment. Against the backdrop of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc and national Industrial Strategy, significant opportunities exist to achieve a step change in the area's commercial property market performance, if suitable infrastructure and sites can be provided to attract and grow high value, innovative business activity to complement ongoing population and housing growth. This will also require provision of sufficient skilled training facilities and resources, enterprise support and Research & Development through links to universities, further education.

The Economic prospectus<sup>21</sup> identifies sector opportunities and growth potential as renewable and low carbon energy (referencing Chelveston Renewable Energy Park as a case study), high performance technologies, life sciences and construction. Opportunities for renewable energy creation/use will be explored in the Strategic Plan with work to be commissioned to inform this.

The visitor economy is identified as a sector strength in the economic prospectus. The prospectus recognises that North Northamptonshire offers iconic landscapes

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<sup>18</sup> Commercial property market analysis in North Northamptonshire Investment Framework p26-27

<sup>19</sup> In the East Midlands, the industrial market is dominated by the logistics Golden Triangle, where the M42, M1 and M6 motorways meet and where most of the UK population can be accessed in a four-hour drive.

<sup>20</sup> GVA is used as a measure of productivity

<sup>21</sup> [http://www.nnjpdu.org.uk/site/assets/files/1459/16461\\_nn\\_economic\\_prospectus\\_final\\_26\\_06\\_20.pdf](http://www.nnjpdu.org.uk/site/assets/files/1459/16461_nn_economic_prospectus_final_26_06_20.pdf)

and outdoor activities that support a growing visitor economy. The area is home to beautiful unspoilt countryside, historic market towns and attractive villages, together with a unique collection of historic houses and diverse range of arts festivals and other cultural events. This is complemented by an ever-expanding leisure and hospitality offer within the area's urban centres. These provide opportunities to enhance the tourism offer whilst protecting and enhancing assets.

The 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. The Strategic Plan and its evidence base will consider how to capitalise on these opportunities and will set the strategic priority framework for supporting the creation of high-quality, better skilled jobs.

Although the plan will need to plan for employment needs and land requirements, North Northamptonshire has a significant over-supply of employment land, particularly in the Corby and Kettering areas. The Strategic Plan and evidence base being developed will need to consider whether sites that have not come forward should be de-allocated or brought forward for another use or whether alternative methods of delivery can be used e.g. public sector delivery.

### *Skills*

A key element in delivering higher value jobs relates to skills and this is a key priority within the Corporate Plan. This includes supporting key sectors such as construction and renewable energy. Education and training are at the heart of government plans to level up left behind areas. 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, with the result being a net loss of people (particularly younger residents) from the area, and who often do not return.

### **Consultation questions:**

- 19. What can the Strategic Plan do to support the delivery of committed employment sites?**
- 20. Should any existing employment allocations be de-allocated/used for another use? If so which sites and for what use?**
- 21. Should new sites be identified for employment uses? If so, where and for what type of employment?**
- 22. How should the demand for logistics be addressed in the area?**
- 23. How can the Strategic Plan deliver high quality, better skilled jobs?**
- 24. How can the Strategic Plan help to promote better training and further and higher education opportunities?**
- 25. How should the Strategic Plan encourage appropriate tourism opportunities?**

## Town Centres

North Northamptonshire consists of a network of 12 town centres from the Growth Towns to Market Towns. The town centres in North Northamptonshire are the focus for retail, leisure and cultural facilities and provide significant employment. They also act as the heart of their communities and serve their surrounding rural areas, whilst also offering opportunities for regeneration over the coming years.

The JCS retail strategy seeks to maintain and regenerate Kettering and Corby town centres as the focus of higher order facilities and retail investment serving growing communities in the north of North Northamptonshire, including a minimum increase of 12,500 sqm net comparison shopping floorspace in each of Corby and Kettering town centres by 2031. In the south of North Northamptonshire, the retail strategy recognises that the Rushden Lakes retail and leisure development will account for most, if not all, of the forecast additional comparison spending in the southern area and will also divert some trade from existing shopping locations.

