



Office of the  
Deputy Prime Minister  

---

Creating sustainable communities

## **Sustainable Communities:**

### **An Urban Development Corporation for West Northamptonshire**

### **A Decision Document**



Office of the  
Deputy Prime Minister  

---

Creating sustainable communities

## **Sustainable Communities:**

## **An Urban Development Corporation for West Northamptonshire**

## **A Decision Document**

**April 2004**

**Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: London**

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London SW1E 5DU  
Telephone 020 7944 4400  
Internet service [www.odpm.gov.uk](http://www.odpm.gov.uk)

© *Crown copyright 2004.*

*Copyright in the typographical arrangement and design rests with the Crown.*

*This publication (excluding the Royal Arms and logos) may be reproduced free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is reproduced accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright with the title and source of the publication specified.*

## Contents

Background .....	5
Consultation .....	5
Lifespan.....	6
Relationship with Local Authorities.....	7
Relationship with Existing Agencies.....	8
Boundaries .....	9
Planning Powers .....	13
UDC Board Membership .....	17

## **Background**

1. Just over twelve months ago, the Deputy Prime Minister set out an action programme to deliver sustainable communities for all ("Sustainable communities: building for the future" ODPM February 2003).
2. To accommodate the economic success of the wider South East and ensure that the international competitiveness of the region is sustained, four growth areas including Milton Keynes and South Midlands have been identified. The Sustainable Communities plan included a commitment in these growth areas to set up strengthened local delivery agencies with the necessary powers to drive forward development.
3. In many locations, local authorities will take the lead with regional development agencies (RDAs) and other partners. But in a few locations, with particularly complex sites, the long term focus and special powers of an Urban Development Corporation (UDC) will be required to deliver the necessary change and maximise private investment. For West Northamptonshire - a flagship location in the Government's sustainable communities agenda - this approach has been proposed.

## **Consultation**

4. On 15 January 2004, a consultation paper was launched on the proposal to establish the West Northamptonshire UDC. The paper sought comments on the lifespan of the UDC, its relationship with local authorities and existing agencies, the area it should cover, the powers it should have, and the composition of its Board. Views were invited on six major issues, and eleven specific questions:

### ***Lifespan***

Q1: The most appropriate lifespan for the West Northamptonshire UDC.

### ***Relationship with local authorities***

Q2: The best way for the UDC to work with the local authorities in relation to those activities where the local authority retains the competence.

### ***Relationship with existing agencies***

Q3: The best way for the UDC to work with existing Government agencies.

### ***Boundaries***

Q4: The boundary proposal for the West Northamptonshire UDC.

Q5: Whether the proposal provides the UDC with sufficient flexibility in which to

maximise the regeneration and growth opportunities within the West Northamptonshire area.

Q6: Whether there are other boundary options that should be considered.

### ***Planning Powers***

Q7: The scope of an order transferring planning powers to a UDC, including the area for which the UDC would be the local planning authority and the development control functions that it ought to undertake.

Q8: How best the UDC could be supported by the planning expertise of local authorities if it became the planning authority.

Q9: How a UDC might best identify strategic and significant planning decisions.

### ***Board Membership***

Q10: The groups that should be represented on the UDC Board.

Q11: The skills and experiences needed by the members of the UDC Board.

5. The consultation period closed on 12 March 2004. 119 responses were received from individuals, the voluntary sector, the private sector, local authorities, non-Governmental organisations and Government agencies. The complete set of responses have been deposited in the Office's own Library, and in the Libraries of the Houses of Parliament.

6. Throughout this document, percentage figures are based on the number of respondents for each question.

## **Lifespan**

### **Question 1: The most appropriate lifespan for the West Northamptonshire UDC**

7. In the consultation paper, it was proposed that the UDC have an indicative lifespan of ten years, with a full review after five years.

