

Consultation Draft
South Northamptonshire
Economic Development Strategy
2010 - 2014

Executive Summary



Summary

As the population of South Northamptonshire grows we need to be proactive to shape growth in keeping with the District whilst ensuring we have a dynamic economy which supports employment. We want to:

- Ensure employment growth accompanies housing growth to avoid seeing dormitory towns and villages created.
- Encourage business growth and inward investment
- Strengthen the economy of our market towns and villages
- Secure improved infrastructure provision to ensure any growth is sustainable, especially with improved transport connections and access.

The Strategy sets out the basis for our action and the actions we will take, often in partnership with other organisations and especially with local businesses themselves. Whilst the strategy sets our long term vision it has also been developed within a two year delivery timeframe to reflect the changing economic climate. It builds on our recent State of the District's Economy report which gave us a clearer understanding of the economy of the District, the economic trends it faces and will enable us to ensure that our policy response and that of our partners is relevant to meeting its needs. The full strategy sets out a detailed work programme so this summary is not a complete list of projects but rather a useful snapshot of our key themes and priorities.

The themes for the Economic Strategy are:

- People and Workforce
- Business Growth and Job Creation
- Market Towns
- A Sustainable Rural Economy
- Tourism

The strategy has been developed with the aim of building and maintaining sustainable communities and the full strategy also links with existing and emerging strategies around housing and transport.

People and Workforce

The district is characterised by a well qualified, high earning, predominately professional workforce and high levels of home working. Its major sectors include banking and public which have been and continue to be at risk whilst employment in tourism is a growing sector. It also experiences high outcommuting and whilst unemployment is lower than average, the increase has been dramatic. The strategy will focus on:

- Getting people back into work
- Increasing take up of business start up and support services
- Removing barriers to employment such as childcare, accessibility of transport
- Supporting provision of higher education in the district

Business Growth and Job Creation

The district is largely rural and agriculture still features highly in the overall percentage of enterprises although not in terms of an employment sector. The majority of businesses are over 10 years old and B space jobs have become more dominant. We can also see a significant reduction in jobs in industrial sectors and an increase in office and, too a lesser extent, warehouse based employment. There has been limited development in employment land recently though the district has identified a wide range of employment sites through the recent countywide Strategic Employment Land Assessment (SELA). The strategy will focus on:

- Working with partners to grow existing companies and support new starts
- Encourage the provision of facilities and infrastructure that will support an increase in home working
- Preparing an inward investment promotion package and online directory
- Using the SELA to release appropriate levels of employment land
- Supporting the green economy and clusters including high performance engineering and motorsport
- Secure the full implementation of Silverstone Circuit Masterplan
- Increase our engagement with major employers in the district

Market Towns

The 2 towns of this district, Brackley and Towcester are both attractive, traditional Market Towns. However, they have both been affected, to differing levels from the challenges facing market towns and the wider economy in this recession. Implementing the Masterplans for Towcester and Brackley will support their diversification and strengthen their economies. We also recognise the link between shopping and leisure and to ensure the towns meet the needs of the modern shopper. The strategy will focus on:

- Taking forward the commitments set out in our two Masterplans
- Market the 2 towns jointly with WNDC and NEL to attract new investment
- Strengthen the retail offer to retain retail spend in the towns and District more generally
- Work with NEL, EMDA and WNDC to secure further funding support for key capital works
- Maintain our opposition to new large scale supermarkets on the edge / out of town locations which could detrimentally affect the role of town centres.
- Secure section 106 funding for Town Centre Managers to promote and market each town and to develop an annual calendar of events

A Sustainable Rural Economy

We aim to secure rural communities that are sustainable, vibrant and thriving. Some villages do need to grow to meet local housing need and to survive as the pattern of service use changes. With employment we recognise that the rural economy is about more than just those employed in farming, but also includes secondary employment

and associated rural industries in our market towns. Links also need to be made to the Transport Strategy around rural transportation affecting access to services, employment and education. The strategy will focus on:

- Exploring opportunities to support farm diversification to strengthen the rural economy through the reuse of rural buildings for economic activities such as business units
- Reviewing the measures we take to secure the survival of village shops
- Linking with our Transport Strategy to extend connectivity and access to the villages and the main tourism venues by wider public transport links.
- Establishing a single web portal to link to all village web sites and maintain the annual Village Services Directory
- Work with ACRE to support parish plans, village halls and continue to lobby for needs of rural communities in South Northamptonshire

Tourism

Tourism in South Northamptonshire is already significant, but underdeveloped and is a major opportunity. Tourism related expenditure brought £125 million (includes VAT) and nearly 3.5 million visitor days into the district in 2007, which is the highest in the County after Northampton. A visit to South Northamptonshire has much to offer and the Council's new approach to tourism now focuses on developing a new tourism offer with existing and new products based on the assets of the district to attract and retain visitors to the district, to secure spending and the local employment multipliers from that spending. The strategy will focus on:

- Working with Explore Northants to promote the District across the County and beyond.
- Support the development of tourism premises and new tourism opportunities as business development activities
- Build on the District's strengths such as Silverstone to increase day and weekend visitors.
- Web based promotion of tourism facilities
- Encouraging more bedspaces
- Support outdoor tourism facilities such as canal and forestry based

For further information or a full copy of the Economic Development Strategy and State of the District Economy report contact:

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