LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK FOR NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

Corby Borough Town Centre Area Action Plan

Preferred Options

May 2006
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1. **Introduction**

**AREA ACTION PLANS**

1.1 A vibrant and successful Corby town centre is fundamental to creating a successful and sustainable community. The town centre has been given particular attention under the Local Development Framework (LDF) since the planned growth of Corby presents major opportunities for improving its vitality, viability and image. This is reflected by the inclusion of a specific Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP) in the Local Development Scheme (LDS).

The provision of sustainable communities is a principle objective for the planning system. A definition of a Sustainable Community is provided by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) as

“Sustainable communities are places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment, and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run, and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all”.

“The components of sustainable community are:

- Active, inclusive and safe
- Well run
- Environmentally sensitive
- Well designed and built
- Well connected
- Thriving
- Well served, and
• Fair for everyone”.

1.2 Planning Policy Statement (PPS)12 (Local Development Frameworks) identifies the need for Area Action Plan (AAP’s) where there is a requirement to provide the planning framework for areas where significant change or conservation is needed. The town centre is a particular focus for the growth and regeneration agenda for Corby. A key feature of an Area Action Plan (AAP) will be its focus on the implementation of development proposals.

1.3 In the context of the North Northamptonshire LDF, the town centre Area Action Plan (AAP) will seek to:

♦ deliver planned growth with a mix of town centre uses;
♦ stimulate regeneration and 'claw back' expenditure currently lost to other town centres.
♦ Establish Corby alongside Kettering and Wellingborough as sub regional centres meeting the needs of an expanding population.

1.4 In areas of change, the guidance states that AAP’s should identify the distribution of uses and their inter-relationships, including specific site allocations, and set the timetable for the implementation of the proposals. Further guidance, such as the layout of uses within these allocations and design requirements etc, may be provided in the AAP or in one or more supplementary planning documents in the form of a master plan.

REGENERATION CONTEXT

1.5 The town centre is in need of comprehensive regeneration if it is to succeed in supporting the growth of Corby as a sustainable community. Indeed, the principal land owner, Land Securities, and the Council, consider it is important to the regeneration of the town that this occurs in the short and medium term, thereby front loading the town centre’s redevelopment in advance of the planned population and job growth for the town. The Area Action Plan AAP will provide the statutory basis for the individual plans and development frameworks that have been prepared in recent years for the redevelopment of the town centre as well as incorporate the strategies that has emerged from various technical studies. These various studies and frameworks include:

♦ Corby Town Centre Shopping Study (Barton Willmore 2004) Corby Borough Council commissioned a Town Centre Shopping Study to inform and guide retail planning and to provide a baseline assessment from which future needs, both quantitative and qualitative can be evaluated. The study analyses the vitality and viability of the town centre based on
CORBY TOWN CENTRE AREA ACTION PLAN

Final Report Preferred Options

‘health check’ indicators and concluded that the centre is not vital or viable and there is a significant need to overcome fundamental shortcomings. Further details are given in Section 3 below.

♦ North Northamptonshire Town Centre Roles and Relationship Study (Roger Tym and Partners 2005) – Undertaken to identify the key sub-regional patterns of retail expenditure including high levels of expenditure leakage within North Northamptonshire and the short comings of Corby as a centre for ‘value retailing’ and poor leisure facilities. This provides the basis for the balanced centres strategy concentrating growth in Kettering, Corby and Wellingborough as set out within the Preferred Options Core Strategy consultation document (November 2005).

♦ Regeneration Framework – In January 2003, Catalyst Corby launched a Regeneration Framework and its principles were supported by Corby Borough Council. This presents a range of residential, employment, town centre and transportation proposals which will provide residents, businesses, investors and developers with a range of new opportunities, facilities and services. The aspirations of the Regeneration Framework are supported by Corby Borough Council and include ambitious proposals for a comprehensive transformation of the town centre to regain its retail strength, improve the quality and design of the public realm, and attract a greater range of mixed uses. A number of proposals are well developed including the flagship civic, leisure and cultural development of the Parkland Gateway and work has already begun to redevelop Willow Place as a new shopping centre.

♦ Parkland Gateway Development Framework - The Development Framework was adopted by Corby Borough Council as Interim Planning Guidance in March 2005 and is an important document for the AAP.

♦ Corby Central Area Masterplan - The town centre masterplan has been prepared by EDAW (2006) with involvement by public and private sector partners including CABE (The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) which formed the Master Plan working group. This provides the spatial and design framework that ties together the wide-ranging proposals that have emerged for the regeneration of the town centre, including contributions from the private sector. The emerging masterplan provides a key source for preparing the AAP.

♦ Inspirational Corby –Community Strategy 2003-08 by Corby Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). This document sets out the vision for Corby and identifies a number of priority objectives, including the need to redevelop the town centre to create a dynamic driver of the economy and provide exceptional facilities to residents and visitors.

THE PREFERRED OPTIONS REPORT

1.6 The Preferred Options report is a key stage in the production of the Town Centre AAP. It builds upon the Issues and Options document produced for consultation in September 2005. The responses from the previous consultations, together with the findings of various technical studies, have been used to draw up a preferred way forward for the town centre.
1.7 The Council’s Preferred Options for the Town Centre AAP are outlined in Section 5 and 6 of this document, which provides an indication of how the final AAP will appear. The Council is now seeking your views on the preferred options and proposals contained in this report. This consultation will take place over a statutory period of six weeks which will commence on Tuesday 2nd May through to 5 pm on Friday 16th June 2006.

1.8 After careful consideration of comments, the full Town Centre AAP will be finalised and submitted to the Secretary of State in November 2006. Upon submission of the AAP to the Secretary of State, there will be a further six-week period for comment. Following this an independent Inspector will undertake an examination into the Plan. It is intended that the AAP will finally be adopted in December 2007. The policies contained within the final document will then form part of the Local Development Framework, and be used by the Council to judge against future planning applications and development proposals for the town centre.
2. Strategic Priorities and Policy Context

2.1 A review of the strategic policy context demonstrates the high level and wide ranging commitment to the regeneration of Corby town centre.

