



Realising the Opportunity

*West Northamptonshire
in the 21st Century
A Prospectus for growth
and prosperity*



The Board



West Northamptonshire Development Corporation Board Members at the inaugural Board meeting on 15 March 2005

Standing (from left) Cllr Lee Barron, Cllr Phil Larratt, Keith Barwell (Chairman), Cllr Chris Millar, David Dickinson; Nick Thompson, Cllr Arthur McCutcheon.

Seated (from left) John Farrow, Mary Burrows, Cllr Sandra Barnes, Ann Tate, John Weir (Deputy Chairman). Inset Cllr Ben Smith, not available for the group photograph.

When announcing the appointment of the Board of WNDC, Jeff Rooker, Minister for Regeneration and Regional Development, said:

“This is a fantastic opportunity for West Northamptonshire to secure a successful and sustainable future. I am confident the breadth and depth of talent and experience within this team will provide strong leadership in the challenges ahead. The six Councillors on the Board will ensure a strong local voice with the best interests of local people at heart”

The one thing certain in our lives is that things will change

West Northamptonshire will change significantly over the next twenty five years. Global and national trends will see some currently profitable industries decline. Technological advances will lead to the rise of others as yet unknown. Climate change will impact on our weather, our floodplains and our water supply. People will continue to migrate into the county.

These changes create challenges and opportunities. How we rise to them will determine our quality of life and that of future generations.

We have the opportunity to make Northampton a world class sustainable city at the heart of a successful West Northamptonshire.

We can become one of the best places in the country to live – a thriving centre with a tremendous choice of retail and leisure activities.

We can become one of the best places in the country to work – with new and exciting industries that provide a range of high wage employment.

We can become one of the most sustainable places in the country – with a quality built and natural environment and an effective and efficient public transport system.

Or we can allow our towns to continue declining slowly. For shops to continue to leave the town centres one by one. For the economy to provide low wage, low skill employment – at least for as long as the jobs don't go abroad. For housing to slowly sprawl across the countryside, creating dormitory towns for commuters.

This is not the future we, at WNDC, want to embrace. We believe that Northampton, supported by successful centres at Daventry and Towcester, can be a world class sustainable city that powers the growth and development of Northamptonshire as a whole, and West Northamptonshire in particular.

This document sets out how together the people and organisations of West Northamptonshire can make it happen. The future for the towns of West Northamptonshire has the potential to be very special. There are a series of opportunities to be grasped or missed. A series of challenges to overcome or be overwhelmed by. Together we must decide which path we will follow. We hope you will join us in embracing the opportunities the future holds.

Keith Barwell
Chairman WNDC



West Northamptonshire: Which Future?

NORTHAMPTON THE BEST PLACE TO LIVE IN THE UK – OFFICIAL!

Northampton has been named the best place to live in the UK for the second year running. The city has been awarded the title of 'Best Place to Live' by the Sunday Times. This is a testament to the city's high quality of life, excellent schools, and vibrant community. The city is also home to a number of world-class universities and research centres, making it a hub for innovation and technology.

300 more jobs created as hi-tech firms move to Towcester

300 more jobs have been created as hi-tech firms move to Towcester. This is a significant boost for the local economy and is expected to create further opportunities in the future. The new jobs are in a range of sectors, including engineering, manufacturing, and services. This is a reflection of the city's growing reputation as a centre for high-tech industry.

Another record year for Daventry town centre retail

Another record year for Daventry town centre retail. Retail sales in the town centre have reached a new high, reflecting the success of the town's shopping centre. This is a testament to the town's vibrant retail sector and the success of its shopping centre. The town centre is also home to a number of independent shops and businesses, which are also doing well.



Local people are enjoying the new cycle paths in the town. This is a testament to the town's commitment to sustainable transport and the benefits of cycling. The new cycle paths are well-maintained and provide a safe and enjoyable way to get around the town.



A new office building has been completed in Towcester. This is a significant investment in the town's infrastructure and is expected to create further jobs in the future. The building is a modern and stylish structure, reflecting the town's growing reputation as a centre for high-tech industry.



People are enjoying the new shopping centre in Daventry. This is a testament to the town's vibrant retail sector and the success of its shopping centre. The new shopping centre is a modern and stylish structure, reflecting the town's growing reputation as a centre for high-tech industry.

YET ANOTHER MAJOR RETAILER DESERTS NORTHAMPTON TOWN CENTRE

Yet another major retailer has deserted Northampton town centre. This is a significant blow to the town's retail sector and is expected to have a negative impact on the local economy. The retailer's departure is a reflection of the town's declining retail sector and the success of its shopping centre. The town centre is also home to a number of independent shops and businesses, which are also struggling.

Air quality in Towcester worsens

Air quality in Towcester has worsened. This is a significant concern for the local community and is expected to have a negative impact on the environment. The worsening air quality is a reflection of the town's growing reputation as a centre for high-tech industry and the associated increase in traffic. The town is also home to a number of industrial sites, which are also contributing to the problem.

Unemployment in Daventry on the rise

Unemployment in Daventry is on the rise. This is a significant concern for the local community and is expected to have a negative impact on the economy. The rising unemployment is a reflection of the town's declining retail sector and the success of its shopping centre. The town is also home to a number of independent shops and businesses, which are also struggling.



A young boy is looking at the camera. This is a testament to the town's vibrant community and the success of its shopping centre. The boy is a happy and healthy child, reflecting the town's high quality of life and excellent schools.



People are enjoying the new shopping centre in Daventry. This is a testament to the town's vibrant retail sector and the success of its shopping centre. The new shopping centre is a modern and stylish structure, reflecting the town's growing reputation as a centre for high-tech industry.

Executive Summary

The purpose of this prospectus is to present the residents of Northampton, Daventry and Towcester with a once in a generation opportunity to create vibrant communities with a dynamic economy.

Northampton, together with Daventry and Towcester, has been identified by central Government as a prime location for growth that will attract significant new investment from both the private and public sectors. The West Northamptonshire area is already recognised around the world as a centre with a fine tradition in craft and industry. Its towns, villages and rural areas have a rich mix of heritage buildings and fine landscapes. With increased investment, and the area's strategic location at the centre of England, it now has the opportunity to become recognised for its creativity, innovation, cutting edge design and outstanding quality of life.

In short, a world class Northampton in a world class West Northamptonshire.

West Northamptonshire Development Corporation (WNDC) is developing a framework that will set out how the regeneration of West Northamptonshire will be achieved. In an era of profound and lasting change, West Northamptonshire will only prosper if it embraces its position within the global economy, creates opportunities accessible to all its residents – existing and new – and more effectively manages and minimises its impact on the environment.

