

Consultation on the Sustainable Communities Strategy for Northamptonshire 2008/2031

We will:

"Develop and strengthen sustainable communities by delivering real improvements in the quality of life for everyone in Northamptonshire."

More than 125,000 new homes will be built in Northamptonshire in the next 23 years, and we want to ensure that all parts of the county benefit from this major growth. So we have developed our Sustainable Communities Strategy to plan the development of Northamptonshire over the next two decades. This Strategy will form the basis of our second Local Area Agreement (LAA) – our agreement with central government on how we deliver public services from 2008/9 onwards.

In this leaflet we outline our vision and objectives for a successful and sustainable county. We have developed these ideas with public, private and voluntary sector partners, in discussion with the wider community of Northamptonshire.

Our Vision for Northamptonshire

By 2031, Northamptonshire will have - through the sustainable management of growth - become a dynamic part of the economy of the greater south-east whilst retaining its traditional connections with the East Midlands.

It will be economically, environmentally and socially successful through becoming a modern, outwardly facing part of the UK, where individual and community ambitions are high, new ideas and trends are grasped and implemented and where history and local identity are celebrated: a place where people will want to live, work and visit.

It will have become a more diverse, yet more cohesive county, where the gaps in income, living conditions and in life expectancy will have been narrowed through reducing inequalities, building more cohesive communities and where innovative, efficient and coordinated public services that deliver fairness and engagement with local communities have been developed.

Northamptonshire will have become an even more distinctive and attractive county through having:

- Grown Northampton as the nationally influential heart of the county and developed Daventry into a successful sub-regional centre.
- Transformed Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough into key centres for the wider regional economy, with a focus on their individual town centres.
- Provided a sustainable and efficient public transport system that meets the modern needs of both new and existing communities.
- Made our smaller market towns self-sustaining centres of enterprise that serve to support the functions of our urban centres and rural communities.
- Worked to address disadvantage, engage citizens and build cohesive communities.
- Ensured that the population of the county has adopted healthier lifestyles by reducing smoking and obesity together with increasing physical activity.
- Ensured that people who require help and support are treated with dignity, and enabled to live independently with choice and control over their services.
- Brought about vibrant and sustainable rural areas.
- Created a quality of life which reflects the economic success of the sub-region in its cultural and social fabric.
- Provided the facilities and services needed by children and young people, as the future citizens and employees of the county.

What we want to achieve

We have set out 10 strategic objectives that underline our ambitions for the county. We want you to look at each of these and consider the following questions, using the form at the back of the document for your responses:

1. ***How important is this strategic objective for the county?***
2. ***What could we do in order to achieve it?***
3. ***What could the residents of Northamptonshire do to contribute?***

1: A Northamptonshire with a clear infrastructure investment framework

We want to create a framework for public and private collaboration and investment in Northamptonshire's infrastructure and economy - in a way that gives confidence to investors and communities.

We want Northamptonshire to benefit from being the country's main growth location. It's an opportunity to attract investment in new communities and to regenerate existing ones. We plan to make the most of being within two hours drive for 75 per cent of the UK's population. Improvements to road and rail links will help, as will developing fast and efficient bus services and our "smart card." We plan to raise the status of our urban areas and transform the city-region of Northampton.

This objective is designed to bring new money into Northamptonshire. This could be achieved by the following example activities:

Ensuring the town centres in the county are attractive to businesses and visitors
Building new railway stations in Northampton, Wellingborough and Corby.
Expanding the shopping centre of Northampton

2: A Northamptonshire with a strong and distinct identity

To harness investment in the local fabric to secure the physical attractiveness of the county; building on pride in its local identities, its history and its heritage, making Northamptonshire welcoming and adaptable to change, as well as successfully positioned in the UK as a driver of sustainable growth.

Around 70 per cent of our 125,000 new homes will be in Northampton, Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough. Many will also be built in Daventry and Towcester. The result will be a reshaping of six of our urban areas, including our four largest communities. To develop truly sustainable communities we need improved design of urban areas and an integrated approach to land use - sustainability should be at the heart of design and planning decisions. We want to achieve a high quality built fabric, local identity and a sense of community that will endure. We want to put Northamptonshire on the map – accentuating the university town of Northampton, promoting the county's identity as attractive, dynamic and historic, and highlighting our role at the heart of British motorsport. Northamptonshire will increasingly be known as an area where change and growth mixes well with tradition, as part of our identity – "Let Yourself Grow".

This objective is designed to put Northamptonshire "on the map". This could be achieved by the following example activities:

Rejuvenation of Northampton Market Place.
Holding a "Northamptonshire Day" to celebrate the best of the county

3: A Northamptonshire with a vibrant and dynamic economy

To develop Northamptonshire as a powerful sub-regional economy that has the ambition to raise the number and quality of jobs and skills to match and move ahead of its competitors in the greater south-east of England.