2.2 National guidance on the roles of town centres is contained in PPS6 (Planning for Town centres). The guidance supports the ‘town centre first’ principle established in previous guidance (PPG6) and emphasises the need for sustainable development. The guidance sets out the Government’s aims for promoting and managing growth in town centres and states that local planning authorities should actively plan for growth in retail, leisure, office and other town centre uses. Local planning authorities are also encouraged to adopt a positive and proactive approach to planning for future of centres, which reflects Catalyst Corby and Corby Borough Council’s response to the wide ranging problems facing the Corby town centre.

2.3 The guidance also set out the Government’s aim of promoting higher density mixed use developments and diversity, in this respect plan policies should reflect the need to encourage higher density, multi-storey development within and around existing centres, including the promotion of mixed use area, where appropriate. The town centre masterplan has been developed with these principles in mind and the guidance recognises how town centre strategies play an important role in ensuring the continued vitality and viability of centres. Much of Corby town centre is in the ownership of Land Securities, and in reference to site selection and assembly, the guidance states that plans should have regard to the objective of promoting vital and viable town centres.

2.4 Regional priorities for town centres have been established by Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands (RSS8, March 2005). This Plan has been informed by the Regional Town Centres Study (February 2003) and Corby, together with Kettering and Wellingborough are identified as priorities for support and major investment. Policy 23 of RSS8 states that where towns are under performing, action should be taken to promote investment through design led initiatives and the development and implementation of town centre strategies. Policies and proposals should bring forward retail and leisure developments within town centres to meet identified need. The Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional strategy complements RSS8. The strategy emphasises the need to regenerate Corby town centre.

2.5 The North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy (Preferred Options November 2005) identifies the strengthening of town centres as one of its nine stated objectives. The objective seeks to ensure services and facilities are located in town centres making them more self contained and the real hearts for their communities. The Strategy has been informed by the North
Northamptonshire Town Centre Roles and Relationships study. In light of the proposed population growth (and thus expenditure) of the ‘Growth Towns’ of Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough, and the desire to pull back some of the expenditure by local residents in Corby currently lost to surrounding centres, the Core Strategy recommends more self contained and sustainable communities. A balanced centres strategy, concentrating on the Growth Towns is recommended with Corby being identified as a sub regional centre and focus for new retail development. The Core Strategy recommends a significant expansion of retail floorspace, effectively doubling the amount of comparison shopping floorspace in the plan period to 2021. The Core Strategy also details the requirement for further cinema screen developments across the North Northamptonshire area and the lack of choice in the food and drink offer within Corby. Corby does not currently have any cinema screen.

2.6 Corby Community Strategy (September 2003) promotes the sustainable development of the urban environment and conservation of the natural environment and identifies the priority objective of ‘the holistic and sustainable development of the town’ and to redevelop the Town Centre to create a dynamic driver of the economy and provide exceptional facilities to residents and visitors. This is reflected in the Local Development Framework which has established the regeneration of the town centre as a key aim.
3. Issues & Opportunities

3.1 Various studies described above have been undertaken and much of the evidence base has been gathered to demonstrate the need for regenerating Corby town centre. The appraisal of the town centre falls into two broad categories, the first relates to the vitality and economic performance of the town; the second relates to the physical appearance and quality, including the design of public spaces and building, the level of comfort, safety, accessibility and durability of the town centre.

3.2 The Corby Town Centre Shopping Study (Barton Wilmore 2004) undertook a vitality and viability audit based on the health check indicators set out in national planning policy guidance. The audit focused primarily on economic indicators and in summary the study found:

♦ the town centre is geared towards ‘value retailing’, and this is reflected both in its convenience goods (e.g. Netto, Kwik Save, Iceland, Co-op) and comparison goods (e.g. Poundland, Wilkinsons, Peacocks) retail provision;
♦ prime zone A retail rents and investment yields confirm that Corby Town Centre is not perceived either by retailers or investors as an attractive or vibrant retailing destination;
♦ vacancy levels are almost double the national average;
♦ shoppers appear to have a generally negative opinion of the town centre’s retail offer and the quality of its built environment;
♦ a lack of investment and planned maintenance of the public realm and the built fabric of the centre over a number of years has created an unattractive and hostile environment for shoppers and visitors to the centre;
♦ a review of the health check indicators has confirmed that the town centre is not vital and viable, and is in need of significant improvement to overcome fundamental shortcomings. A failure to address these will exacerbate the already high levels of retail expenditure leakage to nearby competing centres.

3.3 Notwithstanding the above, the study recognised that the comprehensive range of improvements proposed by the Regeneration Framework have the potential to significantly improve the vitality and viability of the town centre.
3.4 The Corby Central Area Masterplan provides the key spatial appraisal of Corby town centre. The main issues as identified by the masterplan are:

♦ The built form of the town does not address the local resource of the existing Park or Woodland;
♦ Poor connectivity exists within the town due to a lack of finer grain street pattern;
♦ Distinct lack of quality higher density residential development in the town centre to improve its ‘critical mass’;
♦ Landmarks and gateway features at key town centre approaches give a poor sense of arrival and legibility to the town;
♦ Vehicular focused street network;
♦ Poor north-south connectivity through the town centre;
♦ There is a ‘Zonal’ approach to uses across the town centre;
♦ Poor quality public realm and no focal public space for the town;
♦ Strong northern and southern boundaries to the town centre;
♦ A large area of poorly defined surface car parking weakens the urban pattern and structure of the town; these also create poor pedestrian environments.