This prospectus is the first step towards the framework. It sets out:

- The drivers of change that provide the context for action;
- The priorities for action if we are to ensure West Northamptonshire makes the most of the opportunities and challenges arising from change; and
- WNDC's role in delivering these priorities.

The prospectus sets the scene for regeneration and growth activities over the next ten years and beyond. It states "why" WNDC is here and links with the local development frameworks being prepared by the local authorities that set out the "where" and "when" things will happen. The next step is the preparation of a Growth Delivery Plan during 2006. This Plan will set out "what" needs to be done, "who" does it, "how" it will be done and "how much" it will cost.

This prospectus is about the choices to be made, and which future we want for West Northamptonshire. The challenge is for us all to do what needs to be done together.

Comments should be sent to:

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by 6 March 2006.

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Northamptonshire – the strategic location

Northamptonshire is an area of opportunity. It benefits from its strategic location in the centre of England:

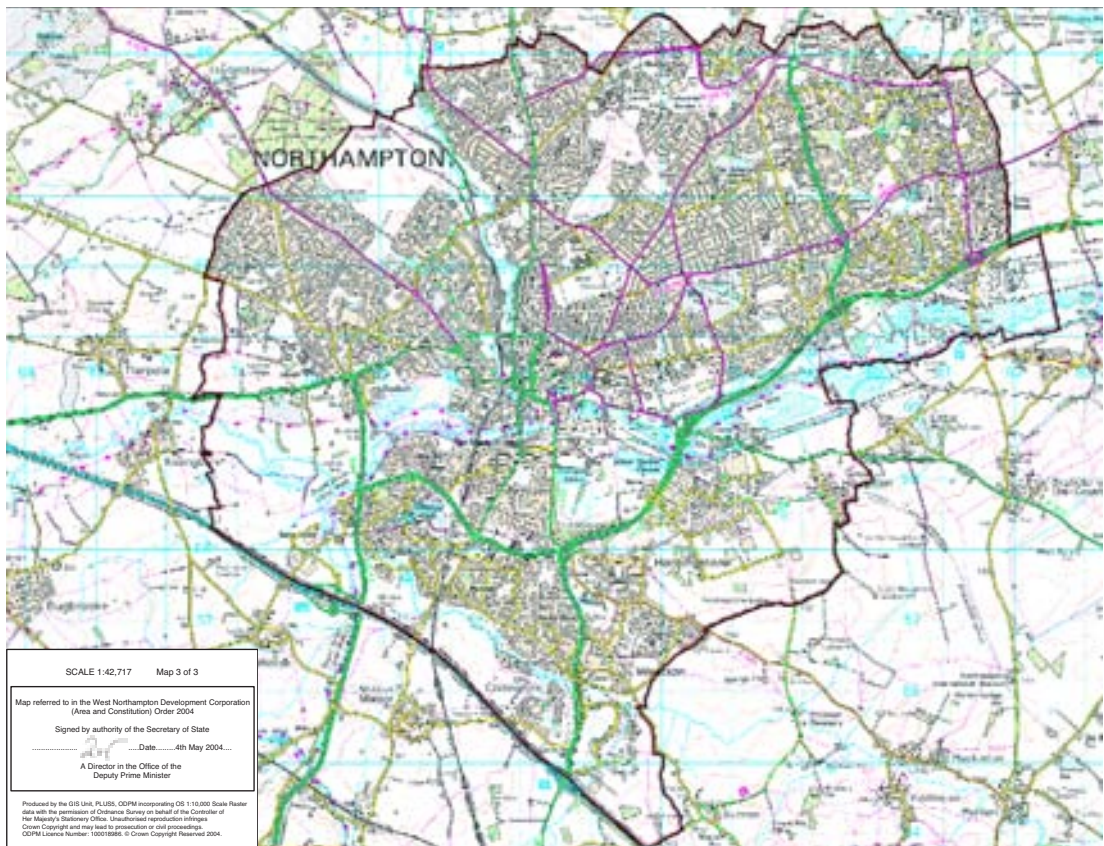
- Halfway between the country's two major cities, London and Birmingham – both players on the world stage. This provides huge opportunities to access the global marketplace;
- At the heart of the Oxford to Cambridge arc, between two of the world's most famous centres of learning. This creates opportunities to develop a role incubating and developing "spin-offs" from new technologies;
- At the southern edge of the East Midlands region providing a "bridge" between the South East and Eastern regions, and the West Midlands and the North.



Northampton and UDA boundary

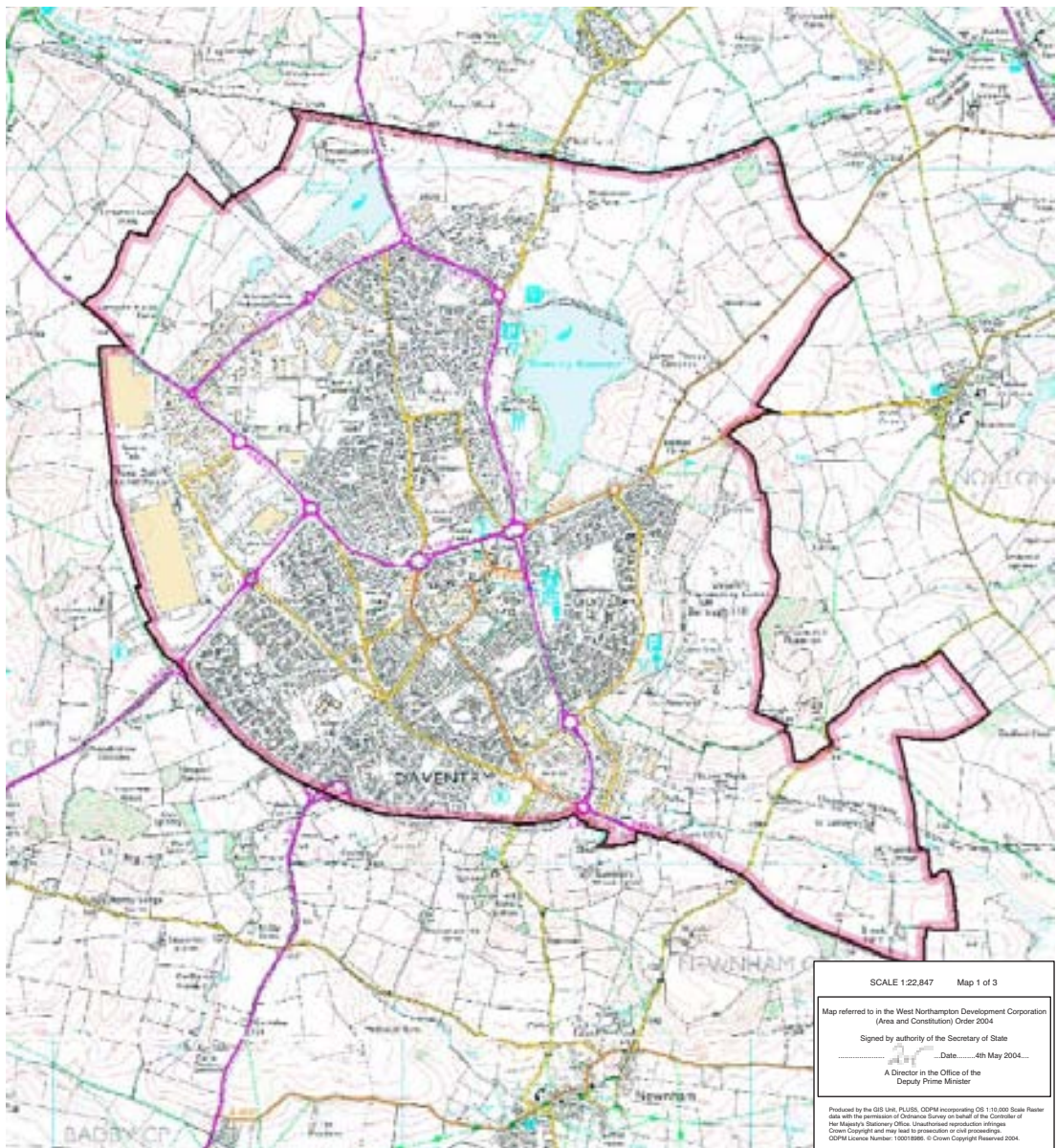
An Urban Development Area (UDA) & Urban Development Corporation (UDC) for West Northamptonshire were established by Parliament in December 2004.¹ The UDA covers the three towns of Northampton, Daventry, Towcester.