8. 43% of respondents agreed that the lifespan proposed in the consultation paper was appropriate. While a small number thought that a reduced timeframe would be sufficient, approximately 25% thought that a longer time frame would be required, given:

- The time scale envisaged by the Regional Planning Guidance and Regional Spatial Strategies currently in preparation.
- The need to secure increased confidence and attract investment from the private sector.
- The timeframe required to enable the delivery of longer term strategic objectives and infrastructure investment.

9. The Government has considered these responses and has decided that the UDC should initially be established for ten years, with a full review after five years and with the scope to extend the lifespan beyond this time if substantial regeneration was still required. The Government considers this will allow the UDC to deliver substantial and sustainable economic and housing growth and regeneration to the area.

## **Relationship with Local Authorities**

### **Question 2: The best way for the UDC to work with local authorities in relation to those activities where the local authority retains the competence.**

10. The consultation paper stated that it was the Government's intention that the new UDC would operate, as far as possible, in co-operation with the local authorities. The paper set out how the UDC will need to work closely with local authorities in those activities that are important for regeneration, where the responsibility remains with the local authority (for example in relation to the authority's role as the transport authority) and are consistent with planning objectives for those areas in the county not covered by the UDC.
11. Almost all the respondents (85%) emphasised the need for close co-operation between the UDC and the local authorities, and welcomed the Government's commitment to this objective and the related proposal to have strong local authority representation on the Board of the UDC.
12. A number of respondents, including local authorities, suggested that a clear protocol needed to be established between the UDC and the relevant local authorities to ensure an effective relationship.
13. The local authorities and Parish Councils emphasised the need for extensive consultation, in order to guarantee continued accountability during the lifespan of the UDC.
14. Northamptonshire County Council noted that the relationship between the UDC and local authorities "will be important to ensure consistency of approach across the area, to ensure that roles and responsibilities are clear and that duplication is avoided." They suggested that "local authorities will have a key role to work with the UDC to ensure that the planning, transport and other key objectives of areas outside the remit of the UDC are consistent with the UDC programme and that these are sustainable."
15. Having considered these responses carefully, the Government remains committed to the UDC working co-operatively with the local authorities. As part of this commitment, the four local authorities will be represented on the Board. In addition, the guidance issued to the UDC on drawing up its strategy for the area and in preparing its corporate plan will also reflect the importance of a close working relationship between the UDC and the local authorities. This plan will be drawn up in close consultation with the local authorities and other stakeholders.

16. Further, the Government notes that section 140 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act (LGPLA) 1980 specifically requires an urban development corporation to prepare a code of practice as to consultation with the relevant local authorities about the exercise of its powers. Such a code would cover consultation with parish, district and county councils and has to be prepared no later than 12 months from the establishment of the corporation. The UDC must prepare and revise the code in consultation with the relevant local authorities.

## **Relationship with Existing Agencies**

### **Q3. The best way for the UDC to work with existing Government agencies.**

17. The consultation paper highlighted the need for the UDC to co-operate with Government agencies already responsible for delivering regeneration. English Partnerships is the Government's national regeneration agency. Emda is responsible for sustainable economic regeneration in the east midlands region, working alongside the sub-regional strategic partnership (the Northamptonshire Partnership). The paper also set out how the UDC would need to liaise closely with those Government agencies that, while not directly involved in regeneration activity, will have an influence on the capacity of the areas to accommodate growth. Examples include the Strategic Rail Authority, the Highways Agency, the Countryside Agency and English Nature.
18. Respondents, including Government agencies, overwhelmingly (85%) supported this commitment. There was widespread agreement that a clear and effective relationship between the UDC and existing Government agencies would help deliver regeneration for the area. The Northamptonshire Chamber wrote that the "support and co-operation of these agencies is essential to the allocation of land, to attracting developers to utilise this land and to the success and sustainability of the planned growth." Respondents suggested that in addition to the agencies referred to in the consultation paper, the UDC would need to work closely with:
- English Heritage
  - The National Health Service
  - The Environment Agency
19. Specific issues about how relationships would be managed included the need for:
- a clear protocol to be established.
  - the UDC to work closely with environmental and heritage organisations to ensure green infrastructure provision and the protection of important archaeological and historical sites within the UDC area.
  - the UDC to make use of the expertise of existing Government agencies and utilise this capacity in order to avoid unnecessary overlap and duplication of activity.
20. The Government agrees with the majority of respondents about the importance of ensuring effective engagement with all relevant Government agencies, and these requirements will be reflected in the UDC's Management Statement. When taking planning decisions, the UDC would be subject to the same requirements as any other local planning authority to consult certain government bodies or agencies in

