POLICY CONTEXT AND KEY DRIVERS

2.1 POLICY CONTEXT
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2.0 POLICY CONTEXT AND KEY DRIVERS

2.1 POLICY CONTEXT

West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy, 2014 (WNJCS)

The WNJCS sets out the long-term vision and objectives for the whole of the area covered by Daventry District, Northampton Borough and South Northamptonshire Councils for the plan period up to 2029, including strategic policies for steering and shaping development.

It identifies specific locations for strategic new housing and employment, changes to transport infrastructure and other supporting community facilities. It recognises the role of the natural environment, providing strategic policies to protect and enhance existing provision and create new provision. The SDF is consistent with the strategic policy framework provided in the WNJCS.

Eight SUE’s are identified within the JCS ‘Northampton Related Development Area boundary’. The study area for the Strategic Development Framework is the SUE’s concentrated and located to the western edge of Northampton; Northampton Norwood Farm/Upton Lodge (N9a) and Northampton West (N4). Northampton Upton Park (N9) (planning consent granted for 1000 houses in 2014) is considered to be an important neighbouring development area in terms of transport, green infrastructure and wider movement and is therefore included in the study area boundary to be consistent with the presentation of SUE sites in the JCS (WNJCS, page 328 and 331).

Whilst the remaining SUE’s have been mapped and considered to assess the relationship with the wider context, the scope of the study is to focus on development of the western edge of Northampton therefore the remaining SUE’s are beyond the remit of this study therefore not included in this SDF.

Individual policies are as follows:

Policy N9a: Northampton Norwood Farm / Upton Lodge SUE

The development of Norwood Farm and Upon Lodge SUE will provide a significant component and contribution to housing growth in Northampton, a new Country Park and respect for the setting of the village of Harpole and a major transport infrastructure link to the west of the town (the Sandy Lane Relief Road). Key provisions in the policy and accompanying text include:

- has an important role to play in linking the emerging communities to the north of the A4500 and the new communities of Upton and to also open up connectivity through the site and to the wider South West District;
- requires structural green space and landscaping to be incorporated + positive enhancement of biodiversity within the area of the SUE (structural landscaping, open space and creation of habitat corridors);
• will include protection of the village of Harpole’s countryside setting + delivery of a new Country Park (as a buffer) between the urban area and the open countryside + adjoining the village of Harpole;

• provides essential recreational opportunities for new and existing communities;

• delivery of the Sandy Lane Relief Road (Phase II) that will need to be constructed to ensure the sustainable development of the SUE;

• provide for two primary schools + local retail and community facilities consistent with a development of this size.

Policy N4: Northampton West SUE

The Northampton West SUE will provide significant housing growth adjoining the existing neighbourhoods of Duston/ New Duston to the east, within close proximity to the villages of Upper and Lower Harlestone + open countryside to the west of Northampton. Key provisions in the policy and accompanying text include:

• (with the majority of this SUE contained within the lower parts of the topography), development must preserve key views towards open countryside and the St. Crispin’s tower;

• provide structural green space, wildlife corridors and sensitive treatment of the rural/built edge to the west;

• provide a financial contribution for North-west bypass and Kingsthorpe corridor (A508) (as identified in Policy N4).

• provide for one primary school, local retail, healthcare + community facilities consistent with development of this size;

• sports and recreation provision.

Policy N9: Northampton Upton Park SUE

The Upton Park SUE has been allocated (currently with outline permission) for the provision of 1,000 new homes and associated education and community facilities and will play an important role in connecting the existing community of Upton with the wider context and form a new urban/built edge to Upton Country Park. It adjoins the historic Upton Hall parkland and will provide important green links through the development and require sympathetic treatment of development at the Country Park edge.

Northampton Upton Park was granted outline permission in 2015. Future development provides an important context and reference for the development of N9a and N4. It is included in the SDF text and graphics for context only.
WNJCS (2014): Northampton related development areas (SDF study area)
Policy N9a: NORTHAMPTON NORWOOD FARM/ UPTON LODGE SUE
- In the region of 3,500 dwellings + 2 x primary schools;
- Local centre + retail + health care + community + employment opportunities;
- Sandy lane relief road phase 2 + integrated transport network;
- Structural greenspace + wildlife corridors + country park;
- Open space and recreation provision.