Northampton and UDA boundary



¹ HMSO – The West Northamptonshire Development Corporation (Area and Constitution) Order 2004

Daventry and UDA boundary

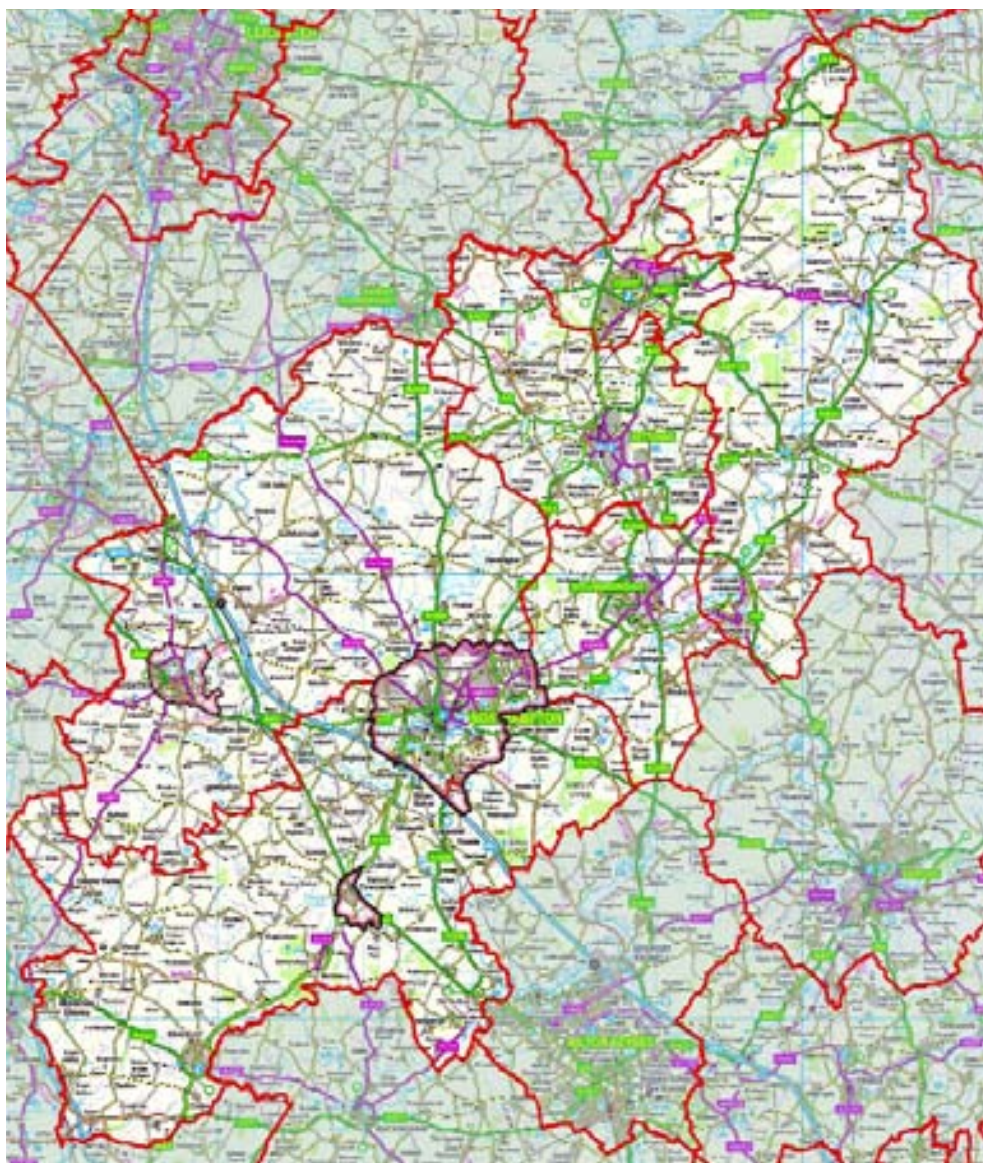


Towcester and UDA boundary



Northamptonshire and UDA boundaries

The UDC – West Northamptonshire Development Corporation (WNDC) – is established to secure sustainable regeneration and development of the UDA, to help encourage growth and attract extra public and private sector investment to the county. This means creating more and better jobs, improving town centres and creating better places to live. In the northern part of the county, similar challenges will be addressed by a new organisation due to be formed from the merger of North Northamptonshire Together and Catalyst Corby. This body will not have statutory powers.



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West Northamptonshire today

Most West Northamptonshire residents currently enjoy a relatively high quality of life, low unemployment, a new University and many charming and attractive open spaces and rural areas. However, deprivation is clearly evident in both Northampton and Daventry. The town centres in all three towns are not fulfilling their potential.² Baseline analysis³ developed for WNDC indicates that there are a number of challenges facing West Northamptonshire, which will need to be addressed if the area is to reach its full potential in the future. Amongst these are:

A lack of economic diversity

West Northamptonshire has a less diverse economic base than the UK as a whole. A significant proportion of the area's employment is dependent upon manufacturing, logistics, and specialist sectors such as the boot and shoe industry and high-level engineering. It has limited representation of knowledge based industries and employment. There is generally a relative shortage of quality, well-paid jobs.