specific cases.

21. In addition, the Milton Keynes South Midlands Inter-Regional Board will bring together the key agencies across the region and will ensure that these agencies are fully involved in the regeneration agenda at that level.

## **Boundaries**

### **Q4. The boundary proposal for the West Northamptonshire UDC.**

22. The consultation paper proposed that in order to support the regeneration of West Northamptonshire and deliver sustainable communities, the UDC must be large enough for it to have sufficient scope for development that can effect real change (critical mass).
23. Under this approach, the core areas proposed were situated in Northampton, Daventry and Towcester. The boundaries around the core areas proposed in the consultation paper reflected the primary objective of the UDC being regeneration, and are not meant to identify all of the areas where development may occur. It should also be understood that not all areas within the UDC boundary would be considered as suitable sites for development. Against this background, the factors taken into account in developing the boundaries included the agreed development plans for the area, but also reflected the scope for physical, economic and environmental regeneration.
24. Some respondents, including a number of Parish Councils and Government agencies, supported the proposed boundaries. English Partnerships wrote that the "proposed boundaries appear appropriate as they concentrate the UDC focus on brownfield and town centre sites together with complementary extensions on greenfield sites of a sufficient scale to create sustainable residential communities rather than a fragmented approach on many smaller, dispersed sites across West Northamptonshire."
25. However, the majority of respondents recommended alterations to the boundary (see question 6 for details). The issues raised in response to the proposed boundaries included:
  - The majority of developers considered the boundaries too restrictive and would not allow for sufficient growth and flexibility.
  - A number of developers were specifically concerned that the proposed boundaries would not be able to accommodate the development potential in the draft Milton Keynes-South Midlands Sub Regional Strategy (MK-SM SRS).
  - Other respondents suggested that the boundaries should not be finalised until the MK-SM SRS had been approved. Northampton Borough Council, for example, questioned, "whether or not it is premature to finalise the boundary of the UDC prior to approval of the MKSM sub regional spatial strategy."
  - A number of respondents - predominantly Parish Councils and environmental groups - expressed concern over the inclusion of greenfield land and sites of archaeological, environmental or historical importance, particularly Daventry

Country Park, Borough Hill Fort and Burnt Walls.

26. The need for the UDC to address the impact regeneration might have on the rural environment was also expressed by the Countryside Agency. While they appreciated the need for a fixed boundary, they suggested that it was important for the UDC to be flexible and "to work beyond its boundaries. Activities should include: support for rural communities that are affected by the growth; landscaping and improving countryside access; and the proposed River Nene Regional Park. Opportunities and benefits for both rural as well as urban areas should be recognised."
27. Having considered the views expressed in response to questions 4, 5 and 6, the Government considers that the boundaries, revised as set out under question 6, will broadly give the UDC the necessary scope to pursue an integrated approach to the regeneration of Northampton and the key related centres of Daventry and Towcester. The Government is satisfied that this is achieved without encompassing land that might be suitable for development outside any regeneration objective.
28. At the same time, it is clear that development for regeneration can go hand in hand with protecting and enhancing environmentally and historically significant sites. The Government recognises that this is a critical part of the regeneration of an urban area. A UDC is ideally placed to bring together the varied aspirations and concerns of key stakeholders in its area, and to work in close co-operation with them (including history and environmental protection societies and government environmental and heritage agencies). In addition the Government agrees that the UDC should take account of enhancing the rural environment, improving the rural/urban fringe and supporting rural communities as part of its work. Its support for Towcester and Daventry will be important in this area.