Town centres across North Northamptonshire have changed and evolved significantly over recent years, due to the growth in online shopping, the Covid-19 pandemic, which has had, and continues to have a significant impact, and the opening of the Rushden Lakes development. Changes to Permitted Development rights will also affect the future of town centres. As shopping patterns have changed, cultural led regeneration is evolving the way town centres connect with people in North Northamptonshire, so they continue to act as the heart of the community. The Corporate Plan sets out that the Council will reimagine and redesign key town centres to help respond to changing trends in shopping, leisure and living, with developed masterplans and identification of opportunities for public realm improvements.

Town centre regeneration is ongoing in North Northamptonshire and the area has benefitted from significant funding to deliver this. Kettering has received funding to deliver a High Street Heritage Action Zone<sup>22</sup> (HSHAZ) and Corby has been awarded £19.9m of the government's Towns Fund, it is hoped the money will pay for a new sixth form centre and an improved walking and cycling route from the town centre to the railway station. Government funding is also being provided through the 'Welcome Back Fund<sup>23</sup>'.

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#### 3. Safe and thriving places

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- Attract tourism, visitors and inward investment
- Working with local businesses and partners to support the creation of high-quality, better-skilled jobs
- Improve the standard of new and existing homes and ensure housing supply meets demand
- Enable people to travel across North Northamptonshire and beyond

<sup>22</sup> A Historic England initiative intended to "Breathe new life into our town centres by revitalising buildings and helping to regenerate a vibrant place for locals, businesses and visitors

<sup>23</sup> The Welcome Back Fund is providing councils across England a share of £56 million from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to support the safe return to high streets and help build back better from the pandemic. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/welcome-back-fund>



The Strategic Plan will provide updated policy guidance and strategy for town centres and retail development taking account of the impact of policy changes and social/economic implications including Covid-19. This will include a review of comparison floorspace requirements. It will be necessary to think about how the Council will reimagine and redesign key town centres and how the Strategic Plan can support regeneration and economic recovery from Covid 19 as well as ensure that town centres play a role in helping to address the climate emergency, meet housing needs, provide necessary services and facilities, and support people's health and wellbeing. Updated retail and town centre evidence is being commissioned to inform this approach.

Beyond the town centres are a variety of out-of-centre locations, including the significant Rushden Lakes shopping and leisure scheme. The Strategic Plan will need to consider the future role of out-of-centre locations.

**Consultation questions:**

**26. How can the Strategic Plan support town centres so they continue to act as the heart of their communities?**

**27. What should the future role of Rushden Lakes and other out-of-centre locations be?**

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## Strategic Development Locations and Opportunities

Strategic sites that are key to the delivery of the spatial strategy will be identified in the plan. The current strategic sites threshold in the JCS is 500+ dwellings or 5+ ha of employment land and the Strategic Plan will consider whether this threshold should be amended or retained. As discussed earlier, Garden Communities are key elements of the Strategic Plan which will consider their potential for further expansion.

The location of strategic sites will be a key consideration in the context of climate-change and ensuring future development contributes to a reduction in carbon emissions. Future infrastructure opportunities and investment will be important considerations in determining these potential locations. The Strategic Plan will define clear development principles for sites identified in the plan. A 'Call for Sites' was launched in January 2022 where interested parties were invited to submit potential sites for consideration in the plan and potential sites can be submitted via XXXXX.

### Consultation question:

**28. Should the strategic sites threshold of 500+ dwellings or 5+ ha of employment land be retained or amended? Please provide reasons for amendments.**

### Corporate Plan Priorities:

#### 3. Safe and thriving places

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- Maintain our highways infrastructure to keep people moving safely around North Northamptonshire
- Enable people to travel across North Northamptonshire and beyond

#### 4. Greener, sustainable environment

- Promote sustainable, active travel
- Embed low carbon technology, sustained and improved green infrastructure, and sustainable forms of transport fit for the future
- Protect the countryside and open spaces, and enhance the natural environment and ecology

## Infrastructure

Infrastructure must be considered in its widest sense and include all systems and services to support growth. The JCS identifies 3 broad types of infrastructure- **Physical** (necessary to connect homes and workplaces to the wider environment such as transport, waste, utilities to meet the day to day needs), **Green** (to provide green spaces and habitat to allow ecosystems to function alongside development and includes land and water) and **Social** (to ensure that the communities can function effectively and covers a wide range of assets such as education, healthcare, sports facilities and libraries).

