

Appendix 1

CENTRAL AREA ACTION PLAN - EMERGING STRATEGY

Foreword

This emergent strategy is about how the centre of Northampton will develop over the next twenty years and beyond. It is not a final strategy, but is work in progress representing thinking that is relatively well progressed. The strategy however could be subject to change if reasons warrant it, for instance new evidence from the feedback given from this period of consultation. It contains some of the key decisions that will affect the centre, however the Pre-Submission version of the Central Area Action Plan, produced after the end of consultation on this document will contain more detail and policies.

The future of Northampton's centre is reliant upon well focussed planning and investment. There is a once in a generation opportunity to transform the fortunes of the centre. It must become a place that takes advantages of the opportunities that the growth of the town's population from approximately 200,000 to around 300,000 by 2026 will bring. This transformation will be an integral part of ensuring that Northampton and West Northamptonshire are regarded as a place that people want to be to live, to work and for leisure.

The Central Area Action Plan will complement regional planning policy and the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy. It provides more detail on how central Northampton will meet the ambitions set out for it in these documents. It is a 'spatial' policy document, meaning that it deals with places and the activities that happen within them. It will eventually replace parts of the Northampton Local Plan adopted in 1997.

The Plan will set both the broad framework for developing the centre to 2026 and beyond and more detailed policy requirements for particular parts of the centre. This will provide a clearer picture of the future of the centre for residents, investors and businesses. It will also help focus the spending plans of a range of public sector organisations from the Borough and County Councils, West Northamptonshire Development Corporation, Homes and Communities Agency, the Primary Care Trust, the emergency services and the Environment Agency.

It seeks to solve some of the current problems experienced such the relatively poor performance of the centre in terms of its retail offer; the recent limited investment in employment premises, in particular offices; the under-use of large areas within the core of the centre and on what can currently be seen as its edges; and the limited emphasis placed on positive natural features that could be real assets, such as its rivers and associated open spaces.

This document is the 'emerging strategy' for the town centre. It explains the current thinking and is designed to test out ideas. It follows on from the Issues and Options document that we consulted on in October 2007. The Pre-Submission version of the

Plan, which to all intents and purposes should be considered the final version, will be published in November 2009, prior to submission to the government for examination in June 2010.

This document is part of the consultation process as set out in Regulation 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008. Although it contains a number of questions on the emerging strategy for the Central Area for inclusion within a Pre-Submission Action Plan, the Council is not seeking to limit representations about what the Action Plan ought to contain, and indeed welcomes any additional representations.

Purpose of the Emerging Strategy

The purpose of this document is to explain the current thinking of the Council and to obtain responses from all interested parties to these thoughts. This is an important step forward in the production of the Central Area Action Plan. However it is not the complete plan, nor at this stage is anything completely fixed. The strategy and proposals set out here have been developed after careful consideration, and appear to be the best approach available. However, if further evidence suggests some change of approach or emphasis that may lead to changes for example the conclusions of the Stage 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

A lot of testing of ideas has already taken place and this emerging strategy explains how some of the important choices for the area are being informed, as well as our thinking on the best way forward. On reflection, our issues and options document put forward too many options, particularly for potential uses within areas. A significant amount of work had already been undertaken through consultation with many people and organisations, for example in the production of the BDP Northampton Central Area, Design, Development and Movement Framework published in November 2006, to which a significant level of consensus had been achieved.

In this document we justify why we have taken decisions on the preferred options, but do not address why we rejected all others. Further information will be provided in further technical papers in support of the Pre-Submission document. Our testing of these ideas will help to inform further technical work.

This document is for everyone who is interested in the future of Northampton. It will have impacts on communities, businesses, landowners, developers and other investors. It is also intended to increase the dialogue we already have with bodies such as the Environment Agency, River Nene Regional Park, English Heritage and a range of public services operating in the area.

This emerging strategy document has been prepared taking into account consultation responses received through the informal consultation prior to the Issues and Options stage, the formal consultation that took place at that stage and subsequent continual dialogue with partners, plus feedback as and when from others such as the Town Centre Commission and Councillors. Together these have helped shape changes to the plan proposals,

Since the publication of the Issues and Options document additional evidence has been collected which forms the basis of the policies and proposals which will be included in the Pre-Submission document.

PART ONE - INTRODUCTION

Area Action Plans are documents targeted at planning for areas of significant change and conservation. The Government wishes to see them integrate land use, transport and regeneration proposals with clear mechanisms for delivery.

Northampton is a key component in the Government's programme of developing sustainable communities. By 2026 the whole town will have grown significantly towards a population of 300,000. Past change is evident in the town's unique built heritage; however the town must adapt and revitalise to meet the challenges of change while conserving its historic past. To enable these two challenges to be faced the Central Area Action Plan will provide a Spatial Plan to guide future development.

The Central Area includes what most people would identify as the 'town centre', the central retail, leisure and commercial hub of the town, together with adjoining areas of commercial, residential and mixed use. These adjoining areas are included because it is anticipated that they will be developed to enhance the role and functioning of the centre in its expansion to become of a stature as a principal focus for a settlement with a population that will grow to 300,000 by 2026 and probably also more beyond this date. It is anticipated that, as part of this expansion Northampton Town Centre will become Northampton City Centre, with all the associated scale and density of development and uses that that implies.

The Central Area Action Plan includes within its boundary the area shown within Figure 1. Meetings with stakeholders and discussions with others led to a revised boundary. The original boundary proposed at the Issues and Options stage can also be seen in Figure 1. A large amount of the existing residential areas where no 'actions' are planned has been removed. This allows the Plan to focus on areas where change is going to happen or needed, and where a clear view on the type of development is required. A large area to the south of the old boundary has also been added to the boundary. This is the Waterside and also associated large development areas at Ransome Road, where there is an opportunity to capitalise on the opportunities provided by the River Nene and Grand Union Canal. The new boundary also has areas of public greenspace land to the south-east which includes Midsummer Meadow and Barnes Meadow Nature Reserve.

The Central Area Action Plan will provide the basis for co-ordinating the actions of a range of partners (for example the County Council, West Northamptonshire Development Corporation, Northamptonshire Enterprise Limited and the Borough Council) with an interest in the Central Area.

The existing town centre is an area which is beginning to show clear signs of being in relative decline. This decline is due to a combination of factors, including lack of investment and growth in shopping provision to meet demand, the effects of out of town retailing and the draw of other shopping destinations, in particular Milton Keynes. This combined with the loss of major employers in the town centre to out of town locations and lack of sufficient investment in the public realm have all contributed to the decline.

The Plan aims to halt the decline in the first instance and to implement a sustainable future for the centre of Northampton, whilst respecting and protecting the historic environment. It will provide a framework for high quality employment, retail, housing, leisure and cultural development and investment.

The Central Area Action Plan will also establish planning policies for the Central Area of Northampton until 2026. These will manage growth and change, whilst ensuring the protection of areas and places sensitive to change, such as the historic core.

The Plan must also be deliverable (as much as anyone can be certain over these timescales). As such it gives details of the key partners that can make change happen, therefore trying to provide a degree of certainty when looking ahead twenty years.

The plan will provide a framework for future decisions made in the Central Area by landowners, investors and businesses; local authorities and other public sector organisations such as the emergency services, health providers and the Environment Agency; and will also be a key consideration in decisions on planning applications.

The Borough Council in association with its partners has been, is and will continue to work on a number of town centre and Northampton wide studies (such as retail and economic development) to inform decision making on the Central Area, plus site specific Masterplans. As a significant landowner, the Council can also take the lead on some developments within the Central Area such as the Grosvenor Centre , sites included within the Bridge Street/St John's/Angel Street Masterplan and the regeneration of Spring Boroughs.

POLICY CONTEXT

The Central Area Action Plan must be generally conform to several higher tiers of policy, set out at national, regional, sub-regional and Borough wide level

National

At the national level town centres are still regarded as the priority areas uses that attract large number of visitors and activity, for example retail, leisure, office and hotel uses. The most pertinent policies relating to town and city centres is contained within Planning Policy Statement 6. This however is likely to be replaced by a revised Planning Policy Statement 4, currently going through a phase of consultation on a revised draft.

Paragraph 6 of Draft PPS4 outlines the Government's objectives for achieving prosperous communities, and these include the aim to promote the vitality and viability of town and other centres as important places for communities and ensure that they are economically successful recognising that they are important drivers for regional, sub-regional and local economies. This is to be done through the following:

- New economic growth and development to be focused in existing centres, with the aim of offering a wide range of services in an attractive and safe environment
- Competition between retailers and enhanced consumer choice through the provision of innovative and efficient shopping, leisure, tourism and local services in town centres, which allow genuine choice to meet the needs of the entire community, and particularly socially excluded groups
- The historic, archaeological, architectural heritage of centres to be conserved and, where appropriate, enhanced to provide a sense of place and a focus for the community and for civic activity

The policy relating to site selection and land assembly for can be considered main town centre uses (Policy EC7) requires the application of a sequential approach to site selection and an impact assessment of the development on existing centres. These uses include: retail, offices, leisure, entertainment facilities and arts. This will have implications on proposals for out-of-town locations, as the Government reinforces a “town centre first” message.

Regional

The East Midlands Regional Plan adopted in March 2009 sets out the assumed level of growth of housing and employment associated with the expansion of the town. It sets out a minimum of an additional 40,375 homes in the period 2001-2026 for Northampton and 37,200 jobs for West Northamptonshire for the period 2001-2021. This takes forward the Government’s objectives set out within the earlier Sustainable Communities Plan of providing additional significant growth in housing development to cater for the needs of the population and increased employment opportunities to retain the economy’s competitiveness at a national level.

In East Midlands Plan (RSS8), Northampton is identified as a principal urban area, along with cities such as Leicester, Derby and Nottingham. Therefore there is an acknowledgement that the role of Northampton will be similar to that of larger existing cities within the region and that Northampton will have a significant role to play within the Milton Keynes, Northamptonshire, and Bedfordshire sub-region. A clear policy direction for the Council is set out in the Plan for Northampton Central Area.

Policy MKSM SRS Northamptonshire 3 within the East Midlands Plan states:

“Northampton Borough Council, in partnership with other relevant bodies, will prepare a Local Development Document to provide a long-term framework for revitalising and upgrading the quality and facilities of the central area, including;

- *Developing the area around and including the railway station not only as a transport hub for the town, but also as an attractive and vibrant gateway to the town centre and focus for development;*
- *Improving the range and quality of retail provision by increasing comparison and convenience floorspace, and linking this into a revitalisation of the rest of*

the central area incorporating attractive links to the railway station and waterfront areas;

- Making the central area the focus of a range of employment opportunities with a particular emphasis on office space. From the provision of large office space through to small office suites in both new and converted accommodation;*
- Developing cultural/heritage tourism by enhancing the existing cultural heritage facilities and attractions, and through the provision of new facilities; and*
- Increasing the range of centrally located overnight accommodation”*

West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy

The West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy, which is at the same stage in its preparation as the Central Area Action Plan will set out the critical role that Northampton centre will have in being an integral part of ensuring that Northampton and West Northamptonshire are regarded as a place that people want to be to live, work and for leisure. The emerging Core Strategy’s vision for West Northamptonshire states:

”.....Northampton City is repositioned as the key economic driver at the cultural heart of the sub-region fulfilling its role as the leading retail, entertainment, employment health and learning centre based upon a thriving mixed economy including the services it offers relative to neighbours and proud of its theatres, museums and professional sports teams. All communities have access to many opportunities.....”

