

Northampton/Northamptonshire

First Mile/Last Mile Strategy

NIC Submission

September 2017

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Context

Northampton is a present day success story. Successful in terms of developing a vision, successful in delivering it, and successful in securing significant amounts of private sector funding in doing so, to maximise the benefits of development for the town. In recent years the town has seen the following levels of investment;

Northampton Train station = £26m

Siemens National Training Academy for Rail = £7m

Cosworth Advanced Manufacturing centre = £22m

Carlsberg bottling facility = £20m

University of Northampton Innovation Centre = £8.5m

Northampton bus station = £13m

Wootton Hall Park junction = £2.7m

Weedon Road Smart Corridor = £2m

Enhanced power infrastructure (EZ) = £1.25m

Superfast broadband in EZ

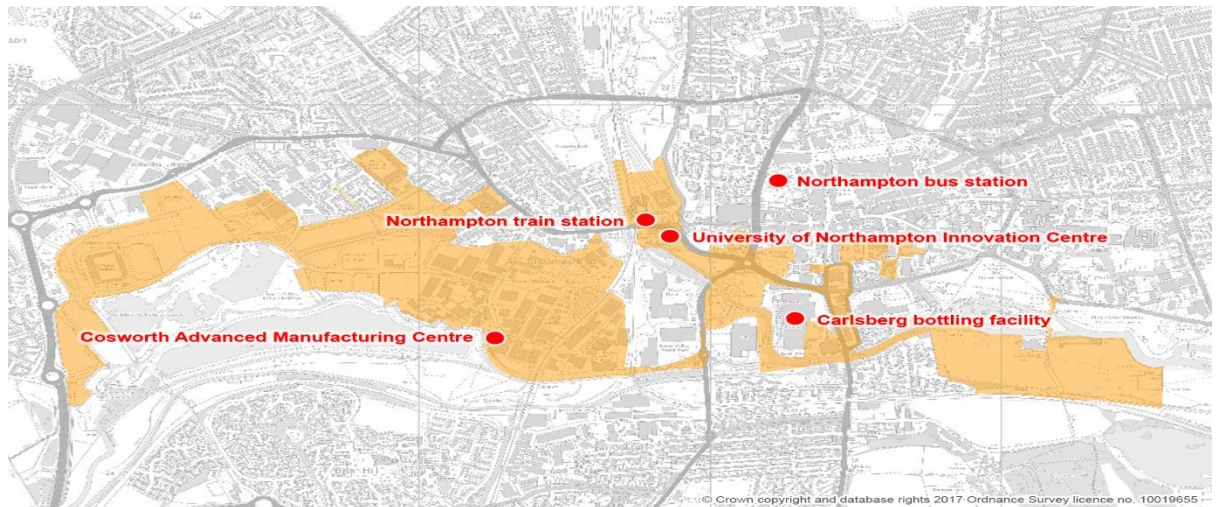
Northampton has also established the Enterprise Zone based in and around the town centre, one of the top performing EZs in the country, which has seen;

- 2,689 jobs created
- 53 Businesses created
- £319.5m Private sector investment
- £71.4m Public sector investment

The densities of jobs created are generally in keeping with national figures, as assumptions used to inform the Joint Core Strategy are contained in the West Northants Employment Land Study from 2010 and are based on information from Roger Tym and Partners used in the East Midlands Councils checklist. They are as follows:

- 1 worker per 18 sq.m office
- 1 worker per 35 sq.m general industrial

- 1 worker per 88 sq.m warehouse



This level of growth has also seen changes in movements in and across the town. This is reflected in the ratio of jobs compared to population aged 16-64 in the Borough;

Northampton 0.99

East Mids 0.78

Great Britain 0.83

(ONS, 2015)

This is indicative of Northampton being a centre for jobs with a significant amount of in-commuting, with a net inflow of 12,000 commuters to the borough from the 2011 Census (NOMIS);

- Inflow: 39,545 person(s) commute into Northampton from other local authorities in the UK.
- Outflow: 27,442 person(s) commute out of Northampton to other local authorities in the UK or abroad.
- Net change: Overall, commuting results in a population increase of 12,103 in Northampton.

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/WU03UK/chart/1132462266>

Whilst it is an important centre within the Growth Corridor, it should also be noted that Northampton is different to Oxford, Cambridge and Milton Keynes, in that it is not currently proposed to be connected by the Expressway and East-West rail.



That said, it is also true that Northampton has something different than its neighbours to offer to the Corridor, in particular with its links to the area for development beyond its own administrative boundary, and its excellent links to the north, bringing, with enhanced infrastructure, other major settlements, including Birmingham and Leicester, within reach of the Corridor.

Current delivery and future plans

These levels of investment are also expected to continue in the near future;

£360m University of Northampton campus, creating a world class 21st century university campus, housing 14,000 students and 2,000 staff, with 1,000 students living in a new accommodation village in a waterside town centre location.

Greyfriars mixed town centre re-development on the site of the former Bus Station, worth £77.4m.