Policy N4: NORTHAMPTON WEST SUE
- In the region of 2,550 dwellings + 1 x primary school;
- A local centre + retail facilities + health + community;
- Highways works + contribution to NW bypass and the Kingsthorpe corridor (A508);
- Integrated transport network;
- Structural greenspace and wildlife corridors;
- Sport and recreation provision.

Policy N9: NORTHAMPTON UPTON PARK SUE
- In the region of 1,000 dwellings + primary school;
- Local centre + community facilities;
- Integrated transport network;
- Structural GI + wildlife corridors.

*The policy requirements listed above are taken directly from the policies in the JCS. However, through consultation with NCC as education authority, it is apparent that there is a need to provide a second primary school within the Northampton West SUE (Policy N4). Furthermore there is evidence that an additional secondary school will be required post-2020 to the west of Northampton. The SDF has identified a potential site which could address this need as part of the Norwood Farm / Upton Lodge SUE (Policy N9A).*
2.0 POLICY CONTEXT AND KEY DRIVERS

2.2

NORTHAMPTON LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY & GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STUDY 2009 (NLSGIS)

The NLSGIS provides a strong evidence base for the WNJCS which contributed to “the identification of an optimal green infrastructure strategy for Northampton as it grows to include 40,000 new homes … and to assist public sector agencies involved in growth decisions in their understanding of the relative sensitivity of the areas surrounding the town to proposals for growth” (NLGIS, Page 6).

The study identifies and maps the natural and cultural resources of the area and investigates how they contribute to the setting and character of Northampton (Study Area 5 for West Northamptonshire SUE’s). The study is presented as five themes: (i) Natural Systems (ii) Cultural Heritage and Land-Use Systems (iii) Townscape and Visual Character (iv) Environmental Character Assessment and (v) Strategic Green Infrastructure.

The (NLSGIS) has been reviewed as key evidence to inform the SDF and used as a resource to:

• identify and map the key natural, built and cultural assets in the area;
• identify the strategic impact and areas of sensitivity in relation to new development (as per the JCS allocations);
• provide an understanding of how development should respond positively to both the opportunities and constraints identified;
• determine the location, scale and type of development that may be appropriate across the West Northampton area; and
• integrate the GI objectives and recommendations as a key driver within the SDF.

The Northampton Green Infrastructure Plan 2015 (Draft) provides further strategic and local level detail and recommendations based upon the adopted NLSGIS. Whilst it is not adopted policy, the NGIP has been a useful resource for the development of the SDF in relation to identification of:

(1) Green Infrastructure links (associated with planned development)
(2) Strategic Green Infrastructure Corridors (Sustainable Movement Network aided by GI)
(3) Open Space, recreation + non-designated Cultural Heritage Assets

The presentation and mapping of key information (derived from both studies) which have informed the development of the SDF can be found in Section 3.0 Site Analysis.
‘Neighbourhood Plans’ have been agreed at a referendum and made (brought into legal force) by the local planning authority are part of the statutory development plan.

**Duston Neighbourhood Plan** was made on 14 December 2015 and is therefore part of the development plan. The Neighbourhood Plan Vision states: “**By 2029, we will have made Duston to be an even better place to live, with a stronger sense of village identity and community spirit. Duston will have adapted to the extensive development to the west of Northampton and will have helped to shape and influence the provision of better transport facilities (for motorists, pedestrians and cyclists), to allow safe and sustainable journeys to work, school, shopping and leisure. The character of built up areas will be respected and enhanced. Open spaces will have been protected and enhanced with a focus on play, landscape value and nature conservation.**”

The key drivers and aspirations identified through various pre-consultation exercises and emerging Neighbourhood Plan (Duston) include:

- Retain the village identity and community spirit (Duston and Harpole);
- Support and sustain local transport trips/network and deliver Sandy Lane Relief Road (Phase 2);
- Protect open space, landscape and nature conservation in the locality;
- Provide a country park/significant open space buffer located to the East of Harpole village; and
- Development edge not to encroach or be visually intrusive to the western edge of new development.

