



Rushden
Neighbourhood Plan
Draft for Regulation 14 Consultation
(March 2017)





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An introduction to the Neighbourhood Plan

Rushden Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared under the provisions of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act (as amended by the 2011 Localism Act) and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. It is intended to guide the future development of the town up to 2031, supporting strategic policies of the Local Plan.

For the purposes of the relevant legislation, the Qualifying Body is Rushden Town Council. The Town Council applied to East Northamptonshire Council on the 25th June 2013 for designation as a Neighbourhood Area. The area comprising the Neighbourhood Area is illustrated in Figure 1 below:

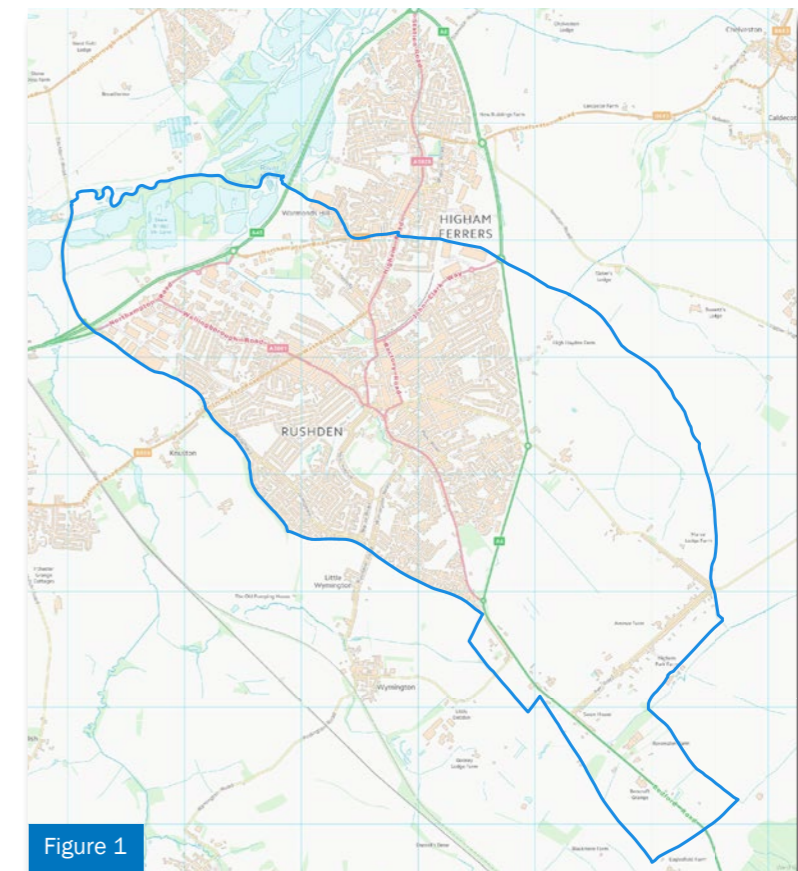


Figure 1



East Northamptonshire Council endorsed the Town Council's Neighbourhood Area application on the 16th December 2013.

The Neighbourhood Area covers the parish of Rushden, in its entirety.

As the Qualifying Body, the Town Council is responsible for coordinating the Plan's preparation. The Neighbourhood Plan is for the entire area falling within Rushden Town Council's administrative boundary, including both the main urban area and the outlying rural hinterland.

It is a legal requirement that Neighbourhood Plans are prepared in accordance with the Localism Act 2011, the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, as amended, and other relevant legislation and Directives including the Directive 2001/42/EC on Strategic Environmental Assessment.

A Neighbourhood Plan must be drafted to meet the basic conditions that are set out in

paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as applied to neighbourhood plans by section 38A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. These conditions include that a Neighbourhood Plan must have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State, and must be in general conformity with strategic policies of the adopted development plan for the local area.

In terms of national policies and advice, these principally comprise of policies contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework /NPPF) and guidance within the National Planning Policy Guidance (the Guidance/ NPPG), in addition to Ministerial Statements where relevant.

Strategic planning policies for the local area are set out in the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2011-2031 (NNJCS) – Local Plan Part 1 – which was adopted on 14th July 2016 and currently comprises the principal

development plan document for the local area. The NNJCS sets out the long-term vision and objectives for the whole of the North Northamptonshire area (comprising the administrative areas of Corby Borough Council, East Northamptonshire Council, Kettering Borough Council and the Borough Council of Wellingborough) for the plan period up to 2031, and includes strategic policies to steer and shape development.

The Neighbourhood Plan has had full regard to all relevant national and local policies. The strategy presented in the plan aims to build on relevant policy to produce a cohesive local framework to manage the development and growth of the town. The plan period for the Rushden Neighbourhood Plan is the same as that for the NNJCS, 2011 - 2031.

The Neighbourhood Plan has also been prepared in accordance with the EU Directive 2001/42/EC on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). The Directive seeks to provide a high level of

protection for the environment and requires that all plans and programmes that may have an environmental effect need an environmental evaluation.

A sustainability report has been prepared to assess the objectives and policies of this Neighbourhood Plan and to demonstrate that the plan will not result in any adverse environmental effects. This report will address the requirements of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, which incorporates the SEA Directive into national legislation.

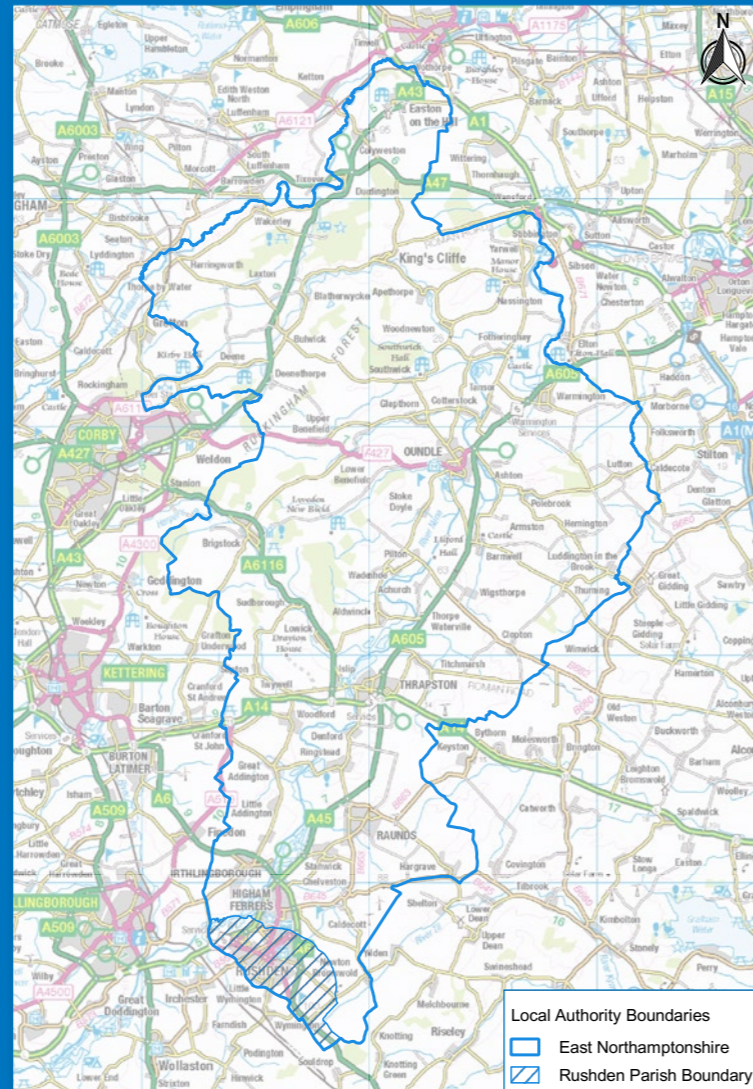
The Neighbourhood Plan has also been assessed against Directive 2011/92/EU on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment, and 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora and Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds.



Rushden

Rushden is located in the County of Northamptonshire and falls within the administrative boundary of East Northamptonshire Council.

Geographically the town covers approximately 14 square miles and is well served by a number of strategic roads, including the A45 located to the west and north of the town and the A6 that runs east of the town. The town is divided into the following five ward areas: Hayden Ward, Pemberton Ward, Sartoris Ward, Bates Ward and Spencer Ward. 2011 Census statistics indicate that the population of Rushden was 29,272 persons. The latest (2015) population estimate for the town is 30,282 persons.



The History of Rushden

The history of Rushden dates back many thousands of years with indications of there being Bronze and Iron Age settlements in the area as well as Roman sites found in the Hayway Area and Higham Park. Rushden is referenced in the Domesday book as “Risdene”, which means “Rushey Valley”. This heritage means many of the settlement’s key attributes stem from early historical periods; for example, the core medieval pattern and field systems of Rushden were established during the 8th Century.