3.5 The physical context and key issues for Corby town centre have also been assessed in the following figures:
Figure 3.1 - Town Centre Context

Aerial view of Corby Town Centre

Landownership - Land Securities

Town Centre Boundary
## Built Form:

- A distinct lack of landmarks and gateway features at key town centre approaches.
- The built form of the town turns its back on the woodland and park.
- Development within the town is predominantly low density and lacks critical mass.
- Strong landscape structure surrounding the town centre.
- The historic layout is no longer appropriate or attractive to modern retailing.
- Many of the buildings and public spaces look tired and are in need of refurbishment.
- No clear hierarchy for the public squares and other public spaces.
Figure 3.2 – Key Issues – Built Form (EDAW)
VEHICULAR AND PEDESTRIAN ACCESS AND MOVEMENT:

- Strong boundaries to the town centre created by Westcott Way and Cottingham Road. The boundary formed by the Westcott Way road frontage allows little opportunity for pedestrian access to the town centre.
- Divisive ‘over scaled’ street network.
- Clear strategy of servicing from the periphery of the development areas.
- Established pedestrian only area within the core retail.
- Clearly established pedestrian desire lines.
- Established crossing points.
- Poor north/south connectivity through the town centre.
Figure 3.3 – Key Issues - Access and Movement (EDAW)
4. Community & Stakeholder Views

4.1 Previous consultation with the local community and stakeholders has been extensive and undertaken in respect of preparing the overall Regeneration Framework for Corby and the preparation of the Corby Local Development Framework.

Catalyst Corby’s Regeneration Framework

4.2 A key component in evolving and delivering a vision for the future of Corby has been to ensure that there is a clear understanding of the views of stakeholders: the people and agencies that will be at the heart of transforming Corby. Two separate public consultation events were undertaken during preparation of the Regeneration Framework (Issues consultation and Emerging Options consultation)

4.3 The Issues Consultation held in March 2002 involved a public exhibition in Corby town centre which attracted some 800–1,000 visitors. The public consultation event reinforced the messages of the sense of community pride in the town and what had been achieved. At the same time people wanted to see something better for themselves and for the visitors to the town. The key concerns and issues arising from the event which need addressing were:

- Town Centre - The people of Corby want a town centre of which they can be proud, including a better range of shops and facilities.
- Urban Decay - The gradual but accelerating decline of the town centre and the very poor retail and leisure offer.
- Transport - The inadequacy of the public transport system and the need to provide a decent reliable service for the existing population and visitors.
- Urban Stewardship - Quality and maintenance of Corby’s public realm.
- Amenity and Activities - A lack of things for people to do, especially the young.

4.4 A further public exhibition and series of workshops were held in May 2002, to obtain feedback on the Emerging Options for the expansion of the town and the redevelopment of the central area. Visitors to the exhibition were asked to complete a questionnaire, the results of which showed that 81% of respondents were happy for the population of Corby to grow
substantially if it helped to deliver better shopping, leisure, entertainment and transport services. Support was expressed for new housing in and around the town centre. New improved commercial and leisure features including cafés, bars, and a sports complex were seen as a priority for the central area. Particular support was expressed for a cinema and bowling alley.

4.5 There was also strong demand for a new library facility, closely followed by improved access to local services and information, as well as a bookshop and other shopping. In addition, many respondents chose to recommend extra facilities that they would like to see such as a public building to house the local authority and local democratic processes, with the most popular ‘other’ facility being a museum, most probably featuring elements of Corby’s history. This seemed to link in with many of the other suggestions that were based on the principle that the building should be the ‘civic centre’ for the people of Corby, where they can meet and spend time together. Other suggested uses included an art gallery, an exhibition hall, a theatre, a restaurant and a café.

4.6 Respondents also supported limited development in Corby’s central park area to provide new recreation and sport venues, closely followed by the development of restaurants and café.

4.7 Consultation was also undertaken with representatives of ‘hard to reach groups’. This included a focus on young people, often the most difficult constituency to reach in consultation and for whom the Regeneration Framework will have a significant impact, as well as organisations representing ethnic minority groups, people with mental health and learning disabilities, children, families, travellers, asylum seekers, refugee communities and those representing environmental interests. The general priorities that were identified during the consultation were very similar and included:

♦ Image & Identity - A need to improve the image and profile of Corby, and specifically direct resources to revamp the town centre;
♦ Education - Investment in education, helping young people raise their aspirations;
♦ Transport - The creation of a better public transport system with a new railway station acting as a transport hub;
♦ Community Facilities - Ensuring that investment is made in services and facilities required to meet the population increase; and
♦ Environment - Making better use of green spaces and ensuring community safety.
Local Development Framework (LDF)

4.8 In respect of the Corby Local Development Documents (LDD’s) and Area Action Plans (AAP’s), an Issues Papers was published in October 2003 which raised key question regarding the town centre and other LDF themes. Over one hundred responses were received for the whole consultation with almost 60 written comments received regarding the town centre. A series of stakeholder workshops were held during September 2005 to discuss the Issues and Options for Corby. The aim of these workshops was to elicit more detailed responses and discussions than would be possible through the general consultation exercise and also to ensure key stakeholders had an opportunity to share their knowledge and experience at an early stage of the LDF process.

4.9 The main findings from the Issues and Options paper were:

♦ The majority of responses were positive about the need for additional retail growth and prioritising the town centre for the retail expansion.
♦ There was unanimous support for the development of a three dimensional master plan for the town centre and the provision of safe car parking integrated with the provision of public transport within the town centre.
♦ There was general agreement that the town centre has no need for a bus station or transport interchange but rather that buses should stop at points well located in terms of town centre facilities.

Parkland Gateway Development Framework

4.10 The Parkland Gateway Development Framework provides an important context for the AAP and to move forward with this key document, Catalyst Corby organised workshops to involve key stakeholders in determining central principles for development. The first workshop was held in September 2003, and a follow-up feedback workshop was held in March 2004. Following the workshops, individual meetings have been held with key stakeholders, including local landowners, service organisations and environmental groups, as well as additional technical testing of key elements of the framework. Following further consultation with the public the Parkland Framework was agreed by the Council in March 2005.
North Northamptonshire Core Strategy

4.11 At a sub regional level, separate consultation exercises have been undertaken including the North Northamptonshire Core Strategy Issues and Options Paper (June 2005) which included a town centre issues workshop, and the report on the Core Strategy Preferred Options (November 2005).