It also identifies that “with government and regional policy focusing on Northampton's role within the Growth Area, there is a compelling need for a major step change in the delivery of an attractive, lively and commercially successful town centre.” (para 4.5.1.2)

It states the “Northampton Central Area will lie at the heart of a new city and will serve as the economic and cultural hub for the county. Castle and Spencer wards of which Castle includes part of the central area are identified as priority communities in need of regeneration”. (para 4.5.1.3) “Employment growth will be promoted in urban centres through an urban concentration policy to help realise objectives for regenerating and revitalising urban centres.” (para 4.3.10)

It identifies that: “Northampton’s centre, in particular, has been damaged over the years by the unhealthy range of out of centre retail areas that have diverted investment away from the centre and contributed nothing towards its regeneration. There is a strategic well evidenced necessity to reverse this damage and improve Northampton so that it fulfils its regional, county and West Northamptonshire role to its full potential. The Joint Core Strategy will address these strategic issues through policies to resist any further retail development outside the central shopping area (as

defined by the Central Area Action Plan) or the other defined centres.” (para 4.6.5-4.5.6)

Northampton’s centre is identified as a “City Centre: serves as a hub of business and cultural activity in the sub-region and county. It is the most intensive form of development for housing, employment and public transport. The City Centre will continue to serve as the finance and commerce, government, retail, tourism, arts and entertainment centre for the sub-region and county.” (para 4.6.12) The Core Strategy will also “Promote the development of additional cultural and tourist facilities close to popular destinations for example: Northampton arts and culture quarter....(and)..waterfront areas in Northampton” (para 4.8.4.6)

Community Strategy

Government Policy is clear that the Plan should also be reflective of the Community Strategy. The Action Plan will be a key part in meeting the aims of Northamptonshire Sustainable Community Strategy of:

- Being successful through sustainable growth and regeneration
- Developing a growing economy
- To have safe and strong communities
- To have healthy people with a good quality of life

THE EVIDENCE BASE

The emerging strategy has been developed through an examination of a variety of sources of information and specific pieces of research designed to inform policy. This evidence base consists of national and regional planning policy, best practice guidance, background studies, census statistics and other published data, and consultation feedback. See Appendix A for a list of the evidence base considered.

SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL

The Area Action Plan has been informed and modified throughout by the process of Sustainability Appraisal, incorporating a Strategic Environmental Assessment. This assesses the Plan’s effect on a wide range of sustainability environmental, economic and social aspirations objectives. The emphasis is on ensuring that the Plan minimises any adverse impact on these objectives, and where possible seeks to improve them. The Appraisal has been used in working up the emerging strategy and will also be used again in the next stages of taking the Plan through to its Submission Draft. In addition to this an Equality Impact Assessment screening has been undertaken. This has concluded that the Plan has the potential to impact on some of the six equalities strands. This related amongst other things to the impact of the plan on older and younger people, particularly with regards to safety and the perception of crime, accessibility for women, the young and the old and those with a disability and impact of restrictions on uses disproportionately affecting particular ethnic minorities. Therefore a full Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken in

the run up to the Pre-Submission document to inform and influence the policy approach.

CENTRAL AREA CONTEXT

The Central Area Action Plan includes the main shopping areas of Abington Street, St Giles, the Drapery, Gold Street the Grosvenor Centre and the Market Place, together with adjoining areas of commercial, residential and mixed use. To the west the boundary extends to include Spring Boroughs, the railway station and sidings and the out of centre St. James and Nene Valley Retail Parks. To the south it follows the old Northampton to Bedford railway line, with the exception of the area around Ransome Road, which will be subject to significant change in the future, linked into the Waterside area based around the canal, River Nene and its Bampton Arm tributary. It also includes a significant area of 'greenspace' or 'green infrastructure' around Midsummer Meadow up to the A45 and Barnes Meadow. To the east it includes the hospital area along with large scale commercial premises, before being drawn more closely into the historic core of the town which tends to be defined by the inner ring road. (see Figure 1)

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

BRIEF SUMMARY

Despite recent growth in the population of Northampton and Northamptonshire, the investment within Northampton's centre is below what would have been anticipated. There has been a lack of substantial investment by the development industry, with extremely limited retail and office provision in particular over the last 20 years. On the other hand there have been significant opportunities and investor appetite for out of centre retailing and employment development. This has resulted in several major employers and retailers moving out of the Central Area.

More recently there has been a growth of new apartment development and a rise in the number of pubs and restaurants operating within the centre, particularly along Birdge Street. There has also been a substantial investment in the Derngate Theatre complex. These changes have been particularly successful at bringing people into the town in the evenings and at the weekends. However, there has been a particular emphasis in the market on places that attract younger drinkers with the consequential associated problems. To many the centre can feel intimidating and unsafe in the evenings.

Although Northampton centre can in comparison with other centres across the country be regarded as relatively successful, it is clearly underperforming in relation to the catchment that it serves. There is a need to turn around its fortunes. It needs to be able to take advantages that the opportunities of sustained growth of the population and associated employment opportunities will bring. It needs to become an integral part in ensuring that Northampton and West Northamptonshire are regarded as a place that people want to be to live, work and for leisure. It has to take on the mantle of being a city centre that serves a population that will approach

300,000 by 2026 and have all the characteristics of a major urban centre. It also has to have an eye on the future, in the assumption that growth is likely to occur beyond 2026 for Northampton as a whole.

This emerging strategy outlines how the Council and its partners plan to ensure that this happens, starting out with the vision, strategic objectives, it also outlines policies that will support this vision, gives further detail of ambitious development anticipated in substantial areas and identifies how public sector partners and other organisations will work together to assist the private sector in delivering the majority of the proposed change and how the success of this will be monitored.

RESIDENTIAL

- The Central area is home to around 9% of Northampton's population. It has a mix of homes, but the majority are in the form of high density apartments, with a high proportion of them being in the social rented sector.
- Most of the housing stock in the Central Area is pre-war (1939), although as there has been a substantial amount of apartment development in the last decade.
- Spring Boroughs, a substantial residential area in the Central Area is within the top 5% of deprived areas in England and has a range of poor quality housing.

CHARACTER AND ENVIRONMENT

- The Central Area retains a considerable amount of its historical character Four conservation areas are designated. There are also many Listed Buildings, some Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Locally Listed Buildings
- Some areas have however suffered from significant intervention through highway widening schemes, or wholesale clearance, particularly during the late 1960s, early 1970s. Many of these have been poor quality developments resulting in disjointed and poor environments, particularly for the pedestrian and cyclist
- The river and its valley is a natural resource located to the south of the Central Area. The potential of this area has in the main, until relatively recently, been neglected
- Although there are some very pleasant areas, and a programme of recent investment there needs to be an improvement in the public realm and signage
- Visitors rate the town centre poorly in terms of cleanliness, safety and character

EMPLOYMENT, RETAIL AND LEISURE

- Northampton centre attracts only half the retail spending of the town's residents, with a lot of spending going to Weston Favell on the east of the town, Milton Keynes and other competing centres.
- Provision in the town centre of convenience shopping is currently underprovided for so most spending is at edge of centre or out of centre food stores;
- The large purpose built Grosvenor Centre is beginning to show its age
- The centre is regarded at by occupiers as low income. Thus is despite its population catchment having a high level of per capita spend, so the centre should be able to attract more and better retail and restaurant operators;
- The perception is that it has a poor selection of multiple retailers, although in terms of key attractors it is on a par with Leicester (although it is true that there is a lack of premium retailers).
- The town centre needs a broader range of comparison shops, with some higher quality shops to improve its attractiveness. These types of operators are usually looking for large modern units within central locations
- Restaurants are under-represented and in particular higher quality outlets – a restaurant cluster should be encouraged and marketed to overcome the perception that the town centre is not an eating out location;
- There has been little investment over the past 20 years in new employment development. Consequently a significant proportion of the existing available stock is unsuitable for modern day occupier requirements.
- The Northampton General Hospital is located to the east of the Central Area. It provides facilities for a wider area and is the largest employer within the central area.
- There is one main employment site at Bedford Road. However there are several other industrial sites including Carlsberg Brewery and the railway sidings at Castle Station

TRANSPORT AND MOVEMENT

- A purpose built bus station is located to the north of the Grosvenor Centre;
- Castle Station, whilst not on the direct line, provides links with both London and Birmingham, along the West Coast Main Line

- Although access by public transport is good, both the railway station and bus station are peripheral and dated
- Much of the historic centre is enclosed within an inner ring road of varying lane size – whilst providing access to the town centre, this also acts as a route for through traffic and is a significant barrier to movement across it, in particular by pedestrians
- There are a number of one-way systems in operation around the Central Area, and the town lacks 'permeability' - the ability to drive easily through the town
- Abington Street, which is one of the main shopping areas, is pedestrianised

PART TWO - VISION AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Northampton City Centre Vision 2026

By 2026 Northampton City Centre will be firmly established as the economic and cultural hub for Northamptonshire. It will be the destination of choice for people within the County and beyond to live, work and relax. The city centre will be using its strengths, in particular its architectural heritage, its riverside, a distinctive retail offer and its cultural offer as a key to its success.

The City Centre will have developed:

- A distinctive retail offer that combines the best in major high street names in The Greyfriars (which will have replaced the Grosvenor Centre and bus station) with niche and specialist retail and leisure in Northampton's traditional streets and market
- A new inter-city railway facility at Castle Station with a key employment area providing a high quality gateway to the city, supporting the regeneration of neighbouring sites including Spring Boroughs
- A lively St. Johns Quarter providing a centre for arts and culture alongside a base for public services and employment
- A new focus on The Waterside enhancing a long neglected asset as a new destination for employment, living and leisure with a new marina at its heart
- Our city centre will provide facilities equal to or better than the best European cities of a similar size

Question: Is the vision appropriate? How could it be improved?

DRAFT STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES TO 2026

Strategic Objective 1: Regeneration

To expand retail and other town centre facilities and the scale of employment opportunities in the centre to match Northampton's future role as a city at the heart of its sub-region, maximising the use of previously developed land

Strategic Objective 2: A well designed city centre

To ensure new design is of the highest standard that reflects the rich architectural heritage and adds to the sense of place

Strategic Objective 3: A destination of choice

To revitalise the Market Square as the heart of the new city and create and develop cultural initiatives based around St John's and the Derngate Theatres area

Strategic Objective 4: A walkable city

To make the Central Area pedestrian friendly and 'walkable', with an improved Public Realm and linkages between key destinations

Strategic Objective 5: Public Transport and cycling

To ensure good public transport and cycle accessibility, and develop a dedicated public transport route on the disused railway line linking the City Centre with the major growth areas

Strategic Objective 6: Quality places

To provide an appealing and safe environment within the urban framework and along The Waterside

Strategic Objective 7: Repopule the centre

To substantially increase the resident population through redevelopment of redundant industrial areas and the regeneration of Spring Boroughs

Strategic Objective 8: Sustainability

To ensure the Central Area develops in a sustainable manner and helps create a positive framework for action on climate change

Question: Are the objectives individually and collectively appropriate? How could they be improved?

PART THREE - SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

BDP Northampton Central Area, Design, Development and Movement Framework published in November 2006.