By the 16th Century farming in the region had intensified and so agriculture had become the dominant occupation of the town. This changed rapidly in the late 18th and 19th century during the advent of the industrial revolution, wherein boot and shoe manufacturing became Rushden’s new employment base. During the rise of the shoemaking industry, workers often worked from their homes; however, as demand for footwear increased, the amount of factories built in the town also increased, which caused Rushden to change from a rural village to an industrial town. This period was also responsible for introducing new rows of terraces and community buildings built between new roads and over former green space within the settlement. The speed of growth meant factories became an embedded feature of the town and in more recent years a large number of these have been converted to flats.

The period between 1870 and 1920 represented the peak of growth for Northamptonshire’s boot and shoe making industry,

and at this point Rushden contained over 100 factories. This corresponded closely with World War I; indeed the factories within Rushden were the main national supplier to troops in the trenches. Following the national decline in industry many of these were lost, or as noted previously converted to residential use. While there was a brief resurgence in demand for boots and shoes during World War II, the industry contracted again in the latter half of the Twentieth Century. The factories that remain are therefore a reminder of the settlement’s heritage, and factories are now interwoven among more modern development.

During the 20th century Rushden continued to grow and development in the settlement diversified to include new banks, shops and other civil and community buildings constructed around the High Street and Newton Road. Other significant developments in this period include the creation of the one-way traffic system that still remains today.

30,282

Understanding Rushden of Today

Rushden has grown to become one of the largest towns in Northamptonshire. While the town has many positive attributes, it no longer plays the economic role it once did in the region.

In the mid-1900s there were over 100 boot and shoe factories in the town but by the end of the century most of these had closed and the associated employment they provided had gone. Much of the vibrancy of its old centre has also now been lost to out-of-town competitors and other nearby towns.

The purpose of this Neighbourhood Plan is to put in place a locally derived development framework that will redress this lost productivity and create a better, more cohesive

town that can support its future residents and once again play an increased economic role in the region. In the coming years, Rushden will experience new growth opportunities arising from both the Rushden Lakes development and Rushden East; the new major sustainable urban extension proposed to the east of the settlement, beyond the A6 Bypass. Our aim is to bring back the jobs that have previously been lost and to capture this growth for the benefit of Rushden's residents.

Before setting out a vision for the town and the policies needed to deliver the vision it is important to understand Rushden's natural and physical characteristics.

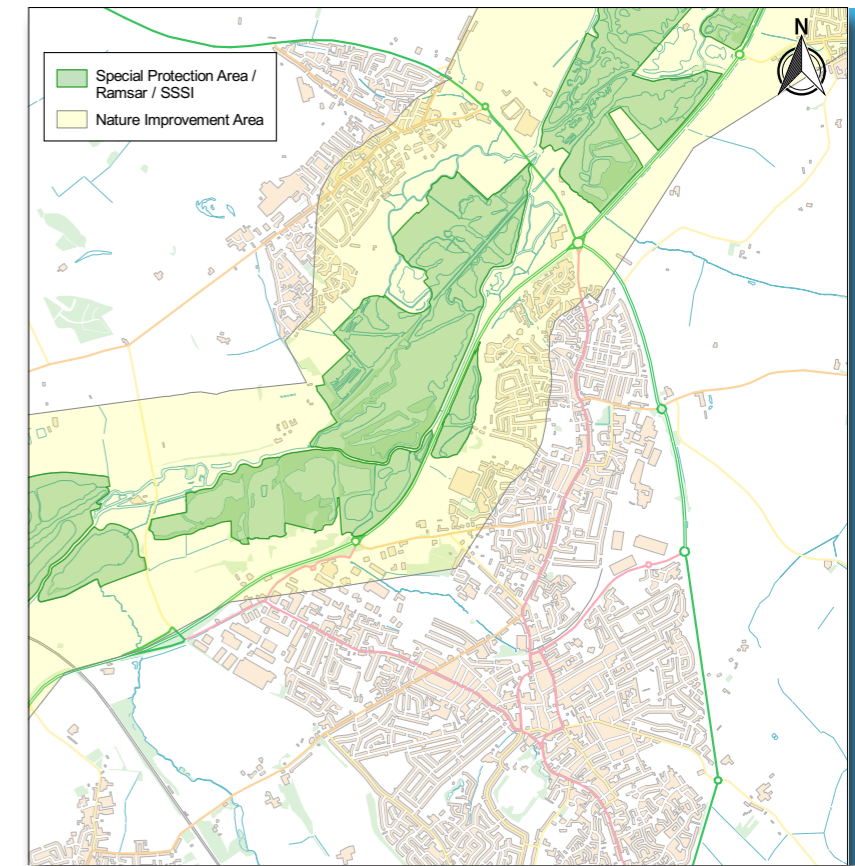


Environment

Rushden is located within the Nene Valley, which covers over 41,000 hectares and rises to the west of Northamptonshire, extending for the length of the County and then on through Peterborough.

The Nene Valley is home to a large number of hugely valuable wetlands for birds and wildlife, with protections provided by Ramsar (international), Special Protection Area (European), Site of Special Scientific Interest (national) and Nature Improvement Area (local/ Northamptonshire) designations. Within Rushden, the original core of the settlement grew around High Street, High Street South, Duck Street, College Street, Church Street, Newton Road and Park Road. The greatest period of growth occurred from the 19th Century onward with new development expanding around the High Street (former A6) that now runs like a spine through the settlement in a north - south direction. Radiating out to the west, south and east of the town centre are predominantly streets of brick and terraced housing that are associated with the former shoe manufacturing industries as well as other Victorian buildings.

The large-scale urbanisation of Rushden that took place during



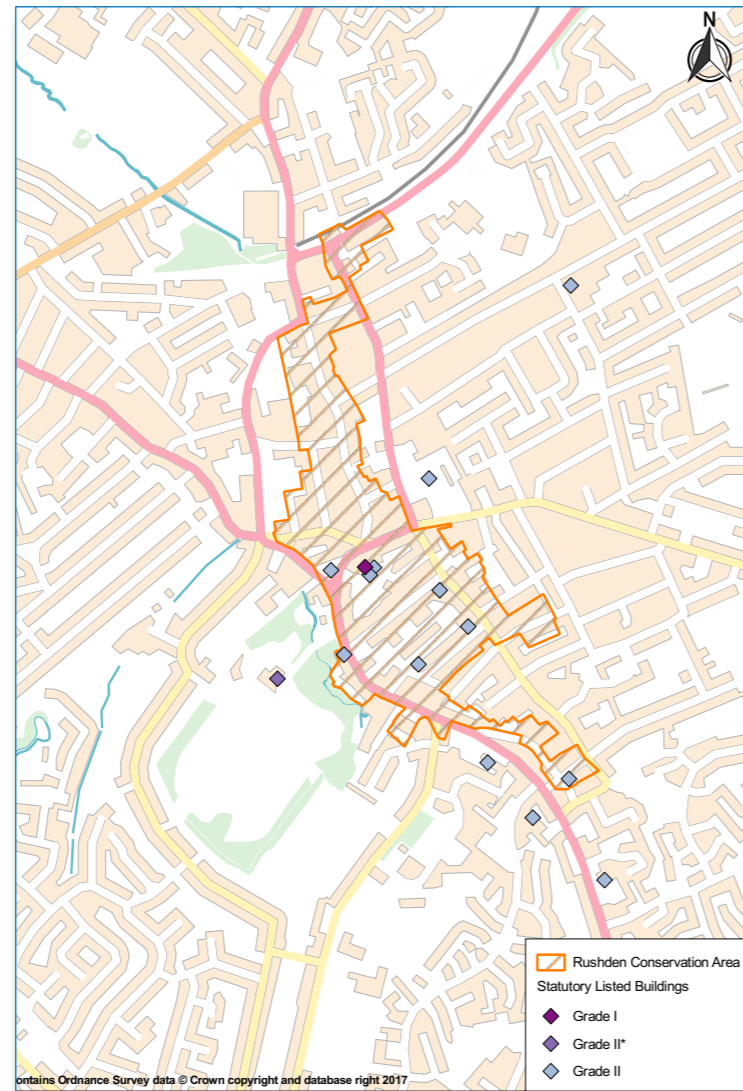
the 19th Century meant that the town was virtually rebuilt and now much of its architecture stems from the Victorian period.

As a reflection of the age of the settlement, the town contains a significant number of designated heritage assets including the Grade I Listed St Mary's Church that was built in the 1300's and is identified by its grand spire which measures 172ft in height. In addition, there are other Grade II listed buildings, including Rushden Hall which dates back to the 14th century, former shoe factories, former farmhouses and rectories as well as non-listed buildings that are still worthy of preservation for future generations.