4.12 Generally, in response to the various consultations it has been shown that there is support for the aims and aspirations of the Corby Regeneration Framework, together with the underlying principle of making bold and significant changes to the physical and economic structure of the town centre. Several areas of consensus have emerged and provide a firm direction for developing a town centre strategy.
5. Town Centre Objectives

PREFERRED OPTION FOR TOWN CENTRE OBJECTIVES

5.1 The following objectives have been prepared incorporating the primary regeneration principles that underpin the future direction for the regeneration of the town centre contained within the Regeneration Framework. Corby Town Centre has suffered from considerable spending leakage to competing centres across the region due to its limited range of retail, educational, leisure and entertainment facilities and poor public realm.

5.2 The preferred option objectives for the town centre objectives are:

♦ To promote comprehensive regeneration of the town centre, as part of a balanced centres approach alongside Kettering and Wellingborough, to address the loss of expenditure and provide a range of new and high quality facilities to draw new shoppers, visitors, workers and residents into the central area.

♦ To promote an active and dynamic heart for the town, offering a comprehensive range of new cultural, retail and entertainment facilities. The transformation will take place within a distinctive setting of attractive new buildings, quality public realm and new public spaces.

♦ To promote a rich diversity of uses throughout the day, making it an attractive place to live and work, supported by a growing evening economy and leisure and entertainment offer.

♦ The town centre’s redevelopment will act as a stimulus for the regeneration of the town as a whole.

5.3 The AAP will seek to build on these principles to spearhead the regeneration of Corby town centre.

Other Options Considered

5.4 The objectives for the town centre have been based upon the agreed Regeneration Framework for Corby which is in accordance with regional planning guidance. Alternative approaches, including a piecemeal approach to the regeneration of the town centre is considered to be inappropriate as it would fail to attract the significant level of investment required to transform Corby into a modern and vibrant town centre.
6. Town Centre Strategy

**PREFERRED OPTION FOR TOWN CENTRE VISION**

6.1 The Catalyst Corby Regeneration Framework identifies a number of specific initiatives to take forward regeneration objectives including a strategy to deliver a new town centre that will attract quality commercial, retail, leisure, residential and civic facilities known as Corby Central.

6.2 The preferred option for the town centre spatial vision has been broken down into a number of connected town centre areas, each providing a special focus of activity and a number of physical opportunities for regeneration. These are:

6.3 The existing town centre core will undergo a dramatic transformation, creating a new high density retail area that will act as a visually impressive ‘front door’ to Corby. It will be the principal area of destination activity throughout the day and evening, during the week and at weekends, with a diverse mix of community, shopping, entertainment and cultural activities together with residential and commercial floor space. The town centre core will include the following elements:

- New retail centre with key anchor stores;
- Mixed use destination including evening entertainment and leisure activities;
- Improved public realm with active frontages and good permeability.

6.4 To the west of the Town Centre Core will be the Parkland Gateway, a mix of cultural, civic, educational, residential, retail and leisure uses to create a mixed use quarter linking the town centre core with the adjacent historic parkland. The diversity of uses envisaged will add vibrancy and life to the area and drive the evening economy. The spatial vision for this area of the town centre will contain the following key components:

- New town square, a major new civic and urban activities and events space;
- ‘Civic Hub’, a civic area potentially including a library including information and One stop Shop, a performance venue, voluntary and community sector space;
- Café/bars, restaurants and specialist retail;
- New swimming pool
♦ Residential apartments located adjacent to an improved Hazel Wood.

6.5 To the east of the Town Centre Core is an area which forms part of the Mixed Use Precinct. This section of the town centre will incorporate mixed use leisure and residential uses as well as healthy living and recreation facilities.

Other Options Considered

6.6 Other options have been discounted since the Corby Regeneration Framework has been endorsed by Corby Borough Council and Catalyst Corby as the strategic vision for the town centre and Corby as a whole. This Vision has been subject public consultation and provides the established basis for identifying a preferred Vision for the regeneration of the town centre.

Preferred Option for the Spatial Strategy

6.7 The preferred option for the design framework and rationales for creating a unified, attractive, vibrant and accessible town centre was originally set out in an early draft by EDAW for Catalyst Corby and this is detailed in Figure 6.1 This illustrates the overall preferred spatial strategy for the town centre.

6.8 The Council recognises however the need to maintain the existing residential area to the north of the town centre.

6.9 The spatial strategy details a broad range of strategic opportunities for the transformation of the town centre, including improvements to access and movement, open spaces, urban structures and mixed uses.

6.10 Of particular importance is the need to establish a more pedestrian friendly link across Westcott Way and ensuring that the urban design and form of the adjacent retail units enables this pedestrian access.
Figure 6.1 - Spatial Strategy – Early Draft (EDAW)

Key:
- Lines of influence
- Corby Walk
- Public spaces
- Activity Hubs
- Service vehicular access
- Primary active frontages
- Key facades and/or landmarks
- Key pedestrian routes

Corby Central Area
EDAW

Hub Parameter Plan
January 06
DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION ONLY

2006.03.30 Draft Town Centre AAP.doc
PREFERRED OPTION FOR THE ILLUSTRATIVE MASTERPLAN

6.11 Based upon this assessment of the town centre Figure 6.2 illustrates the preferred option for the illustrative masterplan.

6.12 The illustrative masterplan identifies a number of spatial relationships which have emerged from the master planning process which the AAP will support as part of the town centres redevelopment. The preferred approach seeks to consolidate the retail core and significantly strengthen the quality of the shopping ‘offer’. This will provide the necessary critical mass in the short and medium term and end the cycle of decline. It will also create a ‘multi-layered’ town centre i.e. a place to work, live and play in which its citizens can take pride. The masterplan renews the relationship between the built form of the town and its existing parks and open spaces whilst strengthening the concept of the central avenue and improve north-south connectivity. This will assist in creating a strong urban grain to the town with a legible/permeable network of streets and spaces. The establishment of three distinct activity hubs within the three corners of the town centre will intensify uses around these locations and encourage and generate movement around the town.