The Council together with West Northamptonshire Development Corporation, the County Council and the Homes and Communities Agency (formerly English Partnerships) commissioned BDP to undertake the Northampton Central Area, Design, Development and Movement Framework in 2006. It was recognised that the existing Northampton Local Plan adopted in 1997 was increasingly becoming out of date. The Local Plan adopted in 1997 could not have taken into account the type of centre that would be required for Northampton to be the successful place anticipated through the substantial growth agenda set out in the Government's Sustainable Communities Plan published in 2002.

The Northampton Central Area Design, Development and Movement Framework sought to provide a strategic vision for the town centre that could be used to guide the work and priorities of these partner organisations and the private sector prior to the adoption of the Central Area Action Plan. In progressing with the Central Area Action Plan to the emergent strategy, the Council has had regard to the piece of work that BDP did. It has sought to refine the Framework through more rigorous assessment and testing, but has not sought to start again.

The BDP work identified significant areas of opportunity. The Framework document took into account the characteristics of the opportunity areas and their connections to the wider town, as well as the centre. It set out preferred principles for the development of the sites and the connections between them. Development should include anchors to create points of activity within the town which would then be connected by strong pedestrian movement routes either obviously signposted or through enhanced public realm, many of which overlapped, for example the retail circuit and the north/south/east/west cross created through historic routes. Work on improving the connective glue between the opportunity sites has started through an agreement on a Public Realm Implementation Framework. This has been instrumental in the first phases of public realm improvement from Castle Station, along Marefair and Gold Street to All Saints. Work has been and will continue to occur on refining the development opportunity sites and connections between them through masterplans and identification within the Submission draft of the CAAP about the priority connective routes.

A simplified overview of the basic BDP strategy for the centre is included in Figure 2. A simplified Spatial Plan of the Emerging Strategy for the Action Plan is shown in Figure 3

Shopping in the Central Area

Three distinct pieces of work have been commissioned as part of the evidence base for developing retail policy for the Northampton sub-region. The *West Northamptonshire Retail Study 2026* by Consultants CACI (May 2009) gives advice on retail capacity and needs within West Northamptonshire, whilst the *Retail Strategy*

for Northampton Town Centre also by consultants CACI in May 2008, gives a specific assessment on retail matters within the town centre. A Town Centre Health Check has been commissioned and is being undertaken by Roger Tym and Partners and is expected to be completed at the end of July 2009. This will provide further retail analysis (and other town centre uses) in association with a wider understanding of the health of the centre.

CACI describe the town centres within the sub region as 'embattled' due to a number of successful out of town retail locations situated around the urban area of Northampton. In addition the centres face strong competition from large format supermarkets and Milton Keynes, this is particularly attractive to residents in the south west areas of Northampton. Currently Milton Keynes takes 11% of the spend from the Northampton town centre catchment area. This is about the same as Weston Favell District Centre, which is to the east of Northampton. However, the competition posed by Milton Keynes and Weston Favell will increase due further expansion of their retail offer through extensions, which was permitted some time ago. Figure 4 shows the split of spending within Northampton's retail catchment.

In order for the CAAP to provide realistic and deliverable policies for the regeneration and reinvigoration of the town centre and the emerging city centre, it will be necessary for there to be policies in the Joint Core Strategy that restrict the development of new and the expansion of existing out of town and edge of town retailing. This approach is confirmed above in the Policy Context section.

The St. James' and Nene Valley Retail Parks and B&Q are included within the boundary of the Central Area. These currently function as out of centre retail parks and retail warehousing with no evidenced linkage to the primary shopping area and are in part in competition with the town centre. Given the advice in CACI the Council is keen to see that in the future this area does not have further retail provision to undermine the centre. In the longer term, taking into account the growth of the centre and in particular the ambitions for the adjacent Waterside area, the Council regard this as having great potential to provide additional capacity for medium to high density mixed use development, including offices, residential and other non-retail uses appropriate for an area adjacent to a central area. Given recent investment that has occurred in the retail units it is anticipated that this will be towards the end of the Plan period, or in the period shortly after its end.

Question: Do you think that this would be an appropriate response to ensure that the town centre is strengthened and enhanced?

Question: Would it be appropriate for the CAAP to include specific policies to change the use of St. James' and Nene Valley Retail Parks and the B&Q site from retail to high to medium mixed use areas primarily for employment and residential uses when proposals come forward for their redevelopment?

Overall the town centre takes only 46.2% of the trade from its catchment area. (see Figure 4). The Retail Strategy for Northampton identifies the aim to; *To see Northampton attain the status of dominant sub-regional centre, upgrading from an 'average major centre' to a 'quality major centre', by improving the amount of retail*

floorspace to a city sized level. To also encourage 'niche' retailing and more family friendly restaurants.

The Strategy identified the following issues to address to deliver this ambition;

- A strong need for additional retail floorspace to accommodate contemporary requirements from larger store operators
- An under-provision of Health and Beauty retailers
- A gap in the market for 'Upper' and 'Upper Middle' premium clothing retailers
- A strong need for an improved catering offer
- An opportunity for premium home 'lifestyle' retailers - including specialist electrical and furnishing offers

It identified that in order to increase its attractiveness to shoppers and performance that a potential 44,200 sq.m of floorspace could to be provided in the period to 2026, as well as a change in focus of the retail offer in line with the Retail Strategy for Northampton to a higher quality, more distinctive offer. (identified as Option C) Taking this evidence into account, the Council believes that there is the need to proactively plan for this floorspace to be delivered within the centre.

The CACI work also identified that there is also a need for a substantial amount of food retailing shopping within the town centre, enough for a medium sized store, or a range of smaller ones. (3,017 sq m net to 2016 and 4511 sq m net to 2026)

Currently there appear to be limited number of choices for large scale retail provision sites in the centre. The most obvious solution which the Council has been pursuing with Legal and General, the current owners of the Grosvenor Centre, is a reconfiguration and significant expansion of the centre northwards. This would remove the obsolete bus station and has the potential for positively addressing the extremely poor townscape caused by remodelling undertaken in the 1970s and 1980s. The Council, which owns most of the land that it is anticipated the extension will be built on, is close to signing a development agreement with Legal and General which would commit both to delivering a significant proportion of the additional retail floorspace capacity that needs to be provided.

The Grosvenor Centre redevelopment could be the key part of delivering the retail strategy required to improve the long term prospects of Northampton's centre. (See Figure 5 for boundary of development site) Although negotiations are still on-going, it is anticipated that the expanded Grosvenor Centre will have approximately 42,000 sq m net of extra retail floorspace. It will be a comprehensive redevelopment that will include demolition of the Bus Station, and creation of new anchor stores. It is anticipated that the expansion plans will increase the size of the current supermarket. Nevertheless, it is likely that this would still allow for the possibility of more food retail to be provided on another site within the town centre. CACI considered that the provision of more of this food floorspace on another site in the town centre would be

beneficial to assisting in increasing its vitality and viability. The Council considers that the location of the additional supermarket floorspace should be in the northern half of the central area to balance against existing provision in the south and provide better access to resident populations to the north of the centre to a supermarket.

In addition to the Grosvenor Centre redevelopment, in order to meet the longer term needs of Northampton and to provide greater investment choice a further substantial retail led development will need to start. The Council has identified two additional site options that it considers have the potential to provide greater choice. Both of these options are in the vicinity of the primary shopping area.

North of Abington Street

The first site is an area on the north side of Abington Street, primarily covering the area formerly occupied by the Notre Dame convent which was redeveloped in the 1970s. (see Figure 6 for site boundary) This would assist in enlivening Abington Street where it begins to peter out in terms the amount of pedestrians it has and the associated feeling of vitality that this creates. Site assembly of all the land is likely to be more difficult than the options where the Council is the only, or principal landowner, although the Borough Council do own some of the land. This location could also provide offices and a new supermarket. A more modest scheme could see the buildings on the Abington Street frontage parcelled together to provide an opportunity for additional convenience retailing such as a modest sized food store.

Land in between College Street and Horsemarket

The other site is in the Horsemarket/College Street area to the rear of the Drapery. (see Figure 7 for site boundary) The proximity of this site to the Market Square has the potential to strengthen the footfall there and enhance the role that the emerging strategy sees for it as a focal point of the centre. Redevelopment of this site will involve relocation of the Park Inn Hotel to another site, or its accommodation within the redevelopment. This will be a high quality retail led mixed use development that overlooks St Katherine's Gardens with cafe/restaurants making use of the improved open space,. Office, hotel and residential uses above this development would be required. Site assembly should be easier as the Council own all the land in the area. The redevelopment of this site would strengthen the links between Spring Boroughs and the central area, further supporting its regeneration.

On balance it is considered that the land between Horsemarket and College Street is a stronger option for the next generation of large scale retail floorspace. It is a site that is likely to be easier to assemble, is larger and would put the retail focus more towards the Market Square, enhancing its role as a key focal point for the central area. .

The start of the Horsemarket/College Street development will need to be considered along side delivery of the Grosvenor Centre and the needs of the town.

***Question: What do you see as the advantages / disadvantages of such sites?
What are the possibilities for the Council of promoting quick wins to deal with***

some of the more immediate retail needs without undermining the business case for a major shopping centre?

Upgrading the quality of the retail offer:

In addition to the large format national multiple stores, CACI identified the need for the town centre to focus on creating a higher value shopping experience in Northampton. This would play on the differentiating characteristics that the centre has in terms of its competitors, namely its history and sense of place. This would increase its competitiveness in relation to other centres. It would attract the higher spenders who are currently under-represented as shoppers in the town centre. Specialist shopping of this nature will help Northampton attain a status of dominant sub-regional centre, upgrading from an 'average major centre' to a 'quality major centre'.

The Plan will seek to build on the existing higher order shopping in some of the current secondary shopping areas and eventually the opportunities that might become available within existing primary shopping areas once the Grosvenor centre extension opens. This retailing is likely to be based in the Market Square, Gold Street, Abington Street, The Drapery and St Giles, based on a circuit proposed by CACI. (See Figure 8) This will need a much more interventionist approach from the Council and others than through planning policies alone. It could require amongst other things encouraging selective letting from the Council and others as a landlord, investment in signage, marketing, improving shopfronts and buildings, creating high quality public places and streets.

Question: Do you support the idea of higher quality retailing? Where are the best locations? How can this approach best succeed?

Primary Retail Frontages

To ensure the vitality and long term viability of the town centre, it is crucial that at its core it has mainly attractive retail uses (part of Use Class A1). Some non retail uses, for example banks/buildings societies (part of Use Class A2) and restaurants /pubs/ cafes (Use Classes A3 and A4) are appropriate as long as they do not dominate.

There are two key definitions here set out in Government policy;

- *Primary Retail Frontages which have a high proportion of retail uses, and;*
- *Secondary Retail Frontages which contain a greater diversity of uses and may also be found outside of the town centre*

Primary Retail Frontages are areas where shops predominate (or should predominate) and pedestrian flows are at the highest (or are to be encouraged such as The Market Square).

The Borough Council has reappraised the town centre and in line with the Retail Strategy and aspirations for the Market Square and defines the following as Primary

Retail Frontages; Grosvenor Centre, part of St Giles, part of Abington Street, part of The Market Square, Wood Hill, Mercers Row and the Drapery.

The following are defined as Secondary Frontages; Gold Street, Fish Street, part of St Giles, George Row, Derngate (from Castilian Street west), part of the Market Square and Abington Square.