Vulcan Works to refurbish a listed building in the Cultural Quarter, establishing a centre of excellence for leather crafts, worth £12.4m

£7m Museum expansion project, delivering a modern facility to display the extensive boot and shoe collection

Extension of St James Mill Road to improve town centre and EZ access, worth £2m

A43 phase 2 = £9m

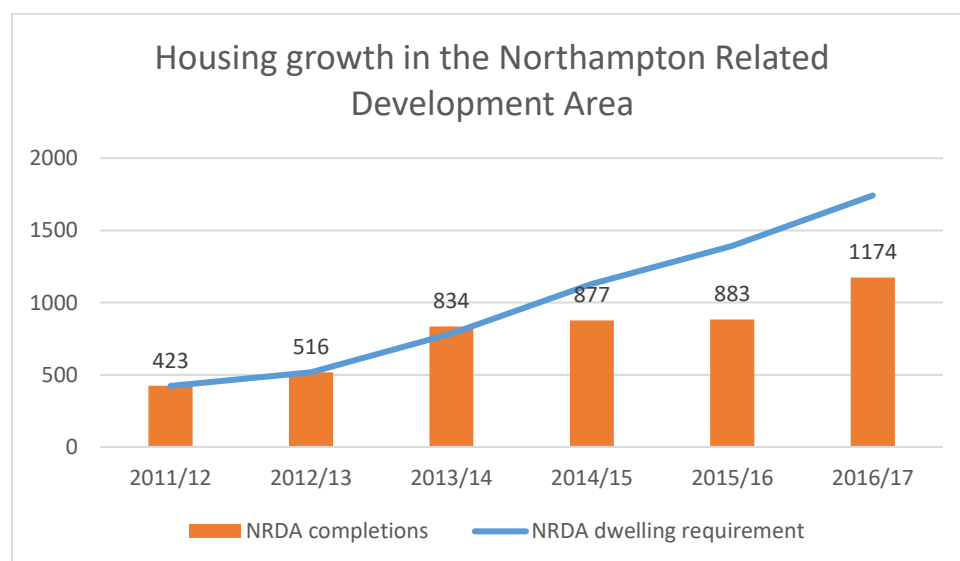
A43 Moulton Bypass = £18m

However, whilst the town has begun to successfully deliver high increasingly high levels of housing, it is not currently reaching the levels required in the 2014 Joint Core Strategy trajectory.

Housing requirement 2011–2017 = 5,987

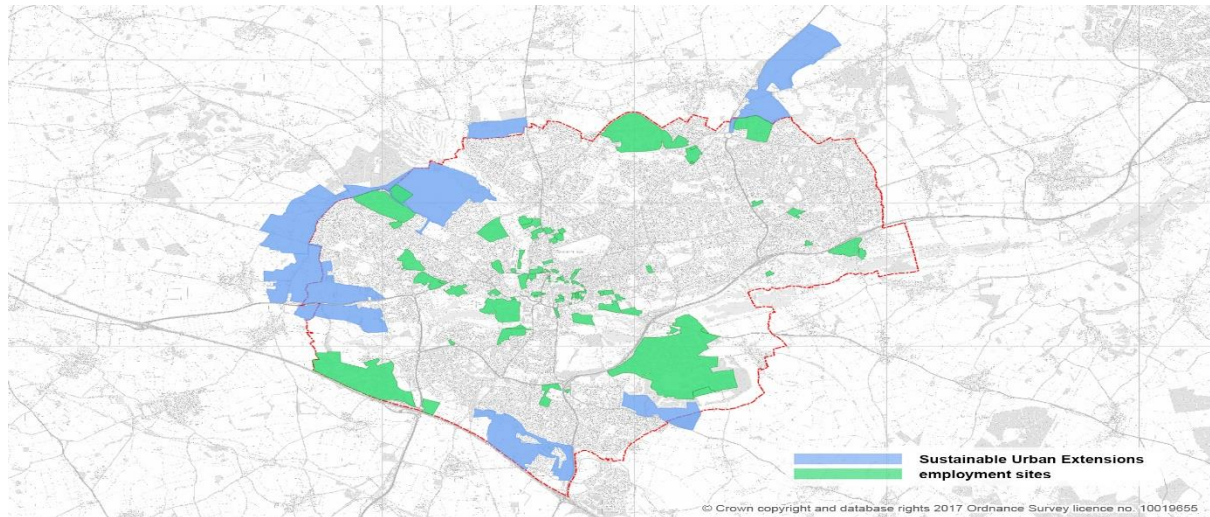
Housing completions 2011–2017 = 4,707

Shortfall 2011–2017 = 1,280



On this basis, the town can only deliver 2.6 years of deliverable housing land between 2017 – 2022, which will increasingly leave it vulnerable to speculative planning applications.

Even given 2017 completions of 1,174 houses, the town needs help to deliver existing commitments, and only then, after 2029, will it be possible to consider additional, accelerated housing delivery. The Borough Council is taking steps to remedy this, including drafting the Local Plan Part 2, which will allocate sites for housing, economic development, retail and other uses, which will be submitted in 2018. Current work is suggesting that there is a Land Availability Assessment capacity of 4,350 units without planning permission, and Employment capacity of 99,000 square metres.



Constraints

Given that the town is currently struggling to deliver its current housing targets, the Borough and County Councils have undertaken assessments of what is restricting growth.

Investment

The proposed East-West rail line could serve Northampton, but this is not yet agreed and this uncertainty is beginning to impact on investment in the town.

Similarly, the Expressway could relieve congestion on the A45 and A43, but the required investment has yet to be committed.