The core of Rushden has an expansive Conservation Area that is laid out in a largely linear form, with the medieval route through the town forming the backbone of the Conservation Area. The centre of the Conservation Area appears dense in form as buildings front onto the High Street with visual relief only being provided by pockets of public seating scattered throughout the centre. The continuous building line along the High Street is only broken by the Wesleyan Chapel, which sits at a different angle to nearby neighbouring buildings. The most prominent building in the Conservation Area is St Mary's Church, which appears considerably taller than all other buildings on the High Street.

While trees and greenery in the Conservation Area are generally lacking, Griffith Street is an exception to this, with a number of mature trees that serve to soften the landscape character of the area. The Conservation Area provides a blanket protection for all trees within the boundary. Beyond the Conservation Area, notable clusters of protected trees (Tree Preservation Orders/ TPOs) are also situated at Higham Road, Wellingborough Road, Prospect Avenue, St Peters Avenue, Bedford Road, Trafford Road, Oval Road and Highfield Road.

Referring to building types in the Conservation Area, these appear fairly typical of a small industrial town development. Places of worship, a war memorial, factories, a railway station, banks, shops and inns intersperse terraced housing dating mainly from the late 19th and early 20th Centuries.



The special interest of the area lies not only in the number and quality of its many historic buildings but also in their relationship to each other as the components of a working, former industrial, town. The majority of buildings originate from the expansion years when Rushden grew rapidly. The most prevalent building material is local red brick.

A number of significant public open spaces are situated across the urban area. Notable open spaces are Jubilee Park, Manor Park, Rushden Hall Park, Spencer Park, the Cemetery (Newton Road), and allotments at Highfield Road and Woodland Road. Immediately outside the urban areas of Rushden the landscape consists mainly of managed arable farmland, with large fields defined by thin hedgerows.

Population of Rushden

According to 2011 Census statistics the population of Rushden is 29,272 people (latest, 2015 estimate, is 30,282 people).

The age profile of Rushden is broken down as follows:

- 0-14 age group – 18.66% of population
- 15-64 age group – 64.75% of population
- 65+ age group – 16.58% of population

The 15-64 age category is dominated by persons aged 35-45. However, population distributions show that Rushden's population is beginning to age as persons in the 60-64 age group contribute to 6.6% of Rushden's population.

In comparison to 2001 statistics, persons falling in the 65+ age category increased by 1.49% by 2011. 2011 Census show that the majority of the town's residents fall in the following categories:

- 49.3% regard themselves as living as a married couple
- 15.5% are cohabiting as a couple
- 19.8% are single

Residents are typically healthy, with 44.4% of the population rated as being in very good health and 37.3% rated as being in good health.

Relatively few residents are unemployed or economically inactive. For example, in the 16-24 age category, only 1.3% of persons are unemployed whereas in the 50-74 category 0.9% of residents are unemployed.



Housing

2011 Census Statistics show that housing stock in Rushden is divided in the following way:

Property size	Number of Properties	% of Total Properties
One Bed	923	7%
Two Bed	3,000	24%
Three Bed	5,989	49%
Four Bed	1,988	16%
Five Bed	404	3%
Total	12,304	100%

The majority of Rushden's housing stock is either owned outright or owned with a mortgage, which combined account for 73% of Rushden's households.

- Owned outright: Total number, 3878 or 31.5% of total households.
- Owned with a mortgage: Total number, 5110 or 41.5% of total households

However, persons living in social rented properties and private rented properties make a significant contribution to households:

- Social rented: Total number, 1647 or 13% of total households
- Private rented: Total number, 1493 or 12% of total households

All remaining households are either occupying under shared ownership (0.1% of total households) or living rent free (1% of total households).

2011 Census statistics also show that Rushden's households are divided in the following way.

Household size	Number	% of Total Households
One person	3354	27%
Two person	4677	38%
Three person	1906	16%
Four person	1628	13%
Five person	533	4%
Six person	154	1%
Seven person	32	0.3%
Eight person	20	0.2%

Notable from this evidence is that two and three bedroom properties account for a very significant proportion of Rushden's housing stock; however, this does not necessarily mean existing stock is able to cater for market demand. To improve the diversity in housing stock and to ensure new housing can cater for full market demands, including executive home categories, there is a need to ensure new residential development is of a sufficient quality and dwelling size to service the growth aspirations of the settlement. Local Plan requirement regarding housing mix and tenure are defined by NNJCS Policy 30.

In terms of affordable housing; the housing stock data shows that Rushden has 1875 affordable homes of a variety of tenures. Out of this housing stock, 323 are 1 bed flats and 257 are two bed flats. Whereas 308 are two-bed houses/maisonettes and 681 are 3-bed houses/maisonettes.

A recent analysis of affordable housing demand has illustrated that demand for smaller affordable housing units is currently greater than demand for bigger affordable properties. Given the amount of stock that falls within the larger dwelling category, the town may benefit from a programme of providing smaller affordable units; however these still need to be brought forward as quality new homes and should include new 3 bedroom units. Therefore, wherever smaller units are proposed, these should be included as part of a mix of dwelling sizes that responds to outstanding needs.

Recent housing developments in Rushden have provided a significant amount of flatted developments. Future housing should therefore look to provide houses, maisonettes or bungalows rather than more flats.

Overall, it is considered that new housing should be provided in a form that meets market needs and aspirations.

Business and Retail

Whilst once having a thriving shoemaking industry, the decline of this industry led to a contraction of the town's economic base, which, in tandem with the gradual rise in nearby out-of-town shopping locations has resulted in a reduction in the town's retail offerings.

Referring to Rushden's main High Street, this extends through the core of the settlement and generally conforms to the land's natural topography. Development along the High Street follows that of the settlement's older heritage sites, with buildings set immediately adjacent to the main north – south arterial road.

In 2010, the Princes Foundation for the Built Environment put forward a Regeneration Strategy for Rushden. The strategy noted that 91% of residents stated they may visit the town if it had a wider range of shops. It is vital for this regeneration work to continue. To achieve this, the Neighbourhood Plan will seek to create more cohesive shop frontage design and provide softer landscaping within the town, improving Rushden's sense of place and public realm.

To bring about growth, the town must capitalise on business opportunities brought forward by Rushden Lakes and Rushden East and seek to create employment and reduce out-commuting from the settlement. Where new business is provided, the preference should be for high calibre employment opportunities.

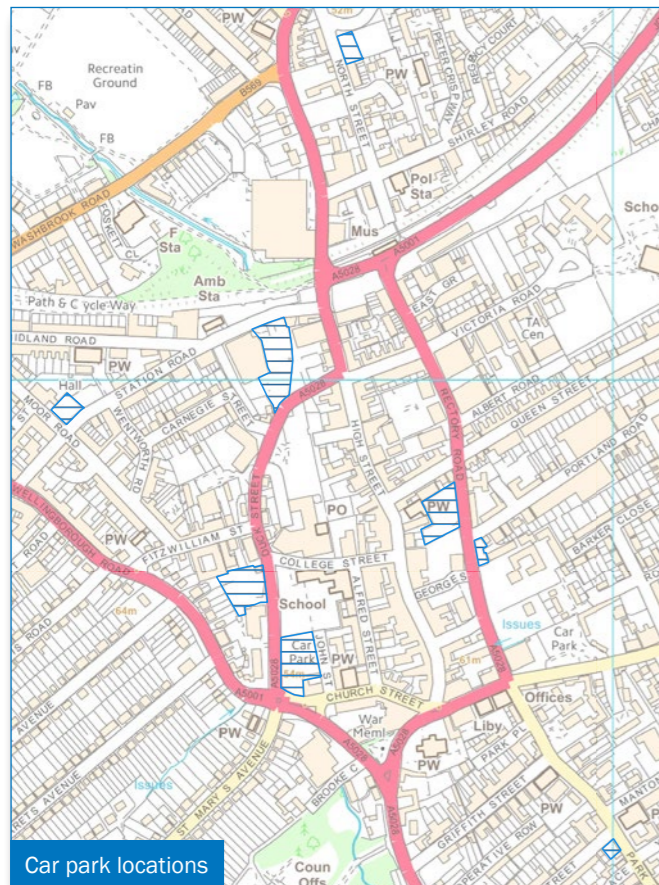
Transport and Travel

Rushden is located between two major strategic Roads – the A45 and A6. The town can be accessed via a number of major arterial roads, including the A5001; A5028 and B569.

Its local highway network consists of a series of streets forming a clockwise one-way system, particularly around Rectory Road, Newton Road, Church Street, Duck Street, Skinners Hill, Church Parade and High Street.

The prominence of one-way systems around the centre is both a positive and negative for the town. By preventing opposite traffic movements, the one way systems limits unnecessary through traffic in the town, but it also creates a less navigable road network and can increase local journey times.