**Q5. Whether the proposal provides the UDC with sufficient flexibility in which to maximise the regeneration and growth opportunities within the West Northamptonshire area.**

29. The consultation paper set out how the UDC would be able to fund transport and other utility schemes and amenities within and outside its area, provided that works or activities that take place beyond its boundaries are for the benefit of people living in the UDC area and contribute to the achievement of the UDC's regeneration objectives.
30. Qualified support was received from a wide range of respondents - particularly Parish Councils, the local authorities and the LSPs - who agreed that the UDC would deliver regeneration and growth opportunities for West Northamptonshire.
31. Northamptonshire County Council welcomed the proposal as it would provide "flexibility to enable the UDC to fund transport and other utility schemes and amenities within and outside its area."
32. The need for flexibility was a major concern for a large number of other respondents, particularly those in the private sector. Most developers stressed

flexibility as the key to securing regeneration and meeting the growth potential as set out in the MK-SM SRS. The principal concern raised by these respondents was that the proposed boundaries were too restrictive, and would impede the ability of the UDC to secure its objectives. Many of the private sector respondents stressed the view that the UDC should not be "artificially" constrained by the need to develop brownfield land first.

33. In contrast, a number of submissions from Parish Councils and environmental organisations, such as the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE), highlighted the concern that regeneration would mean development on greenfield sites. The CPRE wrote that "the greenfield nature of much of the land proposed for inclusion [in the UDC] is inconsistent with the imperative to unlock regeneration potential." Some environmental groups were concerned that the UDC would have too much power and flexibility.
34. Parish Councils, environmental groups, Government agencies and other groups also raised a number of other issues relating to the way in which the UDC would maximise regeneration and growth opportunities:
- The UDC would need to ensure infrastructure developments accompanied growth. Northampton Borough Council agreed that the UDC should "focus its activity upon advancing infrastructure provision - social, economic and physical. Investment in employment initiatives, affordable housing, skills and training for the local labour force, health care, policing, education, and strategic infrastructure projects are the obvious areas where the UDC can add value."
  - The UDC should recognise that environmental, rural and recreational benefits contribute to economic growth and regeneration.
  - The UDC would need to work effectively across the three areas: Northampton, Daventry and Towcester.
  - The UDC would need to take into consideration the effect growth would have on other areas outside the boundaries of the UDC.
35. On balance the Government considers the issues raised can be addressed within the approach outlined in the consultation paper, bearing in mind that the primary object of a UDC is to secure the regeneration of its area and that the UDC for West Northamptonshire will tackle the agenda for growth within the context of this overriding objective. As outlined above (paragraph 27), the Government considers the UDC will be well placed to ensure environmentally and historically significant sites are enhanced and protected.

**Q6. Whether there are other boundary options that should be considered.**

36. As mentioned above, the consultation paper proposes that the core areas of the UDC would be situated in Northampton, Daventry and Towcester. Although a small number of respondents proposed major changes to the boundary, including the addition of Brackley, the removal of Daventry and Towcester, and extending the UDC to a single area encompassing the three key sites. However, the majority of respondents suggested minor alterations to the proposed boundaries.

