

PREPARATION OF THE ROCHFORD CORE STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report explains the background to the preparation of the Rochford Core Strategy and seeks initial views on the long-term spatial vision and the strategic policies required to deliver that vision.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The 'Core Strategy' is a central part of the local development framework and is intended to set out the key elements of the planning framework for the area. The timetable for the preparation of the Rochford Core Strategy envisages final adoption in 2008, with initial public participation in Autumn this year and formal public consultation in spring 2007.
- 2.2 The Core Strategy will comprise a set of strategic policies that will be central to delivering the spatial vision and objectives of the Local Planning Authority and its partners. The policies will guide the broad patterns of development and constraint across the district. It should be borne in mind that the Core Strategy must be in conformity with the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) (East of England Plan) and it is expected that the final version of the RSS will be published in 2007.
- 2.3 The Core Strategy can also include some generic development control policies and decisions will be required about whether to include such policies in the Core Strategy or in a separate Development Control Policies Development Plan document (DPD). In practise it is likely that some development control policies will be included in the Core Strategy with others better placed in a specific Development Control Policy DPD.
- 2.4 Local Development Documents (LDDs), including the Core Strategy, must demonstrate how they give spatial expression to the Community Strategy and have regard to the Corporate Plan and other strategies and plans in which the Authority is involved. This will particularly include the emerging Essex Local Area Agreement (LAA).
- 2.5 It should be emphasised that this report is only a starting point in the preparation of the information that will be required to carry out initial informal community consultation, the first stage in the plan preparation process. The requirements of consultation are explained in more detail later in the report.

3 THE CORE STRATEGY

- 3.1 The main features of the Core Strategy are as follows:-
- to apply the principles of the RSS and give spatial expression to the Community Strategy;

- to define a spatial vision to 2021 and provide guidance on a broad locational/distributional strategy for spatial change;
 - set out spatial objectives and translate these into non-site specific policies;
 - ensure that relevant stakeholders are signed up to their elements of the Core Strategy;
 - provide generic development control policies;
 - ensure that all policies have output targets and indicators;
 - a key diagram to illustrate the key spatial features of the strategy.
- 3.2 It is important to bear in mind that the Core Strategy is a strategic level document; it is not a replacement local plan and therefore it is essential to ensure the Core Strategy does not include too many initiatives and objectives. The Core Strategy (and other LDDs) must refer to non-land-use strategies and indicate how national policies will be applied locally, without duplicating those national policies.
- 3.3 Good practice advises planning authorities to follow a logical process in preparing the Core Strategy as follows:
- (a) prepare a spatial portrait of the district;
 - (b) identify the issues arising from the portrait that need to be addressed in the LDF;
 - (c) prepare a spatial vision for the next 15 years;
 - (d) set out spatial objectives;
 - (e) prepare spatial policies that derive from the objectives.
- 3.4 In giving initial consideration to the contents of the Core Strategy, Members should also be aware of the visioning work that took place around the budget process and the identification of key priorities and actions that were identified at the away days in November and January. These were incorporated within Appendix B of the report on the budget strategy presented to Full Council in January. Whilst many of the items listed do not have planning implications, some do and, therefore, that Appendix is reproduced as part of this report for Members' reference (Appendix 1)

Spatial Vision

- 3.5 The spatial vision is intended to articulate a sense of local identity and understand how the district will have changed at the end of the plan period in terms of physical, economic, social and environmental terms. The vision must reflect sustainable development principles and be clear about the outcomes that are sought.

Spatial Objectives

- 3.6 These are intended to demonstrate how the strategy contributes to the outcomes outlined in the spatial vision. Examples of spatial objectives could include:
- meeting the housing needs of the district (not site specific);
 - providing affordable housing;
 - improving public transport accessibility;
 - promoting rural diversification;
 - improving environmental quality;
 - promoting high quality design and environmental performance in new development;
 - enhancing biodiversity.

4 CONSULTATION ARRANGEMENTS

- 4.1 The development plan regulations (Regulation 25) require authorities to ensure plans are genuinely front-loaded by formally involving communities in the development plan issues and alternative options. The Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out the arrangements for consultation and community engagement.
- 4.2 The detailed mix of engagement techniques is set out in the SCI, but a decision will need to be taken about which of those methods to use for consultation in respect of each DPD, including the Core Strategy.