The existing one-way network also has implications for the local bus network as bus drop off points for passengers tend to be on the opposite side of the road to the settlement's retail buildings.



Car park locations

Rushden currently generates a significant number of traffic movements – many through out-commuting, which the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to address through encouraging new job opportunities within the town wherever possible.

Parking provision around the town is typically generous with 451 spaces available in the following eight East Northamptonshire Council-owned public car parks:

Crabb Street	8 spaces
Duck Street	86 spaces
John Street	102 spaces
North Street	31 spaces
Rectory Road - Orchard Place	78 spaces
Rectory Road – corner of Portland Road	19 spaces
Station Road – Splash Pool	97 spaces
Station Road	30 spaces

Car parks are also well located which serves to reduce walking distances from the car parks to Rushden's centre. The Neighbourhood Plan should seek to safeguard this parking provision.

Historically, cycling options have been fairly segregated. However, the Greenway created a new route along the old railway line from the High Street, Rushden to Crown Way. It also made use of the existing footpath (a former donkey track) from the High Street to Washbrook Road provided a new tarmac cycle-way to Rushden Academy across Spencer Park and through to Higham Ferrers.

In terms of walkability, Rushden is a compact town measuring roughly 2.2 miles east to west at its widest point. The Greenway provides an optimal walking route as well as a cycling route and most roads within the town have good quality footpaths.

Community, Leisure and Open Space

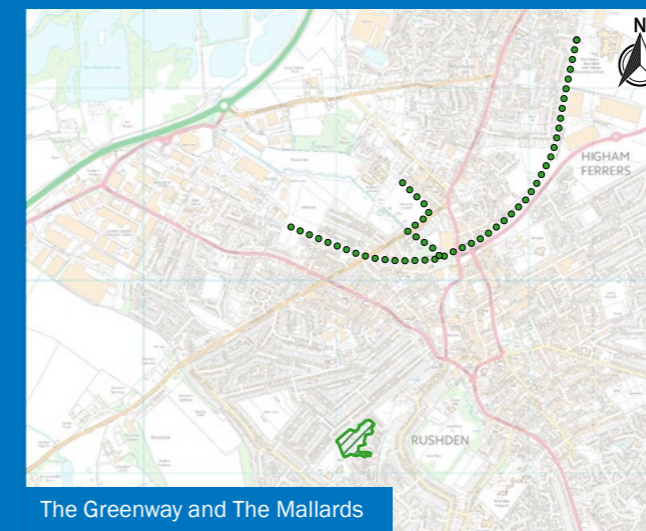
Rushden provides a variety of open space types including children's play provision, natural and semi-natural greenspace and allotments. Findings from a study commissioned by the Town Council into available open space within the town are summarised below.

Type of children's play space	Number of open spaces	% of total open space
Local area for play	9	23.1
Local equipped area for play	11	28.2
Neighbourhood equipped area for play	4	10.3
No formal children's play provision	15	38.4

Total **39** **100**

Source – Rushden Open Space, Recreation and Sport Study August 2015¹

From the space that is available, the study found the highest proportion of formal and informal play provision to exist in Bates Ward. Pemberton and Hayden Wards have the lowest provision of open space for children's play provision (by area) at 2m² and 4.1m² per person respectively.



The Greenway and The Mallards

Natural and semi-natural open space²

The setting of Rushden means that it has good access to greenspace in the River Nene Regional Park; however green spaces within the urban area are limited and connectivity between existing spaces requires improvement. The two prominent semi-natural green spaces in Rushden are East Northamptonshire Greenway and The Mallards.

Allotments

There are currently four allotment sites in Rushden:

- Church Hall Road Allotments (4ha)
- Rushden Permanent Allotments and Small Holdings Society, Quorn Road (5ha)
- Bedford Road Allotments (1.6ha)
- Alexandra Road (inc Grafton Road) Allotments (3.5ha)

This provision means that there is around 0.48ha of allotment space per 1000 persons; which is higher than the East Northamptonshire Benchmark of 0.34ha of space per 1000 persons³.

Outdoor sports space

There are a total of 19 sports pitches in Rushden that provide a variety of private and public space for sport. Football, cricket, rugby and tennis pitches make up the majority of the provision that is available; however, the quality of pitches and their facilities is generally in need of improvement. Due to the policy steer in the NNJCS to direct development in growth towns to existing brownfield land, and the proposals for the Rushden East Urban Extension, there will be a need to increase the amount of outdoor sports provision and pitches to cater for an increase in the town's population.

Indoor sports space

To complement Rushden's outdoor sports space it has a variety of indoor sports facilities including bowls and swimming clubs; table tennis club; roller hockey club and health and fitness suites. Due to forecast population growth, the demand for these and other facilities will continue to grow.

¹ Rushden Open Space, Recreation and Sport Study (2015) prepared for Rushden Town Council by DLP Planning Ltd

² Natural and semi-natural open space includes woodlands, urban forestry, scrubland, grasslands (e.g. downlands, commons, meadows), wetlands, nature reserves and wastelands with a primary purpose of wildlife conservation and bio-diversity within the settlement boundaries.

³ Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study prepared for East Northamptonshire Council by PMP



Vision for Rushden

The vision and objectives for the Neighbourhood Plan have been shaped by public consultations and stakeholder involvement to ensure the Plan accurately reflects the aspirations of the local community. Further details of the consultations undertaken are provided in the Consultation Statement which forms part of the Plan's evidence base. Following these consultation events and workshops, the following vision to underpin and inform the Plan has been established.

The Vision

- To embrace the opportunities created by Rushden Lakes and Rushden East developments and to strive towards a town that balances the needs of its people with jobs and infrastructure.
- To use Rushden Lakes and Rushden East as a catalyst for growth and to achieve real economic progress to sustain Rushden's status as North Northamptonshire's 'fourth town'.
- To provide an appropriate balance of new housing that is of a suitable size and type to meet the needs and aspirations of all residents both now and in the future.
- To improve the visual environment of Rushden; providing more green open space and preserving the town's important heritage assets and overall ensuring the town is an attractive place to live and work.

Core Objectives - To deliver this vision for Rushden we have set out a series of Core Objectives that the Rushden Plan will set out to achieve. These objectives have been developed in response to a range of issues that were raised by local people during the consultation exercises undertaken in the preparation of the Plan.

The policies set out in the remainder of this Plan provide the framework for local decision making that will ensure these objectives can be met.

Theme	Core Objectives
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver between 200 and 550 new dwellings to meet defined need for Rushden on allocated sites (in addition to Rushden East SUE) • Provide a range of housing types and tenures to ensure a balanced and mixed community • Avoid the proliferation of flats
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and enhance existing employment sites that are of the right type and quality • Support appropriate new employment opportunities in suitable locations
Open space and leisure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguard existing open spaces and children's play spaces • Seek opportunities to secure new amenity, open and play spaces alongside new development • Create a high quality outdoor sports and recreation hub
Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure new developments are well connected to local services and facilities • Protect and enhance the network of public footpaths and cycleways in the town • Support proposals for new greenways in the town
Town centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support uses and proposals that enhance the vitality and viability of Rushden Town Centre • Encourage high quality design in all developments
Design and conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote designs and materials that protect the setting of the Town's Conservation Area and other historic assets

Housing

Housing projections for Rushden's population demonstrate that it will continue to increase, reflecting the ongoing aspirations for growth that are supported by the Rushden East Sustainable Urban Extension.

Assessments into available housing stock have shown that there is an overall lack of smaller units to enable downsizing and to provide homes for the town's reducing household size. Any new stock should be able to cater to changing household sizes and aspirations, and should be able to provide sufficient dwelling choices for the settlement's ageing population.

Aside from housing need, the vision for the plan is to ensure that where new houses are built they are appropriate in size and designed so that they integrate acceptably with the existing settlement.

Policy 29 of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2011-2031 (NNJCS) sets out the overarching housing distribution strategy for the wider area and, in Table 5 details how the housing requirement will be distributed. Table 5 states that Rushden must plan for 3,285 dwellings over the course of the plan period.

The allocation of land to the East of Rushden as a sustainable urban extension will accommodate in the region of 2500 dwellings (of which it is expected 1600 will be delivered during the plan period), plus appropriate job opportunities, ancillary facilities, services and open space, as set out in NNJCS Policy 33. For the period 2011-16, 650 new dwellings have been delivered in Rushden Parish, with a further 130 dwellings anticipated to come forward during the 2016-17 monitoring period. In addition, there are existing commitments and emerging proposals to provide for a further 348 dwellings in the Parish. As such, there remains a residual balance of approximately 550 dwellings to be delivered over the next 15 years to fulfil the requirement imposed by the NNJCS.