All three infrastructure types are required to deliver sustainable communities that function effectively. It is also critical that this infrastructure is delivered alongside development in a timely manner to the benefit of existing and new residents.

An important principle in the JCS that will be taken forward in the Strategic Plan is that new development should be located and designed to minimise its demand on infrastructure, and that any additional impacts arising as a result of development can be effectively mitigated through delivery of new or expanded, high quality infrastructure. The design, layout and location of development can minimise the need for or make more efficient use of some items of infrastructure. Where there is a need related to new developments then contributions towards its delivery will be secured from the development. The Strategic Plan will need to consider the mechanisms for funding and delivering infrastructure and demonstrate that its proposals can be delivered. Currently infrastructure required as a result of development is delivered largely through Section 106 developer contributions. Proposals to replace the Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 with a new consolidated Infrastructure Levy were published by government as part of the Planning White Paper consultation but no decision has been made on this. Other funding sources will be considered where appropriate to enhance and improve infrastructure provision throughout North Northamptonshire.

Current infrastructure priorities to deliver planned growth to 2031 are set out in the North Northamptonshire Investment Framework (NNIF). The NNIF identifies infrastructure pressures and pinch points as factors affecting delivery, most notably congestion and capacity issues along key strategic highways networks in North Northamptonshire such as the A14, A43 and A45 corridor. Beyond transport, there is reported to be some capacity constraints within the area's electricity network, with solutions required to connect new developments to the grid, including low and renewable technologies. When upgrades do occur to the electricity network, this tends to be approached in a piecemeal, rather than strategic way that anticipates

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future development and associated demand. This creates challenges, including for District Network Operators connections for Electric Vehicle charge points. The requirement for strategic upgrades to North Northamptonshire's electricity network has been recognised for some time.

In parts of North Northamptonshire, particularly areas with lower land values, viability impacts on the delivery of infrastructure and affordable housing. The NNIF identified that the highest priority infrastructure projects had a funding shortfall of just under £316m, based on a 'point-in-time' snapshot at June 2019. This shortfall represents the tip of the iceberg for North Northamptonshire. Viability will be an important consideration as the NNSP is developed.

The Strategic Plan will identify the key infrastructure required to deliver the strategy such as strategic transport schemes, utility networks, green infrastructure and community facilities including schools. The Corporate Plan sets out that providing a range of accessible leisure, sports and play facilities and attractive open spaces will be important in helping people to live active, fulfilled lives. This will be informed by a re-refresh of the infrastructure evidence base, including updated transport modelling work to ensure that all forms of movement infrastructure are identified and planned for.

There is a need to improve access to digital connectivity (such as in rural areas) by, for example, securing efficient full fibre broadband provision for all. Full fibre ensures that speeds can increase to keep up with demand which will continue to grow at even faster rates as more devices and services become connected and richer data needs to be transmitted. 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 innovation, improving access for residents to services and opportunities in ways that enrich lives, reduce the need to travel, and which in turn also contributes to the decarbonisation of the transport network and the realisation of technology driven benefits in all sectors.

Supporting the decarbonisation of the transport sector will be an important element of the Strategic Plan. The plan will identify future opportunities to achieve connectivity through sustainable modes of transport and active travel, a priority in the Corporate Plan. In terms of distance, the main towns of North Northamptonshire are located relatively close to one another, however there is a distinctly rural nature between settlements. This presents opportunities to deliver modal shift for travel between these locations. Green Infrastructure and new walking and cycling routes provide an opportunity to facilitate modal shift in a location where the travel to work area is relatively contained (people travel small distances) but car use still dominates. Initiatives such as the Greenway and Ise Valley Way could act as exemplars for the wider Arc area in delivering walking and cycling infrastructure, including opportunities provided by green infrastructure corridors.