Generally, development sites don't fund upfront infrastructure investment, so there are delays in delivering the supporting infrastructure.

Funding sources now available mean delivery is not plan led.

The County Council is forward funding infrastructure through the Revolving Infrastructure Fund, but this has significant borrowing impact.

Administrative

The town has a restrictive boundary, therefore there is no potential for large development sites within the Borough.

Land ownership surrounding the town is complicated, meaning that assembling large scale sites is proving to be slow.

The majority of large sites suitable for SUEs are already allocated, meaning that development beyond this needs to be undertaken on a collaborative basis with neighbouring authorities.

There is ongoing uncertainty over the current joint strategic planning arrangements, where the partner Councils have asked for the current Joint Committee arrangements to be superseded by joint advisory arrangements with each Council adopting its own Local Plan, possibly on an aligned basis.

Infrastructure

Northampton's transport network exhibits a number of key constraints. Firstly, the River Nene runs through the town from west to east, passing just to the south of the town centre, with the Brampton Arm running in from the north, connecting just to the south-west of the town centre. There are a limited number of crossings of the river.

Secondly, the Eastern and Southern Expansion areas of the 1970s and 1980s were designed with highway networks that largely ran north-south and east-west respectively, making journeys to and from the town centre difficult. Furthermore, the A45, was originally built as the key distributor road for these new town developments and access to some of the areas is very difficult without using what is now a trunk road.

These constraints of the highway network obviously limit not only car traffic but also traffic by more sustainable modes.

Northampton is well connected by road. It is close to the centre of the national motorway network, with three junctions on the M1 serving the town. Easy access is possible via the M1 to the M6, via the A45 to the A14, and via the A43 to the M40 and A34.

Northampton is less well connected by rail. When the West Coast Main Line was built in the 1830s the route chosen was along the high ground to the west of the town. Widening of the line in the 1880s saw additional tracks laid through the valley to serve Northampton, but while these 'slow lines' are the main route for freight traffic, passenger services are limited to the London – Northampton – Birmingham semi-fast or stopping services, with the inter-city Virgin services bypassing the town.

The New Town era saw significant development of highway infrastructure in the town. Significant new highway capacity was added, particularly to the south and east of the town. However, the planned 'ring road' to the north and west of the town remains incomplete despite the construction of large industrial estates in these areas.

By contrast, the same era saw limited development of other modes. The initial New Town plans included public transport corridors to link with the Eastern and Southern Expansion areas. However, these proposals were dropped at an early stage.

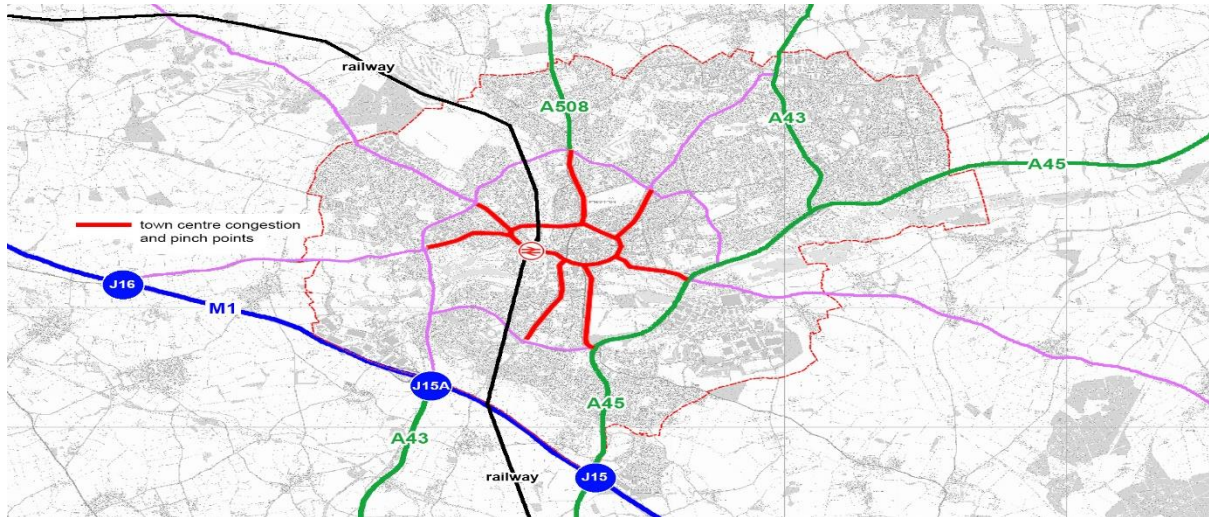
A turning-point in transport planning was reached in the mid-1990s in considering plans for development of the south-west District of the town, when it became obvious that the capacity of the proposed grade-separated Kislingbury Valley Way dual carriageway could not be matched by the surrounding road network. The solution was road infrastructure constructed to match the capacity of the surrounding network – single carriageway distributor roads that opened up the network but did not provide strategic level relief.

The mid-2000s saw a significant expansion of growth plans in the county as part of the Milton Keynes & South Midlands Growth Area. It was obvious that the level of growth predicted could not be accommodated if car use continued to increase. A Transport Strategy for Growth was drawn up encompassing challenging levels of modal shift, predicated on significant investment in alternative modes – walking, cycling and public transport.