Neighbourhood Plan Areas have also been designated for Harlestone, Harpole and Kislingbury, but to date, none of these communities have reached the formal stage of pre-submission consultation on a draft plan.
2.4 KEY DRIVERS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Key Drivers for the SDF have been identified from the policy context review and assessment of the consultation responses/feedback from stakeholders driving the early stages of the SDF/design process. These are:

- JCS policy requirements (delivery of required development quantum’s and associated uses for this scale of development in accordance with JCS policy allocation);
- Delivery of homes and the creation of communities with land-use disposition that supports a well-connected and sustainable mix of uses and facilities that promotes sustainable movement patterns;
- Support the Strategic Green Infrastructure Network: The integration of existing, enhanced and new GI infrastructure links and green corridors through the development (east-west and north-south);
- A New Country Park: significant informal open space within a natural/rural setting via a new Country Park located between Harpole Village and the edge of new development;
- A positive response to Natural Landscape and topography:
  › integrate the development within its natural, historic landscape setting;
  › determine the appropriate ‘rural’ edge response and location of edge development; and
  › protect the visual amenity and character of surrounding villages/role of existing settlements.
  › Recognise the significance and visual sensitivity of the 115m contour line (south of Roman Road).
- Deliver key transport infrastructure and connections: provision for the delivery of the Sandy Lane Relief Road, key transport infrastructure and a well-integrated network of streets connecting new and existing communities; and
- Provide for a clear hierarchy of Centres with community infrastructure provision: the accessible location, co-location and design of key anchors and destinations (including recreation, community and education facilities and neighbourhood centres).
SITE ANALYSIS

3.0

3.1 SITE ASSESSMENT:
- LANDSCAPE, BIODIVERSITY + HERITAGE
- MOVEMENT + CONNECTIVITY
- EXISTING SERVICES + FACILITIES

3.2 OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS
3.1 SITE ASSESSMENT

Existing physical site information together with a review and analysis of the sites existing character and context (from both desk-based study and field analysis) has been combined to provide an overview of the sites opportunities and constraints. The information and analysis has been grouped as follows:

- Landscape, Biodiversity + Heritage
- Movement + Connectivity
- Existing Services + Facilities

Key information from site assessment and analysis is presented in Figures 3, 4 and 5.
Topography and Land form

The north/north-west of Northampton comprises an area identified as the ‘Central Northamptonshire Plateaus and Valleys’ and ‘West Northamptonshire Uplands’ which comprises a rolling ironstone valley, slopes and undulating hills (NLSGIS, 2009). The West Northampton SUE’s are located within these plateaus and valleys, where the land form rises from its shallow point along the River Nene Valley (Upton Valley Country Park) northwards towards Harlestone village and Harlestone Firs.

Northampton is located at the confluence of the River Nene and its tributary the Brampton Nene, which flows south into the Nene from Pitsford Reservoir. The Nene runs east-west through the town. Significant watercourses within proximity to the West Northampton SUE’s include the River Nene to the south of the area south of the Weedon Road/A45 and Dallington Brook which runs through the centre of Northampton West site.

Key Landscape Character

The landscape setting of Northampton generally sits in a ‘bowl’, encircled by higher land which forms ridges and viewpoints from the rural hinterland, which creates a unique setting and landscape context for Northampton and its surrounding villages. The SUE sites have a very distinctive rolling landform with the steepest land located around Harpole and Harlestone where a prominent ridgeline north of Harpole village sits at 115m (AOD).

The higher points of the area (around Harpole) create a strong visual relationship with their landscape setting and landmarks such as the Express lift tower and St Crispin’s Hospital (tower). The area around Harlestone village is however less visually prominent and self-contained. Further north, land to the east of Harlestone Firs and Chapel Brampton has a distinctive rolling form which is important to the setting of Northampton both in views towards the town from the north and in views northwards out of the town from the Brampton Valley area. There are also some heavily wooded areas in West Northampton, notably Harlestone Firs and tree copse/tree belts to the edges of the Northampton West SUE allocation.

Biodiversity

The availability of biodiversity checklists, ecological surveys and data was limited at the time of the SDF production. Biodiversity is however a key aspect of sustainable development and should be assessed and considered at the early stages of planning and master-planning. Recognising biodiversity features early on also offers the best chance of incorporating them into the development design.
Archaeology + Heritage

Designated and non-designated heritage sites have an important role to play in understanding the history and contributing to the character and sense of place of any particular area. These are considered ‘assets’ which provide important opportunities to create special character and unique sense of place within the context of SUE’s/new development.