A lack of affordable housing and starter homes

West Northamptonshire is characterised by high owner-occupation and relatively low levels of social and affordable housing. Throughout the area, house prices have risen by 64% since 2000 making getting on the housing ladder a real problem for local first time buyers.

A low skilled workforce

West Northamptonshire's skills base is lower than more competitive areas of the UK. The proportion of individuals with highest level of qualification is below the national average. There is a lower level of ongoing workforce development in West Northamptonshire than nationally, compounded by high levels of daily out-commuting which reduces the skills base available to local employers.

Poor internal connectivity

West Northamptonshire has good external and poor internal connectivity. It is a key centre for logistics and related sectors. Internal movement between the main settlements and other key employment, leisure and service locations is often restricted, reducing quality of life for some and suppressing economic activity. There is a high reliance on car use, leading to congestion hotspots where the road network lacks capacity.

A lack of innovation

West Northamptonshire does not display the patterns and trends of innovation as do other, more competitive, parts of UK. Northampton, in particular, may be constrained by limited research & development activity. It has few significant 'incubator' or 'nursery' units suitable for bringing on new 'start-up' companies.

² Northamptonshire Observatory "The West Northamptonshire Development Corporation: a baseline profile" (March 2005)

³ Scott Wilson-EDAW have produced a suite of 7 documents which underpin this Prospectus a) "WNDC Regeneration Framework Project Initiation Document" (May 2005); b) "West Northamptonshire Regeneration Framework Baseline Issues Scoping (June 2005); c) "Towards a Regeneration Framework: Policy and Delivery Perspectives" (July 2005); d) "The Shape of Things to Come: Vision and Urban Design Perspectives" (July 2005); e) "WNDC Baseline Issues Scoping Report" (August 2005); f) "WNDC Board Workshop Presentation" (August 2005); g) "West Northamptonshire Development Corporation Regeneration Framework" (Sept 2005). All these documents are available on the WNDC website.



West Northamptonshire tomorrow

Over the next twenty five years, West Northamptonshire will change significantly. Interrelated economic, technological, environmental, political and social trends will impact on the way people and communities live:

- Continuing globalisation of trade will bring new competitors to the industries where West Northamptonshire excels;
- New technology will create opportunities for creative and innovative places like West Northamptonshire to set up new industries;
- Climate change will affect the security of water supply and impact on the level of flood risk in West Northamptonshire;
- Higher energy costs will affect the way businesses and communities perform their daily business – a huge risk for an area reliant on road based logistics and distribution; and
- An ageing population will affect the way healthcare is organised and delivered.

In the short and medium term, the main driver of change in West Northamptonshire will be the Government's Growth agenda, as set out in the Communities Plan, which aims to tackle housing shortages in the wider South East.⁴ The Communities Plan emphasised that the Government was not simply committed to the delivery of additional housing – it was committed to creating sustainable communities. Places that are:

- Active, inclusive and safe – fair, tolerant and cohesive with a strong local culture and other shared community activities;
- Well run – with effective and inclusive participation, representation and leadership;
- Environmentally sensitive – providing places for people to live that are considerate of the environment;
- Well designed and built – featuring a quality built and natural environment;
- Well connected – with good transport services and communication linking people to jobs, schools, health and other services;
- Thriving – with a flourishing and diverse local economy;
Well served – with public, private, community and voluntary services that are appropriate to people's needs and accessible to all; and fair for everyone – including those in other communities, now and in the future.⁵

⁴ ODPM "Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future" (Feb 2003)

⁵ ODPM "Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future" (Feb 2003); "Creating sustainable communities – Making it happen: Thames Gateway and the Growth Areas" (July 2003)



The Regional Growth agenda for the East Midlands is set out in Regional Spatial Strategy 8 (RSS8)⁶ which provides a spatial vision for the sustainable development of the region up to 2021.

Northampton is identified in RSS8 as one of the East Midlands' five Principal Urban Areas (PUAs)⁷ These are conurbations which can develop into sustainable urban communities where people wish to live, work and invest. They have the potential for:

- A variety and choice of high quality, healthy, affordable and sustainable living and working environments;
- A sufficient number and variety of jobs to meet employment needs, along with associated education and training opportunities;
- Modern urban transport networks and modal interchanges with an emphasis on public transport provision;
- Vibrant city, town and local centres to serve communities with high quality services, to promote identity and social cohesion and to drive economic growth; and
- Improved infrastructure capacity, including healthcare, recreational and other facilities, for example public open space.

Daventry is identified as a sub-regional centre offering improved shopping facilities and a wider range of jobs and services.

Towcester is identified as a rural service centre, looking to extend its role in providing local services for its rural hinterland.

⁶ Government Office for the East Midlands (March 2005) Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands (RSS8)

⁷ The other four PUAs in the East Midlands are Derby, Leicester, Lincoln and Nottingham.



Housing Requirement

RSS8 indicates 47,400 new homes can be delivered by 2021 in West Northamptonshire, (of which some 9,600 should already be provided by 2006).

30,000 are to be built in and around Northampton Borough and in neighbouring parts of Daventry and South Northamptonshire (Northampton Implementation Area), with a further 10,800 in Daventry District and 6,600 in South Northamptonshire.

47,400 should house a population increase of around 125,000 people. RSS8 also indicates, by 2021, some 37,200 additional jobs will be required to provide employment for local people and to reduce the need for additional commuting.

RSS8 Housing Provision for West Northamptonshire 2006-2021

	2006-2011	2011-2016	2016-2021	Total
Daventry	2,700	2,700	2,700	8,100
Northampton Implementation Area	7,250	8,750	8,750	24,750
South Northants	1,650	1,650	1,650	4,950
Total	11,600	13,100	13,100	37,800

For the period 2021-2031, the policy requires that a further 17,500 dwellings should be an uncommitted planning assumption.

2 WNDC's Role in Delivery

The Government has recognised that sustainable regeneration and growth of West Northamptonshire requires major investment in public transport, roads, green infrastructure, social and community facilities and town centres. West Northamptonshire Development Corporation (WNDC) is a statutory vehicle with real powers, established to help deliver that infrastructure and co-ordinate regeneration and development.

There are currently **only two other UDCs** in the UK, both in Thames Gateway.

Thus WNDC provides a special opportunity for West Northamptonshire.

What is WNDC here to do?

The WNDC Management Statement issued by ODPM, provides the broad framework within which WNDC operates. It sets out WNDC's overall aim:

"To promote and deliver the sustainable regeneration and growth of West Northamptonshire, within the context of the national policy set out in the Sustainable Communities Plan, the plans for the wider Milton Keynes and South Midlands sub-region, and for the East Midlands as a whole."