**Consultation question:**

**29. What are the key infrastructure priorities that need to be delivered in North Northamptonshire and how can they be best be delivered?**

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## Place-making/sustainable development

Central to the economic vision and overall growth strategy for North Northamptonshire is an ambitious agenda for 'place shaping', to ensure that growth and development is genuinely sustainable and inclusive by creating places where people want to live, work and do business, now and in the future.

Great places go beyond aesthetics and visual appearance. Place-making encompasses social and economic opportunity, creating an environment that supports health, wellbeing and contributes to the quality of people's life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run, and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all and promote a green economy.

The National Planning Policy Framework and National Model Design Code makes clear that creating high quality buildings and places is fundamental to the planning and development process, with specific emphasis on the need to create high quality sustainable places that address climate resilience and health and wellbeing.

The Strategic Plan will play a key role in responding to the changing national policy context in relation to design. It will reflect the corporate ambition to drive up the quality of design and provide strong design and place-shaping policies, building on the existing policy framework provided in the JCS.

The JCS provides a robust policy framework to shape North Northamptonshire which includes increased protection for North Northamptonshire's cultural and environmental assets, stronger recognition of the importance of the natural environment and the opportunities it provides, and greater emphasis on urban design principles and how places could change for the better.

To create sustainable places, all development is assessed against the North Northamptonshire Place Shaping Principles set out in Policy 8 of the JCS which provides a checklist of the key issues that need to be considered by development in delivering the highest possible quality of development sought by the plan. These principles seek to ensure that development proposals support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, which, where possible, make physical activity easy to do and create inclusive places and spaces that support community engagement. Policy 8 and these principles will be updated and strengthened in the Strategic Plan.

### Corporate Plan Priorities:

#### 1. Active, fulfilled lives

- Improve the accessibility and use of leisure, culture, art and sport
- Tackle the causes of complex problems such as poverty and homelessness

#### 3. Safe and thriving places

- Strengthen the cultural identity of towns, villages and rural communities
- Help town centres and villages respond to changing trends
- Attract tourism, visitors and inward investment
- Working with local businesses and partners to support the creation of high-quality, better-skilled jobs
- Improve the standard of new and existing homes and ensure housing supply meets demand
- Tackle the causes of difficult issues leading to nuisance, crime and anti-social behaviour
- Enable people to travel across North Northamptonshire and beyond

#### 4. Greener, sustainable environment

- Promote sustainable, active travel
- Embed low carbon technology, sustained and improved green infrastructure, and sustainable forms of transport fit for the future

The Council also supports Building for a Healthy Life (BHL) 2020 as a valuable tool in assessing and shaping development proposals and has previously used its predecessor (BfL12) to assess design quality in the area as part of the AMR.

With the increased emphasis at the national level for place-making to support health and wellbeing, it will be essential that the Strategic Plan seeks to address health inequalities to ensure that no communities/populations are left behind when realising the ambitions for North Northamptonshire. Many of the existing health inequalities have been exposed throughout Covid-19 and in many cases exacerbated.

The Strategic Plan will update and strengthen the policies in the JCS to help shape places where health and wellbeing is considered in every element of development and where inequalities in health and wellbeing are reduced. Apart from obvious benefits to people's well-being, this should also assist in reducing demands on the local NHS and social care services.

There are several elements to place-making and creating sustainable communities. The Strategic Plan will seek to take forward the key principles set out below, which relate to all elements of it and have been discussed within this document. Many of these are already contained within the JCS.

### **Key Principles for Place-making and Sustainable Communities**

**1. Active, inclusive and safe** - *Fair, tolerant and cohesive with a strong local culture and other shared community activities*

Development proposals will support strong, vibrant and healthy communities where people feel safe, healthy, socially connected and proud of where they live.

**2. Environmentally sensitive** - *providing places for people to live that are considerate of the environment*

New development will respect and make use of the natural and historic character of North Northamptonshire and ensure that all residents and visitors can benefit from the advantages these characteristics offer.