It is noted that the NNJCS, at paragraph 9.11, sets out a flexible approach to be applied to the housing requirement figures such that an over- or under-provision at another settlement within the same Part 2 Local Plan area (in Rushden's case comprising the other settlements of Higham Ferrers, Irthlingborough, Raunds and the surrounding rural hinterland) can be off-set across the area. Given housing completions within the plan period to date and existing commitments, the prescribed housing requirements of these other settlements has already been met and exceeded (by circa 360 dwellings). As such, by adopting this flexible approach the residual requirement could be further reduced to around 200 dwellings to meet the requirements of the NNJCS.

On this basis, between 200 and 550 further dwellings ought to be provided within the remainder of the plan period across the Rushden Neighbourhood Plan area to meet the NNJCS housing requirement. In accordance with the Plan's visions to embrace opportunities and plan positively for both economic and housing growth, the Plan will seek to enable the delivery of sufficient sites to accommodate up to the higher level of growth. These new dwellings are to be delivered in accordance with the following policies:

Policy H1 – Settlement boundary

The Neighbourhood Plan designates a Settlement Boundary, as shown on the Policies Map, for the purposes of:

1. distinguishing between the urban and rural parts of the Plan area (Rushden Parish), in accordance with the overall spatial development strategy set out in the Local Plan;
2. directing future housing and economic development to within the established framework of the urban area;
3. containing the spread of the urban area, by allowing for infilling up to existing physical boundaries; and
4. encouraging the re-use of previously-developed sites.

Development within the Settlement Boundary will be permitted where it accords with other policies of the Development Plan.

Other than on the allocated sites identified in Policy H2 below or within the Rushden East Sustainable Urban Extension, proposals for new housing development beyond the Settlement Boundary will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, in accordance with Paragraph 55 of the National Planning Policy Framework.)

In order to identify appropriate sites to allocate for new housing development, a ‘call for sites’ exercise was undertaken, inviting submissions of potential sites. The submitted sites have been assessed against a number of criteria to assess their suitability for new housing development. Those considered to be the most sustainable have been allocated to accommodate new housing development and boost the supply of housing within the Town.

The ‘call for sites’ exercise also identified a number of smaller sites within the established built framework of the town which could be supported for housing development given the accessibility of existing facilities and services within the town. However, it was not considered necessary or appropriate to allocate individual sites with a likely yield of fewer than 10 dwellings and instead these will be considered as ‘windfall’ developments which would normally be appropriate subject to standard development management considerations (design, access etc.). Based on the submissions made to the ‘call for sites’ and having regard to past delivery rates, the Town Council anticipates circa 100 dwellings could be brought forward over the plan period through this provision.

The Local Plan (NNJCS Policy 4) requires the preparation and implementation of a mitigation strategy, in relation to all future residential development within 3km of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area (SPA)/Ramsar site. Given that most of the main urban area is situated within this 3km zone, any residential development within the area will incur a financial contribution to cover the mitigation measures necessary to alleviate the adverse impacts of development upon the SPA/Ramsar site. Further details about these requirements are set out in the Addendum to the SPA Supplementary Planning Document: Mitigation Strategy⁴.

Policy H2 – Location of new housing development

In addition to the Rushden East SUE, approximately 550 new dwellings will be delivered on the following sites, which are allocated for housing and identified on the Policies Map.

Site name	Number of dwellings
A. Irchester Road	10 – 15
B. Hayden Road ⁴	70 – 100
C. Shirley Road	100 – 150
D. St Marys Avenue	20 – 30
E. Manor Park ⁴	135 – 200
F. Northampton Road (RESERVE SITE)	50 – 80
Total	385 – 575

In addition, provided new development meets the requirements of other policies in this plan, new dwellings will be permitted on appropriate sites that fall within the Settlement Boundary as defined by policy H1.

Planning applications for development on an allocated site, or smaller windfall sites within the Settlement Boundary, will be determined in accordance with the policies of the Development Plan and will be expected to ensure appropriate integration with the site and surrounding development context and adequate outdoor amenity space.

Planning permission will be granted unless development will result in a poor relationship with its surroundings or other material planning considerations indicate otherwise. In determining this relationship, particular regard will be had to policies H3 and H4 which set out site-specific considerations and policy E1 which considers design in new development. Proposals for self-build plots on any allocated site, or windfall sites within the Settlement Boundary, will be supported subject to Policy H6.

For all residential development within the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA/Ramsar site 3km buffer zone, as shown in the Local Plan, financial contributions to mitigate the adverse impacts of development upon the SPA/Ramsar site will be sought in accordance with the Addendum to the SPA Supplementary Planning Document: Mitigation Strategy⁵.

It is an aspiration of the Plan that all new development should serve to deliver overall improvements to the visual environment of the town and enhance access to open space. In order to achieve these aims, the following policy sets out key site-specific considerations.

⁴ The allocation of both the Hayden Road and Manor Park sites for development are contingent upon the relocation of the existing playing pitches and facilities to a suitable alternative site in accordance with Policies SL5 and SL6.

⁵ Addendum to the SPA SPD: Mitigation Strategy (2016) prepared by North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit

Policy H3 – Allocated sites

Proposals for housing development on allocated sites A-F identified in Policy H2 will be permitted provided they accord with other policies of the Plan and the following site-specific criteria:

A Irchester Road

- the proposed development will be of a scale and density commensurate with existing residential development in the locality;
- the proposed development will respect and complement the character of existing terraced development in the locality;
- the proposed development will make adequate provision for off-street parking, in accordance with Northamptonshire County Council's standing advice for highways or any subsequently adopted standards which supersede them;
- the proposed development will provide for 10-15 new dwellings.

B Hayden Road

- the existing sports facility is to be re-provided in accordance with Policy SL5;
- the proposed development will make provision for older peoples' accommodation;
- the proposed development will make adequate provision for both public and private outdoor amenity space;
- the proposed development will provide for 70-100 dwellings.

C Shirley Road

- the proposed development will make provision for older peoples' accommodation;
- the proposed development will provide for appropriate vehicular and pedestrian access;

- any application for development of the site will demonstrate that ground conditions have been investigated and any necessary remediation or mitigation is to be undertaken;
- the proposed development will make provision for publicly accessible open space and a well-connected network of public footpaths;
- the proposed development will provide for 100-150 dwellings.

D St Mary's Avenue

- the proposed development will make provision for publicly accessible open space;
- the proposal will ensure that the development is resilient to flood risk and flood risk is not exacerbated elsewhere;
- the proposed development will seek to create a link between Hall Avenue and Centaine Road;
- the proposed development will provide for 20-30 dwellings.

E Manor Park

- the existing sports facility is to be re-provided in accordance with Policy SL5;
- the proposed development will make provision for at least 4 hectares of public open space;
- the proposed development will make a positive contribution to the town's southern Gateway by providing an attractive, landscaped design appropriate to the edge of settlement location;
- the proposed development will provide for 135-200 dwellings.

These allocated sites are anticipated to yield a sufficient number of new dwellings over the plan period to meet and exceed the identified requirement for new housing at the town. However, if difficulties are identified which delay or prevent the delivery of the strategic housing requirement for Rushden East or if circumstances are identified to justify a greater level of housing provision, a suitable 'reserve' site has been identified which could be developed in such circumstances

Policy H4 – Reserve housing allocation (Northampton Road)

Proposals for housing development on reserve site F, identified in Policy H2, will be permitted subject to the following criteria:

- it can be demonstrated that the minimum housing requirement for the Plan is unlikely to be delivered during the Plan Period or other material considerations indicate that a greater level of housing provision within the Town is necessary;
- the proposed development will provide for a green infrastructure wedge connecting with existing green infrastructure beyond the site boundaries;
- the proposed development will provide for 50-80 dwellings

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2015 update produced in support of the preparation of the NNJCS highlights the growth in older (65+ age group) households as the most pressing housing need facing North Northamptonshire. Within East Northamptonshire, 79% of the total household growth between 2011 and 2031 is projected to be for older persons' households. The Plan will therefore support proposals which seek to address this need in appropriate, sustainable locations and on the allocated sites listed above.

Evidence has shown that historically there has been a large number of flatted developments in the town; therefore, more flats should only be brought forward where a need can be robustly demonstrated. To ensure an appropriate mix of housing types are provided, housing proposals will be considered in accordance with policy H5.

Policy H5 – Market housing type mix

New market housing proposals will be required to provide a balance of property sizes and types to meet market demands in accordance with Policy 30 of the NNJCS.

Notwithstanding the requirement in Policy 30 to provide more smaller households in Rushden, flatted development will only be permitted where this:

- meets an identified local need; or
- where the constraints of a site are such that it is not possible to provide smaller one and two bedroom houses or maisonettes; or
- where an existing non-residential building is being converted for residential use.