These include conservation areas and listed buildings are generally located on the edge of the SUE’s concentrated in and around the villages of Kislingbury, Harpole, Harlestone, Dallington, Duston, south of Berrywood Road and the Express Lift Tower. The majority are examples of the local vernacular tradition of building in locally quarried ironstone. Other notable landmarks/townscape elements are more localised and include the towers of village churches (often built in traditional ironstone) which aid local distinctiveness and aid orientation.

There are examples of ‘ridge and furrow’ around Harlestone and Harpole and also several historic routes, including routes of Turnpike Roads (A4500; A428; B5199) and a possible route of Roman Road (Nobottle Road) which runs through the centre of the SUE allocations. Registered Parks/Garden include Althorpe Park Estate (Grade II*) and a scheduled monument located at Harpole Roma Villa (north Harpole village).
Landscape, Biodiversity & Heritage

KEY
- SDF Areas
- Existing Urban Area
- 115m Contour Line
- Water Body/Watercourse
- Woodland
- Local Wildlife Site
- Country Park/Local Nature Reserve
- Non-Designated Park/Garden
- Conservation Area
- Scheduled Monument
- Roman Road
- Ridge & Furrow
- Landmark (St Crispins Tower)
- Regionally Important Geological Site (RIGS)
- Existing Barn/Farmsteads (stone)
3.0 SITE ANALYSIS

> MOVEMENT + CONNECTIVITY

**Major Roads + Primary Routes**

Northampton is well served by major transport infrastructure, including the M1 which runs to the southwest edge of Northampton (Junctions 15 and 15a of the M1 serving Northampton). The West Northampton SUE’s are located between and can be accessed via major transport corridors, the A4500 (Weedon Road), the A428 (Harlestone Road), the Cross Valley link road and the partially constructed Sandy Lane Relief Road (SLRR). The SLRR (northern section, partially complete) provides vehicular access from Harlestone Road/Nobottle Road to the north of the area and into Duston.

The SLRR link will need to be constructed to provide full access and integration with Northampton West, Norwood Farm and Upton Lodge SUE’s. There are currently two options that have been explored throughout the SDF process: (a) the existing consented alignment (b) a proposed re-alignment to the west of the existing Sandy Lane. Both options have been explored throughout the design process to determine the optimum location and design solution (see options a+b: page 20).

**Local/rural Road Network**

The area is also served by a network of local roads and lanes, which connect the surrounding villages of Harpole and Harlestone with Duston and the wider town centre. This includes Larkhall Lane, Sandy Lane, Port Road and Berrywood Road which have limited capacity for additional traffic, placing further emphasis on the completion of the SLRR and new/enhanced road network to serve new development.

**Footpaths + Public Rights of Way**

Northampton and its surrounding area is well served by Sustainable Routeways including Byways, Bridleways, Footpaths and other cycle routes. The ‘Sustrans Regional Cycle’ route passes north of the SUE’s which runs north-south through Northampton, via the Brampton Valley Way - town centre - River Nene and southwards. Walking Routes/ Country Walks in the area include the Nene Way, the Brampton Valley Way and the Midshires Way. County Cycle Route link Kislingbury with Rothersthorpe and Harpole.

**Public Transport + Walkability**

Public transport routes are located and serve the existing urban area with three regular services connecting Harelstone, Harlestone Road, Duston, Harpole and St. Cripsins with the wider area and the town centre. Pedestrian walking distances have been mapped at 800m (approximately 10 minutes walking distance) from existing village and/or local centres, to understand accessibility for pedestrians to transport facilities and key services within the local area. Manual for Streets states that ‘walkable neighbourhoods are typically characterised by having a range of facilities within 10 minutes (up to 800m metres) walking distance of residential areas which residents by comfortably access by foot’ and ‘is a fundamental component to creating sustainable developments with a sense of place’ (Manual for Streets, 2007; Northamptonshire Place and Movement Guide; CABE and NCC, 2008). All local routes and public transport networks will need to be integrated and enhanced (where possible) as part of the SDF.
Movement & Connectivity