5 WAY FORWARD

- 5.1 The Council must prepare for community consultation under the provisions of Regulation 25. Work is now underway to prepare a baseline audit of the district's assets, which will provide a starting point to enable the sustainability of the plans, policies and proposals to be tested and measured over time.

5.2 This report provides the starting point for Members to consider:

- (a) matters to be covered in the spatial portrait of the district;
- (b) the spatial vision and what this might include;
- (c) the spatial objectives that are most appropriate to the district.

5.3 In order to assist initial thoughts on these matters, extracts from a fictional core strategy are attached as Appendix 2 to this report. The extracts provide a flavour of some of the issues that might be considered.

5.4 Officers have also given some thought to spatial objectives that might be relevant/appropriate to the district. These are set out below, but it should be noted this is not intended to be a comprehensive list.

- 1. The requirement to accommodate future growth identified in the East of England Plan.
- 2. A percentage of the new housing allocation to be provided within the settlements of or the general location identified on the key diagram.
- 3. Expansion of the employment base across the following sectors.....
- 4. Diversify the district's economy into leisure and tourism to reflect its role as part of the Thames Gateway South Essex cultural and intellectual hub.
- 5. Promote the vitality and viability of the district's town centres (or centres to be specified).
- 6. Maintain a Green Belt.
- 7. Promote good design and environmental performance of new buildings.
- 8. Ensure a percentage of all new dwellings are affordable (note: RSS requires a minimum of 30%, of total housing supply).
- 9. Promote rural exceptions – circumstances to be specified.
- 10. Safeguard the district's heritage.
- 11. Use new development to reduce the need to travel and to promote healthy lifestyles.
- 12. Develop mixed communities that are safe and have good access to services.

13. Specify the percentage of the housing allocation to be provided on previously developed land.
- 5.5 As explained, as part of the background to the preparation of options, it will be important to think about the particular characteristics that shape and define the district. This is a spatial process best carried out using maps and diagrams. Accordingly, the Committee will be provided with a set of maps and plans to use as a resource to develop initial thoughts on these matters. Two issues that will need to be carefully considered during the preparation of the Core Strategy relate to the broad areas where development may or may not take place in the future.
- 5.6 First, taking account of protective designations and the characteristics of the district including the location of centres, the road network, etc. Is it possible to identify areas where new development in the future would not be appropriate in any scale?
- 5.7 Second, is it possible to identify broad locations for required allocations or proposed development as required in the Core Strategy? These broad locations should not be site specific, but will identify possible options to be considered during the informal community consultation stage of plan preparation.
- 5.8 The key requirements for new development in the district to 2021 are set out in the East of England Plan:
- 4600 dwellings;
 - 3000 jobs.
- 5.9 In addition there are other requirements emerging from discussions with partners and stakeholders, including the requirement for a 2 hectare (5 acre) site to accommodate health facilities for the Primary Care Trust in Rayleigh.
- 5.10 In considering the future requirements for housing, it is estimated that, taking account of dwelling completions from 2001 to 2006, land for about 3000 dwellings must be found through the LDF process. Even though the Core Strategy is not intended to be site specific, the land requirements to accommodate this number of dwellings must inevitably be borne in mind as Members examine the broad locations that might be options for future development.
- 5.11 On the basis of the Government's housing density advice, between 60 and 100 hectares (150-250 acres) of land will be required for housing development alone. To give Members an idea of the scale of the land requirement, the Park School site in Rayleigh is 10 hectares (25 acres).