37. Having considered the submissions to exclude Daventry and Towcester, and in keeping with the underpinning principle of the Sustainable Community agenda - balanced growth - the Government considers that the regeneration and improvement of Northampton could have detrimental effects on Daventry and Towcester if these two historic market towns were not also included. There are also sufficient requirements for economic and environmental regeneration and brownfield improvement in these two urban areas to require the powers and potential that a UDC brings. The inclusion of the three centres will ensure the UDC pursues an integrated strategy, particularly in relation to the economic regeneration of the area.
38. With regard to the suggestion that Brackley be included, while the Government recognises the importance of Brackley in the growth area agenda, it does not consider that a case can be made for its inclusion in the UDC given the primary objective of the UDC is regeneration. While Brackley will not be included in the UDC for West Northamptonshire, that does not mean that it should be excluded from the benefit of being in the Milton Keynes and South Midlands growth area. Brackley does have an important role to play in terms of growth and as a rural service centre in the West Northamptonshire area and the local authority and the ODPM are working closely to find other ways of supporting growth and infrastructure in that area.
39. More specific suggested alterations included

**Towcester:**

- A large number of the respondents who commented on the Towcester boundary (including South Northamptonshire Council, the Northamptonshire County Council and Towcester Town Council), asked for the extension of the boundary to include land available for an A5 bypass.
- The inclusion of undeveloped land to the south, south west and south east of the town.
- The inclusion of Easton Neston Park between the River Tove, a line drawn from the confluence of the river with the Silverstone Brook to the racecourse and then to the A5.

**Daventry:**

- The inclusion of the former Argos unit, the A45 gateway, and the area of land to north west of the town.
- The inclusion of the eastern parts of Daventry and South Northamptonshire Districts.
- The inclusion of land within Warwickshire and Rugby Borough.
- Review the boundary to the east of Daventry (adjacent to Norton village) to create a separation zone of 1km.
- Re-draw the boundary at the northern end of the town from the A45 to the disused railway.
- A number of respondents asked for the exclusion of Burnt Walls, Borough Hill, the Country Park or the area to the east of Newnham Grange.
- Extending the proposed boundary at Daventry to incorporate all of the Drayton

Field farm land and industrial land around the A45 Gateway.

### **Northampton:**

- The inclusion of the area between the M1 and the B526 at Wooton/Grange Park.
- The extension of the boundary to the west of Northampton along the A45 corridor.
- The inclusion of land to the north within Daventry District.
- The inclusion of Buckton Fields.
- The inclusion of land to the north, south and west of Northampton.

40. Having considered the responses, the Government considers the proposed boundary for Northampton is appropriate. However, recognising the broad level of local support, the Government has decided to alter the proposed boundary for Towcester, extending it to line up with an indicative alignment of the proposed A5 bypass. This change will ensure that the UDC can integrate this area into its plans for the regeneration of Towcester.

41. The Government has also decided to make two minor alterations to the proposed Daventry boundary. These are to extend the north west boundary to avoid passing through an industrial unit, Drayton Field Farm, and to incorporate the A45 gateway area on the southside of the A45 on the east side of town.

42. The Government notes the responses calling for an extension of proposed boundaries to include current and planned transport corridors. But an urban development area has to be determined having regard to the nature and regeneration needs of the land within it, and cannot be extended simply in order to cover the proposed routes of new transport links. Also, it should be noted that some UDC powers may be used to support activities outside the UDC area if it is satisfied that they will further the regeneration of its area.

43. Ministers recognise the genuine concerns raised over the inclusion of a number of sites of historical and environmental importance. However, rural and urban issues are clearly interrelated and sustainable solutions are unlikely to be generated if they are considered in isolation to each other. Over the next few months, targets and guidance for the UDC will be drawn up. The Government will fully consult environmental stakeholders to ensure that the UDC is clear about its role in delivering all aspects of sustainable development.

44. The urban development area may need to be revised in light of the final revisions to the regional planning guidance (RPG) and amendments to the boundary may be made to reflect the conclusions of the RPG process.

### **Planning Powers**

#### **Q7. The scope of an order transferring planning powers to a UDC, including the area for which the UDC would be the local planning authority and the development control functions that it ought to undertake.**

45. In the consultation paper, it was proposed that once established, a further Order

enabling the UDC to become the local planning authority for applications relevant to its purpose would be required. It was also proposed that the UDC's planning powers should be limited to major applications for a series of individual growth sites where strategic new development is envisaged.