The extension of the Grosvenor centre, additional retailing in the northern half of the town and the emphasis on a quality retail offer is likely to lead to changes in the role of frontages over time. The Council wants to ensure that the refocus will be supported by policies that seek a further diminution of retail offer in some existing secondary frontages. This will be more fully addressed in the Pre-Submission document.

The primary and secondary frontages are identified in Figure 9

Question: Are the frontages identified correct? Should there be more or less included?

In order to be compliant with Government policy, as well as highlighting the primary shopping area, the Council also needs to define what it considers to be the 'town centre'. This provides clear guidance on where uses given priority in government guidance for being accommodated within town centres should go, and what can be regarded as edge of centre and out of centre.

Figure 10 shows the Council's defined town centre.

Question: Are the town centre boundary identified correct? Should there be more or less included?

The Market Square

The Market Square lies within the All Saints Conservation Area. It is an historic and unique piece of the town which could act as a real draw in its own right if enhanced. The Town Centre Health Check has identified that it is already popular with visitors. Within the BDP Framework it was anticipated that the Market Square would function as the heart of the centre, to which key connecting pedestrian routes would run. There is the opportunity for it to become a focal point and a strategic asset to an attractive town centre.

The Market Square is also in poorer health in terms of trading, retail and catering than it was several years ago. Footfall has fallen consistently over a number of years, mirrored by the decline in stall holder occupancy. The economic downturn has led to a rise in vacant shop units on its edges. The remaining retail offer is weak and there are lower order services e.g. betting shops, recruitment agencies. The catering offer is limited with two public houses fostering a volume drinking culture and two fast food vans catering for an eat-as-you-go populace.

However, the public realm is acknowledged as being poor. The street level building frontages and poor quality shop fronts, as well as poor street furniture lack respect and empathy for this historic environment and the outstanding architecture above.

Substantial work has already begun in seeking to increase the attractiveness of the market through the implementation of the Market Square Project in 2009. This has been supported with investment from our Northamptonshire Enterprise Limited. Rationalising the amount of stalls and creating an events area has been successful in creating a feeling of additional vitality and drawing people into the Market Square for events. Work is about to commence on a water feature at the 'gateway' entrance to the square.

The square has also been subject to detailed analysis of the building frontages, which formed the basis of a recent unsuccessful bid for Heritage Lottery Funding to improve building frontages. A bid for funding to consider the public realm improvement solutions to the Market Square and Abington Street is awaiting decision.

Future plans include the creation of catering outlets around the edge that can be easily moved to allow more flexible use of the space, canopied seating area and an improved 'gateway' area situated at the south end of the square. Furthermore a new lighting scheme is proposed to greatly improve the architectural appeal of the historic buildings

Improvements to the Market Square, to increase its appeal and potentially make it the heart of the centre and Northampton, as with the specialist retail circuit, will require more than just planning policies. It will need action on the public realm, additional work on promotions and events to ensure it draws people in, changes in letting policies from landlords and investment in building frontages.

***Question: What could transform this area into the true heart of the centre?
How could this realistically be achieved?***

Question: Do we need more outdoor pavement cafés that appeal to all people, or family friendly restaurants? How can we actively ensure that if these types of uses are allowed, that they are of a type to create a quality place?

Office and Employment

Northampton as a whole has, until 2008, had a relatively vibrant economy which has led to a healthy and expanding property market for employment space. Over the last 5 to 10 years, employment land allocations in the existing adopted local plan were consistently taken up, leading to an increasing supply of floorspace, predominantly within the strategic distribution sector.

Central Northampton however, has not been recently recognised as a major office location. There has been a lack of office investment in the centre. The consequent inability of the centre to attract new office employment opportunities within it has limited its attractiveness to new businesses and meant that existing ones have not

been able to be accommodated as their need for premises have changed. Many of these office occupiers abandoned the town centre and relocated to strategic employment areas out-of-town, including the Barclaycard to Brackmills.

This has marginalised the commercial role and importance of the centre. There has also been an impact on the day time economy and the ambiance of the centre. The service outlets that might ordinarily thrive if supported by office workers on their breaks, or way in or out to work are limited. The decline in office occupiers has in itself created a dynamic that will be difficult to break, as some of the advantages of being located in a centre, e.g. networking, higher quality eating and drinking establishments disappear. Compared to other centres, there is a definite lack of high earners and spenders being within the town centre. This is something that needs to change if the centre is to thrive. It is also part of making Northampton and the wider economy successful. Northampton needs to attract higher earning employees within higher value added business sectors, such as the knowledge based firms to broaden the economy to the extent desired in the Core Strategy. These types of people and businesses expect certain types of facilities and characteristics within city centres that appeal to them.

In the past, investment has been drawn to easy to develop greenfield sites, where lower rents are available, making investment in the more difficult to assemble sites in the town centre less appealing. The remaining town centre stock therefore tends to be older and more obsolete accommodation, where the pressure for conversion to alternative uses, predominantly residential, exists. All these, cumulatively, have contributed to a shortfall of office provision in the town centre. This shortfall was confirmed in the Draft Strategic Employment Land Assessment, which identifies that good quality space of 500 sq m to 1000 sq m is almost non-existent and floorspace in this category is mostly poorer quality secondary and refurbished space. In order to increase the likelihood of new high quality office development within the town centre, the ready availability of supply of sites needs to occur. There also needs to be a restriction on the amount of out of centre office development that is allowed. This restriction on supply out of centre will need to come through policies in the Joint Core Strategy.

There are a number of choices for employment sites in the Central Area. The position in the emerging strategy is that the Plan will support the following;

- The level of office provision set out in the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy, in conformity with the requirement to meet annualised job growth targets for the strategic area of West Northamptonshire, and
- Conforms to and delivers the phasing strategy set out for key regeneration sites

Key areas where significant levels of high quality office development will be supported are located within the main regeneration sites, namely the Castle Station site, Avon/Nunn Mills, St John's (including Bridge Street and Angel Street) and the Waterside. Other locations are anticipated as part of the major new retail developments.

Employment provision and extensions, particularly office use, will also be supported in areas outside the key regeneration sites, including those at;

- Lady's Lane
- Victoria Street
- The Old Postal Office in Barrack Road
- The Commercial Area around Bedford Road
- St Peter's Square

The Plan would also seek to retain existing office employment areas within the Central Area where relevant. The emerging Strategic Employment Land Assessment gives an indication of the sites where it is considered appropriate to retain existing employment uses. For sites recommended for retention, applications for change of use or redevelopment into alternative uses will only be considered favourably if it can be demonstrated that the site has been vacant for at least two years despite proven efforts for marketing the site for B1 uses being demonstrated. Figure 11 shows the areas where protection of employment uses will be sought and new employment opportunities identified.

Creative Industries

The Council is promoting a business growth facility in the St John's area to house creative industries which also includes art and fashion companies. It is proposed that the studios would be open to the public to buy the locally created goods by graduates of the School of Arts in the University of Northampton. The provision of these studios is seen as important in seeking to retain skilled graduates who will otherwise leave the area once getting their degrees from the University. It is also part of creating a distinctive attraction in the existing cultural area around the theatre / museum that will draw people into Northampton centre.

Residential

There has been a significant amount of investment within the Northampton centre in residential development over the last ten years. This has predominantly been through the provision of apartments. This market is currently saturated and has also been disrupted by the current economic conditions.

An updated Strategic Housing Market Assessment has been commissioned by the Joint Planning Unit and is being undertaken by the consultants ORS. This will provide more insight into the type of housing that will be needed in the area in the longer term, once demand and building activity again picks up. However, it is anticipated that there will still be a significant market for apartments and the demand for a city living experience, particularly from some of the people associated with the economic profile which it is the ambition to attract and retain in the area. Bringing more people into the centre to live will add to the vitality and viability of the centre as residents will use its restaurants, shops, leisure and other facilities on a regular basis. However, it is also considered that areas such as the Waterside, Ransome Road and

Avon/Nunn Mills and Spring Boroughs will provide opportunities for quality family housing close to the centre.

However, some of the main residential areas within and around the Central Area have high levels of deprivation; in particular there is a significant concentration within Spring Boroughs. The majority of the housing stock is owned by the Borough Council and will fail the Decent Homes Standard in 2010. It will either need refurbishment, redevelopment, or a combination of both.

The emerging strategy is that there will be policy support in the plan for residential in the following areas;

- New residential areas in the St John's area
- Spring Boroughs to be identified as a Key Regeneration Area for renewal to be brought forward early during the plan period
- New residential areas along The Waterside, around St Peters Way, Avon/Nunn Mills and Ransome Road

It is anticipated that the thresholds for affordable housing, the amount sought and the type will be set out in the Core Strategy, or the associated Development Plan Document on Developer Contributions and Affordable Housing. These policies will be based on the up-to-date Housing Market Assessment.

A more detailed approach to Spring Boroughs that builds upon policies within the Action Plan and takes its direction from the community will be set out in a Supplementary Planning Document. SPD may also be taken forward where it will assist the development of more coherent proposals for other areas.

Question: Are the areas appropriate, should more areas be identified?

Leisure and recreation

There is a varied leisure and recreation mix in the Central Area, including;

- The Royal & Derngate Theatre, with more than 350,000 visitors a year
- Sol Central, a leisure complex that includes a ten screen cinema, an hotel, restaurants, gyms and bars and a casino
- The main leisure area of Bridge Street with pubs and nightclubs
- The Roadmender music venue

The existing facilities are better than in some comparable towns, but on the whole there is a sense that Northampton should improve the leisure offer, particularly restaurants, of which there is a deficiency within the central area.

There is a great deal of potential along The Waterside, and in Becket's Park, both for formal and informal leisure and recreation that could add to the visitor or resident experience of the centre.

The policy will support;

- Enhancement of leisure uses including a cluster of restaurant uses in the redeveloped St John's area, with a pavement cafe culture and new public squares, creating synergy with the Theatre. This would encourage theatre users to dwell in the centre for longer, as well as encouraging other groups not yet catered for to venture in,
- Creation of a informal and formal leisure destinations along The Waterside, this would include facilities for boating, and other water related activities, walking, fishing and playing, public houses and places to eat
- Encouragement of restaurants and cafes elsewhere in the town centre, in particular in the market square, the Grosvenor Centre extension and some of the secondary frontages once the Grosvenor Centre extension opens
- Use of the Market Square for a varied events programme for families and young people
- Extension of the museum to house the national boot and shoe, and leather craft collections in any potential redevelopment at St Johns which would release existing accommodation within County Hall.

Question: Do you support the idea of more restaurants in the centre and if so where?

Question: Do you support the idea of developing the Waterside and Becket's Park for leisure and recreation, including visitor attractions such as pubs and restaurants associated with the new marina?

Transport

'The scale of growth for Northampton is unprecedented,' says the Northamptonshire Transport Strategy for Growth - Transport Prioritisation Framework. By 2012, the County Council believe car use could be 107% more than in 2001 (Transport Strategy for Growth). The County Council have the key role to play in managing this as the Highways Authority for all the roads in the town centre. The Northamptonshire Local Transport Plan 2006/7 - 20010/11 is the strategic plan for all types of transport, which also sets out the authority's plans for spending money they hope to secure from the Department for Transport.

Their long term strategy is based on Central and Local Government's four shared priorities of reducing congestion, improving accessibility, improving safety, and improving the environment. To this the County Council has also added three local

priorities; encouraging healthier travel, improving maintenance, and accommodating growth.