KEY
- SDF Areas
- Existing Urban Area
- Motorway
- Watercourses
- ● 115m Contour
- — North-West Relief Road (To be constructed)
- − North-West Relief Road (Completed)
- — Sandy Lane Relief Road (SLRR) - (Completed)
- − Sandy Lane Relief Road (SLRR) - (To be constructed)
- — Sandy Lane Relief Road (SLRR) North
- Existing Road Network
- — Public Transport Route (Existing)
- — Footpaths/Right of Way
- — Bridleway/Cycleway
- Railway Line (Northampton Loop)
- 800m Walking Distance (from existing villages/local centre)
3.0 SITE ANALYSIS

EXISTING SERVICES + FACILITIES

Existing facilities and services have been identified and mapped to determine the spatial portrait of existing provision and how this relates in location and movement terms to the existing and proposed communities within the SUE areas (SDF study area).

Education

There are a number of existing primary schools in the surrounding villages and urban areas and a secondary school located in the heart of Duston. These are located along key transport routes and within close proximity to local centres and employment.

New housing development will bring with it opportunities for new schools and investment in existing schools therefore the SDF will explore the optimum location for new primary school provision within the new development areas. Policy requirements for primary school provision is set out in the WNJCS, 2014 (page 11).

Consultation with Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) as part of the SDF process also identified ‘a need for additional primary and secondary educational provision to that set out in the JCS policy’, as follows:

• N4 (Northampton West) – increase size to provide 1 x 3FE-4FE primary school
• N4 (Northampton West) – to the south of Roman Road – additional 1 x 2FE-3FE primary school
• N (9A) Secondary School

The optimum location for educational facilities has been explored as part of the SDF consultation and design process. The SDF accommodates the majority of the additional educational facilities outlined by NCC, where agreement has been made with SDF consultees and authorities. This includes an increase to a 4FE primary school (N4) and provision made for a secondary school (N9a). The additional school N4 (south of Roman Road) has not been incorporated as a part of the SDF.

Local centres/community

There are a number of well established, vibrant local centres located primarily within the heart of the surrounding villages and often supported by other community uses, educational facilities.

Open space

The area is rich in existing formal and informal parks, recreational facilities and open space. Strategic green/open space links Upton Valley Country Park to the south with open countryside and Harlestone Firs to the north-west of the SUE locations and existing urban area. The area also contains significant areas of woodland, including Berrywood which provides an important green/recreational resource for Duston and St. Cripsins communities. The wider area also contains attractive local parks and open space (as indicated on the plan) and formal sports pitches to the east of Harpole village.

The SDF will map and address the provision of open space (formal, informal and sports provision) from its contribution to the wider strategic Green infrastructure strategy and connections serving the western part of Northampton and local open space, sports and recreational resources for existing and new communities.
3.0 Site Analysis

FIGURE 5: Existing Services & Facilities

KEY
- SDF Areas
- Existing Urban Area
- Woodland
- Watercourses
- 115m Contour
- Primary School
- Secondary School
- Park or Green Space (Under 20 Ha)
- Country Park/Local Nature Reserve
- Existing Local Centre
- Key Movement
- 800m Walking Distance (from existing village/local centre)

West Northampton: Strategic Development Framework
The review and evaluation of key policy and development drivers together with site assessment and context analysis has provided key information from which to draw and present opportunities and constraints. This provides a presentation of site and contextual information as conclusions from early analysis and consultation, and provides the foundation for concept development which are utilised to inform and structure the SDF development proposal (presented in Section 4.0).

Opportunities

- Provision of sustainable development supported by amenity/green space, community facilities and infrastructure;
- The completion of the SLLR + link to the North West Relief Road with a new positive development edge to northamton west;
- Provision of a strong landscape framework that utilises existing vegetation and landscape features on site;
- Provision of a number of access points to serve the proposed development whilst connecting with the existing movement network;
- Provision of a network of green streets + pedestrian routes through the site, incorporating the existing pedestrian network;
- The retention of existing vegetation (hedgerows + woodland) within the development area (where practicable);
- Incorporate rising topography of the landform - particularly towards the northern section of N9a and sensitive treatment/ response to the 115m contour line;
- The retention and integration of the existing farm/stone buildings within the development framework;
- Provision of new educational facilities to serve both the existing and new community;
- Provision of mixed use areas/ community hubs at key locations to serve the needs of the new and existing community;
- Provision of a network of public open spaces/ green infrastructure which complements the existing green links as well as providing for the needs of the new community.