46. This proposal was broadly welcomed by the private sector, Government agencies and a number of local representatives. English Partnerships wrote that for "identified strategic sites the determination of major applications by the UDC is likely to provide the private sector with the confidence of an integrated planning and regeneration approach to delivery, especially over the long term."
47. Those respondents who welcomed the proposals did, however, raise a number of issues:
- The definition of a "major" or "strategic" planning application.
  - The status of sites that extend beyond the boundary of the UDC.
48. Concerns were raised about the possible confusion stemming from the existence of two planning authorities. Many of the responses from developers highlighted the need for transparency and clarity in relation to who would be the appropriate planning authority for individual development proposals.
49. In addition, a number of respondents, including local authorities, offered a range of proposals that they considered would improve the effectiveness of the UDC:
- Northamptonshire County Council suggested that the UDC should have the "strategic planning (Local Development Framework) co-ordination role, as well as a call-in option on all planning applications, across the whole of its area, rather than just planning powers on key strategic sites." The approach reflected the Council's concern that it might not be apparent from the outset as to what constitutes a 'strategic' development.
  - The Royal Town Planning Institute recommended the preparation of joint development plan (and supplementary planning) documents in the designated areas of the UDC, with either the Local Planning Authority or the UDC taking the lead as appropriate.
50. While EP supported the general approach, they commented that the "UDC should concentrate on new initiatives, not already started, to enable existing and committed delivery to progress".
51. Other respondents - primarily Parish Councils, environmental groups and local authorities - were of the view that planning powers were unnecessary or undesirable. Issues raised included:
- The transfer of planning powers to the UDC would reduce the already limited influence that the Parish Councils have over planning.
  - Planning applications may be rushed through without adequate consultation with the local community.
  - The transfer of planning powers would water down the usual procedures designed to protect the historic environment.

52. A number of these respondents proposed that planning powers remain with the local authorities, providing a range of views in relation to the role for the UDC on planning matters:

- The CPRE suggested the UDC become a statutory consultee and a party to Section 106 negotiations.
- Northampton Borough Council suggested that the UDC should not necessarily need to exercise any reserve planning powers vested in it and considered that the UDC should focus initially on those geographical areas which local authorities have been unable, for whatever reason, to bring forward for development.
- South Northamptonshire Council proposed that the UDC should concentrate on the provision of infrastructure and funding.

53. Having carefully considered these representations, the Government is satisfied that planning powers are of considerable importance to the UDC's ability to deliver regeneration. As proposed in the consultation paper, the Government confirms that UDC will be the local planning authority for applications directly relevant to its purposes (which are defined as strategic and significant developments only).

54. The creation of the UDC does not mean local authorities are relinquishing control of planning. The UDC will focus on strategic sites, where it makes sense to bring together the powers of all the delivery partners. Local authorities will retain their existing powers in other areas.

55. An agency agreement will be established between the UDC and existing local planning authorities, setting out the roles and responsibilities of all parties. The Government will also discuss with the local authorities how arrangements for Council planning officers to assist the UDC with the exercise of its planning functions would work in practice. Further details of any agency agreement will accompany the Order giving the UDC planning powers. This Order will be laid following establishment of the UDC.

**Q8. How best the UDC could be supported by the planning expertise of local authorities if it became a planning authority.**

56. The consultation paper stated that while the UDC Board must take all the planning decisions within its remit, it could ask the local authorities to assist by giving advice, undertaking administrative tasks, and providing services to optimise the scarce resources including planning staff. UDCs in the past have effectively used local planning authorities as their agent in handling planning applications. There was overwhelming support from a wide range of interest groups for this approach.

57. The local authorities welcomed these proposals and highlighted a range of options to improve the effectiveness of the UDC on planning matters. Northampton Borough Council suggested that:

- The UDC should be supported by formal agency agreements with respective local planning departments to provide all necessary publicity, consultation and assessment of planning applications.
- Appropriate service level agreements should be made to ensure adequate funding and quality of service is achieved.
- The UDC should use District Planning Authority professional planners to handle planning applications on their behalf.
- The UDC should also consult Local Planning Authorities and have proper regard to their advice ahead of their determination of applications.