The County Council, in seeking to guide the overall development of the county's infrastructure and economy, drew up the Northamptonshire Arc – a spatial investment strategy which emphasises the key role of Northampton as the county town and largest settlement alongside the county's smaller and medium sized towns.

This thinking from both the Transport Strategy for Growth and Northamptonshire Arc was embodied in the current Local Transport Plan, which encompasses a suite of documents including strategies for the various modes of travel, as well as over-arching Town Transport Strategies for the main towns, including – of course - Northampton.

Unfortunately, by the time this strategy-writing was complete, the economic situation had changed following the 2008 crash. There has been much less money available from both developers and the LTP Integrated Transport Block than was anticipated when the LTP was written. The priority given – at both national and local level – to unlocking key developments sites has meant that available funding has been focused on key pieces of highway infrastructure that enable development proposals to be unlocked.



But the need to invest in sustainable modes remains, and despite the challenging times recent developments have included Cycle Connect, Smart Move and the Societal Total Transport company.

The latest public response to these constraints were included in the Town Transport Strategy (2013). Not surprisingly, given the challenges posed by the Transport Strategy for Growth and the Northamptonshire Arc, the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan strongly embraces growth, while also needing to tackle other challenges such as road safety. The needs of growth are most directly assessed within the various Town Transport Strategies, with the Major Roads, Rail and Bus Strategies providing complementary information on inter-urban movements.

The Northampton Town Transport Strategy was developed alongside the preparation of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (Local Plan Part 1) and formed part of the evidence base presented by the West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit for the examination of the Joint Core Strategy.

However, the timing of the Town Transport Strategy means that it does not encompass the additional levels of both housing and employment growth included in the adopted Joint Core Strategy following Main Modifications, which extended the plan period to 2029.

There are two further major linked changes to the development proposals for the town which have emerged since the Town Transport Strategy was published:

- The relocation of the main University of Northampton Campus to a site at Nunn Mills, now in an advanced stage of construction and due to open in September 2018.
- The designation of the Northampton Waterside Enterprise Zone.

In summarising the existing transport situation, the Town Transport Strategy concludes:

- Neither Northampton's Inner nor Outer Ring Roads are complete; this leads to traffic making unnecessary cross town trips.
- The network is congested in the AM and PM peaks, particularly on links with the strategic network and Inner Ring Road.
- Bus services terminate in the town centre, hence Northampton has a lack of orbital services. The town also has limited evening and Sunday services.

- Northampton experiences poor air quality around the town centre and on heavily trafficked routes.
- Car parking within Northampton is plentiful, but difficult to locate due to poor signage. The town centre finds it difficult to compete with out of town retail and employment sites. Poor use of car parks is symptomatic of this.
- Northampton similar to other towns in the county has too many internalised trips of under 5km made by cars.

The Town Transport Strategy then presents a series of complementary strategies, which can be summarised as follows:

Highway Strategy

- Completion of the Sandy Lane Relief Road
- Construction of the North-West Bypass
- A43 dualling north of Northampton
- The A45/M1 Northampton Growth Management Scheme
- A number of junction improvements, both around the town centre and on key radial corridors

Public Transport Strategy

- New town centre Bus Interchange
- New rail station building
- Bus priority on radial corridors
- Creation of an integrated transport hub north of Northampton
- Additional bus services to serve Sustainable Urban Extensions
- Improved public transport information, including real time

Cycling and Walking Strategy

- Improved cycling routes around the town centre
- New/improved cycling routes to serve the Sustainable Urban Extensions
- Improved cycle parking

- A comprehensive upgrade of walking facilities, including dropped kerbs, missing links, pedestrian crossings
- Improved signage and promotion

Car Parking Strategy

- Revision of countywide parking standards
- Location of future car parks study
- Town Centre Shuttle Service study
- Signage strategy
- Offer additional payments

Air Quality Strategy

- Marketing and information measures
- Congestion management strategy in Air Quality Management Areas

The estimated cost for the entire strategy was £190.7m:

Public Transport Improvements	£60m
Creation of an integrated transport hub North of Northampton	£2m
Highway Improvements (North West Bypass, Dualling A43 North of Northampton and junction improvements)	£109m
Humanising and extension of the Inner Ring Road (Town centre regeneration schemes)	£8m
Comprehensive cycle and walking network	£9.6m
Town centre parking strategy	£1.8m
Air Quality Improvements	£0.3m
TOTAL	£190.7m

It was anticipated that funding to deliver the strategy would come from a number of different sources:

- The Integrated Transport Block
- Central government grants
- Section 106 Agreement contributions from developers
- Developer-led infrastructure delivery secured through Section 278 agreements

- Localism
- Match funding from the public sector
- New sources of grant funding from public bodies
- Community Infrastructure Levy
- Partnership with commercial operators

Delivery strategy

Aims of the Strategy

Northampton is already having difficulty in achieving its adopted housing and employment targets, so will need support in order to deliver these within the plan period. This will need to include the provision of upfront infrastructure, freedoms relating to CIL, Business Rates and development funding, and land value capture mechanisms. Leading up to 2029 these improvements will improve connectivity into and across Northampton, and to other towns, meaning that residents in the areas around Northampton will have easier access to jobs in Northampton and beyond within the Growth Corridor. If these improvements can be delivered then the period 2029-50 offers the opportunity to deliver more growth.