The West Northamptonshire Development Corporation Toolbox

The toolbox which WNDC has at its disposal for delivering regeneration comprises:

- Land assembly powers – including the ability to compulsory purchase;
- Development control powers and the ability it gives WNDC to extract a proportion of the land value created by development;
- The programme funding and resources made available to WNDC direct from Government;
- The dedicated resource of the expert team at WNDC;
- The resources WNDC can make available to partner organisations to build capacity;
- Influence with Government as one of only three Urban Development Corporations in the UK;
- A mission to deliver and an ability to focus solely on delivery.

Powers

The Act establishing Urban Development Corporations⁸ sets out the types of activities WNDC can engage in to deliver regeneration. These include:

- Bringing land and buildings into effective use;
- Encouraging development of existing and new industry and commerce;
- Creating an attractive environment; and
- Ensuring that housing and other social facilities are available to encourage people to live and work in the area.
- Ensuring that housing and other social facilities are available to encourage people to live and work in the area.

⁸ The statutory powers of Urban Development Corporations are set out in section 136 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980.



To ensure delivery WNDC can:

- Acquire, hold, manage, reclaim and dispose of land and other property;
- Carry out building and other operations;
- Procure provision of water, electricity, gas, sewerage, other services;
- Carry out any business or undertaking for the purposes of regenerating its area; and
- Generally do anything necessary or expedient to secure regeneration, or for purposes incidental to the need to secure regeneration.

Where appropriate, WNDC can exercise compulsory purchase powers.⁹

Development Control Powers

Government has announced its intention to transfer development control powers for "strategic" planning applications from the relevant local authorities to WNDC. The Government held a public consultation¹⁰ between April and June 2005 on the definition of 'strategic'. Following that consultation it has concluded that the thresholds set out below should apply, except in Northampton Town Centre, where Government is currently consulting on an additional proposal which will enable WNDC to determine any development or change of use. Subject to parliamentary approval, the transfer of development control powers to WNDC should occur before the end of March 2006.

WNDC Proposed Development Control Thresholds

Development Type	Threshold
Housing	50 units or 1hectare (ha) whichever is smaller
Mixed Use	2,500m ² floor space or 1ha land take
Office, R&D and light industry	2,500m ² floor space or 1ha land take
General industry, distribution	2,500m ² floor space or 1ha land take
Buildings	Height 15m+
Playing fields	1ha
Retail	2,500m ² retail floor space
Mining, minerals and quarries	2ha
Transport	All applications (including roads) that would normally be decided by one or more council
Leisure	1000m ² floor space or 1ha land take
Education, Community Uses	1000m ²
Car park outside related development	50 spaces+
Any loss of development	1ha

⁹ The compulsory acquisition powers of Urban Development Corporations were subject to guidance in DOE Circular 23/88 (Compulsory Purchase Orders by Development Corporations). This guidance was cancelled by paragraph 7 of DETR Circular 01/98. An updated version of the original Guidance was issued as Appendix D of ODPM Circular 06/2004 which reinstated the 1988 Guidance with some amendments.

¹⁰ ODPM (April 2005) West Northamptonshire Development Corporation



WNDC will set up planning committees to handle these applications which, subject to obtaining approval from the First Secretary of State, will include representatives from the relevant local authority. These development control powers will enable WNDC to ensure proposed development is in line with the planning policy framework drawn up by the local authorities and aspirations for West Northamptonshire set out in WNDC's regeneration framework, and to obtain from developers, their contributions for strategic and local infrastructure.

Jointly with partners in West and North Northamptonshire, consultants EDAW have been commissioned to test the validity of certain proposed growth-related infrastructure in Northamptonshire. EDAW's findings will be reviewed by the partners and taken forward with WNDC's broader list of infrastructure to inform commercial discussions between WNDC, landowners and developers.

Such studies will comprise part of the first step in developing proposals for the land value component needed to fund strategic and local infrastructure. These proposals will then form part of a WNDC Growth Delivery Plan and after proper processes are completed, these proposals will lead to binding legal contracts.

What resources will WNDC have?

For 2006/07 and 2007/08 Government has provisionally allocated £25m for WNDC to invest in West Northamptonshire. Future resources are dependent on the outcome of Government spending reviews, but WNDC anticipates receiving at least £15m each financial year after that. This represents only a small proportion of funding required for everything that needs to be done. Substantial other funds must be derived from development activity and attracted from private sector.

These funds mainly arise:

- From the increase in land value arising as a result of residential and commercial development;
- From private sector investment attracted by the opportunities the growth creates; and
- From mainstream government department expenditure on healthcare, schools, roads, etc.

Each of these sources can be expected to generate hundreds of millions of pounds over the next twenty five years.

The Growth Delivery Plan, to be developed during 2006, will set out how these resources will be secured and how each of the components will be addressed.



Example

A funding mechanism has been devised for Milton Keynes, covering all known infrastructure requirements up to 2016. This was drawn up by the local delivery vehicle (Milton Keynes Partnership Committee) in collaboration with a landowner/developer consortium (MK Forward), Milton Keynes Council and the local Primary Care Trust. The overall package takes the form of a business plan, an infrastructure plan, a set of development standards, a tariff to be paid by developers and specific proposals for interim finance to cover the timing gap between the need to invest in infrastructure early and the later phased receipt of section 106 payments as various sites are granted Planning Permission, brought into use and new premises are built.

Regime for generating land value for infrastructure and community facilities

WNDC is committed to establish, (in an open consultation with landowners and developers), a regime for funding strategic and local infrastructure and community facilities. The end-product will be legally binding agreements made following a full commercial negotiation. It is therefore appropriate that comprehensive lists of strategic and local infrastructure are settled as soon as practicable and costed by WNDC. Payment by landowners and/or developers will be based on such specific lists.

How will the WNDC operate?

Sustainable regeneration and development requires action across a broad range of areas, such as health, skills and transport. This means that WNDC can only be part of the solution. WNDC needs to work together with many stakeholders to deliver sustainable growth. It is these stakeholders who often have the statutory remit, the knowledge and the experience to deliver in their specific areas of responsibility. This partnership approach will work best if we all:

- Sign up to a challenging, shared vision;
- Agree an action plan to make that vision a reality;
- Commit to our individual roles in the delivery of that action plan; and
- Have the capacity and resources to play our part.

WNDC will consider supporting partner organisations by:

- Making WNDC's staff and resources available to work with and assist the development of long-term capacity;
- Sharing the cost of attracting specialist skills – like urban design and project management – so that everyone benefits;
- Supporting organisations lobbying to Government for funding for activities that help achieve the objectives of the delivery plan; and
- Capitalising on the wide experience of WNDC's Board.