- 5.12 The assessment of land for future housing is not though simply an examination of green field sites. Also important, in accordance with government advice, will be an assessment of the capacity of the existing urban areas to accommodate additional development. In simple terms, two issues must be considered. First, the opportunities for realistic further intensification of residential areas, a difficult issue given growing concerns about the impact of increasing residential densities. Second, an assessment of non-residential uses, particularly employment areas, and a decision about whether these should be retained or might be redeveloped for housing.
- 5.13 The employment allocation for Rochford is 3000 jobs. At present, it is anticipated that regeneration of Southend Airport will provide about 1000 jobs, with a further 1000 jobs being available on the Rochford Business Park.
- 5.14 The industrial estates in the district are of variable quality and a recent study for TGSE concluded that most industrial areas in South Essex were unattractive, run down and old fashioned. An initial assessment has been carried out of the industrial estates in the district to assess their suitability for housing redevelopment or their imperative for retention as employment areas. The assessment is attached to this report as Appendix 3.
- 5.15 In examining this analysis, Members will need to begin to give some thought to the value of each industrial area and determine whether there is any justification for a residential use. In deliberating on this question, it may be that the value of an industrial area for employment is paramount, but that the existing estate might be better relocated to a new site, enabling the creation of modern facilities and allowing residential redevelopment of the old site.
- 5.16 It should be borne in mind that an additional 3000 jobs is intended to be a net figure. This is important because there is no doubt that some jobs will be lost, for many reasons, and the overall aim of the strategy is not to stand still, but to move forward to provide additional jobs that will adjust the imbalance between resident workers and jobs and reduce out-commuting.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 This report is intended to provide an outline of the plan preparation process and some initial thoughts on the matters to be considered during the informal community consultation stage.
- 6.2 It is suggested that Members give initial consideration to the following:
- (a) the matters to be covered in the 'spatial portrait' of the Core Strategy;
 - (b) issues to be addressed in the Core Strategy;
 - (c) the 'spatial vision' of the district for the next 15 years and beyond;
 - (d) spatial policies that might be included in the Core Strategy;

- (e) the general location for housing in the district in the period to 2021;
- (f) the analysis of industrial areas.

6.3 Finally, it will be clear that there is much work to complete to enable a meaningful community consultation to take place in the autumn and it is suggested that the Committee gives some thought to a programme of meetings, and whether there might be merit in considering the creation on a LDF sub-committee, tasked with advising the Policy Committee.

7 RISK IMPLICATIONS

The timetable for the preparation of the Core Strategy is set out in the Council's Local Development Scheme (LDS) and it is essential that work progresses on target.

8 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

8.1 None arising directly from the report, but crime and disorder issues will be included in the Core Strategy and other development plan documents.

9 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The Core Strategy will set out a spatial vision for the district over the next 15-20 years and environmental issues ranging from the protection of the district's key assets to the construction of environmentally friendly houses will be a central theme of the document.

10 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There is little doubt that the preparation of Development Plan Documents to form the LDF will be more demanding of time and finance. At present, the costs of preparation can be met from the PDG, but this situation will need to be kept closely under review.

11 PARISH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The Parish Councils will be expected to play an important part during consultation and community engagement in the preparation of DPDs.

12 RECOMMENDATION

12.1 It is proposed that the Committee gives initial consideration to the contents of the Rochford Core Strategy and considers the arrangements necessary to enable informal community consultation (Regulation 25) and determine a programme of work and a way forward.

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Background Papers:-

1. Appendix 1 - Extracts from a fictional core strategy (Planning Officers Society 2005).
2. Appendix 2 - An initial assessment of the industrial estates in the district to assess their suitability for housing redevelopment or their imperative for retention as employment areas.

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APPENDIX 1

PRIORITIES INITIALLY IDENTIFIED BY MEMBERS

No.	Key Suggestion	Resource assessment	Timing
1	Better lighting in alleyways and car parks	Capital programme for RDC managed footpaths and car parks	S–M
2	Better designed public spaces; residential areas; community buildings	Capital programme for implementation of design for public spaces and grant support of community buildings	S–M
3	Better public transport – safer; more coordinated – linked to settlements	Revenue support if linked to either community transport or taxi vouchers	S–M
4	Park Wardens/keepers/town wardens	Significant revenue implications	S
5	More and improved CCTV	Depends on scale but probably small revenue	S
6	Develop and expand footpath/cycling network	None if influence is on ECC	M
7	Address pavement/verge parking	None if undertaken by existing officers and police	S–M
8	Tackle chewing gum effectively	Small revenue cost for education campaign. Significant cost of regular cleaning	S
9	Pedestrianise Rochford square	Low cost of consultation. Likely part funding with ECC on capital works. Possible Thames Gateway issue	M–L
10	Develop and expand Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park up the Roach valley	Provision currently in capital programme. Thames Gateway funding possible under green grid initiative. Revenue implications of management	S–M