6.13 The future success of Corby town centre undoubtedly depends upon a broad range of enhancements as set out in the illustrative masterplan. These include improvements to the built environment, accessibility, employment opportunities, leisure facilities, housing, civic amenities, and integrated public art. It is the ability to deliver broad ranging improvements to all of these areas that will transform Corby into a centre that people can take pride in. A failure to provide these improvements will simply encourage more residents in the town’s catchment area to travel further a field to more attractive centres with a better mix and quality of retailing.
Figure 6.2 – Preferred Town Centre Masterplan (EDAW)
Masterplan Layout:

March 06
DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION ONLY

Corby Central Area EDAW
Other Options Considered

6.14 None. The preferred principal options strongly reflect master planning best practice tailored to the particular issues identified as part of the town centre analysis. The preferred masterplan options help reinforce the range of options identified as part of the consideration of other town centre themes.

Preferred Option for Retail & Commercial Uses

6.15 The AAP will provide for a range of retail and commercial uses which will strengthen the role and functions of the town centre including shopping, offices, business space and commercial leisure with mixed uses including food and drink. The creation of active frontages is considered to be of particular importance in creating a vibrant town centre and the provision of additional retail space is key to this objective. PPS6 advises that, in addition to defining the extent of the primary shopping area for their centres, Local Planning Authorities may distinguish between primary and secondary frontages. Primary frontages should contain a high proportion of retail uses, while secondary frontages provide greater opportunities for flexibility and diversity of uses.

6.16 The Preferred Option to identify a Primary Retail Area where there will be a high proportion of retail uses with a Secondary Retail Area where a more flexible mixed uses approach is adopted.

6.17 It is intended that the Town Centre Area Action Plan will define the Primary Shopping Area for the town centre where retail development is to be concentrated. This will be based upon the existing Corporation Street and the phased redevelopment to the south and east as part of the Land Securities retail development scheme. Within this area primary frontages will be identified where it is important to retain a high proportion of retail uses. Secondary shopping frontages will be identified where a more flexible approach will be allowed. The town centre is to undergo major redevelopment in light of the proposals set out within the Regeneration Framework and masterplan being developed. Primary and secondary shopping frontages will be defined in accordance with the redevelopment proposals for the town centre contained within the Town Centre Area Action Plan.

6.18 Within the Primary Retail Area, retail uses will include a major expansion of comparison shopping floorspace to accommodate an increase in retail expenditure generated as a consequence of the growth in population in Corby, coupled with the potential to
‘claw back’ lost expenditure from nearby centres. The Barton Willmore Corby Town Centre Shopping Study (December 2004) and Roger Tym and Partners (August 2005) retail study have identified the potential for a major increase in comparison shopping floorspace in Corby by 2021 which would allow for a major redevelopment of the town centre to include a quality anchor department store. Land Securities has planning permission for the erection of a new shopping centre and associated facilities south of the town centre. The first phase of the redevelopment includes a relocated and enlarged Wilkinson store with retail and restaurant floorspace. Taking into account later phases of retail development it is anticipated, in line with the Barton Wilmore report, that approximately 29,000 sq.m of floorspace could be developed within the town centre in the period to 2021 (this excludes the approximate 14,000sq.m. of floor space for the provision of out-of-town bulky goods/warehousing).

6.19 This will support the proposals to redevelop Willow Place at the southern end of the town centre including a new department store and the significant additional retail development that will be required.

6.20 Plans for the redevelopment of Corby Town Centre are well advanced and, with market support, could be delivered fairly quickly given that Land Securities control the majority of the land required and have started the first phase of the development (Willow Place). In order to maintain momentum, the aim is to complete the entire redevelopment scheme in the next 5 years or so. This front loading of retail development in Corby will enable the required regeneration of Corby’s town centre, meeting the needs of Corby’s residents and enhancing the attraction of the town for the residential and commercial development.

6.21 The Town Centre Shopping study (Barton Wilmore. December 2004) has also identified the need to accommodate a total of 11,850sq.m floor space convenience shopping (between 2004 and 2021) for the whole Borough of Corby in phases by 2021. In accordance with the ‘town centre first’ approach a new quality main food supermarket will be planned for the town centre to accommodate the projected growth in expenditure. It is anticipated that this along with the major development planned for comparison goods offer would improve the attractiveness of the town centre.

6.22 In addition to the long term aim of strategic growth in Corby Town Centre, it is also important to address short and medium term revival and renewal. The need to improve Corby Town Centre’s retail provision is immediate and whilst concerted efforts should be placed on the longer term redevelopment of the southern part of the town centre, short term measures should also be taken to ensure that the town centre does not continue to lose retail expenditure to competing centres. The immediate challenge for Corby Town Centre is to continue to maintain its existing market share of retail expenditure, it is vital that piecemeal development is avoided. The original core of the town centre (i.e. Corporation Street) offers scope for further improvement by small scale ‘surgery’ without the need to initiate comprehensive redevelopment.
6.23 The street market, which is currently located in Queens Square, makes an important contribution to the overall vitality and attractiveness of the town centre, and the preferred approach will be for its relocation to the proposed Market Place north of Corporation Street.

6.24 The Parkland Gateway and frontages onto the northern area of George Street will be a Secondary Retail Area and retail uses will be complementary to the retail function of the primary retail area. The development of cafes and restaurants to support the cultural and leisure activities within the Parkland Gateway will be encouraged.

Other Options Considered

6.25 Regional guidance, the emerging North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy and the adopted Regeneration Framework identifies the requirement for a comprehensive retail regeneration of the town centre to accommodate higher quality investment and the creation of additional floorspace to reflect the growth requirements planned for the town. Limited growth and redevelopment would not address the need of future growth within the town centre allowing a balance of opportunities that maintain the dominance of the primary shopping area whilst allowing connected mixed use secondary shopping areas immediately adjoining it.