To deliver this, the strategy will aim to;

Improve transport connectivity

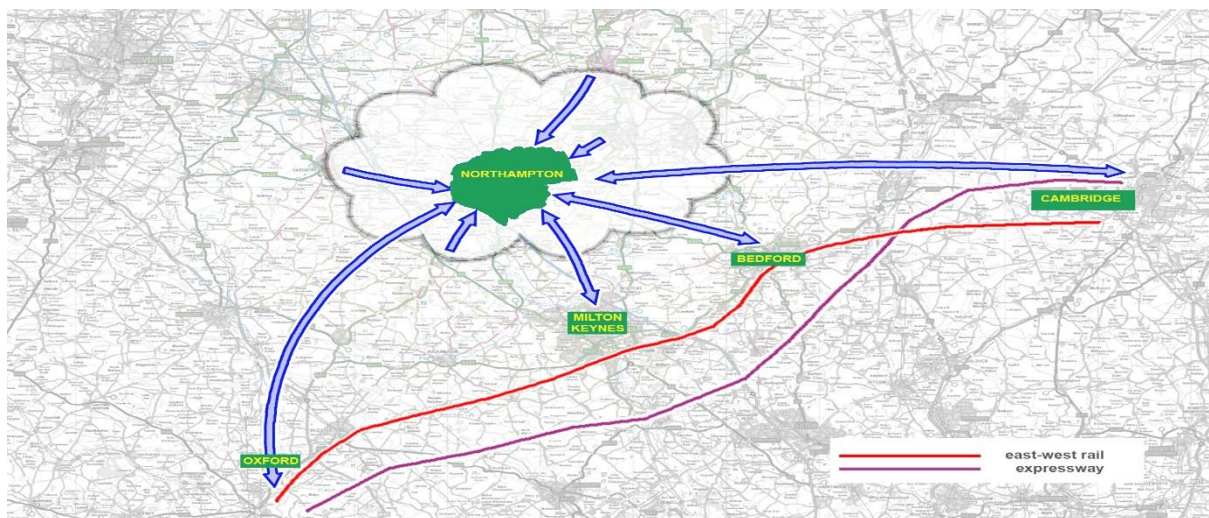
Develop an accessible, mixed use town centre

Deliver infrastructure improvements early, including technological infrastructure

Deliver a comprehensive transport strategy

Support growth in neighbouring areas

Support employment growth



The starting point will be the Town Transport Strategy. Whilst it is not yet four years since this was published in December 2013, the time taken to develop, draft, consult, revise and adopt the strategy means that it is several more years longer since it was first conceived.

As variously related above, some key features have changed:

- the Joint Core Strategy was extended to 2029 with additional development sites added or extended and the overall quantum of development increased

- the designation of the Northampton Waterside Enterprise Zone and the relocation of the University of Northampton to a new riverside campus
- Sustainable Urban extensions coming forward more slowly than anticipated due to market conditions
- changes in the availability of funding

The result is that delivery of the plan has been somewhat slower than anticipated, but also that initial priorities have been different to those anticipated. However, the main aims of the Plan remain the same and can be incorporated into the planned strategy.

Highway Strategy

Much of the initial focus will be on delivery highway schemes that open up development sites, including

- The Northampton Waterside Enterprise Zone access scheme (LEP and Pinch Point Funding) has opened up several sites in the early phases of the development – Castle Station, Innovation Centre, new retail opportunity as well as relieving congestion and creating capacity for further growth. This scheme requires further investment to achieve its full impact.
- Wootton Hall Park junction improvement (Growth Deal and NCC/PCC funding) has facilitated future development of a site owned jointly by NCC and the PCC in the south of the town.

Pinch-point funding was used for the first phase of the A43 works north of Northampton – the widening of Round Spinney roundabout. Growth Deal funding, along with the County Council's innovative Revolving Infrastructure Fund is now being used to deliver the first two phases of A43 dualling northwards which will open up the Northampton North Sustainable Urban Extension. A bid to extend this dualling to the Holcot/Sywell roundabout, potentially facilitating further employment development beyond that currently in the plan, were submitted as part of the most recent Local growth Deal, but despite scoring very well in evaluation, could not be funded within the SEMLEP allocation. This scheme therefore requires future funding.

Local Growth Deal funding was secured earlier this year towards construction of the North West Relief Road, which together with funding from Section 106 and CIL and direct construction of a first phase directly by the developer at Dallington Grange should both facilitate that development and unlock constraints to further development at Northampton West and Buckton Fields. This scheme will require future funding.