No.	Key Suggestion	Resource assessment	Timing
11	Develop Gusted Hall Woods for recreational/amenity purposes and link with Cherry Orchard and Hockley Woods	Capital programme for development. Possible funding from Thames Gateway. Revenue implications of management	M–L
12	New Civic amenity site serving the east of the District	None if influence is on ECC	M
13	Develop brickwork site for museum/heritage purposes	Significant capital and revenue implications	M–L
14	Develop wetland and waterways in the east of the District for leisure and recreation with potential new country park	In the absence of grant funding, significant capital and revenue implications	M–L
15	Address weeds/litter on pavements and verges	Revenue implications. Seek funding from ECC. Items for longer term street cleansing contract specification	S
16	Enforce against car sales on verges	None if influence is on ECC	S
17	Promote Stambridge Mills for possible hotel/conference centre and craft workshops	Minor revenue costs for promotion	M–L
18	Provide Environmental Centre at Cherry Orchard Jubilee County Park	Significant Capital and revenue costs	M–L
19	Develop Rochford Reservoir and link down to the river for recreation/amenity purposes	Capital cost	M–L
20	Open up public access to river system on Crouch and Roach for recreation/leisure	Limited cost if delivered through partnership with key land holders. Otherwise significant capital cost	M–L
21	Promote the churches in the District for historic visits	Small revenue cost of promotional material however research and co-ordination could be material	S

No.	Key Suggestion	Resource assessment	Timing
22	Adoption of the Canewdon target of 1.68 (4.16 acres) hectares of sports pitches per 1000 residents for the whole District	Depending on interpretation of results (whole District or local area basis) Significant capital and revenue costs possible	
23	Promote airport expansion with appropriate infrastructure and environmental safeguards	Minor revenue costs – links to other strategies such as Tourism	M–L
24	Promote the provision of niche market shops, studio and workshops in Rochford town	Minor revenue costs – links to Tourism strategy	S–M
25	Encourage provision of start up units	Possible capital funding to provide incentives	M
26	Encourage better working between schools and employers	None	S–L
27	Develop tourism across the District	See separate section on Tourism strategy	M–L
28	Provide more opportunities for hotel/conference facilities in the District	Revenue implication of consultants	M–L
29	Secure improvements and upgrade employment areas to maintain and attract high quality enterprises	Revenue implications of consultants and presence at trade exhibitions etc	M
30	Provide more youth facilities specifically in and around Rochford and Rayleigh (not close to warehouse centre)	None if influence on ECC. Possible grant funding of new initiatives	M–L
31	Promote a farmers market in Rayleigh	Location should be self funding. Small costs of promotion and publicity	S–M
32	More services/facilities to keep the elderly active	Revenue costs of schemes similar to holiday projects and promotion of groups such as ramblers Influence on sports/leisure providers	S–M
33	Increase provision/linkages between footpaths, cycleways and bridleways	None if influence on ECC. Possible capital cost in relation to RDC land and incentives on private land	S–M

No.	Key Suggestion	Resource assessment	Timing
34	Increase car parking provision in key centres	Significant capital costs to be funded from car parking strategy	S–M
35	Increase young people's and persons under 50 involvement in local decision making process	Revenue cost to support involvement	S
36	Encourage more partnership working between parishes	None but see item later in this report	S
37	Further develop RDC website for community consultation/information	Capital and revenue cost of software purchase	S
38	Promote more community events across the District	Revenue cost of promotions	S–M
39	Provide more services and facilities targeted at the elderly to serve the ageing population	None if influence on ECC. Activities already covered above	S–M
40	Provide more affordable housing	Capital programme and S 106 provision for encouragement. Links to LSVT process. Possible free transfer of existing assets to assist delivery	S–L
41	Encourage better designs in housing development in the District	Revenue implications of expanded awards scheme	S–L
42	Re use old/existing sites and buildings for housing	Revenue costs of research and promotional material	S–L
43	More purpose build care homes for frail/elderly	Possible capital funding as incentives and free transfer of current assets	M
44	Maintain tight green belt boundary across the District	Possible additional cost of planning enforcement	S–L
45	Broadcast / televise council meetings via the web	Capital cost of equipment and revenue cost of management and maintenance. Possibility of joint venture with Castle Point.	S