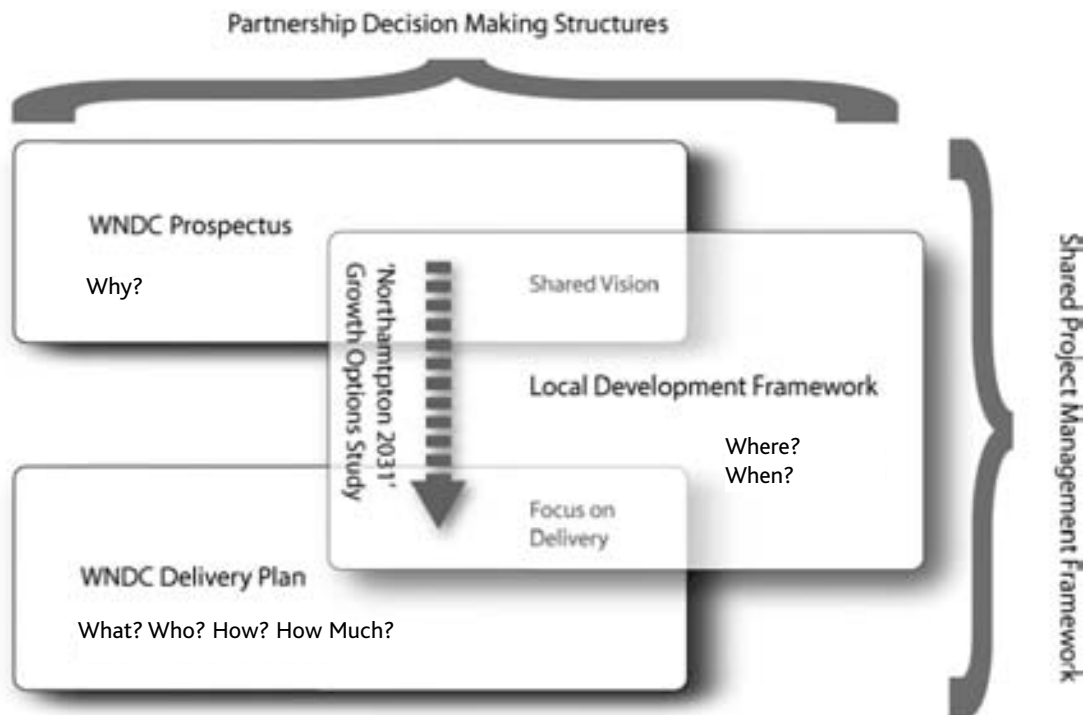


Local Development Frameworks

Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) are a requirement of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. They are a suite of Local Development Documents (LDDs)¹¹ which make up the statutory framework for decisions on the location of future development. By providing a spatial context for growth in their areas, LDFs underpin successful delivery of sustainable communities. In particular, to accurately gauge a level of infrastructure requirements to support growth, the LDFs have to allocate sufficient land for development through to 2021 and to give consideration to further requirements through to 2031.

In West Northamptonshire, the three local councils (Northampton, Daventry and South Northamptonshire) are preparing a Joint Core Strategy for the Northampton Implementation Area, in addition to Core Strategies for each district. Northampton Borough Council will also prepare Area Action Plans including the Town Centre, Sixfields and King's Heath. WNDC will be working very closely with all three Councils and the County Council on all these documents.

The inter-relationships between these activities are set out below:



¹¹ LDDs include a Local Development Strategy setting out how and when the LDDs will be produced, a Core Strategy, any Area Action Plans deemed appropriate, and a Statement of Community Involvement.



Successful delivery will require new forms of close partnership working and clear project management arrangements. WNDC is working with partners to put this in place. It will also require a clear evidence base. To that end the partners will commission a 'growth options study' looking at the case for alternative ways in which required growth up to 2031 can be accommodated.

Northamptonshire Local Area Agreement

Public sector organisations and the voluntary and community sectors in West Northamptonshire are already showing that they can work together to deliver.

Local Area Agreements (LAAs) are a new contract between central and local Government to deliver priorities of local people, giving increased flexibilities and resources in return for increased performance. Northamptonshire has been successful in the current round of LAA pilots announced on 22 June 2005. All organisations in Northamptonshire are now planning how best to work together to deliver improvements in public service.

Where will WNDC operate?

Although this document focuses on West Northamptonshire, which is WNDC's statutory area, Northampton's influence is felt right across Northamptonshire.

A relationship between the three towns and their rural hinterland will be key to achieving sustainable outcomes. The urban areas have been supported by and have provided support to their surrounding areas historically – for instance through Northampton Livestock Market. Therefore WNDC will work 'across its boundaries' **with partners** in the surrounding Rural Areas, in Brackley, in North Northamptonshire, and alongside the County Council, county-wide bodies and Regional Agencies.

3

Priorities for Action

Objectives

At the heart of the growth agenda is the need to increase the rate at which homes are being built. The extra investment this development creates and attracts gives West Northamptonshire a once in a generation opportunity to lift the quality of life in the area significantly.

WNDC believes West Northamptonshire will be able to tackle today's problems successfully and believes it can rise to the challenges of tomorrow. To do so, it must achieve three key sustainability objectives. They are:

Competitiveness – Finding a position within the global economy that enables West Northamptonshire to compete successfully within world markets;

Cohesion – Making the opportunities arising from growth available to all – both existing and future residents; and

Quality – Creating buildings and places that are well designed, enhance their surroundings and contribute to a better environment.

Key areas for action

To achieve these objectives, WNDC has identified ten crosscutting areas of action. WNDC is not the lead organisation in any of these areas – they must be tackled through strong public, private, voluntary and community sector partnerships. However, WNDC can support its partners' ability to deliver by the use of its influence, resources and powers. These activity areas are therefore an indication of priorities for action and, if supported by the results of this consultation, will form the basis on which WNDC will make its investment decisions. The ten proposed key areas of action are:

A. Improving and diversifying the economic base to tackle West Northamptonshire's over-reliance on a few employment sectors and promote an innovative and dynamic economy which offers quality, well-paid employment opportunities, is highly competitive and generates a substantially greater level of added value. Key activities include:

- Improving performance and competitiveness of existing businesses;
- Supporting the formation of new businesses;
- Attracting inward investment;
- Attracting leisure and business tourism; and
- Driving the streamlining of overlapping bodies to remove unnecessary bureaucracy and make doing business in West Northamptonshire as simple and speedy as possible.

B. Transforming town centres that are currently struggling to compete, to create distinctive, robust and vibrant places to satisfy the needs of existing and new communities. Key activities include:

- Reinforcing the role of Northampton town centre at the heart of a dynamic county;
- Assembling key development sites in all three towns;
- Showcasing the area's heritage, cultural and architectural legacies;



- Developing complementary district centres within Northampton, supporting a renaissance of Daventry and Towcester town centres; and
- Promoting better movement patterns with reduced need for car use.