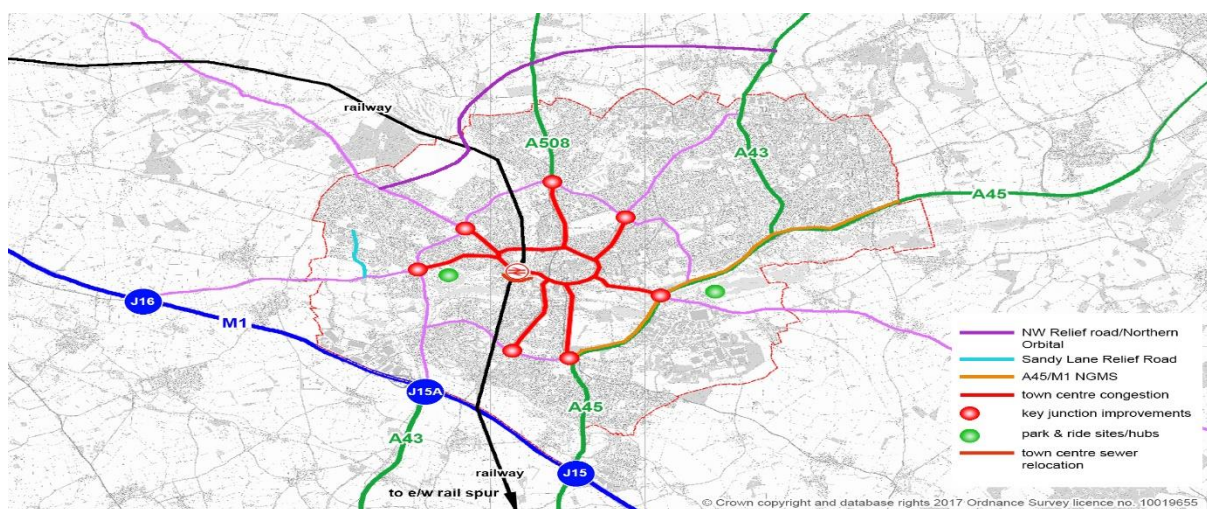
The completion of Sandy Lane Relief Road forms part of the Norwood Farm development (across the SNC boundary) and while the expectation is that this will be largely a developer funded scheme, it is currently (mid-August 2017) anticipated that a marginal viability Housing Infrastructure Fund bid to facilitate early delivery of this road is likely.

The extension of the Joint Core Strategy period to 2029, and the associated addition at Main Modifications of further development to the north and west of Northampton placed additional demands on the highway network. This led to a revival of proposals for the Northern Orbital Route, which had been considered as part of earlier versions of the Joint Core Strategy that envisaged a similar level of development to the adopted plan. While seen as essential infrastructure to support the level of development in the current Joint Core Strategy, the Northern Orbital Route would also offer scope to accommodate additional growth beyond that already identified in the plan. Unlike many of the County Council's major road schemes, which have been developed over many years, the Northern Orbital Route is 'new'. The proposals have recently (June – August 2017) been through a second round of public consultation, and while the constraints are challenging, it is anticipated that a decision on a preferred route will be taken by Cabinet in November.

The A45/M1 Northampton Growth Management Scheme (a joint project between Highways England, NCC, NBC, DDC and SNC) to ultimately upgrade seven junctions between the strategic and local road networks is to be funded from developer contributions, with a bid submitted for Highways England's Growth and Housing Fund to accelerate delivery. While early phases have been complicated by planning appeals for associated developments, and overlap between the scheme and conditioned (S278) works, it is expected that work on the Queen Eleanor junction will begin early in 2018.

A National Productivity Infrastructure Fund bid for widening of Cliftonville has been submitted, and if successful this scheme would be delivered in 2018/19. These works formed part of the highway strategy for the Town Centre, and have been prioritised to meet the demands which will be placed on the network by the relocation of the University.

Other junction works remain within the strategy to be delivered at a future date as developer or other funding becomes available.



Public Transport Strategy

A new town centre bus interchange and a new rail station building have been successfully delivered.

Bus priority works on the Weedon, Kingsthorpe and Kettering Road corridors form part of the Smart Corridors scheme being delivered by a combination of Local Growth Deal and Section 106 funding. Works on the Weedon Road corridor are now complete, and have reduced bus journey times. Work to an initial junction on the Kingsthorpe corridor is being undertaken during the 2017 summer holiday period. Further work on the Kingsthorpe and Kettering Road corridors will then need to await triggers for Section 106 funding, but it is hoped to resume delivery in 2019.

Northampton's urban bus network is basically a commercial operation, with subsidised services limited to a small number of out-of-town routes and some developer-funded services. Since the closure of First's operations in Northampton in September 2013, Stagecoach have become the sole operator on a number of corridors. The only other operators of urban services are County Lion, Meridian Bus and UnoBus, whose operations are limited to specific routes. UnoBus's urban operations are (largely) undertaken on contract to the University of Northampton, and are liable to significant change when the new University campus opens.

While head-to-head competition between First and Stagecoach was limited, and they did not operate on the same routes, there was a degree of competition between them as both served most of the radial corridors within the town. When First withdrew their routes, replacement services were provided by Stagecoach in most instances and a degree of simplification of the network has taken place. Opportunities have also been taken, in some instances, to improve linkages between residential areas and industrial parks. A number of other cross-town routes have also been reinstated.

Operating services in a congested highway network remains challenging. In general, journey times are extending and reliability is poor. It is believed that, together with a recent decline in fuel prices and car park pricing policy, this has led to a significant decline in patronage, particularly on Saturdays.

While progress of the Sustainable Urban Extensions has not yet required the provision of new bus routes, opportunities have been taken to use available section 106 funding from smaller developments and initial phases of larger ones to enhance the network.

Particularly worthy of note have been:

- The introduction of a new direct service between Northampton and Kettering via the A43. This has scope to be expanded in future to provide a more direct services across the county in place

of the current X4 (Milton Keynes – Peterborough service) which runs via Wellingborough and also to serve the Northampton North SUE.