No.	Key Suggestion	Resource assessment	Timing
46	Continue holding council meetings in the purpose designed, air conditioned Civic Suite facilities	Already within core budget. Potential to bid for air con in Committee Room 4	S
47	Move towards 24/7 operation	Capital and revenue costs of new technology and possible call centre operations	S–M
48	Develop satellite office arrangements across the District	Possible capital costs if not with partners. Significant revenue costs	S
49	Develop more partnership arrangements with other Councils	None but potential for long term savings	S–M
50	More services accessible via the web	Possible costs of software and hardware Revenue costs of web access and response	S
51	Planning Enforcement	Additional Revenue cost. Planning Delivery Grant funding an option	S
52	Handyman and Gardening service	Revenue cost for expansion of current scheme	S

Bids made through the Committee process

No.	Key Suggestion	Resource assessment
1	Continuation of dedicated call centre for Housing benefits	£10,000 per year
2	Application for Charter Mark for Council Services	£5,000 one off
3	Environmental Liaison officer – Woodlands strategy	£20,000 per year
4	Car Parking digitised display boards (parking capacity)	Capital provision – costs for Rayleigh only £150,000. Need to consider ECC programme of works.
5	Rayleigh Windmill – museum	Funding being sought from TGSE. Revenue funding may need to be considered at a future date.
6	Environmental Street Scene Manager	£45,000

No.	Key Suggestion	Resource assessment
7	Webmaster/ICT Development Manager	£37,000
8	Overview and Scrutiny Officer	£35,000
9	Partnership Assistant	£20,700
10	Publicity, Marketing and Promotions Officer	£43,000

APPENDIX 2

SPATIAL PORTRAIT OF NORTH WORKSHIRE

“North Workshire is a relatively large District in the Midlands covering 200 sq. miles with a population of approximately 200,000. It is located entirely within the broad valley of the river Worke and its three tributaries. Historically, most development originated from the early commercial success of Workton (around 75,000 population) located on the polluted River Worke in the centre of the district. A recent study recommended a western extension to Workton to cope with forecast housing demand; this will require a range of new and improved services for the new inhabitants. Two smaller towns, Northton and Southton (around 15,000 population each) are located 6 miles north and 8 miles south of Workton respectively. Fifteen villages, with populations ranging from 500 to 3,000 are dispersed in the attractive countryside surrounding these towns. The city of Barnchester (around 500,000 population) is 12 miles southeast of Workton and it acts as the sub-regional centre for this part of the Midlands. A third of North Workshire is within the Green Belt that surrounds Barnchester.”

“The District’s traditional economic base has been manufacturing and agriculture centred on Workton, with Southton and Northton performing complementary roles as local market towns. During the last ten years, the local economy has started to restructure with strong growth in the commercial, IT and retail sectors. There is a high level of commuting to Barnchester from all parts of North Workshire and the current unemployment rate in the district is low at 2.5%.”

“North Workshire has a relatively prosperous economy, reflecting a growth in commuting to Barnchester and this has resulted in increased population mobility across the district in recent years. However, the loss of manufacturing employment in Workton over the past 20 years has resulted in pockets of urban deprivation with parts of the town centre in need of regeneration. Housing in Workton is predominantly small Victorian terrace properties, which are the most affordable dwellings within the District. It has actually resulted in ‘reverse-flow commuting’ of agricultural contract workers who live in Workton and work in adjacent rural areas.”

“Northton and Southton are no longer confined to their traditional role as market towns and service centres for the district’s rural economy. Instead, they have become attractive locations for specialist retailing, emerging business and IT firms that are ‘spin offs’ from Barnchester and Workton. The District Council and Local Chambers of Commerce have worked to ensure that both towns develop distinctive economic roles. Northton has been marketing itself as an incubator for IT companies, whilst Southton has focused on the business and retail sectors.”

“As the District falls within Barnchester’s sub-regional retail catchment area, retailing in Workton has struggled to compete with Barnchester over the last decade. Workton has an out-of-town retail park and two out-of-centre supermarkets. Retail development in the two market towns has been restricted to their town centres and, helped by the twice-weekly markets, they have successfully focused on local

requirements. Northton and Southton have also both experienced recent growth in bars and restaurants making them more attractive places to visit and shop.”

“Workton’s leisure services and community facilities include two secondary schools, a public library, local museum, small art gallery, out-of-centre four-screen cinema and a leisure centre that needs refurbishment. The Cathedral Close conservation area has been targeted for enhancement leading to growth in tourism spending. In addition, Barnchester University’s Business School is based upon the former Workton Technical College campus near the town centre. The University has recently announced it wishes to expand its facilities (including student accommodation) to cater for an additional 250 students from 2005 onwards.”