Northampton is well connected nationally, with large scale logistics at various areas within the Borough. As part of this connectivity several radial road routes enter the town centre, where the 'concrete collar' of the inner ring road circulates the traffic. Within the inner ring road the ability of the car to move around is limited with one way systems or restricted access.

On the main roads congestion is bad during the normal peak periods, but not as bad as would be the case if the considerable amount of office and employment dispersal had not happened in the wider Borough. This poses an interesting dilemma; we need more office workers and shoppers in the town centre (discussed in more detail later), yet we also know the potential increase in traffic will cause more congestion problems.

The Local Transport Plan proposes a network of Park and Ride sites on several of the radial routes on the edge of Northampton. Progress on delivery of these sites has so far been limited but it still remains part of the long term transportation strategy for Northampton recommended in the Multi-Modal Study that informed the development of the Plan. The Borough Council's ambition in the longer term is to ensure that more people come into the town centre by public transport and by means other than the private car. However, in the short term it is recognised that the centre is particularly limited in terms of its offer and attractiveness to certain groups. A pragmatic view will therefore have to be taken to accommodating the needs of those that wish to travel by car as long as it does not cause significant congestion with its associated problems. However, once the centre develops its offer and proves to be more of an attraction that people are willing to travel to, despite potentially not being able to use the car, there will be an emphasis on prioritising public transport in the later phases of the plan.

The Central Area Action Plan emerging strategy is to support a 'walkable' centre, with the following elements;

- Reducing the barriers of the inner ring road along St Peters Way, Victoria Promenade, and Horsemarket. The aim is to reconnect some of those areas currently 'cut off' from the historic centre by these roads, in particular through creating pedestrian friendly links to the surrounding residential areas of Spring Boroughs and to the north in the Mounts, also Avon/Nunn Mills, and the rest of The Waterside.
- Ensuring that the demolished bus station is replaced with new bus facilities that encourage greater use of buses as well as bringing more public transport into the heart of the town
- Ensuring that existing car parking provision is used much more efficiently through improvements to signage and routing and developing that which is under used with alternative uses

- Limiting the amount of cars circulating, particularly within the historic core, to reduce congestion and air pollution and improve the environment
- Possible increased public transport penetration within Abington Street , along part of its length, depending on its impact on pedestrian movements and the ambiance of the shoppers experience
- Provision of a new dedicated, strategic public transport route making use of the disused railway line to the south of the city centre, to connect the city centre with Brackmills and potentially out to substantial urban extensions to the south east identified within the emerging Joint Core Strategy – tying into this the possibility of dedicated public transport only links through Delapre Park linking Ransome Road and Eagle Drive, and also through Becket's Park from Nunn Mills Road through to Derngate(subject to confirmation of need being established through a transport assessment and satisfactory environmental assessment).
- Key transport routes into the city centre will be redeveloped as gateway sites, providing a sense of arrival and local identity to the central area

The County Council is currently updating the transport model for the town centre. This will allow a more comprehensive testing of alternative transportation solutions. It will provide a greater understanding of the extent to which the character of the inner ring road can be changed. For example Horsemarket dual carriageway is a major barrier for residents of Spring Boroughs, and also cuts the city centre of the future in two, as it discourages pedestrian and cycle links between the retail core to the Castle Station area.

The updated model will allow the possibility of testing of transport options that could have wider beneficial impacts, rather than just improving traffic flows and congestion. For example St Peter's Way and Victoria Promenade could be downgraded. This could involve routing a lot of traffic to the north around Upper Mounts/ Grafton Street, and maybe only allowing public transport and limited car access. The main advantages would be connecting The Waterside area to the town centre and changing the whole feel of the south of the town. Difficulties would include the need to reroute Towcester Road traffic - perhaps along St James Mill Road via a new link over the disused railway line; and the feasibility of other roads taking the traffic. The Plough Junction improvements will go ahead regardless of this modelling work as the road needs to be improved from the present gyratory system.

Question: Does this seem feasible? Would you support this idea?

Currently it is proposed that the transport model will test several options for the Inner ring road, including:

- Keep the volume of traffic passing along it the same but change its character so that it is a lot more pedestrian friendly and easier to cross through traffic calming and signalling
- Close parts of it altogether and reassign the traffic to other parts of the network, such as from Horsemarket to St. Andrews Road

- downgrade parts of it for public transport
- create a new boulevard for the public realm with tree planting etc

Potential options for testing are shown in Figure 12

Question: Would you support this idea to change the character of the Inner Ring Road? How would cars then move into the town centre and to the Grosvenor Centre?

Climate Change and sustainability

Climate Change is a reality and there is a need to take action on this within the Central Area. The UK Climate Change Programme aims to cut greenhouse gas emissions by;

- Promoting changes in habits that seek to reduce the amount of energy used
- Improving energy efficiency (through design of buildings)
- Stimulating new and more efficient sources of power generation (for example through proven technologies such as Combined Heat and Power and photovoltaics)
- Cutting emissions in the transport sector

The Core Strategy will include policies that seek to ensure the improved sustainability of new development, through recommending standards that new houses and commercial buildings should reach for example in terms of the Code for Sustainable Homes and BREAM standards. It will also give an indication of the amount of renewable energy required in association with new developments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. There may be an opportunity for the action plan to include policies that are more specifically relevant to the central area. The density of development in the central area, together with a mix of uses may enable the use of Combined Heat and Power, or communal heating systems for example within Spring Boroughs. The Borough Council will produce later in 2009 a document titled *Achieving Carbon Reduction in Northampton - Guidance for Developers*. This document provides a guide for the emerging master plans and major development proposals in the Northampton Central Area Action Plan (CAAP) leading them towards the achievement of Zero Carbon Development in terms of:

- What technology is feasible and potentially viable for Northampton Central Area
- What the developer needs to demonstrate in terms of carbon reduction and how it will be delivered

Question: To what extent is a specific policy for the central area appropriate? What would it add that a policy in the Core Strategy could not include?

Flood Risk

Northampton central area has previously suffered from flooding, with the last notable flood occurring in Easter 2008. Since then the Environment Agency, along with the Borough and County Council, English Partnerships (now the Homes and Communities Agency), the emergency services and local residents have worked hard to ensure that the risk of flooding is substantially diminished. This has been through a programme of improved flood defences, both in terms of up stream measures to reduce the volume of water that passes through Northampton in times of flood and also improved physical barriers such as higher walls in some areas, to protect from flooding. There is also much more effective early monitoring of the potential for flooding and emergency procedures are in place, should there be a significant flood event.

Improved planning arrangements have meant that inappropriate development within the floodplain has been avoided. In addition, where development has been built in areas that might have previously flooded but are now protected by flood defences, suitable precautions have taken place to ensure that the risk to property and people has been diminished, e.g. raising floor levels above likely flood levels. Consequently Northampton central area has some of the highest standards of flood defences and protection from flooding in the country, much higher than the level required in national government planning policy.

Decisions will have to be made about the suitability of developing sites that sit behind flood defences, taking into account the inherent levels of risk that will exist. This will be guided by a Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, consistent with Government Planning Policy in PPS25 and the Environment Agency's guidance. The Council in association with partners within the West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit has commissioned this work. It is likely to be finalised by the end of August 2009.

Question: Is the approach being taken in the central area appropriate?

Built and Natural Environment

Critical to the improvement of the town centre will be an emphasis on new buildings and the spaces between them being developed to the highest design quality. This is in terms of its appearance, materials and functionality, its relationship to other buildings and spaces in the locality, the wider central area and depending on its height, potentially wider Northampton. To this end new development in the Central Area will be guided by urban design principles aimed at improving the quality of new buildings, their surroundings and the place as a whole. Good design has an important role to play in raising the profile of the Central Area, creating and reinforcing a distinct local identity and sense of place, strengthening confidence in the town and promoting inward investment.

It is anticipated that the core strategy will set out an over arching design policy which will set a benchmark for principles to which new development must adhere. There is

already a plethora of generic advice on good design at the national level published by Government and the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, (CABE).

Some basic character assessments have already been done in association with the public realm implementation framework, conservation area appraisals, WNDC draft design guide and the Council's work on tall buildings and key views. The Submission draft plan will identify additional work if required to assist in informing the locally distinctive character that new developments must adhere to. The emerging strategy is to ensure that new development proposals are required to provide design and context statements that show how they have taken into account and responded to the character of the central area. These should draw on the characterisation studies that exist.

Taking into account the character of the centre and in association with work seeking to identify key views the Plan will also identify the key locations for 'tall buildings'. There is guidance in CABE publications about what a tall building is, but for Northampton, in the main it is buildings that are over four storeys in height. (See Figure 3) A background technical paper will provide more detail to substantiate the approach that will be taken in the Pre-Submission draft.

Policies will be developed for 'Gateway' sites where new development of a sufficient scale and use would be desirable to give the impression of entering a reinvigorated central area. (see Figure 3 for the gateway sites)

The legacy of historic buildings is evident today in some of the fine examples of architectural quality that remain. There are scheduled monuments and numerous examples of listed buildings afforded protection for their architectural merit. Many of these buildings are located in one of the four conservation areas within the Central Area. In addition there are some other examples of buildings of a relatively high architectural quality that have not been afforded nationally designated protection, although they have been judged by the Council to be worthy of identification.

The Central Area has four Conservation Areas to protect their character and attractiveness. They are;

- Derngate
- St Giles
- All Saints
- Holy Sepulchre

(see Figure 13 for the conservation areas, scheduled ancient monuments and listed buildings)

To a large extent there is strong national policy direction that ensures effective protection of listed buildings and conservation areas. Local policies have historically tended to add nothing of local distinctiveness to differentiate them from the generic national policy. It is recognised that most people consider the historic environment of the centre as something that is important and helps give Northampton its sense of

place. Consultation has highlighted the concern that change and the need to address the growth agenda will result in the loss of more buildings and places of heritage value, thus undermining the character of the area. It is certainly not the intention of the Plan to allow this to happen. The Plan Vision is clear about the desire to use the particular strengths that the centre already has such as its architectural heritage as a key to its success. The emerging strategy will include within it policies on specific development areas such as the need to address specific heritage features that are relevant to that site, for example the impact on adjacent conservation areas. However, it is not anticipated that there will be general generic policies on archaeology and heritage as these are thoroughly covered in national and regional guidance.

Question: Is this approach appropriate? Are there any locally distinctive elements of archaeology or heritage protection that would require a locally specific policy to overcome deficiencies at the national or regional level?

PART FOUR - REGENERATION DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

A number of development sites in the Central Area are either at Masterplan or Outline Planning Application stage. Some of them will require policies to facilitate land assembly, all of them will need a set of Policies to Guide their design and development principles. The Pre-Submission draft will contain diagrams illustrating the key urban design principles that will need to be addressed by any development proposals for these sites.

Question: What level of detail do you think that the key urban design principle diagrams should contain?

Grosvenor Centre development area

The Grosvenor Centre redevelopment will include the area shown in Figure 5. It is a key element in improving both the supply and the quality of retail development in the town centre. The development will add substantially to the stock of retail premises suited to the needs of multiple retailers, and cater for other town centre services such as eating places, leisure and office accommodation (check there is office provision). There may be the options for office or residential in the future as the scheme develops. It will also be more appropriate in scale and design than the existing centre and Greyfriars building, and provide better opportunity for pedestrian movement through it and to other parts of the centre.