6.26 No other options were considered in relation to the identification of primary and secondary shopping frontages, as this is required by Government planning policy guidance.

Preferred Option for Leisure

6.27 The proposed Leisure Hub adjacent to the Market Square will provide for a new cinema and associated leisure uses such as a bowling alley within the retail core. A new swimming pool is proposed on north eastern side of Town Square.

Other Options Considered

6.28 None. Corby Borough Council has identified the need to replace the existing swimming pool as it no longer meets the needs of the community. Introducing new and enhanced leisure uses within the town centre is in accordance with best practice and helps support a mix of uses within an accessible town centre.
PREFERRED OPTION FOR CIVIC/COMMUNITY USES

6.29 Civic and community uses will be located within the Parkland Gateway area and will include a new library and council offices focused within a new Civic Hub. This will improve access to council services and information in a single location.

Other Options Considered

6.30 The town centre should provide a focus and resource for the whole community. Addressing and accommodating the needs and future requirements of Corby’s community is essential, and therefore there is a need to secure and accommodate a range of enhanced services and facilities within the town centre. The quality of existing buildings is generally poor and in need of refurbishment or replacement in order to provide more modern facilities of an appropriate standard to meet current and future needs. Redeveloping community uses on separate sites throughout the town centre would not achieve the same level of critical mass and integration that can be achieved by the proposed Civic Hub scheme.

PREFERRED OPTION FOR CULTURAL USES

6.31 The replacement of the existing Willows Centre is proposed with the provision of a new Arts Centre as part of The Civic Hub. This will enhance cultural provision within the town centre and act as a cultural hub for a number of arts and creative organisations.

Other Options Considered

6.32 The town centre should provide a cultural focus for Corby in the same way that civic and community uses are encouraged. Redeveloping cultural uses on separate sites throughout the town centre would not achieve the same level of critical mass and integration that can be achieved by the proposed Civic Hub scheme.

PREFERRED OPTION FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING

6.33 The relocation of the Tresham Institute is proposed as part of the AAP. The Institute will maintain a presence in a central location as part of the proposed Civic Hub.
Other Options Considered

6.34 The Tresham Institute buildings are in urgent need of refurbishment or replacement in order to provide more modern facilities of an appropriate standard to meet current and future needs. The existing layout of the Institute buildings relate poorly to each other and to the street frontage and do not make an efficient use of the site and are considered inappropriate for refurbishment.

PREFERRED OPTION FOR RESIDENTIAL USES

6.35 The urban capacity study identifies the capacity for approximately 510 new residential units within the town centre in the period to 2021, and the introduction of an element of residential development of this amount within the town centre is the preferred option. This is in accordance with planning policy guidance and will contribute to the creation of a more attractive and safer town centre. It is proposed that the residential uses may be introduced above, or alongside the new retail development in the town centre.

6.36 Residential uses will also be located within the Parkland Gateway area along the interface with the woodland and will include a mix of high density apartments and town houses in blocks facing onto the woodland and arranged around central courtyards. The preferred location of new housing towards the periphery of the retail core will enhance linkages with adjoining residential areas towards the north and south of the town centre.

Other Options Considered

6.37 Introducing new residential population within the town centre will help support a diverse range of mixed uses. Locating residential property at ground floor would detract from the primary retail role of the core area. Low density development is inappropriate within the majority of the town centre where national guidance encourages compacting uses. Critical mass can therefore best be achieved through higher density developments such as a residential tower and town house developments.

PREFERRED OPTION FOR PUBLIC REALM

Urban Structure

6.38 The preferred approach is to:
Reinforce key town centre approaches as important gateway locations for high quality architecture, integrated public art or landscape features and increased massing.

Establish a finer urban grain pattern to create a variety of development plot sizes and flexible development opportunities.

Ensure that all primary pedestrian routes and public spaces are overlooked and animated by active frontages.

Create a strong urban edge to the Parkland and Coronation Park.

Create three distinct activity hubs as key town centre destinations; these will comprise the Civic Hub, Leisure Hub and Retail Hub.

Build on local identity of the town set within a woodland setting.

Other Options Considered

The re-development of the town centre at the same low density development that exists has been considered inappropriate to the regeneration of the town centre. This would also be contrary to National guidance which encourages compacting town centre uses, it would also lack the critical mass required to consolidate the core area and strengthen the quality of attractions. Maintaining the existing street hierarchy would also limit the opportunities to increase permeability and the creation of a variety of plot sizes to accommodate alternative mixed uses. Creating distinct districts is in accordance with best practice to reinforce character and identity in different parts of the town centre where they are currently lacking.

Streets and Squares

The town centre will incorporate a hierarchy of high quality open spaces of varying sizes and functions. It will include a new Town Square which will become the primary public open space within Corby Town Centre to accommodate public gatherings and events, recreation and performance and include places to sit out and for children to play. It will form the main gateway to the town and provide a multi-purpose focus for life in Corby. Linked with Hazel Wood, the Town Square will and sit at the western end of 'Corby Walk', a spine that runs the length of the town, linking with a secondary open space at The Market Place in the east. South Square is proposed adjacent to the retail anchor store with strong pedestrian link towards George Street and the Corby Walk. The new squares will function as the primary activity focus areas for the town centre and will be designed to be safe, comfortable, well maintained, welcoming and accessible to everyone.
Other Options Considered

6.41 Only one principal town centre square exists at present in the form of Queens Square which is to be re-designed as part of Willow Place and this is considered inadequate if the town centre is to become an active and animated pedestrian area. The preferred option strongly reflects urban design best practice tailored to the particular opportunities identified as part of the town centre analysis.