**3. Well designed and built** - *featuring quality built and natural environment*

Sustainable communities offer:

- sense of place - a place with a positive 'feeling' for people and local distinctiveness
- user-friendly public and green spaces with facilities for everyone including children and older people
- sufficient range, diversity, affordability and accessibility of housing within a balanced housing market
- appropriate size, scale, density, design and layout, including mixed-use development, that complement the distinctive local character of the community
- high quality, mixed-use, durable, flexible and adaptable buildings, using materials which minimise negative environmental impacts

- buildings and public spaces which promote health and are designed to reduce crime and make people feel safe
- accessibility of jobs, key services and facilities by public transport, walking and cycling.

**4. Well connected** - *with good transport services and communication linking people to jobs, schools, health and other services*

Sustainable communities offer:

- transport facilities, including public transport, that help people travel within and between communities and reduce dependence on cars
- facilities to encourage safe local walking and cycling
- an appropriate level of local parking facilities in line with local plans to manage road traffic demand
- widely available and effective telecommunications and Internet access
- good access to regional, national and international communications networks.

**5. Thriving Community/offer** - *with a flourishing and diverse local economy*

Sustainable communities feature:

- a wide range of jobs and training opportunities
- sufficient suitable land and buildings to support economic prosperity and change
- dynamic job and business creation, with benefits for the local community
- a strong business community with links into the wider economy
- economically viable and attractive town centres.

**7. Future proofed** - *climate resilient, adaptable and fit for the future*

Development should be fit for the future and incorporate resilience to climate change as well as allowing flexibility to adapt to new smart technology such as that emerging for independent living.

**Consultation question:**

**30. Are these the correct place-making principles for the Strategic Plan or are there any others that need to be considered?**



## Natural and Historic Environment

Protecting and enhancing our natural and historic environment in the area is fundamental to delivering a sustainable development strategy. The environment is our most valuable asset and underpins our wellbeing and prosperity.

Our rich heritage contributes to local character and distinctiveness and will have a strong influence on the spatial strategy of the plan and the identification of suitable development locations. It will also be at the core of our approach to responding to climate change. We draw from the environment all we need to live (food, water, air and energy for growth) so protecting and enhancing the environment is critical for the next generation to flourish.

The corporate plan sets out as a key priority demonstrating clear leadership on tackling environmental sustainability and the Strategic Plan can be one mechanism to help deliver this.

North Northamptonshire is well placed to be an exemplar of sustainable living and working. The JCS 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.’

The environment needs to be considered in its widest sense and the Strategic Plan will contain policies to ensure resources are used sustainably and efficiently, that there is reduced harm from environmental hazards such as flooding and that we seek to improve air quality.

It is a key ambition of the plan to leave the environment in a better state than it is now. That means achieving an environmental net gain.

### *Natural Capital*

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. We also recognise the importance of accessible, good quality natural environments to encourage community cohesion, activity and healthy living.

Natural Capital is ‘*the sum of our ecosystems, species, freshwater, land soils, minerals, our air and our seas. These are all elements of nature that either directly or in directly bring value to people and the country at large. They do this in many ways*

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- Attract tourism, visitors and inward investment

#### 4. Greener, sustainable environment

- Demonstrate clear leadership on tackling environmental sustainability
- Embed low carbon technology, sustained and improved green infrastructure, and sustainable forms of transport fit for the future
- Protect the countryside and open spaces, and enhance the natural environment and ecology

*but chiefly by providing us with food, clean air and water, wildlife, energy, wood, recreation and protection from hazards’.*<sup>24</sup>

Recognising the complex ways in which natural social and economic systems interact enables us to make better decisions that protect and enhance the services and benefits that we need. Biodiversity net gain is a primary driver for growing natural capital, with healthy, diverse and resilient ecosystems essential to underpin the delivery of a wide range of services and long-term benefits for people and places.

Our principle is to take a biodiversity first approach that is founded upon and complements the requirements in the Environment Act 2021 for mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and Local Nature Recovery Strategies, whereby environmental enhancement should deliver BNG first and this cannot be traded off against other Natural Capital benefits.