The approach in the draft Submission Action Plan will support a development that will:

- Initially provides a gross internal floorspace of up to 40,000 sq.m. net of additional retail, with additional floorspace for family orientated restaurants and leisure, office, hotel and ancillary accommodation.
- Provide suitable alternatives for bus passenger set down and pick up and for accommodating long distance bus services in the short term whilst the development is being built out and in the longer term once it is completed to compensate for the loss of the Greyfriars bus station. This must improve public transport penetration into the central area, be mindful of the needs of public transport operators and users to be able to link up with other bus services with ease and overall increase the attractiveness of public transport. It will not be acceptable to merely provide stopping facilities on Lady's Lane;
- Take the principles outlined in the BDP report of increasing the pedestrian connectivity between the areas currently north and south of the development area, including Abington Street, the Market Square, Sheep Street and Wellington Street, Newlands and the Mounts providing safe and secure streets actively overlooked, with a sense of vitality;
- Seamlessly link the existing Grosvenor Centre to the proposed new development and improve the quality of the existing units that would remain;

- Rationalise significantly the amount of land allocated to highway, by altering either Lady's Lane or Greyfriars as a heavily trafficked route;
- Reinstall active building frontages along the broken connection between Sheep Street at an appropriate scale and sympathetic design taking into consideration the historic character of this street. Remodelling will include some rationalisation of the existing Mayorhold car park to also provide a sympathetic frontage along Sheep Street, ideally including new buildings;
- Provide a development that is as outward looking as it is inward, with active frontages at street level on all its edges that face publicly viewable areas, that it links in well with and is sympathetic to the characterisation of the surrounding areas, in particular the designated conservation areas;
- Supports the ability to provide additional development opportunities above any main retail building that will occupy the current Greyfriars bus station site, or car parking to the north on the upper Mounts car park, mindful of the desire to create additional office or significant trip generating uses appropriate to a central area within the future, particularly given that the Greyfriars site has some potential to accommodate tall buildings;
- Removes subways that exist on Broad Street/Marefair, Mayorhold, Sheep Street and Wellington Street/Upper Mounts, to provide an environment that supports better pedestrian movement in these areas.
- Contribute towards environmental improvements in the adjacent conservation areas and traffic calming and other measures required to rationalise traffic and public transport in the area arising from the proposed development
- Provides enough flexibility in the parking solutions sought to, in the longer term, allow removal of the Mayorhold car park and its replacement with a more sympathetic building and street design.
- The likely scale, intensity of development and proposed mixture of uses on this site offer the opportunity to make use of Combined Heat and Power, which is an option that should be explored, along with other options for reducing carbon emissions through using renewable energy supplies.

Question: Are these criteria appropriate in assessing the future development of the site?

Castle Station development area

The railway station has been on its present site for 150 years, and covers approximately 11 ha. The current station was the result of a rebuilding in the 1960s, following plans to modernise the West Coast Main Line. (see Figure 14 for the extent of the boundary of the site)

The station is currently managed by London Midland, and offers train journeys to destinations like Milton Keynes, Birmingham and London. It offers three services per hour to London and two to Birmingham.

The platform capacity is adequate for current needs but is not expected to cope with the expected growth in traffic, generated by increasing demand and new services providing direct connections with the West Midlands and North West.

The concourse itself is a low lying building with very little presence or visibility from the main road passing the station. The facility is cramped and provides basic passenger facilities only.

Much of the southern end of the site is given over to surface car parking, the central and northern parts of the site are rail sidings, which are variously used for storage and delivery of goods, including aggregates for Lafarge.

The review of the property market in 2006 established a clear opportunity for a major new office development providing a step change in the current town centre office market. There is also clear interest in residential development and for an hotel. Retail and leisure uses would need to be limited to ancillary uses for the station in order to protect the town centre.

Various options for the station site were evaluated with reference to the growth objectives for the wider area and town centre. They looked at the transportation benefits that could be achieved, deliverability in terms of market forces, the order of cost and constraints such as the existing freight activities. Whilst the options were only discussed in outline terms, there was a clear consensus for a comprehensive redevelopment.

The Policy will support;

- Development of a new transportation hub and business location
- A rail and bus interchange, with greatly improved passenger facilities, including car parking
- 28,000 - 37,000 sq metres of office and business accommodation
- A new hotel
- 600-700 medium to high density residential units
- Improved connections / links from Phase 2 towards the Market Square through Spring Boroughs which would actively encourage pedestrian movement
- The likely scale, intensity of development and proposed mixture of uses on this site offer the opportunity to make use of Combined Heat and Power,

which is an option that should be explored, along with other options for reducing carbon emissions through using renewable energy supplies

- In recognition of the site's historical use as a castle, a thorough assessment of the archaeology that remains, with the development positively addressing the site's history through appropriate incorporation wherever possible of any historic features that remain.

The current redevelopment of the site is planned in two phases, with Phase 1 beginning in 2010. This will see a new station at an upper level visible from the road and a multi storey car park. Phase 2 includes the area currently used as sidings.

Question: Are these criteria appropriate in assessing the future development of the site?

St John's/Angel Street/Bridge Street development area

The St Johns area is also part of the Derngate Conservation Area. Guildhall Road has benefited from the refurbishment of some of the old warehouse buildings. The area has been the subject of a Masterplan commissioned by the Borough Council in association with the County Council undertaken by Taylor Young in 2008. (see Figure 15 for the extent of the boundary of the site)

Angel Street Area is the largest of the three study areas in the Masterplan. The majority of the perimeter of this area is characterised by historic buildings of excellent townscape value (many of them are Listed). The current developed heart of the area is Bridge Street, which is dominated by A2, A3 and A5 uses and is particularly busy in the evenings and post midnight. At the southern end of Bridge Street the area is mainly made up of commercial/industrial land uses, vehicular repair garages and car hire centres. There is one pub and two restaurants/takeaways. Bridge Street is part of the boundary of the Carlsberg Brewery Site with a two metre boundary fence fronting the edge of the pavement. The area consequently has poor frontages and is not of a character expected on a gateway entrance to the centre.

The route from the south into the Bridge Street area is poor and gives a negative impression on entry into the Northampton town centre and is therefore identified on the Spatial Plan as a Gateway area in need of improvement.

The Policy will;

- Provide the focus for business start up, creative industries and strengthening of the cultural quarter around St John's
- Enable town centre expansion, including niche retail, leisure and commercial uses, supporting employment growth, particularly related to the creative/cultural industries as well as small scale office in St John's incorporating a hotel

- Be a focus for civic uses, providing the opportunity for the County and Borough Councils and potentially others in the public sector to make a positive commitment to taking forward the Vision for the central area by relocating as much as possible of their office requirements to this area;
- Provide public squares with cafe facilities and outside seating
- Provide town centre living opportunities as part of a sustainable community that are built to high environmental standards
- Support an evening economy of restaurants that complements the town's existing offer
- Make the most of the area's assets whilst incorporating quality urban design that reflects the local vernacular
- The likely scale, intensity of development and proposed mixture of uses on this site offer the opportunity to make use of Combined Heat and Power, which is an option that should be explored, along with other options for reducing carbon emissions through using renewable energy supplies.

Question: Are these criteria appropriate in assessing the future development of the site?

The Waterside

West Northamptonshire Development Corporation has commissioned work on a Waterside Masterplan. The area covered by the Masterplan is extensive, and as its name would suggest is based on the River Nene and its tributaries that run through the centre. This is an asset that so far in Northampton not addressed in the most positive manner. In particular the River provides the opportunity for what could be a real environmental asset providing substantial opportunities for leisure, recreation and increased ecology within the centre. It could be part of a green ribbon that brings the surrounding countryside into the heart of Northampton, adding another component to the centre in creating a real sense of place.

The Masterplan area includes land running from an area adjacent to the Brampton Arm of the River Nene to the south of Castle Station, south and eastwards to include Avon/Nunn Mills and Becket's Park, Midsummer Meadow and Barnes Meadow. The Masterplan will seek to tie together the different areas along the Waterside. The emerging strategy will seek to address the River Nene and Brampton Arm as a whole as a leisure and recreation area for example through promoting continuous pedestrian routes and improving the ecology. However, for ease of understanding, the emerging strategy seeks to split the area up into smaller development areas to which more specific policies will apply.

Avon/Nunn Mills and Ransome Road (part of Waterside)

The former Nunn Mills Power Station has been subject to a series of development proposals in the past, but it was the availability of the adjoining Avon Cosmetics site (which is no longer to form a manufacturing base for Avon) that led to proposals for a comprehensive form of residential led, mixed use development coming forward.

The Avon/ Nunn Mills sites have an extensive frontage to the River Nene and are within reasonable walking distance of the town centre. The Ransome Road site adjoins the Avon/Nunn Mills site although are divided by a disused rail freight line which served the Brackmills employment area. (See Figure 16 for boundary)

It is anticipated that the Avon/Nunn Mills area could provide around 1,250 dwellings, and the Ransome Road area about 800 dwellings. Principles for development will provide for a mix of house types and tenures to accord with local and regional assessments of housing need and which promote a quality urban design, and seek to provide homes to a high environmental standard. There will also be 28,000 sq metres of office buildings (which includes a new base for Avon Cosmetics), an extended electrical transformer site, neighbourhood level retail facilities and play areas. The development of this area provides an excellent opportunity to link in and use the leisure assets within the immediate vicinity, in particular Delapre Abbey and Park, Beckett's Park and the more informal recreation areas of Midsummer and Barnes Meadows. The likely scale, intensity of development and proposed mixture of uses on this site offer the opportunity to make use of Combined Heat and Power, which is an option that should be explored along with other options for reducing carbon emissions through using renewable energy supplies.

It was anticipated that the following transport elements will be necessary to enable development of both the Ransome Road and Nunn Mills sites;

- A vehicular link between Bedford Road and London Road, with junction improvements and the construction of a bridge over the railway;
- Provision of a public transport service linking the area with the town centre
- A pedestrian bridge between the two sites at the western edge of development and other measures to actively encourage walking/cycling to the town centre and rail station;
- Measures which safeguard the rail line as a public transport corridor;
- Provision of a public riverside walkway and cycle path to link with existing routes;
- Development and improved cycle links to Hardingstone and Brackmills

Question: Are these criteria appropriate in assessing the future development of the site?

Brampton Arm to South Bridge (part of Waterside)

This area covers a wide swathe of land from Castle Station, including St Peter's Way, the Freeschool Street area, St Peter's Square, the site of two gas holders, before carrying on towards South Bridge. (Figure 17) The policy for this area will support a mixture of high to medium density dwellings, office and employment opportunities, a leisure / cultural attraction of regional importance, along with enhanced riverside leisure experience. The likely scale, intensity of development and proposed mixture of uses on this site offer the opportunity to make use of Combined Heat and Power, which is an option that should be explored, along with other options for reducing carbon emissions through using renewable energy supplies

The policy will support the following development principles for The Waterside;

- Demolition of the gas holders with new office and residential redevelopment
- Improved access via a downgraded roads of St Peter's Way and Victoria Promenade (subject to transport model assessment mentioned above)
- Creation of a landmark building and leisure attraction to the south of the River Nene
- New river crossings
- Improved pedestrian and cycle access along the watercourses, including the 'missing link' around the southernmost gas holder area

Question: Are these criteria appropriate in assessing the future development of the site?

Question: What sort of leisure uses could be encouraged here?

Question: Are there any other opportunities for this area?

Question: How can we improve links between this area and the town centre?