Linkages

6.42 A network of pedestrian linkages and cycle routes is proposed. Within the town centre the emphasis will be on the priority needs of the pedestrian which will take precedence over motor vehicles. Pedestrian movement should be comfortable and easy as this will encourage walking and provide security by ‘natural surveillance’ and passing trade for shops and businesses.

6.43 Accessibility and integration throughout Corby Town Centre is vital for the successful regeneration of the whole central area. The key to achieving this is by creating a safe and legible pedestrian and vehicular network that is supplemented with an efficient high quality public transport system, offering a choice of transport modes to residents, workers and visitors.

6.44 The preferred approach will include:

- Reinforce and enhance key views and vistas with high quality architecture, integrated public art and or landscape features to create a dramatic, legible and distinctive town centre.
- Establish a hierarchy of interconnected spaces to accommodate a range of functions and uses, the main space being the Town Square.
- Corporation Street to become a unifying landscaped route unifying the east-west axis (part of Corby Walk).
- Westcott Way and Cottingham Road area key opportunities for environmental improvements.
- Improve the quality and character of George and Elizabeth Street as key north-south routes through new landscaping, improved lighting and public realm treatment.
- Coronation Park is a resource of enormous potential for the town of Corby. The primary design objective for this area is to increase its accessibility with the town centre and to enhance its pedestrian linkages with residential areas.
- Hazel Wood (including the Health Centre and boating lake) will be linked to the town centre via the enhanced Corby Walk running as a spine through the centre of Corby.
Other Options Considered

6.45 The central area provides a distinct lack of open space and landscape structure to meet the requirements of a modern shopping environment. The reinforcement and creation of key views and vistas, providing interconnected open spaces and high quality public open spaces in accordance with best practice and urban design principles and therefore other alternative approaches were considered inappropriate.

Public Art

6.46 The Arts Strategy for Corby (2004) covers all aspects of art including public art. The strategy supports the developments of the built environment and this includes a programme of public art and the involvement of artists (including public participation) in the regeneration of the town centre.

6.47 The preferred option is to ensure the development of the town centre will include an integrated approach to the use of public art in accordance with the Arts Strategy for Corby, to:

♦ Add interest and create a more human scale within the public realm;
♦ Create focal points;
♦ Reinforce local identity and character.

Other Options Considered
The use of public art in the design of town centres is in accordance with best practice and urban design principles and therefore the alternatives of limiting its usage was considered inappropriate.

Preferred Option for Access and Movement

6.48 The town centre will serve a larger population in the future and access arrangements must be considered in the context of changing patterns of movement within the town. In order to improve linkages, it is proposed to reduce the amount of traffic within the town centre which currently creates a barrier to movement, particularly for pedestrians.

6.49 The preferred approach to achieve this objective is through the implementation of the following measures:
The removal of through traffic from the town centre with the exception of public transport and cyclists to enable pedestrians to cross more easily and to allow for the establishment of a high quality public realm.

- Redistribute through traffic across the network using the Elizabeth Street and Cottingham Road routes.
- Removal of through traffic from the middle section of George Street;
- Elizabeth Street to become the main north-south vehicular route.
- Allowing public transport and cyclists unrestricted access along the full length of George Street to maximise and encourage access to the town centre;
- Maintaining access to businesses and car parks on George Street although the route to them will be subject to the traffic restrictions.
Figure 6.3 - Movement Strategy

**Overarching Principles**

1. Minimise the general conflict between pedestrians and vehicles.
2. Contribute positively to the movement on the pavement of the town.
3. Encourage alternative transport and movement on the pavement of the town.
4. Enhance the attractiveness of the town by providing attractive and accessible linkages.
5. Improve access to and within the town through the creation of a pedestrian network.
6. Promote the use of sustainable modes of transport and movement.
7. Improve the amenity of the town through the enhancement of public spaces.
8. Enhance the aesthetic quality of the town through the provision of green spaces.
9. Improve the accessibility of the town through the provision of public transport and movement facilities.
10. Promote the use of sustainable modes of transport and movement.

**Key**

- Pedestrian priority zone
- Proposed public realm
- Proposed interchange locations
- Proposed surface parking locations
- Proposed taxi rank locations
- Proposed service area locations
- Activity focus areas
- Public service priority zones
- Public realm priority zones
- Longer term connections
- Primary pedestrian routes
- Improved access through the woodland
- Secondary road structures
- Power grid lines
- Drainage network
- Railway lines

**Access and Movement Strategy**

January 06

DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION ONLY
Other Options Considered

6.50 The alternative approach to addressing access and movement within the town centre included the encouragement of a greater penetration of traffic movement into and through the town centre. However, the town centre core is largely pedestrianised already with access only for servicing and therefore does not provide opportunities for allowing through traffic without limiting the opportunities for maintaining and enhancing a high quality pedestrian shopping environment. Working within the existing street pattern and road hierarchy would also significantly limit opportunities for enhancing the north-south and east-west pedestrian linkages through the retail core necessary to improve accessibility from adjoining residential areas to key town centre destinations.

6.51 Other options considered also included the removal of all traffic and the pedestrianisation of George Street, which can be considered as a longer term option if essential servicing and access arrangements can be satisfied.

Preferred Option for Bus Facilities & Provision for Taxis

6.52 Bus services will stop at well located bus stops along the primary transport routes of George Street and Elizabeth Street, close to the town centre, and convenient to shopping and other facilities. George Street will benefit from the removal of through traffic as congestion will be reduced in the main drop off and pick up area. This will allow easier access into and out of the area and provide more road space for bus facilities and an improved environment for people waiting for buses.

6.53 In order to achieve the improved linkages between the retail centre and the Parkland Gateway and to allow for the creation of the new Town Square, it will be necessary to relocate the existing taxi rank facilities located on George Street.

6.54 The location of the new taxi rank facilities will be subject to detailed design work and consultation but two general locations are proposed:

♦ North of the proposed traffic restriction- a new rank on George Street. The rank could be on either side of George Street subject to detailed design.

♦ South of the proposed traffic restriction- a new rank at the junction of George Street and Anne Street.