58. Other proposals put forward to utilise the expertise of local authorities included:

- Local Planning Authorities having the key role in planning to meet local needs and detailed design aspects via the publication of supplementary planning guidance (SPG).
- The local planning department having responsibility for providing detailed, economically justified schemes to the UDC.
- Establishing clear local consultation procedures in accord with the effective procedures already in place between local authorities and LSPs.

59. Some respondents were concerned about the impact close co-ordination between the local authorities and the UDC would have on the:

- independence and dynamism of the UDC; and
- scarce resources from the LPAs.

60. The Government agrees that the UDC should draw on the expertise of the local planning authorities. As mentioned above, the Government will explore options with the local authorities for the use of local authority planning staff to assist the UDC in exercising its planning functions.

**Q9. How a UDC might best identify strategic and significant planning decisions.**

61. The consultation paper proposed that the UDC's planning powers be limited to major applications for a series of individual growth sites where strategic new development is envisaged.

62. Under this approach the UDC would only determine planning applications in so far as they are relevant to its purpose. This would mean significant, strategic applications on identified sites would be for the UDC to determine, but other planning issues including householder and other routine applications would remain with local authorities.

63. A large number of respondents supported the proposals for the UDC's planning powers to be limited to major applications for a series of individual growth sites where strategic new development is envisaged. EP agreed that for "identified strategic sites the determination of major applications by the UDC is likely to provide the private sector with the confidence of an integrated planning and

regeneration approach to delivery, especially over the long term."

64. In addition, proposals were put forward by respondents on how the UDC might best identify strategic and significant planning decisions. These included:

- Where a planning decision is likely to have a significant effect, or regeneration impact, beyond the confines of its own site.
- 50 or more dwellings and/or 1000 sq. metres of commercial or community floorspace.
- Excess of 2 hectares and/or 60 dwellings
- 0.4 hectares or 10 dwellings
- Residential development involving in excess of 150 dwellings or 5ha on sites allocated in the Development Plan; retail development involving in excess of 5,000 sq. metres net or 4 ha on sites within action areas in the Development Plan; industrial development in excess of 2,500 sq. metres net or 2 ha on sites allocated or within action areas in the Development Plan.
- Northamptonshire County Council suggested that if a definition of "strategic" was to be used, it would need to reflect local circumstances, i.e. a different definition would apply for Northampton, Daventry and Towcester.

65. A significant number of respondents, including emda, the Environment Agency and The Countryside Agency, stated that consultation with partners was the best way for the UDC to identify these sites. South Northamptonshire Council suggested that "the Government, UDC, local authorities and key partner agencies should agree the sites for critical planning decisions and define these within a Parliamentary Order. This will avoid local/developer confusion and potential conflict between agencies. The local authorities should treat the UDC as a key partner and consultee for all significant other development proposals so that the UDC can influence the direction and decision on such applications." English Heritage suggested that strategic and significant planning areas and opportunities would be best identified by the preparation of a Masterplan and more detailed development briefs for each of the towns.

66. The Government will take into account the views expressed by the respondents as well as the approach used for the Milton Keynes Partnership Committee and other UDCs in determining, in consultation with key stakeholders, an appropriate definition of what constitutes a significant and strategic application.

## **UDC Board Membership**

### **Question 10: The groups that should be represented on the UDC Board.**

67. In the consultation paper it was proposed that members of the Board should be drawn from the range of interested parties involved in the regeneration of the UDC's operational area. It proposed that the Board would probably consist of eleven members plus a Chair and a Deputy Chair. The majority of the positions would be filled through a publicly advertised open selection process. But to ensure that local authorities have adequate representation it is proposed that the Secretary of State appoint a representative from each of the local authorities, based on nominations put forward by the local authorities. It was suggested that

a similar approach should be used for the two key delivery agencies in the area - English Partnerships and emda. The majority of respondents either positively supported the proposal or did not respond to this question.