Our challenge is to create 85,000 additional jobs between 2001 and 2021. Many will develop naturally as the population expands. But we want to shape a stronger, more dynamic and higher-value economy, particularly supporting creative enterprises and those competing globally. We want to improve the skill levels of our current and future workforce, ensuring all residents have equal opportunity to access training, acquire skills and participate in this growth wherever they live. At the same time we want to attract people with vision and creativity to live and work in the county. We will develop town centres as employment areas and have a major focus on office development and jobs at Northampton city centre - creating an office centre of national status.

This objective is designed to ensure a healthier economy for Northamptonshire. This could be achieved by the following example activities:

Encouraging learning opportunities for Northamptonshire's residents
Developing Silverstone circuit and surrounding area
The Development of University of Northampton campuses.

4: A Northamptonshire where all can share in our success and growing prosperity

To create the conditions where local people are and feel actively involved in the management of their areas; where all communities have sufficient community support, opportunity and capacity to contribute to and benefit from the local economy, local amenities and access to quality services and opportunities.

Northamptonshire is a county of contrasts, with diverse communities and needs. There is significant deprivation in some of our urban areas. People in rural communities can also suffer from unaffordable house prices, low levels of public transport and difficulty in accessing services. "Affordable housing" needs to be genuinely affordable, with appropriate levels of social housing. We want to renew and balance older "estate communities" as we develop the county. We will ensure all members of the community, including new migrants, fully participate and benefit from growth, feel welcome and a part of Northamptonshire.

This objective is designed to ensure all people in the county have excellent opportunities. This could be achieved by the following example activities:

Ensuring that appropriate and affordable childcare is available to families in need
There is adequate provision of affordable housing
Services are available on a more equal basis

5: A Northamptonshire where we have strong, safe and cohesive communities

To create a county where we build strong and sustainable communities, where crime is low and people feel safe, where traditions are respected, all communities have a sense of a shared future and people have confidence to participate and can influence decision making.

Northamptonshire is a diverse county, with more than 100 languages, at least 14 faiths, and a mix of urban and rural communities. We have an ethnic minority population of 4.9 per cent (31,000). Voluntary and community organisations are key partners in building community cohesion and actively engaging people in developing and running their communities. We will provide enhanced support for the most disadvantaged communities in the county's 15 priority areas, and we will work positively with young people to prevent offending and anti-social behaviour. Safer Community Teams and Neighbourhood Management Teams will work together and with local people to reduce crime. Measures to design out crime and create safer stronger communities will be integral to new developments.

This objective is designed to ensure that we have communities where people get along and where crime levels are low. This could be achieved by the following example activities:

Continuing to focus on neighbourhood-based policing
Opportunities for every adult to become involved as a volunteer, ambassador or coach.

6: A Northamptonshire that looks after and optimises its natural resources and assets

To manage and enhance the natural and built resources and assets of Northamptonshire in a manner that is both co-ordinated and sustainable and ensures minimal impact on climate change.

We will use growth to enhance our environment, investing in green spaces and networks, particularly those within and between the major growth towns. There will be clear urban boundaries to Northampton, Corby, Kettering, Wellingborough, Rushden and Daventry to minimise urban sprawl, and to manage the transition from the towns to the countryside. We will promote development patterns and construct new buildings that minimise waste and the use of natural resources – in construction and operation. New materials and technologies should be used where this doesn't erode a Northamptonshire local identity. Local materials will be used where relevant, especially in rural areas, and local design. We will ensure water and waste are sustainably managed and that our communities are safeguarded from natural risk, such as from flooding.

This objective is designed to lessen our contribution to global climate change and to safeguard Northamptonshire's environment. This could be achieved by the following example activities:

Improved partnership working to reduce waste going to landfill
All new public service vehicles to be hybrid or alternate fuel powered;
All new public buildings to be commissioned to eco excellent standards;

7: A Northamptonshire that people can readily move around in.

To develop local and sub-regional patterns of travel, movement and local services across and adjacent to the county that are integrated, sustainable and which help to join up the communities and neighbourhoods of Northamptonshire, economically and socially.

We cannot accommodate the projected levels of car use from all the new housing and jobs - both in terms of numbers and lengths of car journey. So we will develop travel alternatives for both existing and future car users. This will involve reducing congestion, promoting effective public transport and ensuring developments are accessible and sustainable. We will focus sustainable bus networks on the urban hubs of Northampton, Corby, Kettering, Wellingborough and Rushden. Daventry town centre will be a sub-regional service centre and there will be further development of vibrant free-standing rural service centres, such as Towcester and Thrapston. We will use technology to provide information across the area and to encourage better use of existing roads.