Becket's Park and the New Marina (part of Waterside)

Becket's Park is a traditional park located on the River Nene, and forms a green gateway to the town of Northampton. (See Figure 18 for boundary) It occasionally hosts events and it is a place to gather, relax, walk and cycle. It has access to the river for fishing, boating and walking. Other facilities include the hard surface tennis courts and a relatively new children's play area.

However, there are no facilities for older children/teens and no toilet facilities on the site. The boating lake on the island is not currently in use. The park is currently underused and perceived by some as unsafe after dark. Its character is urban and it does not currently exploit its proximity to the river or to that of Midsummer Meadow and Barnes Meadow.

The emergent strategy for Becket's Park is to develop;

- Residential development on the western edge of the park, on the site of the old railway embankment
- A new Marina, Visitor Centre, play areas, plaza and 'wellness gardens'
- a leisure and recreational destination linked to the Marina and to encourage visitors to the Park
- To provide high quality network of footpaths, cycle routes and bridges

Question: What types of development would help to draw people to the new marina? For example, a café, a public house, a restaurant, Children's Play areas, anything else?

Midsummer Meadow and Barnes Meadow (part of Waterside)

This is a swathe of green infrastructure that runs from Becket's Park and continues south east of the Bedford Road. (See Figure 19 for boundary) Situated in close proximity, south of the Meadows, is the Delapre Boating Lake and Charterwood. Midsummer and Barnes Meadows form part of the Sub-Regional Green Infrastructure Corridor known as the Nene Valley (Northampton – Wansford) route.

Midsummer Meadow is predominantly used for informal recreation and Barnes Meadow is a designated Local Nature Reserve. They are situated on the river corridor which supports a number of habitats considered to be of ecological value to both wildlife and flora. However, some of the existing habitats are ecologically poor and could be restrictive in allowing adequate movement and dispersal of local species

From Bedford Road both are obscured by a long bank of bunding which has led to the area becoming secluded. There are a number of reports of anti-social behaviour taking place. It is also noted that there is a lack of amenities and facilities as well as poorly defined access, signage and interpretation.

The emerging strategy is to seek to improve the leisure, recreational and ecological potential that the area has, so that it can become

Question: What should the future of the greenspace area look like? A built development of leisure uses? Informal leisure uses such as walking and cycling? Or should it be mainly for wildlife? Are there any other opportunities in this area?

Question: How can we stop anti social activities? Should we remove the bund alongside Bedford Road (it is not a flood defence) to open the area up?

Spring Boroughs

Spring Boroughs is recognised by Central Government as being one of the most deprived areas in the country. The area is in the top 5% nationally in terms of the indices of multiple deprivation, with key issues being income deprivation, poor

standards of education, skills and training, crime, health problems and unemployment. (See Figure 20 for boundary)

The Government has set a target that all social rented homes should meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2010. In order to be decent, the Government definition is that a home should be warm, weatherproof and have reasonably modern facilities

In Spring Boroughs, by the end of the Plan if nothing is done within this area all of the Council's housing stock will fail the Decent Homes Standard. Taking into account the unacceptable scenario with regards to housing and all the issues of multiple deprivation that exist in this area and have done for successive generations, now would appear to be the right time to fundamentally reassess what is the future of the area should be. The combination of issues, together with the opportunities provided by the growth agenda are such that it is likely that radical solutions that seek to break the cycle of multiple deprivation that occurs in the area should be pursued.

The emerging strategy is to identify Spring Boroughs as a Key Regeneration Area for which a Supplementary Planning Document will be produced. This will support a comprehensive community led approach for the area that seeks to satisfactorily address the adverse issues that currently exist and takes recognition of the position of the area between the city centre and a redeveloped railway station area and the Waterside. We will work closely with the existing community in taking forward a detailed plan for the area.

It is recognised that there is an existing community in the area, many of whom may want to continue to live in Spring Boroughs, or within the central area, and this is something that will be a key priority. Opportunities will exist through the provision of replacement affordable housing on site and also in other developments within the Central Area. There is great potential for Spring Boroughs to be an integral part of a very successful central area. The policy would need to address the following:

- Redevelopment of some of the housing stock which fails the Decent Homes standard to a mix of private and affordable homes;
- Redevelopment which encourages a mixed community, and provides a good range of community and social facilities, seeking to address deficiencies that currently exist in the area, e.g. the need for additional capacity at the primary school, limited open space within the area and a medical centre;
- Opportunities for a greater mix of uses within the area, in particular employment and office, neighbourhood scale retailing and leisure;
- Redevelopment which improves the layout of the area, and encourages high quality urban design, improved community safety, sense of place and meets with the criteria in other policies
- Improved crossings of Horsemarket to improve links with the town centre

Question: What do you think of these ideas about the potential future of Spring Boroughs?

Question: What additional facilities need to be put into the area to overcome existing deficiencies and a growth in the community?

PART FIVE - IMPLEMENTATION, DELIVERY & MONITORING

The Phasing Strategy for the CAAP will be set out in three phases, each covering five years.

Infrastructure work will identify both social and physical features required in association with new development, including new utilities requirements, new roads, bridges and flood defences and community facilities.

The initial 5 year phasing will be in a position that is relatively robust. It will identify who is the lead organisation in delivery, who else will be involved, any funding third party required, particularly from the public sector to ensure that it is delivered, and also a basic risk analysis of the potential for disruption to the projected period of delivery. The second and third phases are also set out however, there is not the same clarity associated with the position of all elements contained within them. For instance funding of all the projects is likely to be more uncertain. Depending on changes in circumstances, there may also be projects that are contained within subsequent phases that need to be added or removed.

Implementation and Delivery

Delivery is one of the key issues that new style LDF Plans are tested on by Planning inspectors, who need to be confident there are mechanisms in place to deliver, and that a plan is not a 'wish list' in order for the plan to be sound.

The Central Area will develop in three Phases; Short Term, Medium Term and Long Term, each one covering five years up to 2026. WNDC as the delivery vehicle for the next five years has an Infrastructure Delivery Programme (IDP). This IDP currently identifies projects that are relevant to the delivery of the Action Plan. It is anticipated that in association with improved co-ordination on delivery and prioritisation of projects that the IDP will be integrated into a West Northamptonshire Delivery Plan. Relevant projects within the central area will be included within this delivery plan. Further detail on the delivery plan will be issued in association with the development of the Core Strategy, the Pre-Submission Area Action Plan and eventually the Affordable Housing and Developer Contributions Development Plan Document.

At the moment a list of new or improved infrastructure needed in the Central Area to accompany development is being prepared for inclusion within the Pre-Submission Action Plan. This will include new road junctions, new cycle paths and bridges, improved utilities, flood defences and improved biodiversity.

All the Central Area projects are at different stages in negotiations, however the current economic climate means that certainty about delivery is not as easy to give as it would have been a year ago. The Borough Council therefore have a key role with its partners due to the amount of land we own in the Central Area. The locations where the Council can facilitate development in the Short Term are the Grosvenor Centre and surrounding area, St Peters Square and St Peter's way area, St

John's/Angel Street/Bridge Street Area, Becket's Park (leisure oriented uses) and Spring Boroughs.

WNDC has agreed a development strategy with the Rail Operator for Castle Station, and is in detailed negotiations with developers about the Avon/Nunn Mills area. They are also assembling land to the south of Castle Station and at a number of other locations.

The main sources of funding WNDC intends to use are their standard charge allocations on each new dwelling, stakeholder funding from delivery partners, the Community Infrastructure Fund and the Growth Area Fund. WNDC will also use CPO powers if necessary to secure these objectives

WNDC and the County Council have agreed the following list with the Borough Council for the phasing of development in the Central Area.

Short Term Phase 1 (up to 2016 – see figure 21)

- Demolition of Greyfriars Bus Station - relocation of overnight bus storage to an alternative site - provision of new street bus pick up / drop off facilities and other support bus facilities in the town centre
- Market Square changes - new water feature and events square, improvements to public realm, signs and shopfronts
- Plough Junction - land assembly and new road layout with removal of the gyratory road
- Castle Station - Stage 1 of project begins with demolition of old station, construction of new Station raised to road level with improved facilities, and new multi storey car park
- The Waterside - two gas holders for demolition and remediation around St Peter's Way and Towcester Road, including the acquisition and demolition of some of the existing buildings and start on site on Green Street
- Avon/Nunn Mills - ongoing new office and residential development plus new junction on London Road and Ransome Road
- Becket's Park - development of new Marina
- St Peter's Square car park - redeveloped for mixed use scheme
- St John's/Angel Street/Bridge Street - redevelopment work around existing surface car park area
- Midsummer Meadow - work begins on improvements

- Spring Boroughs SPD completed and development partners identified and land assembly/disposals advanced

Medium Term Phase 2 (2016-2021 – see figure 22)

- Avon/Nunn Mills - most of site finished
- Ransome Road - most of site finished
- Public transport link - work begins on redevelopment of disused railway line
- Duston Junction/St James Mill Road - new road link
- Waterside - development underway around St Peter's Way
- Castle Station - new station and car park finished, offices started
- Spring Boroughs – major work begins on regeneration of area
- St John's/Angel Street/Bridge Street - development of rest of area underway, including new public square/new offices for Borough Council and County Council
- Grosvenor / Greyfriars Site - ongoing redevelopment plus start on additional retail site
- Becket's Park - development of new leisure facilities in park
- River Nene - new leisure facility south of the river developed
- North of Abington Street – new supermarket
- Freeschool Street – work begins
- St Peter's Square finished
- Midsummer Meadow – on going improvements
- Work begins on redevelopment of the Park Inn site for additional major retail led scheme

Long Term Phase 3 (2021-2026 – see figure 23)

- Grosvenor Centre finished (and additional retail site)
- Castle Station – Phase 2 new residential and office development will be ongoing (likely to be finished)

- Spring Boroughs - work will be nearing completion.
- Avon/Nunn Mills and Ransome Road - final stages
- Between College Street and Horse Market – start on site

Obviously no-one can predict with any certainty where we will be in 10-15 years, which is the Long Term Phase of the plan. However most of the Central Area regeneration and redevelopment will be finished. It is possible some new development sites may have come forward by then, but they are likely to be small scale

The above phasing is not intended to constrain delivery. Unless development would put at risk key objectives of the Action Plan, there should not be any objection in principle to advances in progress of sites.

Monitoring

The new regulations require annual monitoring of the Policies to see if the strategy is being implemented. The submission version of the CAAP will contain information on how the vision, objectives and policies will be measured for their effectiveness. It will also outline who will undertake the measuring and what actions will need to be taken to address any problems identified by the monitoring.

PART SIX - THE CITY CENTRE IN 2026

By 2026 the Central Area will have been transformed. Imagine it as it will be, with all the changes this plan has helped bring forward, and you have our City Centre description by someone who is already there, a part of this exciting future;

Arriving in the City of Northampton by high speed train, on time and relaxed, we wander through the modern station concourse away from a financial services company's new headquarters and are sign posted towards the town centre. To the north the regeneration of Spring Boroughs is nearing completion. An example of community planning at its best with high standard homes, great schooling and new office jobs. The renewed architecture along Gold Street is impressive and the range of niche shops and restaurants with their activity spilling out onto the street captures our interest. All Saints Church provides an impressive welcome to the central retail area and we are soon in the Market Square. The red and white canopies of the market stalls provide a distinctive sight alongside café's and bistros full of shoppers and office workers enjoying lunch 'al fresco'. A school band provides the entertainment as children paddle and chase each other through the fountain. The Greyfriars Centre with its strong retail offer and contemporary style is hugely busy and has been recently upgraded as a result of the planned opening of the new shopping centre to the west of the Market Square. The link through to Abington Street provides an easy route to more shops and the local bus services.