Where new residential development is proposed, the Neighbourhood Plan anticipates that affordable dwellings will be delivered in accordance with Policy 30 of the NNJCS.

A further form of housing that the Neighbourhood Plan supports is the provision of self-build plots, where a local demand for these is identified. This provides further local direction to the Local Plan criterion; NNJCS Policy 30(g).

Policy H6 – Self build

Proposals which include opportunities for self-build homes will be supported, provided that the self-build plots are offered as 'serviced plots' that, as a minimum, must provide appropriate connections to water, electricity, sewerage and communications infrastructure (including highspeed broadband) as well as a safe and appropriate means of access on to a highway, and the proposals are in accordance with other relevant policies of the Development Plan.



Environment

With the designation of Rushden as a Growth Town in the Local Plan (Joint Core Strategy), the Plan seeks to ensure new development reinforces and complements the existing character of the settlement; rather than dissolves its heritage and history

During workshops that considered which matters would be important for the Neighbourhood Plan to address, attendees mentioned that it should look to preserve iconic buildings, create more green space, support disabled access and encourage more street art.

In the main issues consultation for the Neighbourhood Plan, a number of topics were identified that the community believes need to be addressed, including; making improvements to rights of way and the public realm, more greenways and, again, preserving the Town's locally important buildings.

Rushden is a special town that has much potential. To ensure new development delivers this potential, the Neighbourhood Plan requires planning applications to be considered against the requirements set out in the following policies.

The Neighbourhood Plan also aims to ensure that new development provides for a high standard of amenity for both existing and future occupiers. In particular, it is important to ensure that new development makes provision for appropriate amounts of outdoor amenity space.

Policy E1 – Design in development

All new developments should be of a high quality of design. Proposed developments should adhere to the following key principles:

- Understanding local character, and should respect the prevailing density and pattern of development that surrounds the application site;
- Materials should respect and complement existing neighbouring properties and those in the vicinity of the application site;
- Preserve existing neighbouring amenity and should not appear overbearing;
- Designed to allow for adequate daylight and sunlight and should ensure that there is a good outlook for all future occupiers of land and buildings;
- Make provision for an appropriate amount of outdoor amenity space;
- Provide visual interest, particularly at street level and must avoid using blank walls where these would be visible from public vantage points;
- All applications should be presented with details of bin and recycling stores as well as the position of proposed gutters and pipes,

Development proposals will only be supported if they meet the above principles.

Policy E2 – Landscaping in development

Development proposals will be required to provide well integrated hard and soft landscaping that:

- Provides a suitable visual setting for the building or land that is subject to the development proposal;
- Makes a positive contribution to the surrounding area;
- Retains existing wildlife habitats or trees and provides, and wherever possible new wildlife habitats or trees;
- Fully considers the impact of hardstanding on the character of the area and site drainage.

The work undertaken by East Northamptonshire Council in developing new greenways that seek to improve the Town's cycling and walking environments is recognised and supported. The benefits of greenways are far reaching; as well as improving the visual environment of Rushden they also provide local residents with opportunities to improve their health and quality of life by providing recreation opportunities. For local businesses, greenways encourage residents to explore the town, in turn improving local footfall to Rushden's shops and businesses.

Policy E3 – Rushden's Greenways

Development proposals that conserve or enhance Rushden's Greenways will be supported, unless other policies of the Development Plan or other material considerations indicate otherwise.

Rushden is a fairly compact town, being 2.2 miles wide at its widest point (east to west). The Plan therefore seeks to maximise wherever possible opportunities for sustainable transport choices.

Street design can play an important role in encouraging 'walkable' environments; however the design and layout of new developments and the urban 'micro' environment also contribute to an individual's desire to want to walk or cycle to their destination.

For new residential streets, or where upgrades to existing streets are proposed as part of a development, these should incorporate the place shaping principles set out in NNJCS Policy 8.

As well as improving the legibility of Rushden's street network, in appropriate locations, such as in the High Street, it is important to upgrade the public realm to improve the visual environment and create a greater sense of place. Improvements and visual enhancement of the public realm can promote healthier lifestyles and tourism. The National Planning Policy Framework also highlights the importance of creating a good quality built environment, so as to ensure the vitality of town centres. The Neighbourhood Plan therefore seeks to encourage public realm improvements wherever possible.

Policy E4 - Public realm

New development should improve the quality of the public realm with the creation of safe and attractive public spaces.

As part of a development, consideration should be given to vehicular and pedestrian surface treatments, public art, street lighting and street furniture. Where alterations are proposed to the existing public realm, this should be appropriate to its location and make a positive contribution to the surrounding locality.

In particular, public realm improvements will be sought in the following locations:

- Northern end of the High Street (from Queens Street junction to Victoria Road/Duck Street junction)
- Provision of a new, fully-accessible entrance to the Greenway from Washbrook Road by railway bridge
- Entrances to High Street from public car parks

These improvements could take a variety of forms such as entrance features ('archways'), digital signage, paving or other street furniture, all of which will be designed to improve the user experience of these areas.

To continue the work previously undertaken by the Town Council with East Northamptonshire Council to regenerate Rushden's High Street, the Neighbourhood Plan will seek funding from new development to implement public realm improvements.

Policy E5 – Funding public realm Improvements

Where appropriate and in accordance with CIL Regulation 122 (or other legislation that supersedes it), developer contributions will be sought to deliver public realm improvements.

Approaches (main arterial routes) into the town provide an important first impression and 'gateway' to Rushden. These gateway areas are considered to be situated at:

- Northampton Road/A5001/A45 junction
- John Clark Way/A6 junction
- Newton Road/A6 junction
- Bedford Road/A6 junction
- Irchester Road/Boundary Avenue junction

There are a number of design considerations that contribute to positive gateway developments providing a focal entrance point to a settlement. These considerations include (but are not limited to):

- the use of materials;
- scale and building heights;
- orientation;
- landscaping;
- boundary treatment; and
- architectural style.

Policy E6 – Gateway sites

Development proposals within the vicinity of any of the 'Gateway Sites' identified above, which fail to enhance and improve the visual approach to the town will not be supported.

Heritage Conservation

One of Rushden's significant built attributes is its Conservation Area that encompasses a large portion of the town centre. A Conservation Area Appraisal produced by East Northamptonshire Council identifies the main characteristics of Rushden's Conservation Area and the negative factors that detract from the special character of the area.

The National Planning Policy Framework puts in place strong protections for Rushden's designated heritage assets, which include its listed buildings and its Conservation Area. The National Planning Policy Framework is a material consideration in planning decision making. Neighbourhood Planning regulations also specify Neighbourhood Plans must have regard to both national policy and strategic policies of the adopted Local Plan, both of which include extensive direction for protecting heritage assets.

However, as has been referred to in opening sections of this plan, Rushden has a unique history that is intertwined with the 19th Century expansion of Northamptonshire's boot and shoe making industry. To ensure the heritage of Rushden is preserved and to enable the development proposals that will affect the settlement's designated and non-designated heritage assets to be properly assessed, applications must be supported by an appropriate level of information to describe both the significance of the asset and the development's impact on the asset and/or its setting in accordance with local and national planning policy.



Transport and Travel

Rushden's location in relation to Northampton means that it is well served by a strategic network of roads that allow access to settlements surrounding the area, as well as access to major national trunk roads. Internally, the town's road network is defined by a one-way system that acts to limit through traffic but also serves to make the road network less navigable.

External factors such as the development of Rushden Lakes and land identified in the NNJCS for Rushden's Sustainable Urban Extension will likely lead to an increase in traffic, particularly on the strategic road network.

The Neighbourhood Plan is conscious of changes in how transport is fuelled, with alternative fuels such as electricity playing a greater role as this could lead to lower levels of pollution. To encourage greater use of electric and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles within Rushden, this Plan wishes to support the installation of electric car charging infrastructure.

Policy T1 will be relevant to any development that has transport implications.

Policy T1 – Development generating a transport impact

Planning permission will only be granted for development that generates a transport impact if:

- The development would not result in an unacceptable impact on any aspect of the transport network.
- Suitable provision has been made for convenient and safe access to and from the site.

Proposals will be assessed on their merits, taking account of advice from the Local Highway Authority and, where appropriate, Highways England.

All proposals for new development will be encouraged to include infrastructure to facilitate the use of electric vehicles.

In Rushden parking in the town is well located in relation to the centre, reducing walking distances and improving accessibility to the town's retail buildings. In line with national policy and the Local Plan (Joint Core Strategy) the Neighbourhood Plan aims to encourage alternative modes of travel such as walking or cycling, car travel represents a significant contributor to the local travel mix and should therefore be appropriately planned for.

To continue to ensure sufficient parking remains available the Plan will look to safeguard existing car parks and retain them in public use. Due to the planned level of growth in Rushden, demand for parking in the town is likely to increase.

