The South Northamptonshire Local Plan is a framework that will guide decisions made by the local planning authority on a range of issues that affect everyone who lives and works in the district. It will include proposals for housing and other forms of development, including employment and contain policies aimed at improving town centres and the rural economy and other important services and facilities, as well as those aimed at enhancing and protecting our heritage and local environment.

As our urban and rural communities grow and develop, change is inevitable. The Local Plan will help us to manage that change in a positive way, for the benefit of everyone. It will enable us to develop sustainable village communities, build prosperous towns and support a strong and flexible rural economy. At its heart is the desire to create a stronger future for the district, while protecting what we have at the present and preserving what’s special about the past.

The Plan must adhere to criteria contained in a number of national and local planning policies, including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS). The existing Local Plan, which must be reviewed and kept up to date, was adopted in 1997. Shaping the future of the district up to 2029, South Northamptonshire Council (SNC) is working to adopt the new Plan in 2015.

Shaping the future of our community

Cllr Mary Clarke
Leader of South Northamptonshire Council

Cllr Rebecca Breese
Portfolio Holder for Planning and Environment, South Northamptonshire Council
HAVE YOUR SAY
To ensure that the Plan accurately reflects the aspirations and wishes of all, SNC is carrying out a comprehensive consultation with the local community. This is a unique opportunity to have your say about the things that matter most to you. You can influence the outcome of the Plan by responding to the issues set out in the consultation documents and by letting us know if there are any other issues that have not been specifically identified but that you consider to be important. By taking part, you can help to improve the quality of life where you live and work.

KEY STEPS

PHASE 1 – THE ISSUES, WINTER 2013/14
Consultation to establish the scope of the Plan, including the issues to be addressed, the criteria and methodology that should be used in future planning decisions.

PHASE 2 – THE OPTIONS, SUMMER/AUTUMN 2014
SNC will put forward options for how to deal with the issues raised. Based on responses from the community, SNC will set out the preferred options in a draft Plan.

PHASE 3 – EXAMINATION, WINTER 2014/15
The preferred options will be submitted in a final Plan to the Secretary of State.

PHASE 4 – ADOPTED, SUMMER/AUTUMN 2015
The Local Plan will formally be adopted.

Everyone has an opportunity to influence the outcome of the Local Plan.
THE COUNTRYSIDE

In planning terms, the countryside is defined as land outside existing town and village confines and allocated development areas. The countryside of South Northamptonshire features acres of agricultural land, forest and woodland, nature reserves and waterways, including canals, rivers and streams. The current Local Plan also defines the district’s countryside as including six of its smallest villages – Alderton, Castle Ashby, Courteenhall, Hulcote, Passenham and Thenford, as well as a number of hamlets such as Radstone and Duncote.

Together, the countryside and these settlements play an important role in supporting the district’s diverse rural economy, including farming, small businesses, leisure and tourism. Through the Local Plan, the planning system can protect the countryside, while helping to maximise employment and tourism opportunities. It will be expected to support sustainable rural businesses, tourism and leisure developments and seek to balance this with policies that
contribute to and enhance the natural environment by protecting the most sensitive landscapes. Policies must also have a minimal impact on biodiversity.

Rural Economy and Development
The district is home to many rural businesses that help to sustain our towns and villages. SNC aims to support these businesses through lobbying to ensure improvements to high-speed broadband and where appropriate, by allowing the redevelopment of redundant agricultural buildings into small-scale commercial use such as shops, restaurants, hotels and offices. There are also a number of larger employment areas within the district that are set in an open countryside location, including for example, Caswells near Greens Norton, Pury Hill Business Park, Alderton and Greatworth Park, Greatworth. Future development in rural areas must be responsive to local needs and retain the distinctiveness of the area.

To ensure that rural businesses are sustainable, the Local Plan needs to support and encourage the conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new builds. National planning guidance is to avoid the development of isolated homes, unless there is a particular need for someone to live near their place of work, or where the development will enhance the setting.

Tourism
The district has become a major tourism destination and tourism is an important source of employment. South Northamptonshire has much to offer the leisure visitor, notably internationally recognised venues such as Silverstone Circuit and Towcester Racecourse. Important heritage attractions include the Grand Union Canal, the pretty canal-side village of Stoke Bruerne, Sulgrave Manor and Castle Ashby.

Transport, Utilities and Communications
A large number of people in the district work from home, or commute out of the area to Milton Keynes, Northampton and other large centres. With a number of villages acting as transport and service hubs, new routes and connections between villages and towns and links to local railway stations need to be improved. Cleaner and greener links are also needed between settlements and services such as education, health and leisure facilities. It is acknowledged that mobility for socially excluded groups is difficult and that bus services are limited, or non-existent in rural areas.
THE ISSUES

- How far can the Local Plan support jobs and prosperity in the countryside?
- What approach should be taken towards the conversion of farm buildings?
- Should the building of isolated homes in the countryside be supported?
- Should agricultural diversification be encouraged and if so, what sort?
- What approach should be taken towards rural tourism, leisure and retail developments?
- How can the Plan address the issues identified in SNC’s Transport Strategy?
- What are the key factors concerning rural communications, such as high-speed broadband?
- Should the public rights of way network be expanded?
- What concerns exist regarding wind turbines and solar farms and how can they be reconciled with the need for renewable and low carbon energy resources?
- How should the Local Plan seek to protect the district’s ‘special character’?

WHAT NEXT?

The consultation process for The Issues stage is taking place from 28 October 2013 to 24 January 2014.

All responses to the consultation documents must be returned by 24 January at the latest. Responses cannot be accepted after this date.

- Collect a copy of the documents from SNC’s offices at Springfields, Towcester, Northamptonshire NN12 6AE, or telephone 01327 322267.
- Copies are also available from your local parish council clerk.
MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

SNC will be carrying out a number of consultations at key stages during the preparation of the Local Plan. For further information, please contact Andy D’Arcy, or a member of his team at SNC. You can also inform your local town or parish council of your views as it will be submitting its own response to the Local Plan to SNC.

Send all comments in writing to:
Andy D’Arcy,
Lead Officer (Planning Policy),
South Northamptonshire Council,
Springfields, Towcester,
Northamptonshire NN12 6AE

Or by email to:
planning.policy@southnorthants.gov.uk

USEFUL INFORMATION

For further information about relevant national and local planning policy, go to:

The National Planning Policy Framework
www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/nppf

The West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy
www.westnorthamptonshirejpu.org/connect.ti/website/view?objectid=2737424

Brackley Masterplan
http://apps.southnorthants.gov.uk/website/brackleymasterplan.htm

Towcester Masterplan
http://apps.southnorthants.gov.uk/website/towcestermasterplan.htm

South Northants District Tourism
http://www.southnorthants.gov.uk/tourism.htm

South Northants Council Planning Policy
http://www.southnorthants.gov.uk/Servicepage495.htm

South Northants Council Conservation Policy
http://www.southnorthants.gov.uk/688.htm