C. Providing a greater number and range of well designed, eco-friendly diverse housing to redress the imbalance in West Northamptonshire's existing housing stock and increase the size, quality and choice of housing stock to meet the needs of communities and individuals. Key activities include:

- Improving housing standards and demanding design excellence;
- Delivering affordable housing;
- Developing balanced communities with mixed tenures and mixed uses, and
- Protecting the rural character of West Northamptonshire villages.

D. Establishing a more recognisable sense of place and identity for the three individual towns and West Northamptonshire as a whole. Key activities include:

- Improving the tourist offer;
- Rediscovering the qualities of the River Nene and its waterfront;
- Promoting the cultural heritage and history of the area;
- Increasing participation in sport, arts and cultural activities; and
- Supporting creative industries.

E. Improving connectivity by utilising West Northamptonshire's regional and national linkages suitably upgraded whilst substantially improving internal accessibility and movement. Key activities include:

- Increasing bus usage and linkages;
- Increasing accessibility for all;
- Improving virtual connectivity;
- Improving connectivity between Northampton and rest of UK; and
- Reducing road congestion.

F. Creating inclusive communities by ensuring opportunities afforded by growth are available to all residents – especially those living in areas experiencing deprivation. Key activities include:

- Supporting neighbourhood renewal projects;
- Improving the ability of social excluded groups to access services/facilities;
- Improving the capacity of the voluntary and community sector to deliver a range of specialist services;
- Reducing crime and the fear of crime;
- Improving the quality of and accessibility to healthcare;
- Increasing accessibility to services; and
- Supporting diversity.



G. Developing high quality skills, resolving West Northamptonshire's current disadvantage, enabling individuals to reach their full potential and helping employers locate the skills they require. Key activities include:

- Increasing the number of people with higher level qualifications;
- Supporting ongoing workforce development;
- Improving levels of graduate retention;
- Extending the scope of Higher and Further Education provision; and
- Improving the level of key and generic skills.

H. Achieving quality in the built and natural environment to create distinctive places where people want to live. Key activities include:

- Investing in the quality of the public realm;
- Improving design standards for public spaces and new-build projects; and
- Raising environmental standards of design and construction to lower carbon emissions, minimise resource consumption, encourage recycling, promote better waste management, increase the use of renewable energy, reduce flood risk and adopt sustainable standards of construction.

I. Improving management of environmental assets and resources, maximising the contribution the superb West Northamptonshire environment makes to peoples' quality of life whilst minimising the impact of human activity on that environment. Key activities include:

- Ensuring efficient and effective use of the land supply;
- Maintaining biodiversity; improving woodland; better public access;
- Ensuring adequate utility supplies for now and generations to come; and
- Improving air quality.

J. Helping West Northamptonshire's rural communities to thrive and be more secure for the future, by reinforcing the strong relationship between town and country. Key activities include:

- Supporting the marketing of products from rural Northamptonshire;
- Using farmers' markets and the sale of local produce to attract people to town centres;
- Supporting the reintroduction of a livestock market as a focus for urban and rural trade;
- Developing Northamptonshire's range of visitor attractions;
- Improving rural bus services; and
- Assisting in the attraction of niche and micro business ventures.

4 Next Steps

Skeleton Next Steps Programme

Start-up Phase

(March 2005 to March 2006)

- Establish internal governance arrangements
- Recruit staff
- Build relationships with stakeholders
- Research baseline, publish Prospectus
- Consult widely with stakeholders and public
- Launch 'Northampton 2031' Options Study
- Promote sustainable regeneration

Transition Phase

(April 2006 to March 2007)

- Operate Development Control Powers
- Help inform Local Development Documents
- Produce and publish a Growth Delivery Plan
- Consult widely with stakeholders and public
- Contribute to Local Area Agreement success
- Support delivery of housing
- Aid merger of county economic bodies
- Support delivery of new jobs
- Deliver plan for optimum use of Growth Areas Fund money
- Promote sustainable regeneration

Fully Active Phase

(April 2007 onwards)

- Local Development Documents in place
- Implement Growth Delivery Plan**

Opportunities and challenges

WNDC believes the growth agenda and the creation of West Northamptonshire Development Corporation presents a significant opportunity to make West Northamptonshire into an even better place. A place where people will choose to live, work and enjoy their free time. A place that offers the best quality of life possible. A quality of life comparable with anywhere else in the world.

Achieving world class quality of life means being creative. It means positioning the area at the cutting edge of innovation. It means getting the right balance between housing, economic, social and environmental needs. It means using the considerable sums of money WNDC will raise, both wisely and well.

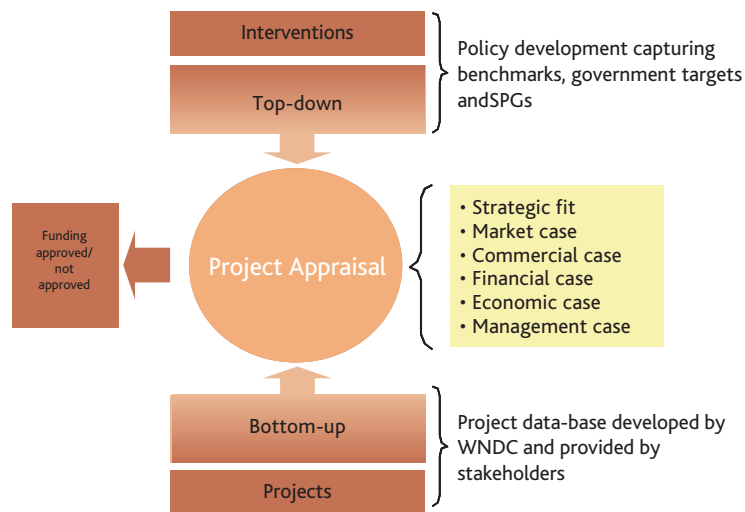


Achieving these objectives will take time. They represent a direction of travel rather than a destination. This Prospectus represents one step along the path. With its local authority partners, WNDC is currently working up a programme to make best use of the £25m worth of funding available to WNDC between April 2006 and March 2008. Following consideration of the responses to this consultation, WNDC will announce which projects it intends to take forward.

Project Appraisal

Investment will be prioritised using a combination of “top-down” and “bottom-up” approaches. The top-down approach starts with the policy framework established by growth, Government targets and baseline evidence, and leads to the development of new projects and schemes. It is an integral part of the Growth Delivery Plan to be developed during 2006. The bottom-up approach starts with the database of potential public sector projects already in the pipeline. These need to be appraised for fit with the regeneration agenda.

Project Appraisal Process



WNDC’s intended gateway process comprises an initial ‘scoping’ exercise that will test projects against the ten areas for action identified in this document to determine if there is an acceptable ‘strategic fit’.