6.55 Taxi ranks area also proposed along Elizabeth Street to serve the eastern side of the town centre.
Other Options Considered

6.56 The development of a bus station within the town centre was considered. The provision of a bus station has not received significant support through consultations and is considered unnecessary in achieving a balanced distribution of set down and pick up point throughout the town centre.

Preferred Option for Parking

6.57 The level and location of parking will be critical to the development of the town centre. The preferred options are:

♦ to locate parking at the periphery of the retail core near to key activity nodes;
♦ to maximise the potential for shared use of parking spaces, for example, the parking which will serve the Civic Hub and mixed use development during the daytime will be available for use in association with the Arts Centre in the evening.
♦ In accordance with compacting uses, rooftop car parking will be considered, for example on the top of the proposed supermarket in addition to undercroft (basement) parking opportunities.

6.58 In the longer term, there is potential for new parking within the town centre for multi-purpose visits. The provision of new undercroft (basement) car parking off Westcott Way would be provided as part of the two phases of retail redevelopments. A new multi-storey car park would be required as part of the proposed food store development off Alexandra Road, a new multi-storey car park accessed from George Street will accommodate the requirements of development within the Parkland Gateway. There would also be additional surface level parking north of George Street, off Wood Street

6.59 In the short to medium term a number of car parking spaces will be lost as the construction of new town centre developments take place, particularly the redevelopment of Anne Street Multi Storey Car Park (MSCP), and a range of temporary parking solutions will be required to accommodate the need of town centre users.

Other Options Considered

6.60 Locating MSCP’s within the core area would be contrary to the overall traffic strategy of maintaining pedestrianised retail core and would encourage greater journey lengths and potentially discourage the use of alternative more sustainable modes of transport with access to the core area including public transport, walking and cycling. Locating parking opportunities within a single location or away from key activity nodes has been discounted as it would make the town centre less accessible and discourage a more balanced movement of pedestrian activity throughout the centre.
7. Delivery and Implementation

7.1 The AAP will be used as a basis for the coordination of public sector investment and for the preparation of development briefs and detailed design of particular projects. It will also provide a platform for discussions and negotiations with developers and landowners bringing forward development projects.

7.2 A number of principles are proposed to underpin the delivery of the proposals in the AAP:

♦ The implementation of the AAP must be approached in a comprehensive way
♦ Development proposals must accord with the regeneration objectives for the town centre as a whole
♦ The provision of new infrastructure in particular the alteration of the existing highway, the provision of new linkages,
♦ Enhancement of the public realm, and the provision of adequate car parking are fundamental to achieving the regeneration objectives and must be addressed comprehensively.
♦ Development and public realm proposals must be of the highest design quality. Best Practice including ‘design coding’ will be included.

**DELIVERY MECHANISMS**

7.3 A number of approaches exist for the delivery of individual projects:

♦ Public development
♦ Partnership/joint venture
♦ Private development

7.4 A delivery strategy and action plan will be prepared. A key objective will be to maximise public and private sector funding to secure regeneration objectives.
FUNDING

7.5 A key regeneration objective is to maximise funding opportunities and investment. A key element of delivering the AAP will be the contribution individual projects make to the regeneration of the town centre complementing other sources of funding and investment. Developer related requirements may include:

♦ Improvements to public realm and streetscape;
♦ Improvements to and maintenance of public open spaces;
♦ Provision and enhancement of pedestrian and cycle routes;
♦ Financial contributions to transport improvements;
♦ Commuted payments for provision of parking spaces in multi-storey car park;
♦ Preparation and implementation of management plans.

PROGRAMME

7.6 The final AAP will identify a number of projects have been identified for potential early development, for example the redevelopment of Willow Place Shopping Centre and the Hub and also those more likely to come forward for development during later stages including the cinema and supermarket.
8. Monitoring and Review

8.1 Monitoring is now a requirement and statutory part of the new planning system and will provide a mechanism for review and assessment of the performance of the plans and policies comprising the LDF.

8.2 The AAP, along with other LDF documents will be monitored through the Council’s Annual Monitoring Report. This is normally produced in December of each year and will report on the plan’s performance in the previous financial year.

8.3 Once the AAP is finalised, appropriate local indicators will be determined and these indicators will help assess the performance of the plan. This process will ensure that the policies are monitored regularly and any new circumstances or change in Government or regional guidance are properly considered.

8.4 The sustainability appraisal will also be updated to take into consideration any changes that may have occurred and to ensure that policies are meeting sustainability objectives.
9. **What comes next**

9.1 This Preferred Options report will now be subject to a six week statutory consultation period. This document is to be distributed across the Borough and will be available on the Council’s website. The Council will also be holding workshops to discuss the themes arising from this document. Details of these events are available on the Council’s website or can be obtained by contacting the number below.

We really want your views on the Preferred Options for site allocations in the Borough.

Please use the response forms provided, completing a separate form for each preferred option, or element within the preferred option you wish to comment upon.

All responses will be scanned and made available on the Corby Borough website as will a report summarising the responses. For these reasons please note that your comments and any identifying information contained in your response will not remain confidential.

Following this period of consultation the plan will be prepared and submitted to the Government Office in August 2006 when there will be a further opportunity to comment.

For further information on this process, or the contents of this document please

- Visit Corby Borough Council’s web page at www.corby.gov.uk
- Visit the North Northamptonshire Joint Planning unit website at www.nntogether.co.uk
• Telephone the Borough’s Planning Policy section on
  01536 463185

• E-mail the Council at
  katanya.barlow@corby.gov.uk

• Write to the Council at
  Local Plans, Corby Borough Council, Deene House, New Post Office Square, Corby, Northants, NN17 1GD

This document can be made available in other languages or in large print upon request. Please contact the Council at the above address.
All comments on the Preferred Options within this report should be made to the Council by 5pm on Friday 16th June 2006.

We will not be able to consider late responses. Please contact us if you are likely to encounter any difficulties with responding in the required timescale.