- The extension of an existing service to provide a new link between the town centre and Wootton Fields via the Brackmills industrial estate. In due course, this will be extended to serve the Northampton South of Brackmills (Hardingstone) SUE.

The provision of radial routes will be considered and costed in order to reduce reliance on the town centre as the sole public transport hub. These routes will need to be funded through development site contributions.

The County Council launched a park & Ride scheme from one of Northampton 'Saints' RFC car parks into the town centre in early 2017. Initially focused on County Council employees, the intention in due course to open this scheme to other employees, the University and the wide public. Proposals are being considered to open a second site to the east of the town. These sites will require further development and investment.

Cycling and Walking Strategy

Alongside a number of smaller-scale walking and cycling measures, a major new cycle route 'NORBITAL' has been opened on the outskirts of the town.

The County Council and Northampton Borough Council worked together to launch the Cycle Connect bicycle hire scheme in 2013. Initially focused on nine sites, the scheme has successfully established itself and is currently undergoing a second stage expansion.

Car Parking Strategy

As part of a strategy to boost town centre retail trade, NBC have introduced free parking for up to two hours in their four multi-story car parks on Monday to Friday and all day on Saturday. Parking is free in all NBC car parks on Sundays.

Air Quality Strategy

Progress on the congestion management strategy has been made through both the highway strategy and the Smart Corridors project.

Information and Technology

The information and marketing elements of the individual strategies are increasingly being drawn together as part of Smart Move Northamptonshire. The Smart Commuter initiative, complementary to the physical Smart Corridors works, is offering the public real-time travel information to help them make more informed choices on their journeys. Cross-modal data is being collected via a number of new and existing platforms and distributed both via an on-line portal and information placed in strategic places around the town.

The County Council is currently developing proposals for how similar technologies could be rolled out to inter-urban routes, starting with the A45 corridor.

Modal Shift Target

Targets of 20% modal shift for new developments and 5% for existing areas were adopted in the Transport Strategy for Growth and carried through into the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan. The selection of these targets was backed by research undertaken for the County Council by Transport for Quality of Life which, on the basis of a review of best practice, recommended that while challenging these were achievable targets in the circumstances..

The target was modally agnostic, in that it did not define which modes trips should shift to. However, examination of the likely figures suggested that bus patronage would need to rise by some 25%, a figure in line with observed growth trajectory between 2003 and 2008.

While these targets have been adopted as County Council policy, they have been greeted with some scepticism by the wider public and many politicians. It is evident, from discussions that have ensued, that while there is widespread support for improving cycling, walking or public transport facilities, and encouraging people to use them, to promote modal shift is seen as being anti-car even though the scale of growth proposed still be more car traffic than at present with the levels of growth proposed in the county.

This suggests that in future, a differently worded policy would gain greater acceptance.

The modal shift data used in developing the policy was based on travel to work information from the 2001 census. The expectation was that future census information would be able to be used for monitoring purposes. Unfortunately, examination of the equivalent data from the 2011 census has shown such large variations (at the detail level) that this is not possible. For this reason, too, an alternative policy wording will be necessary.

Funding Strategy

As was recognised in the Town Transport Strategy, by the time the plan was adopted the funding regime for transport schemes was changing. Funding through the Integrated Transport Block has been significantly reduced. The system of pooled developer contributions, known as a Highway Infrastructure Strategic Tariff, which the County Council had adopted with the agreement of developers in other towns, has been rendered unlawful by the CIL regulations. In addition, due to market conditions, progress with many of the Sustainable Urban extensions has been slower than anticipated.

The current funding regime comprises a series of bidding rounds with very specific objectives, such as the Local Growth Deal, National Productivity Infrastructure Fund, Housing Infrastructure Fund, etc. The time available for bidding for this funding is relatively short, and in order to have a reasonable chance of success schemes have to be prepared with no certainty that a funding round will arise, let alone be successful.

This is at a time when the significant wider financial pressures mean that resources, both financial and human, are tight. While the County Council has been very successful in bidding for funding in recent years, particularly through the Local Growth Deal, the 'bottom drawer' of schemes that are prepared for such funding rounds is almost empty (largely due to that success) and funding to develop further schemes to a similar stage is not available.

Furthermore, the funding regime means that limited staff resource is being concentrated on bidding rather than strategy development. Overall, the result is that delivery is being driven by the availability of funding rather than a coherent plan.

Joint working is already taking place to support delivery

- Joint transport work, including co-ordinated submission of HIF bids
- Joint Planning evidence base developing since 2013 and maintained on an on-going basis
- Developer Forum, used to share information about services provided and obtain market information
- SEMLEP
- Northampton Growth Management Scheme MoU
- Joint Planning Unit which co-ordinates the monitoring of the implementation of the Joint Core Strategy and the commissioning of the shared evidence base
- Green Infrastructure Plan

Outcomes

While the further physical expansion of Northampton would most obviously require further orbital transport infrastructure, good radial connections can be just as important. Given the constraints of

the existing developed urban area, this can be more difficult to provide, but of particular importance for public transport, walking and cycling.

By the end of the current Joint Core Strategy period it is expected that Northampton will have an Outer Ring Road to add to the existing Inner Ring Road and a partly-formed Middle Ring Road (although this road is of very variable standard).