68. Respondents suggested the Board should be able to represent the following sectors:

- Business;
- House builders
- Education
- Health
- Environment (natural and historic)
- Recreation
- Rural
- Transport
- Parish councils
- Training and education
- Heritage/archaeological
- The elderly
- Affordable housing

69. Specific organisations who respondents considered should be represented on the Board included:

- Northamptonshire Chamber of Commerce
- Daventry Villages Together
- East Midlands Churches Group
- English Heritage
- Northamptonshire Association of Local Councils
- Primary Care Trust
- Northamptonshire Environment Network
- Daventry Town Council
- Towcester Town Council
- Northamptonshire Partnership
- Towcester Partnership
- Northamptonshire Rural Community Council
- Government's statutory advisors on environmental, urban design and countryside issues
- East Midlands Regional Housing Board

70. The main concern expressed by local authorities and Parish Councils was the loss of local accountability given that the Secretary of State appoints Board members. Many of these respondents indicated that they would prefer the majority of the Board members to be made up of locally elected representatives. In light of the range of interested parties, one respondent (Weedon Bec Council) suggested the Board be able to call upon interested parties for specialised input if the occasion arises (using a 'hot seat' arrangement).

71. There was general support for the Secretary of State to appoint a representative from each of the local authorities, based on nominations put forward by the local authorities. The Northampton Borough Council argued that because a significant proportion of the urban development area falls within Northampton (around 80%), there should be two Northampton representatives on the Board. While the Government accepts that the principle focus of the UDC will be in and around Northampton, the number of 'nominated' board positions is restricted given the requirement that the majority of the board members be appointed through a publicly advertised open selection process.
72. The Government recognises the desire to make the Board as representative as possible but this must be balanced by the statutory limitations on Board size, as well as the requirement that an open and transparent selection process is used to fill the majority of positions. While the broad approach outlined in the consultation paper will not be altered, we will take into account the views of respondents when selecting Board members, as far as we can initially and in the future as the need arises to fill vacancies.

**Question 11: The skills and experience needed by the members of the UDC Board.**

73. In the consultation paper, the role of the Board was defined as being to set the strategic vision for the UDC, and to take the decisions required to deliver that vision. Views were sought on the skills and experiences needed to perform this role.
74. The majority of respondents who commented on this question highlighted the need for Board members to have a strong understanding of local (community, economic and social) issues. Local knowledge will be a key criteria when selecting Board members.
75. Other skills and experience which were suggested included:
- Understanding of the planning system (client and provider perspective)
  - Expertise in the delivery of major/strategic developments
  - Understanding of regeneration issues
  - Ability to work with colleagues from all sectors
  - Credibility with all stakeholders
  - Ability to reflect the needs of rural and semi-rural communities
  - Expertise in job creation and enterprise
  - Experience in the delivery of public services
  - Sufficient experience that fits them for considering issues in the areas of:
    - Finance and economics
    - Transport and utilities
    - Health and education
    - Skills and social inclusion
    - Expertise in sustainable development and design
    - Understanding of issues relating to contamination and remediation
    - Knowledge of rural, greenspace, recreation, and archaeology/architecture

issues and basic conservation principles.

- Enthusiasm
- Strong management/people skills
- Leadership abilities
- Lateral thinkers and ability to exercise strategic judgement

76. In order to ensure that the Board has a clear understanding of the planning system, one respondent suggested that the Board receive at least annual briefings from agents responsible for delivery (including house builders and their consultants).

77. While a number of respondents suggested that Board members should have business experience, a concern was expressed about the potential for conflict of interest if private sector developers were appointed to the Board. As suggested by the Pitsford Parish Clerk, Board members will need to be subject to a clear Code of Conduct with a full declaration of interests.