“The inter-city (London - Manchester) rail link connects Workton to Barnchester and other Midlands cities. In addition, Workton is linked to Barnchester by the A287. Two trunk roads run within 3 miles of Workton’s town centre: the A214 to the west linking to Northton and the A326 to the south-east linking to Southton. Both roads link Workton to the region’s motorway system- the A214 to the Junction 12 of the M6 (12 miles) and the A326 to Junction 8 of the M40 (9 miles).”

Issues to be addressed

“The District benefits from attractive landscape, good transport links and relative affluence among the population as a whole. However, there are pockets of economic deprivation among the urban and rural populations. This reflects the steady loss of traditional employment over the last two decades. Consequently, parts of Workton town centre require regeneration, whilst several areas of Workton contain high numbers of elderly people living in rundown Victorian terrace housing. In rural areas, deprivation is more sporadic and involves isolation from essential services. Other issues include:

- Transitional nature of the local economy. In particular, Workton has suffered from Barnchester’s economic growth as the sub-regional centre and has been unable to develop a complementary role. There is a particular need to revitalise and refocus activity in Workton town centre. Its future retail role is expected to become complementary to Barnchester, rather than remaining in direct competition with the whole retail sector in the city. Whilst business start-up rates are growing, they are located mainly in attractive conversions and new premises in Northton and Southton rather than reoccupying existing secondary office space in Workton’s town centre. In addition, retail and business investors have preferred to locate on the edge of Barnchester (due to its wider range of facilities and better private and public transport infrastructure), or in Northton and Southton (reflecting their attractive townscape and character) A significant MoD presence in the District is being reduced and the re-use of redundant sites has been problematic;

- Towns and villages are experiencing strong demand for housing generated by local people and commuters moving into the area from Barnchester. This has led to an acute need for affordable housing for local people across the district, particularly for those in low-paid rural employment. A western extension of Workton has been recommended as the best means of providing for the majority of the District's future housing needs, but it will require a range of improved infrastructure and services;
- Conservation of the environment of North Workshire. The Council's Biodiversity Action Plan has highlighted the need to increase public awareness and enjoyment of local natural resources and for joint working with landowners and a range of relevant organisations to protect several threatened flora species. The level of pollution in the River Worke is a major concern to the Council and the Environment Agency. The environmental quality of Workton has diminished in recent years, linked to the loss of jobs in the town and growing industrial property vacancy rates. An enlarged campus for the University Business School and enhancement of historic areas in Workton should encourage local pride in the town's heritage and attract additional spending;
- The district's leisure and cultural facilities require modernisation. Workton's leisure centre is in need of extensive refurbishment, whilst several village halls across the district have been forced to close in recent years due to lack of resources. This picture contrasts with Barnchester's growth as a sub-regional arts and entertainment centre; and
- Poor public transport in rural areas resulting from cutbacks over the last five years. Several of the smaller settlements in the southern part of the district no longer have a daily bus service to Workton, Northton or Southton.

Spatial vision for North Workshire

[Note: This important part of a Core Strategy is where you must present succinctly the plan's essential ideas for the future based upon sustainable development and the individual characteristics of your area].

"The aims of sustainable development are central to a vision of North Workshire in the future. Therefore, the Local Development Framework (in common with the Community Strategy) requires new development to be located where it is likely to minimise the need to travel by car. In addition, the vision has regard to the Midlands Spatial Strategy's requirements that the Council:

- Provide approximately 700 new dwellings per annum over the period from 2001 to 2016, encourage re-use of suitable employment land for mixed uses including employment and prioritise urban regeneration in

Workton. Consequently, the Council has taken account of government advice to reduce vacancy rates and increase housing densities when calculating its housing land allocations; and

- Allocate 60 hectares of land for economic development over the period 2001 to 2016 and encourage urban regeneration in Workton. Calculation of the amount of employment land developed since 2001 reduces the new requirement to XX hectares.”

“Having regard to the above factors, the vision for North Workshire to 2016 is as follows:

We wish to maintain and improve the attractiveness, vitality and prosperity of the countryside, towns and villages and address the expected economic, social and cultural changes that will emerge during the next twelve years. All initiatives in this vision will take full account of the views of the public and other participants.”