Policy T2 – Car park provision

To preserve the vitality and viability of Rushden town centre, car parking identified on the Policies Map will be safeguarded and retained for public use. Proposals to improve or enhance the existing car parks will be supported.

Existing public car parking provision within the town will be protected and retained unless suitable alternative provision is provided (and its delivery secured through condition or legal agreement) or the provision is demonstrated to no longer be required.

Where additional demand for parking is identified, applications for new public car parks will be supported. Proposals to improve or enhance existing facilities will also be supported where the proposals would not adversely impact on the character and appearance of the area.

To improve the overall transport environment of the town, the Neighbourhood Plan considers that it is important for traffic to be managed appropriately. While the one way system has been found to reduce the volume of traffic in the town, it is also important to manage the speed of traffic, particularly given the long term intention of improving walkability in the town.

Policy T3 – Traffic management

Wherever relevant, development proposals should provide mitigation measures to improve traffic management and to reduce traffic speeds where appropriate, providing safer environments for pedestrians and cyclists.

Retail Development

The NNJCS envisions an enhanced role for Rushden as a growth town, delivering - alongside new homes and jobs - new retail, of which a major aspect will be the permitted Rushden Lakes development.



Rushden Lakes was originally permitted in 2014 by the Secretary of State. Phase 1 of Rushden Lakes will open in summer 2017, while later development phases are likely to open by 2018/19. The development will provide a mix of retail, recreational and leisure development.

Rushden Lakes will complement the existing facilities and services that are available in Rushden Town Centre while also providing new leisure and recreation options for local residents.

As the performance of the Rushden Lakes development in capturing growth in spending on comparison goods is unknown, the NNJCS does not identify additional retail floorspace requirements in the south of Northamptonshire. Instead, the intention of the plan is to monitor the impact of Rushden Lakes and consolidate and develop retail offerings in Rushden.

In 2010, the Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment prepared a regeneration strategy for Rushden Town Centre that set out a number of objectives including reinforcing the unique High Street character of independent shops, refocusing

the town centre and reinstating the diversity and mix of Rushden town centre. Notably, the Newton Road/Rectory Road site assessed through the 2010 strategy has subsequently been developed as a new Lidl superstore.

The Neighbourhood Plan aspires to deliver development that promotes the regeneration of the High Street and surrounding retail frontages to make it a more attractive retail environment. As part of improvements to the town, the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to ensure there is an appropriate mix of uses to support the night time economy.

Policy R1 – Town centre uses

New development proposals for main town centre uses (as defined by the NPPF) will be supported where a site falls within the Town Centre area as defined on the Policies Map and causes no harm to amenity.

To improve the visual appearance of Rushden's town centre areas, the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to promote active and quality building frontages. Active frontages aim to ensure that there is visual engagement between the street and the ground floor of a building. This can be achieved by designing out significant lengths of blank and featureless walls in place of well-proportioned windows that allow for passive surveillance. At street level, active frontages provide visual interest to passers-by and can therefore help improve footfall to an area.

Quality frontages are different in so much as the intention is to improve the quality of a frontage's external finishing. This could be achieved by for example, using high grade finishing materials, avoiding garish facades that clash with prevailing character and ensuring the impact of new signage has been properly considered.

Whenever designing or altering a frontage there should be appropriate consideration to the final appearance of a frontage. Fascias and signs should be well proportioned and positioned in

an appropriate manner to avoid appearing overly prominent. Where buildings are one of a row of buildings, consideration should be given to the proportion and design of the fascias of adjoining buildings. Wherever possible, development should ensure there is uniformity in the design between buildings. Sufficient consideration should also be given to the final appearance of stall risers, that should be of an appropriate finishing material and canopies that should not appear overly intrusive.

The location of doorways in buildings should be well conceived as this can improve the visual appearance of a building. The style, materials and colour of a doorway should be in keeping with the overall symmetry of the building elevation and should harmonise with the rest of the building frontage.

Where development involves traditional buildings within the Conservation Area, it should avoid using glossy, reflective acrylic, day glow or fluorescent materials. Instead, materials should be appropriate to the heritage of the area and the building in which they are to be placed.

East Northamptonshire Council has prepared a Shop Front Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) that sets out detailed planning and design guidance for new shop fronts and alterations to existing shop fronts. Any planning application that proposes development of a shop front will be assessed against this supplementary guidance document. Proposals that meet the requirements of the document will be supported. Proposals will also be assessed in accordance with policy R2.

Policy R2 – Active and quality frontages

Development in Rushden's Town Centre as defined on the Policies Map should lead to the creation of active and quality frontages that improve the visual character of the area in accordance with the principles set out within the District Council's most up to date shop front design guidance. Proposals in the Town Centre that meet the requirements of the East Northamptonshire Shop Front Design SPD, or any document that subsequently updates or replaces this guidance, will be supported.

To promote diversification in Rushden's Town Centre areas and to maximise the use of available building floorspace, the Plan seeks to permit alternative first floor or where relevant, upper floor uses where these complement Rushden's Town Centre Areas.



Policy R3 – First floor uses

Within the Town Centre, development of first floor or upper floor uses for residential or B1 Uses will be supported provided that the proposed use does not adversely affect the long term viability of the existing ground floor use.

Employment and Jobs

As well as improving the retail environment, the Neighbourhood Plan aims to ensure there is appropriate growth in the town's employment generating or "B Use Class" offer (i.e. B1 – Business, B2 – General Industrial, B8 Storage and Distribution and other similar non-defined uses).

The NNJCS aims to provide 31,100 net additional jobs in North Northamptonshire (7200 jobs within East Northamptonshire) alongside the strategic opportunity to deliver 40,000 new homes over the period 2011-31. The Strategy seeks to achieve this by safeguarding existing and committed employment sites that are of the right quality and suitably located and providing additional sites in sustainable locations. Policy 35 of the NNJCS allocates a site of approximately 1.2 hectares at Nene Valley Farm, Northampton Road for employment uses.

The Plan supports the Core Strategy in this approach; however, to encourage new business within the town, it is considered that there is a specific local need to provide further employment space for starter or incubator businesses. Incubator businesses assist start up business by providing programmes on business services such as networking, marketing, training, loan assistance and financial management. Starter units provide easy access space for new businesses to work from without having to make long term property commitments.

Policy EJ1 – Starter employment floorspace

Development proposals that aim to provide floorspace for small starter units or incubator business floorspace will be supported provided the requirements of other policies in this location are met.

New employment floorspace should aim to promote the creation of high quality business or Industrial premises, in accordance with floorspace requirements set out in the NNJCS. New storage and distribution uses will only be supported on sites that are currently allocated, used or permitted for these purposes. Where other employment floorspace is proposed it should meet the requirements of policy EJ2.

Policy EJ2 – New employment floorspace

Proposals for new business or industrial employment developments or proposals to re-develop existing employment sites will be supported provided that development would not adversely affect local amenity. New warehousing, storage or distribution uses will only be permitted on sites with an existing commitment for these uses.

The NNJCS aims to preserve existing employment floorspace in the region. Redevelopment of these sites will therefore be considered in accordance with policy EJ3:

Policy EJ3 – Retention of existing employment floorspace

Existing employment sites falling within business, research, industrial, storage or distribution uses, will be safeguarded. However, where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for its allocated employment use, applications for alternative uses of land or buildings will be assessed on their merits having regard to market signals and the relative need for different land uses to support the aims and objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan, subject to compliance with other policies of the Development Plan.

The community considers that there is also a need to promote regeneration of older industrial sites at the gateways of the settlement the framework for which is provided by policy E7 (Gateway Sites).



A review into sports and leisure facilities that are available in Rushden found the town has a number of good sites, but that there is an overall need for improvement. In addition, the increasing population of the town and an aspiration to improve health and wellbeing of residents means that greater and better provision will be required during the plan period.

Community, Leisure and Open Space

While overall, the town has a large number of children's play areas, some of its wards have a poor supply, particularly in Hayden and Pemberton; there is also an absence of natural and semi-natural greenspace in the town. Public open spaces and play spaces are valuable amenities in the town that offers space for children to play and adults to relax. As the population and so housing in the town increases, demand for play space and public open space will increase, therefore it is essential that existing space is safeguarded and where possible improved. Where individual developments will generate their own demand for public open space or children play space, the Council will look for such space to be provided as part of the development proposal.

Policy SL1 – Safeguarding existing public open space and playspace

Existing public open space and children's playspace (identified in the Rushden Open Space, Recreation and Sport Study, October 2015) will be safeguarded and retained. Existing public open spaces or children's playspaces will be protected unless they are no longer viable, no longer needed by the community that they serve or are being relocated or replaced by an enhanced facility.