We take a short walk to Becketts Park, past the 2015 Sterling Prize winning civic office headquarters renowned for its cutting edge environmentally friendly contemporary architecture, the Derngate's new cinema, the St John's hotel and office complex to enjoy the waterside and the marina. Twice now this has been the venue for the Inland Waterways Festival and is just one of the gems along the town's popular waterside. At the Avon headquarters we get on the rapid public transport system returning on the direct link to the train station on the route that runs to and from the significant urban extension to the south east of Northampton, on the other side of Brackmills. Gliding towards the station looking northwards, the gasometers at the Tanner Street end are long gone and have been replaced by homes and offices which provide good jobs and fuel the town centre with customers during the day and night. These people are spoilt for choice for professional sport in the afternoon and the theatre at night.

New neighbourhoods are being completed and already a sense of community cohesion is being developed. Northampton city deserves its reputation as a great place to live, to work, shop and play.

Appendix A
TECHNICAL EVIDENCE FOR THE
THE CENTRAL AREA ACTION PLAN
June 2009

Title	Context	Prepared By	Status/Date Completed
National			
PPS1, PPS3, draft PPS4, PPS6 (and consultation), PPS12, PPG17, PPS25			
Regional			
RSS8	Regional policy guidelines and targets	EMRA	March 2009
Regional Economic Strategy for East Midlands 2006 – 2020	Aspirations and vision for the region over the next decade	EMDA	
Countywide			
Northamptonshire Local Transport Plan 2006/07 – 2010/2011	Strategic plan for the County and it sets out the plans for spending transport capital investment which the County hopes to secure from the Department of Transport	NCC	March 2006

Northamptonshire Local Transport Plan Accessibility Strategy 2006/7 – 2010/11	To develop a framework for an accessibility strategy to help meet local and national objectives including improving employment opportunities for residents in socially deprived areas and reducing inequalities in healthcare	NCC/Atkins	March 2006
Northamptonshire County Council: Cycling and Walking Corridors	Provides a simple methodology for the identification and assessment of the key corridors in each of the chosen towns (Northampton, Kettering, Wellingborough and Corby)	NCC/Atkins	Draft
Northampton County Council: Getting Northampton to Work (Cycle Parking Scope 2006/07)	Getting Northampton to Work project aims to encourage more employees to cycle to the town's business areas. This study was requested to assist in facilitating the installation of cycle parking around the town to further encourage cycling	NCC/Atkins	Draft
Transport Strategy for Growth	Provides an overall review of the County's transport policies in the light of challenges faced in Northamptonshire. It will assist in the preparation of the County's 3 rd Local Transport Plan	NCC	September 2007
Northampton Town Strategy Bus Priority Technical Note (Town Centre Area)	Assessment of the junctions leading into Northampton Town Centre, with a view to suggesting some bus priority measures for each junction (9 junctions were assessed)	NCC/MGWSP	July 2008
Sustrans Connect 2	Funding is available to increase public awareness about the benefits of walking and cycling. Also includes the creation of new cycle routes. Contract to be signed this side of Xmas. Ambitious 5 year programme	NCC	Ongoing
Northampton Multi-Modal Study	To identify the most cost effective, affordable, safe and environmentally acceptable measures to reduce the impact of current and future travel demand	Ove Arup and Partners	December 2003 (minor revision March 2004)

Northamptonshire Strategic Employment Land Assessment	Employment land review for the County up to 2026, in line with Government Guidance Note 2004. It will address the employment requirements of the County's growth agenda, and provide a framework to guide planning and economic development policies and programmes. Issues such as supply will also be included	Lambert Smith Hampton/Atkins	End May 2009
Northamptonshire Biodiversity Action Plan	Lists the most threatened habitats and species in the County and sets out targets for action to aid their recovery	Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust	2008
Making the connection – the Northamptonshire Green Infrastructure Strategy	Presents a fully integrated Green Infrastructure Strategy for Northamptonshire	River Nene Regional Park	2006
Joint Planning Unit			
West Northamptonshire Wider Retail Study	Identify hierarchy of retail centres and the need and capacity for additional convenience and comparison retail floorspace at those centres to 2026. Also identify the scope for any retail development at existing and new out of town locations; and how the strategic approach and spatial strategy for retail should be set out in the JCS	CACI	April 2009
Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level 1 report	To conform to the requirements of PPS25	Scott Wilson	Completed March 2009
Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level 2 report	To conform to the requirements of PPS25	Scott Wilson	Scoping study completed and procurement process underway

Northamptonshire Landscape Sensitivity Study and Green Infrastructure Strategy	To gain an understanding of the natural and cultural resources of the area and how they contribute to the setting and character of Northampton	Living Landscapes	Completed – see website
Water Cycle Study		Halcrow for EA/WNDC/Anglia Water	Due to complete end May 2009
West Northamptonshire Sports Facility Strategy	Comprehensive local assessment and strategy for sports facilities within West Northamptonshire	Synergy Leisure	Completed – see website
Northampton Borough Council			
Corporate			
Northampton's Sustainable Community Strategy 2008 – 2011	Outlines the Local Strategic Partnership's vision up to 2031 and how this can be achieved	Northampton Local Strategic Partnership	2008
LDF General			
Northampton Local Plan	Forms the basis for all decisions relating to land use within the Borough	NBC	June 1997
Statement of Community Involvement	Sets of the Borough's policy for involving the community, both in the preparation/revision of Local Development Documents and significant development control decisions	NBC	March 2006
Affordable Housing (Council's Planning Policy Statement)	Framework for negotiations with developers for the provision of affordable housing	NBC	December 2004

Housing Strategy (enabling and delivering housing choice) 2006 - 2011	Sets out goals, objectives and action plans to deliver the housing vision of NBC over the next 5 years	NBC	March 2007
LDF Technical Studies including Central Area			
Central Area, Design and Development Framework and supporting documents	To inform the development of the Area Action Plan for the Central Area	BDP and CBRE	November 2006
Public Realm Implementation Framework (final draft)	To act as a guide to the selection, design, installation and care of Northampton's public realm and its historic preservation	BDP	Final draft October 2007
Northampton Employment Land Study	Assessment of the likely demand and need for employment land to 2021. Assessment of planned land supply. Comparison of forecast demand with planned supply to establish market balance	Roger Tym & Partners/Innes England	July 2006
Northampton's Open Space, Sport and Recreation Audit	Assessment of local needs and audit of open space, sport and recreation, to provide the Council with a clear vision, priorities and a direction for allocation of resources	PMP	September 2006
Northampton Playing Pitch Strategy	Outlines current provision and makes projects about future requirements	PMP	2005
CAAP Issues and Option consultation – summary of responses	Statistical summary of the responses received from the consultation to issues and options paper in September/October 2009	Community Engagement Officer	
Northampton Town Centre Health Check	Quantitative and qualitative assessment of the Central Area, in accordance with PPS6 requirements	Roger Tym & Partners	Draft June 2009

Economic Intelligence/ Regeneration				
Northampton Economic Regeneration Strategy	Sets out clear targets for the transformation of Northampton's economy connecting regional, sub-regional and local needs	NBC		May 2008
Retail Strategy for the Town Centre	Aims to ensure that there is a retail plan that will entice people back into Northampton	CACI		May 2008
Building Frontage Appraisal – Market Square and Abington Street	Looks at the buildings in Abington Street and Market Square and suggests how to bring the heritage and history back into Northampton	Rodney Melville and Partners		May 2008
Market Square Business Plan and Feasibility Study	Assesses the feasibility of an events space on the Market Square, the options for the Market Square and how to implement these options	Playdell Smithyman		May 2008
The Chrysalis Centre Feasibility and Options Analysis and Business Plan	Explore the possibility of a Creative Business Centre in the town and the best way to implement the centre	Greenborough		March 2008
Leisure Study	Assesses what leisure facilities already exists in Northampton, what facilities need to be improved and increased. Also includes a Business Plan for a major new facility	KKP		Expected September 2009
Car Parking Strategy	Looks at current car parking facilities in Northampton and the best way to improve the facilities for the future	White Young Green		Expected September 2009

Open Space Strategy	Following the production of the OSSR study (PMP 2006), this Strategy is being prepared. It will include an Action Plan that will direct and priorities activities towards the enhancement of existing and creation of new open space and green infrastructure	NBC in conjunction with CAFE Space	Expected November 2009
Open Space Audit update	Updates the Open Space, Sports and Recreation study in terms of the standards that were done by PMP in September 2006	PMP	Expected mid July 2009
Regeneration/ Masterplans			
Waterside Masterplan	Development framework for the Nene Valley River Corridor from Duston Mill Reservoir to Barnes Meadow	Halcrow	January 2005
Becketts Park Masterplan: Stage 3 – Development of Preferred Masterplan (NB: not been to Cabinet: delivery identified as an issue)	Masterplan for Becketts Park with the future aim of securing funding and implementing the proposals. Land uses proposed include visitor centre hub, residential development and marina	Halcrow (with GVA Grimley, D5, EWA)	August 2008
St John's Masterplan	Identifies the comprehensive and co-ordinated redevelopment of key locations within Bridge Street/St Johns/Angel Street areas and how they could be developed in the longer term	Taylor Young (with LSH)	February 2008
Northampton Waterfront Regeneration Opportunities Study	Should eventually provide a vision for Northampton's waterfront and an integrated strategy for regeneration which links existing initiatives and identifies clear steps. Boundary broadly starts from west of Nunn Mills Road through to Harvey Reeves area	Taylor Young	In progress

WNDC					
WNDC Infrastructure Delivery Programme (Consolidated report)	To develop an infrastructure delivery programme reflecting sound decision making and robust data analysis and process	EC Harris	August 2008		
Waterside Northampton: Interim Report	A Masterplan for the river frontage area from Castle Station through to Avon Nunn Mills area, incorporating the gasholder site	David Lock Associates for WNDC	May 2009		
Castle Station Redevelopment Project: Gold Street area to began in January 2009	Public realm improvement	NCC	Ongoing		
Avon/Nunn Mills	Regeneration statement consulted: site to be an economic driver and leisure/visitor attraction and make a major contribution to extend the scale and offer of the town centre through the provision of office based employment opportunities and complimentary cultural retail and leisure/visitor facilities, to become an integral part of the town centre	WNDC	Ongoing		
Draft Strategic Northamptonshire Economic Action Plan (SNEAP)	To develop an economic action plan for the County which would deliver the economic vision	SQW Consulting and Cambridge Econometrics	Consultation completed in Mar 2008		
Planning Obligations Strategy	Establish robust arrangements for securing appropriate developer contributions towards the provision of necessary strategic and local infrastructure needed in the West Northamptonshire area to support the developments that are coming forward	WNDC	Approved		

Renewable Energy	Looking at sustainable energy solutions	Faber Maunsell	Ongoing
WNDC Refreshed Programme of Development (Growth Funding 2008/09 – 2010/11)	Refreshed programme of deliverance, with a greater emphasis on project prioritisation, and funding requirements.	WNDC	October 2008
A Cultural Investment Plan for West Northamptonshire	Position culture at the heart of the planning and development agenda in West Northamptonshire	Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy	November 2008
People and Places Strategy	Target markets to deliver WNDC's vision	CACI/Scott Wilson	October 2008