“By 2016, we wish to have improved the diversity and environmental quality of our natural resources, countryside and built heritage compared to the present day. In the rural areas, we will undertake planned and carefully managed growth to ensure that sufficient jobs and homes are provided for local people. In particular, we will encourage a more diverse rural economy and more public transport services than currently exist.”

“Our aim for Workton is to have created a thriving and more diverse town centre by 2016. We will encourage economic growth, particularly in the business and commercial sectors, by developing the infrastructure required for local and incoming firms to re-use existing empty office space. This initiative will start in 2005 and be undertaken by a town partnership and will be designed to complement Barnchester’s sub-regional employment role. The expansion of the Barnchester University Business School campus in Workton will provide an important regeneration focus. We also wish to stimulate more retail, tourism and leisure facilities in the town centre so they are easily accessible. In conjunction with other partners, we will undertake a major refurbishment of dilapidated housing stock in the town. We also intend to provide land for sufficient new homes at higher densities to meet local housing needs. Many of these will be in a proposed western extension to Workton. A ‘design-led’ approach to the areas of new and renovated housing will ensure they have a high environmental quality.”

“In Northton and Southton, we will continue to develop their individual roles by encouraging the provision of suitable physical, economic and electronic communications infrastructure. We will allow limited retail and leisure growth provided that it reflects the character of both centres and does not undermine their viability and vitality. We will work with partner agencies on the provision of training and education opportunities for local people that will help them to compete for jobs created locally. To encourage more diverse growth across the district and create nodes for integrated public transport in each town, we will seek to reopen the rail

branch lines that link Workton, Northton and Southton, and encourage more comprehensive bus services across the southern part of the district.”

“The quality of life across the whole of the district will be improved by a programme of environmental enhancements, skills training schemes, educational and leisure projects, healthcare schemes and other initiatives by the District Council working with the County Council and a wide range of other organisations. The Cathedral Close area will become a jointly funded flagship for the economic, cultural and social benefits of enhancing the town’s fine historic properties and townscape. The water quality of the River Worke will be drastically improved by joint action involving all relevant organisations and the riparian owners. In rural areas, we will provide communities with additional social, health, educational facilities and more homes for local people. The needs of the elderly, young people and lower-paid local people will receive special attention.”

Spatial Objectives

[Note: This selection of spatial objectives from the Core Strategy is intended to show how the vision is sharpened into measurable and deliverable objectives for the plan. Not all of these example objectives are translated into example policies in later sections].

“The Core objectives stemming from the above spatial vision are as follows:

- **To accommodate future population and employment growth in line with the requirements of the Midlands Strategic Strategy -** Bearing in mind the need to protect the environment, this strategy will focus upon the specified requirements for development set out in the Midlands Spatial Strategy. Thus, the District may not be able to accommodate all the pressures for housing that may arise from Barnchester;
- **To ensure at least 55% of new housing, employment, service and retail development occurs within existing urban areas of Workton, Northton and Southton -** In the first instance, new development (which may comprise a mix of suitable uses) will be located on previously developed sites; particularly on redundant commercial and industrial premises in Workton. Any residual need may be met through mixed development on greenfield sites within defined settlement boundaries, provided there is sufficient justification;
- **To broaden the employment base into identified wealth-creating sectors by 2010 -** The local economy will benefit from the regeneration, starting in 2006, of Workton town centre and neighbouring redundant manufacturing areas for new business and commercial back-office functions, IT, retail and entertainment. Expansion of the University Business School and enhancement of the Cathedral Close conservation area will generate academic and tourist

related investment and spending. A western extension of the town will provide part of the total of new employment land. In rural areas, the agricultural sector will be encouraged to diversify into suitable alternative employment uses;