Ten areas for action

- A – Improved and diversified economic base
- B – Transformed; more vibrant town centres
- C – More; well designed, diverse houses
- D – A more recognisable sense of place
- E – Improved external/internal connectivity

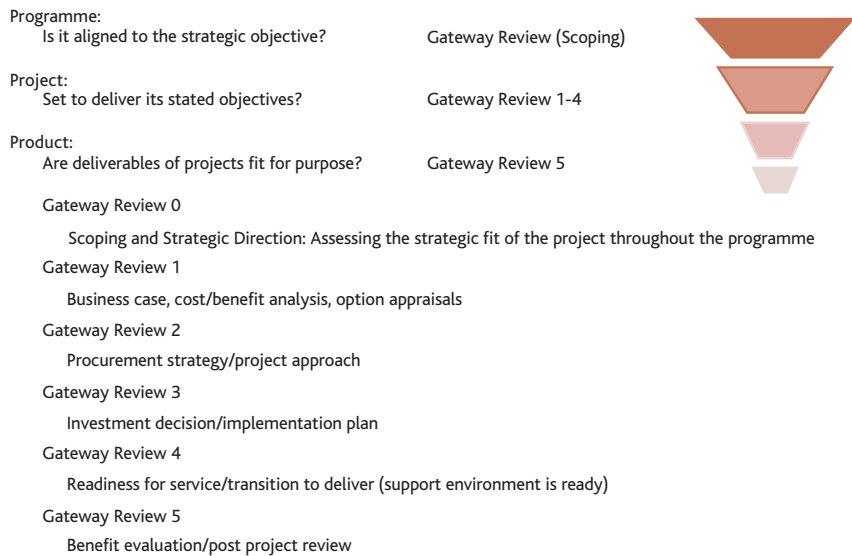
- F – Creating inclusive communities
- G – Developing a high quality skills base
- H – Quality built and natural environment
- I – Well managed environmental resource
- J – A thriving and secure rural community



This will be followed by five review stages that test if the project is robust enough to deliver its stated objectives. The over-arching criteria will be the extent to which projects support the delivery of sustainable communities. Other important factors will include:

- Project resources;
- Funding;
- Evidence of option appraisal;
- Organisational context;
- Stakeholder support; and
- Governance arrangements

Gateway Review Process



Growth Delivery Plan

WNDC has laid out in this Prospectus the results of its initial consultations with stakeholders. They provide a set of key principles, themes, interventions and possible next steps for WNDC. Following on from this consultation, the next key step will be the preparation of a Growth Delivery Plan. This will include:

- Targets and indicators against which WNDC's performance can be measured;
- The identification of potential projects and key areas for delivering housing and achieving sustainable growth in accordance with Local Development Frameworks;
- A framework for infrastructure delivery;
- A regime for funding strategic and local infrastructure from the land value component established in consultation with landowners/developers;
- A spatial investment plan reflecting the work in progress on Local Development Frameworks and establishing the key locations for development, infrastructure and the timing of delivery.

WNDC is an open and consultative organisation. We have already given the public access to Board meetings and minutes and have involved stakeholders in the development of this Prospectus. We are now widening that debate to the community as a whole.

This consultation on the Prospectus will run for twelve weeks. As part of the consultation there will be a number of workshops and exhibitions in each of the three West Northamptonshire towns. Consultees can also access further background information on WNDC's website (www.wndc.org.uk)

To focus discussion, some questions on the Prospectus are set out below. However, comments are invited on any aspect of WNDC's work or remit.

1. How can West Northamptonshire make best use of its strategic location
 - Between London and Birmingham?
 - In the Oxford and Cambridge academic zone? and
 - Between the wider South East and the rest of the country?
2. Does West Northamptonshire have any other natural advantages that could be utilised?
3. How can West Northamptonshire address the challenges identified in WNDC's baseline analysis?
 - A lack of economic diversity;
 - A lack of affordable housing;
 - A low skilled workforce;
 - Poor internal connectivity; and
 - A lack of innovation.
4. Do you feel there are any other existing challenges to be addressed?
5. How can WNDC best support its partners' ability to deliver?
6. How should WNDC support the development of communities outside its designated UDA areas, such as
 - The rural hinterland?
 - Brackley; Silverstone; Daventry International Rail Freight Terminal?
 - North Northamptonshire?
 - Any other areas?
7. Has WNDC correctly identified the key objectives for a sustainable West Northamptonshire?
 - Improved competitiveness;
 - Increased community cohesion; and
 - Environmental quality and design



8. Do you believe there are any other objectives essential to the delivery of a sustainable West Northamptonshire?
9. Has WNDP identified the right key areas for action?
 - Improving and diversifying the economic base;
 - Transforming town centres;
 - Providing diverse, quality housing;
 - Establishing a more recognisable sense of place and identity;
 - Exploiting and improving connectivity;
 - Creating inclusive communities;
 - Developing a high quality skills base;
 - Achieving and maintaining quality in the built and natural environment;
 - Improving the management of environmental assets and resources; and
 - Helping West Northamptonshire's rural communities.
10. Do you believe there are any other key areas for action?
11. Which of the areas for action do you think WNDP should prioritise in the Growth Delivery Plan?
12. Which key issues do you think should guide the preparation of the Growth Delivery Plan?
13. What advantages and disadvantages do you see for the top-down and bottom-up approach to identifying projects?
14. Do you support the use of Gateway reviews for project appraisal?
15. Do you have any other comments on this Prospectus or other aspect of WNDP's future work?

Responses should be sent to:

WNDP Prospectus Consultation
WNDP
PO Box 355
Franklins Gardens
Northampton
NN5 5WU

Or by e-mail to: prospectus@wndp.org.uk

by 6 March 2006.

WNDC is committed to providing timely feedback to the community. All responses will be made publicly available, unless consultees specifically ask for their views to remain private. A final version of the Prospectus, taking on board comments received, will be published in the Spring. Copies will be sent to every person or organisation responding to this consultation.

Within the next 12 months, WNDC will produce the second part of the regeneration framework, the Growth Delivery Plan. This will be subject to the same wide range of consultation.

One of the key parts of the Delivery Plan is the identification of local and strategic infrastructure and how it will be paid for. WNDC will engage communities, public sector organisations, landowners and developers in an open and inclusive consultative process to achieve legally binding contracts for planning obligation payments - based on clear and unambiguous costed schedules with no room for late surprises.

The Board will hold at least one meeting each year at which a progress report will be presented to the public. At these meetings there will be an opportunity to question Board members about WNDC activity and hold them accountable for delivery. Details of these meetings will be published on the WNDC website and publicised in the local press.

This document is available on request in other languages and a format for the visually impaired.



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