#### *Biodiversity and Biodiversity net gain*

The Environment Act, which was passed in November 2021, will require all new developments to deliver a mandatory minimum 10% net biodiversity gain from 2023. Other key components of the Act include the opportunity to enter conservation covenants and register off site biodiversity gains. There is also a requirement to prepare Nature Recovery Strategies. These will be key components to feed into the preparation of the Strategic Plan.

The Environmental Principles for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc are seeking a biodiversity gain of 20% to reflect the ambition to be world leaders on environmental ambitions. There is also a target to double the area of land managed primarily for nature and to increase tree and woodland cover across the Arc from 7.4% to 19%. There are considerable opportunities to engage with the desire to double nature, increase tree planting and increase biodiversity gain within North Northamptonshire through projects including within the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area (SPA) and the Rockingham Forest.

The SPA is internationally recognised for its significance as a wetland habitat for birds. Development could potentially pose threats to the SPA through increased disturbance through human activity, loss of supporting habitat or changes in ecological condition. The plan will need to ensure that the SPA is suitably protected and where possible enhanced. There is an existing mitigation strategy associated with the JCS, this will be reviewed to ensure that it remains fit for purpose. The need to protect this important habitat may influence the spatial strategy of the plan. It also however provides an opportunity to enhance the biodiversity of the area.

#### *Green and Blue Infrastructure Corridors*

Green Infrastructure (GI) including blue infrastructure comprising the network of rivers and lakes, is a strategically planned and delivered network comprising the broadest range of high-quality green spaces and other environmental features. It

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<sup>24</sup> A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment, HM Government, 2018

should be designed and managed as a multi-functional resource capable of delivering ecosystem services and quality of life benefits. For example, GI supports healthier lifestyles, including opportunities for active travel, manages flood water, improves air quality and helps to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Access to natural environments provides important health and well being benefits, which we will want to maximise in the Strategic Plan. It will therefore be important to ensure that the plan ensures that high quality natural spaces are provided in locations which are accessible and that we seek to improve the equality of sustainable access to nature and its benefits across the whole area. This will mean ensuring accessible natural spaces are provided within existing settlements and as part of new developments as well providing access to natural areas within the wider countryside. The pandemic has highlighted the importance of access to local greenspace for physical and mental health and to encourage social activity. The provision of good quality green space for people and nature must be a fundamental component of good place making. It will need to be considered whether the plan should include standards for open space provision and whether existing standards in the Part 2 Local Plans should be harmonised across North Northamptonshire.

The GI framework set out in the JCS and Part 2 Local Plans includes a network of Sub-Regional and Local Corridors. The focus is on the strategic corridors of the Rivers Nene and Ise, and the Rockingham Forest area and includes the open countryside around urban areas, which is important to maintain distinct and separate settlements. In some instances, there is limited connectivity to access the natural greenspace from the main towns and opportunities need to be taken to link urban parks and woodland into the wider countryside. As previously discussed, Green Infrastructure and new cycle routes provide a particular opportunity to facilitate modal shift to active travel and enhance connectivity between settlements.

This network provides opportunities to enhance tourism in North Northamptonshire, while ensuring that its most sensitive assets are protected. The special policy areas of the Nene and Ise Valleys and Rockingham Forest in the JCS are strategically important in stimulating sustainable economic growth through tourism and rural diversification and are being delivered through initiatives such as the Greenway and Ise Valley Way. Evidence produced for the ASF identifies Rockingham Forest into John Clare Country, Nene Valley and Sywell Wood as strategic-scale environmental opportunity zones.