Policy SL2 – Provision of new open space and amenity space

Development proposals that will result in a net gain of 15 or more dwellings or with a site area over 0.42 ha will be required to provide suitable amenity space, through the provision of either: semi-natural open space, natural open space or children's playspace, or a combination of each, in accordance with East Northamptonshire Council's Open Space Supplementary Planning Document or other document that supersedes it.

The Neighbourhood Plan recognises that certain developments will not provide scope to incorporate open space into a layout design. For example, this could happen where the siting of open space would result in it appearing as an un-integrated 'add-on' or would be positioned in an inaccessible part of a site. In such instances, financial contributions may be sought towards the provision of new space outside the site, or improvement of existing open space or play space outside the site, in lieu. This exemption will only be acceptable if the requirements of policy SL2 cannot reasonably be met and applications on this basis will be judged on their merits.

In addition to housing sites allocated in this plan, the allocation of Rushden as a Growth Town will result in a significant influx in population coming forward as part of the Rushden East Urban Extension. The provision of about 2500 dwellings as part of this development will place greater pressure on existing open spaces; therefore the Neighbourhood Plan will support proposals for additional open and play space to be incorporated as part of the Rushden East Urban Extension.

Available allotment space in comparison to benchmarks identified by East Northamptonshire Council is generally good, with space at 0.48ha per 1000 persons in comparison to benchmarks of 0.34ha per 1000 people. As allotments assist in the long-term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion the Neighbourhood Plan will look to safeguard all existing space from alternative development or provide alternative equivalent area.

Policy SL3 – Protection of existing allotment Space

Existing allotments (identified in the Rushden Open Space, Recreation and Sport Study, October 2015) will be protected and retained unless it can be demonstrated that:

- they are no longer viable, no longer needed by the community they serve and they are not needed for any other community use; or
- alternative and improved provision is to be provided elsewhere to meet the needs of the new and existing community (and its delivery secured through condition or legal agreement).

Evidence from the Rushden Open Space, Recreation and Sport Study has found that the quantum of development of brownfield land in Rushden town and through the delivery of the Rushden East Urban Extension will generate the need for a minimum of 37.5ha of additional outdoor sports provision. As growth of the town is likely to exacerbate existing shortfalls, the Neighbourhood Plan will look to safeguard existing outdoor sport and recreational space

Policy SL4 – Protection of existing sport and recreational facilities

Existing sports facilities (identified in the Rushden Open Space, Recreation and Sport Study, October 2015) will be protected and retained. Proposals which will result in the loss of existing sport or recreational facilities will not be supported unless suitable alternative provision is to be provided (and its delivery secured through condition or legal agreement) or the facility is demonstrated to no longer be required.

As identified in the Rushden Open Space, Recreation and Sport Study there is also a shortfall in the existing quality of sports pitch provision in the Town. It is therefore an aspiration of the Plan to support a qualitative and quantitative improvement in provision of outdoor sports facilities in the town, through the creation of a high-quality, multi-function outdoor sports and recreation hub. Since no suitable site within the urban area has yet been identified to accommodate this, the Neighbourhood Plan will allow for such provision outside of the Settlement Boundary in order to enable redevelopment of existing facilities within the urban area which could be more beneficially utilised for alternative forms of development. The location for a new hub will be required to demonstrate a generally flat topography; good road links; good pedestrian and cycle links (or the ability for them to be provided/improved); the ability to consolidate around existing sport/recreation uses; and the availability of a sufficient area of land.

The purpose of creating a sports and recreation hub would be to consolidate a range of complementary sports and leisure uses in a single location to enable the provision of improved facilities in terms of both quantity and quality. It will provide a range of playing pitches and other playing surfaces along with ancillary built facilities (such as a sports pavilion, changing rooms, etc.), car parking and enhanced pedestrian and cycle connections. It is expected that the new hub will not only re-provide for existing facilities but also provide better quality pitches and built facilities and a greater quantity to help to meet the increased needs arising from the Town's growth.

Policy SL5 – Provision of new outdoor sports and recreation facilities

Proposals for the provision of new outdoor sports and recreation facilities outside of the Settlement Boundary to replace existing facilities or for which there is a demonstrable local need will be supported.

The Town Council is responsible for the provision and day to day maintenance of public open spaces, including outdoor sports facilities. To address the deficiency in outdoor sports provision whilst allowing for the redevelopment of existing sports pitches within the settlement framework for more appropriate land uses, the Town Council will also work with landowners, developers, local sports clubs and relevant public sector bodies to prepare a coordinated strategy to consolidate existing uses and provide new outdoor sports provision.

Policy SL6 – Funding provision and improvement of sports facilities

Where required, developer contributions will be sought to deliver new outdoor sport facilities and/or improvements to existing facilities.

In addition to ensuring there is sufficient outdoor and recreational space in the town, it is also important to provide sufficient community facilities for Rushden's residents including families, the elderly and the young. Community facilities include but are not limited to: Public halls, meeting places, facilities that serve the community, facilities that improve connectivity with community, local history and youth facilities.

Policy SL7 – Existing community facilities

Existing community facilities⁶ that meet the needs of Rushden's residents will be safeguarded unless it can be demonstrated that:

- they are no longer viable, no longer needed by the community they serve and they are not needed for any other community use; or
- alternative and improved provision is to be provided elsewhere to meet the needs of the new and existing community (and its delivery secured through condition or legal agreement).

The Neighbourhood Plan will also seek to support the provision of new facilities and/or the improvement of existing facilities, e.g. the Pemberton Centre, through collaborative working with public sector bodies, local groups and other interested third parties.

Policy SL8 – Funding provision and improvement of community, arts and recreation facilities

Where appropriate, developer contributions will be sought to deliver new Community, Arts and Recreation Facilities and/or improvements to existing facilities.

Where new facilities are proposed, they will be considered in accordance with policy SL9 and the requirements of other relevant planning policies. Contributions may only be sought where these meet the requirements of the 2010 Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations (Regulation 122).

Policy SL9 – New community facilities

Developments which improve existing community facilities or provide new community facilities will be supported. Where there is an identified need for new community facilities, the Neighbourhood Plan will support proposals subject to other relevant policy requirements the Development Plan being met. New community facilities should be designed to ensure they are accessible for all.

⁶ 'Community facilities' includes, but is not limited to, clinics, health centres, crèches, day nurseries, schools, non-residential education and training centres, museums, public libraries, public halls, exhibition halls, places of worship and law courts.

Delivering the Neighbourhood Plan

The Rushden Neighbourhood Plan will be implemented by the local planning authority and applied in the determination of planning applications. The Neighbourhood Plan will be used to frame the Town Council's representations on submitted applications for development in the Town. Rushden Town Council will be proactive in responding to East Northamptonshire Council detailing any policy considerations for a proposal. Responses will highlight any conflicts with the Neighbourhood Plan or outline any deficiencies that may arise from development and appropriate mitigation measures that should be secured by way of planning agreement or conditions.

The delivery of the Plan will be achieved through landowners and developers bringing forward development proposals in the positive context provided by the policies of the Plan, in particular its allocation of specific land for new housing developments. In preparing the Plan, regard has been had to seek to ensure that these allocations are achievable. Based on the information available at the time of preparing the Plan, the sites allocated in the Plan are considered deliverable, viable to develop and having no identified overriding constraints.

The role of Rushden Town Council

As the Qualifying Body, Rushden Town Council will closely monitor the implementation of the Neighbourhood Plan, once "made" part of the statutory development plan. The Town Council will work closely with East Northamptonshire Council to monitor and record the progress of delivery of development on those sites allocated for development in this Plan, both in terms of when those sites secure planning permission and when this results in delivery of new housing and associated infrastructure on site. This will enable the Town Council to readily monitor and review the progress of delivering

the Plan and have regard to this in informing their future local priorities.

The Town Council will also use the Plan as the basis for its strategy and approach to delivering or securing public and private investment in the Town's infrastructure. The Town Council will work together with East Northamptonshire Council and Northamptonshire County Council, and other agencies as appropriate, to secure funding for infrastructure improvements including improving pedestrian access throughout the Town, improvements to the identified Gateway sites and public realm

improvements through CIL and other mechanisms. The Town Council will regularly review and reflect on the Town's infrastructure requirements having regard to the efficacy of improvements secured and delivered.

The Town Council will monitor and record the loss of any community facilities which this Plan seeks to safeguard (i.e. open space, sports pitches, play facilities, car parks, and allotments). This record will be used to inform both the Town Council's response to future planning applications and the future approach to provision of any new facilities within the Town.

The role of East Northamptonshire Council

The NPPF requires that local planning authorities should approach decision-taking in a positive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development. Where applications for proposed development accord with the principles of this Plan and other relevant Local Plan and national policies, the local planning authority will work proactively with applicants to secure the most sustainable outcome.