This makes possible the following vision for how the town's internal transport network would develop to 2050:

Periurban/Rural Area

Urban Extensions and rural area beyond the town. Focus on high quality radial A roads with strong inter-urban bus links to surrounding towns and discouraging traffic from rat running through villages.

Outer Ring Road

High quality dual or single carriageway road. No direct frontage access. Park and ride sites at key locations close to junctions with radial routes.

Suburban Area

Selective enhancement of junctions at key locations to access critical out of centre destinations. Focus on bus priority at pinch points for town centre access. Strong off-road or back-street cycle facilities along desire line. Upgrading of pedestrian permeability for shorter trips.

Middle Ring Road

Mixed standard of routes, partly overlapping outer ring road. Standard largely as now with limited upgrade. Possible re-prioritisation of movement at junctions towards radial journeys, particularly for public transport and cyclists. Good permeability across route for pedestrians.

Inner Urban Area

Radial routes focussed on good access by bus and cycling to town centre. Good pedestrian permeability across the area for short trips. Attractive pedestrian environment on radials approaching town centre. Strong traffic calming in residential streets to discourage rat-running.

Inner Ring Road

Overall standard now, as but junctions reprioritised for movements in and own of town centre and with priority to buses, cyclists and pedestrians. Pedestrian permeability as close as possible to desire lines. 'Through' movements around the ring more likely to be stop-start. Increasingly active street frontage.

Town Centre Core

Through traffic discouraged except for access to car parks, limited access to properties (base on cells) and short-term on-street parking, particularly for disabled. Strong priority for public transport, cyclists and pedestrians.

To achieve this the following outline strategy for the period from 2030 to 2050 might be appropriate:

- New roads within the area focused on opening up further expansion of the town.
- Junction improvements focused on reprioritising to favour public transport, pedestrians and cyclists. Significant lengths of bus and cycle lane along inner sections of radials where road space permits.
- More frequent bus services on town and inter-urban routes with longer hours of operation and low or zero emission vehicles.
- Park and ride facilities easily accessible from all radial routes into town. Services used for both out of town travellers into town, and for those within the town to access services to adjoining towns.
- Significant upgrading of cycling facilities – a combination of on-road and off-road measures where these can be quicker and more direct.
- Walking journeys are easier to make.
- Air quality issues have been tackled and not recurred.
- Technology effectively harnessed to provide useful information, which demonstrates that for many journeys the car is not the quickest option.

Also, in the wider sphere:

- Good quality roads to surrounding towns within and outside the county and further afield. HGVs using this roads except for access. All having regular inter-bus links between towns and parallel cycling facilities.
- Faster rail services to both London and Birmingham, and new services/connections to further afield using capacity freed up by HS2.
- An enhanced network of long distance coach services for those destinations not reachable by rail.

What support is needed?

Upfront funding sources

Land value capture mechanisms

Public transport infrastructure investment funding

Front load CIL and remove pooling restrictions

Requiring utility providers to engage early on in the development process

Asks

Review of all funding sources available, including being given 'Growth Corridor' priority when bidding for national funding sources

Investigate land value capture mechanisms

Public transport infrastructure investment funding

Requiring infrastructure providers to engage early on in the development process

Review CIL regulations

Locally set planning application fees

Full control of Business rate Retention

Extension of Business Rate Relief after 2018

Flexibility and freedoms to implement these

Future opportunities to deliver

The current Joint Core Strategy contains proposals for development to 2029. There is no reason to believe that Northampton will not continue to grow and develop beyond that period, as it has done consistently for so many years.

Apart from those areas that are flood land or designated green space, the administrative area of Northampton Borough Council is almost entirely fully developed or proposed for development in the Joint Core Strategy. Indeed, a number of the proposals for Sustainable Urban Extensions in the current JCS are on land within Daventry and South Northamptonshire Districts.

While there will always be some opportunities for development within the existing urban area, once the existing large brownfield areas have been developed, it is likely that the majority of future development allocations will need to come by expanding the urban area into the surrounding districts. Politically, and in terms of public acceptability, this will pose a challenge, not least because it is ultimately likely to see some currently separate villages incorporated into the urban growth.

During the preparation of the Joint Core Strategy a number of different possible directions of growth were considered, and a large number of sites were put forward by developers or landowners as possible development opportunities in the Strategy Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessments and at the Joint Core Strategy examination. While having no basis in County Council or Borough Council policy, this does give some clues as to the challenges that would be faced, both in land-use and transport planning terms, in bringing forward further development in the future.

In this context, increased housing growth post 2029 is possible, providing the requisite infrastructure is in place early. The evolution of a transport strategy is therefore essential to secure this.

The Infrastructure requirements will depend on the potential sites for development. For example, if development were to take place to the south east of Northampton, a new junction 14a on the M1 and a link road to the A428 and A45 beyond could be considered.

Conclusions

Northampton can contribute towards meeting the Growth Corridors aims, but only in the longer term, and if early investment is made in infrastructure to facilitate existing planned levels of growth. The support of the Government will be key to delivering this.

It can also operate as the Northern 'gateway' into the Corridor, potentially attracting skilled workers and investment into the Corridor through enhanced transport infrastructure and improved journey times.

The development of a Transport Strategy is key to achieving this, and the support of the Government is sought to resource and commence work on this as soon as possible, along with other freedoms to fund investment.