- **To diversify the district's rural economy to embrace tourism, leisure and IT-related growth by 2010** - Appropriate growth will be allowed only in carefully controlled circumstances, whilst proposals in the Barnchester Green Belt will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances. Controlled growth in Northton and Southton, supported by suitable new infrastructure, will ensure they maintain their attractiveness as market towns;
- **To provide 10% more local employment opportunities by 2008** - the proposed economic growth in Workton, Northton and Southton has the potential to reduce the need for local people to travel long distances to work. Four new skills training schemes provided by Workton Agricultural College and Barnchester University Business School and funded by contributions arising from employment development sites will be an important part of this objective. Development of Workton's western expansion area will be used to encourage young people to train in construction and related industries;
- **To promote greater vitality in town and village centres by 2008** - This is a priority aim of the Community Strategy and will be met by revitalising the town centre of Workton, further enhancing the attractiveness of the market areas and the centres of Northton and Southton, and supporting the viability of local shopping parades and individual village shops. The major refurbishment of Workton Leisure Centre and expansion of the Barnchester University Business School will provide the impetus for new retailing and entertainment provision in the town centre. The Council will measure the vitality of towns and village centres bi-annually by: shop unit vacancies, reported retail turnover and shopper interviews;
- **To continually encourage good design throughout the district, in particular making the towns of Workton, Northton and Southton more attractive places to live, and make the best use of existing public facilities, services and land within the settlements** - Development should have regard to the existing townscapes and be 'design-led' so that it is designed from the outset to maintain and improve the quality of the rural and urban environment. The Council will measure the success of changes to the urban environment by use of professional panels and public surveys;
- **To improve the quality of the water in the River Worke by 2010** - This objective has a very high priority in the Community Strategy and is mentioned in the regional tourism strategy. There is a policy alignment

between the District Council and the Environment Agency on the required improvements, a firm commitment of funding from the Environment Agency and expressions of interest from riparian owners.

- **To maintain the Green Belt boundaries around Northton and Southton and the villages close to Barnchester throughout the plan period** - This long-standing constraint upon development will continue to limit the outward expansion of Barnchester and preserve the separate identities of North Workshire's towns and villages;
- **To ensure that an appropriate proportion of new dwellings constructed throughout the plan period are affordable** - This is a key element of the Community Strategy and will assist local people who are increasingly unable to compete in the local housing market. Evidence from regular local housing needs surveys will inform the Council's requirements for provision of affordable housing through the planning system. Based upon current evidence, the Council seeks at least 30% affordable housing in suitable locations. This requirement rises to 40% in Workton to meet the acute local needs. In addition, the Council and its partner housing associations have agreed a 10-year housing strategy to upgrade existing public and private sector housing;
- **To limit new housing in rural areas throughout the plan period to infill plots in defined villages** - Some small-scale local housing development will be allowed in defined villages with a high score on the Council's adopted 'Sustainability Matrix'. Elsewhere, new housing in the countryside and in scattered settlements will be strictly controlled;
- **To safeguard the district's rural and urban heritage and to encourage tourism throughout the plan period** – The Council will work with other organisations to protect and enhance the district's attractive rural landscape, areas of nature conservation importance and built heritage. Active use of the Council's Heritage Skills Register will encourage occupiers of historic properties and owners of other heritage features to carry out high quality maintenance using locally available skills and materials;
- **To improve the provision of services and infrastructure in rural areas by 2008** - A key objective of the Community Strategy is to ensure that, by year 2008, the eight key villages in North Workshire have adequate services and infrastructure (defined as refurbished village halls, GP surgeries, adult evening classes, pre-school play groups, indoor and outdoor youth leisure facilities, meals on wheels and day care for elderly, and regular bus/train links to either Workton, Northton or Southton). The Council will work with the Local Strategic Partnership and other stakeholders achieve this objective;

- **To assist the public to develop healthy and active lifestyles and reduce the need to travel by car throughout the plan period** - The District Council and Health Authority wish to encourage communities to develop their own local health and fitness activities. Major projects to assist this objective include the refurbishment of Workton Leisure Centre (in 2007), new facilities at Northton swimming pool (in 2008) and a 10 hectare extension to Southton Manor Country Park (by 2010). The District Council, Workshire County Council and their partner organisations are proposing a series of transport improvements, notably:
 - A local network of cyclepaths linked to the National Cycleway that is being constructed by Sustrans along the former canal towpath through the southern tip of North Workshire (completion in 2005);
 - Promotion of greater use of the existing Workton to Barnchester rail link (campaign runs 2005 to 2007) and re-opening of the former rail branch lines between Workton, Northton and Southton; and
 - Working with Workshire County Council and private transport operators to start up a mini-bus service between selected villages and new express bus services from Northton and Southton to Barnchester (start date Spring 2006)."