#### **Consultation questions:**

- 31. What are the key mechanisms the plan should use to achieve a net environmental gain and how can this be measured?**
- 32. Should the plan seek to introduce biodiversity net gain targets above the mandated 10% and align to the Oxford – Cambridge Arc target of 20%?**
- 33. Should the plan seek to identify opportunity areas for enhancing the natural environment at a strategic scale? Should this include continuing to identify green infrastructure corridors?**

**34. Should the plan seek to introduce other environmental targets? If so, what should they cover and how should they be measured?**

**35. How should the plan seek to improve equality of sustainable access to nature and its benefits. Should the plan include standards of access to green space?**

### *Landscape Character*

The landscape in North Northamptonshire has been influenced by a combination of human and physical influences. These landscapes, both man-made and natural, are what makes the area distinctive and there is a pressing need to conserve and enhance many of the features of importance landscape settings, as well as recognising the importance of views and vistas of these. A Landscape Character Assessment which was undertaken in 2008 for the county and informed the JCS is still relevant.

Some landscapes are more sensitive to change than others. Development can impact on the landscape through its effects on the character and the quality of the landscape and the degree to which development will become a significant or defining feature in the landscape, including skyline (where additional development appears disproportionately dominant), and loss of sense of remoteness. Visual impacts concern the degree to which proposed development will become a feature in particular views (or sequences of views) and the impacts this has on people experiencing views. The JCS recognises the need to protect tranquillity in the King's Cliffe Hills and Valleys Landscape Character Area. The Strategic Plan will update the policy approach to ensure that proposals understand and respond to the character of the landscape setting within which they are located.

### *Historic Environment*

The historic environment is one of North Northamptonshire's most valued assets. It is an important element of the landscape and contributes to the individual character and appearance of settlements. Responding appropriately to the historic environment is a key principle of good place making. Elements of the historic environment that hold significance are termed 'heritage assets' and include any building, monument, site, place, area or landscape positively identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions. This includes below ground archaeology. These assets are an irreplaceable resource that need to be conserved so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.

Known heritage assets can be designated or non-designated. There are also new sites being discovered all the time. North Northamptonshire has over 2800 designated heritage assets spread across its rural and urban landscapes. Designated<sup>25</sup> heritage assets within North Northamptonshire include scheduled monuments, listed buildings, registered parks and gardens, and conservation areas. North Northamptonshire contains many heritage assets of national importance including Grade 1 listed historic buildings and estates and their settings including Lyveden New Bield, Apethorpe Hall, Rockingham Castle, Kirby Hall and Boughton House. However, some of these assets are currently identified on the Historic England '[Heritage at Risk Register](#)' which identifies listed buildings, important historic sites, places and landmarks that are at risk from neglect or decay.

Non-designated heritage assets are an important component of North Northamptonshire and are at risk from the impact of development, or the cumulative loss of structures. Non-designated heritage assets are identified by the local planning authority through 'Local Lists'.

The Strategic Plan will focus on strategic heritage issues and refresh and update the policy approach to the historic environment. It will set a policy framework to ensure the significance of heritage assets is appropriately considered through the development management process and that there is appropriate preservation of assets either in situ or by investigation and recording where appropriate.

**Consultation questions:**

**36. Should the plan identify particular landscapes that are more sensitive to change?**

**37. How should the plan set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment?**

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<sup>25</sup> Designated assets are designated under statute and some, such as listed buildings, conservation areas and scheduled monuments, benefit from statutory protection and require specific statutory duties to be exercised or tests to be applied when assessing the impact of a development on them. They may also be subject to a separate heritage consent regime

## **Process and Next Steps**

This consultation is the first stage in preparing the Strategic Plan and runs from XXXX until XXXX.

It is important to clarify that at this stage no views have been formed on the scale of growth, which sites and locations should be allocated for new development, how existing policies should be updated or whether there should be any additional policies. The responses to the Scope and Issues consultation document will inform and contribute to the development of detailed planning policies and proposals at later stages of the plan making process.

The next stage in the preparation of the Strategic Plan will be to develop a range of potential spatial options to meet the level of growth we are planning for across North Northamptonshire. We hope to consult on these Options later this year and all responses made to this consultation will help us to develop these. The development and consideration of spatial options will also need to take account of a range of influences such as the plans of adjoining authorities.

### **Consultation question:**

**38. Are there any issues that you feel we have missed and should be considered in the Strategic Plan?**

### **Glossary of key terms**

*To be added*