This objective is designed to lessen our reliance on cars and to ensure increased usage of public transport. This could be achieved by the following example activities:

Pilot of transport smartcard scheme.

A flexible public transport system being introduced in South and East Northants.

Extended evening and weekend bus services in every settlement in the County – scheduled or community transport based;

8: A Northamptonshire where people are healthy, have a good quality of life and the most vulnerable are supported to access appropriate services according to need.

To create communities where people are enabled and supported to make informed choices on healthy lifestyles and where they can enjoy good health and well-being and receive appropriate and accessible services.

There is a significant difference in life expectancy between the most deprived areas in Northamptonshire and the most affluent. To effectively combat health inequalities we will focus on the root causes which are linked to income, employment, training, education and housing, likewise service design, availability and access. Our focus is on prevention and we want to develop better multi-agency services - children's centres and extended services through schools, and other services focussed on young people - from pre-birth onwards. We will promote healthier lifestyles, support vulnerable people and promote healthier travel choices. We want to reduce smoking and alcohol consumption, improve access to health services at the local level, and promote sustainable transport options. We'll also support independent living within caring communities for more vulnerable people.

This objective is designed to ensure the residents of Northamptonshire can improve their health. This could be achieved by the following example activities:

Free health/fitness facilities and health coaches in every priority neighbourhood

Free smoking cessation courses in every priority neighbourhood in the County.

School holiday access to free swimming and leisure activities for every child in the county.

9: A Northamptonshire where every child and young person matters

To create an environment where children and young people are healthy, safe, and are able to enjoy and achieve, so that they will make a positive contribution to their communities throughout their lives and help to achieve economic well-being.

Successful education and training is linked to strong family support for the child/young person from an early stage, high self-esteem and also high aspirations. The community can play a significant role too in achieving these aims. We will support vulnerable young people, equip young people with the right education and skills, reduce the numbers who aren't in employment, education and training, and encourage young people to take part in local community life. We will provide integrated multi-agency support to children, young people and their families to ensure services are timely and co-ordinated, developing an area-based model of service delivery. We'll involve children, young people, their families and other stakeholders in service design and planning, providing help to parents so their children to achieve the "Five Outcomes" of the Every Child Matters programme.

This objective is designed to ensure the children and young people have bright prospects for the future. This could be achieved by the following example activities:

Free book for every child every month for the first five years of its life.

Opportunities for every schoolchild in the County to participate in the sporting and cultural Olympiad.

Increased educational opportunities in the Silverstone development.

10: A Northamptonshire with a thriving cultural economy

To develop Northamptonshire's cultural offer so it is a more dynamic and attractive place for people to live, work and visit.

Culture and sport can make a positive contribution to people's lives and the sustainable development of communities. We want to build on our strong cultural and sporting heritage, invest in our cultural infrastructure, and use culture to help improve people's health and well-being. We will develop "cultural centres" that include places for thriving creative businesses, working with key partners such as the University of Northampton to develop skills within the sector and to retain graduates.

We plan to modernise the County Library Service and develop Kettering Conference centre and theatre. We will also work with schools to increase their access to sport and leisure activities. The county brand, "Let Yourself Grow", will give a focus to the development of our identity and will also help build our "visitor economy" – attracting more people to enjoy the county and spend money here.

This objective is designed to ensure the residents of Northamptonshire have access to interesting and vibrant opportunities. This could be achieved by the following example activities:

Development of Northampton's cultural quarter

New conference centre/venue in Northamptonshire.

Consultation Response Sheet

Please complete the following for the Strategic Objectives that you want to comment on:

1. A Northamptonshire with a clear infrastructure investment framework	
How important is this for the county? Very : Quite : Not Very : Not at All (Please Circle One)	
What could we do in order to achieve it?	
What could you do to contribute?	
2. A Northamptonshire with a strong and distinct identity	
How important is this for the county? Very : Quite : Not Very : Not at All (Please Circle One)	
What could we do in order to achieve it?	
What could you do to contribute?	
3. A Northamptonshire with a vibrant and dynamic economy	
How important is this for the county? Very : Quite : Not Very : Not at All (Please Circle One)	
What could we do in order to achieve it?	
What could you do to contribute?	

4. A Northamptonshire where all can share in our success and growing prosperity

How important is this for the county? **Very : Quite : Not Very : Not at All** (Please Circle One)

What could we do in order to achieve it?

What could you do to contribute?

5. A Northamptonshire where we have strong, safe and cohesive communities

How important is this for the county? **Very : Quite : Not Very : Not at All** (Please Circle One)

What could we do in order to achieve it?

What could you do to contribute?

6. A Northamptonshire that looks after and optimises its natural resources and assets

How important is this for the county? **Very : Quite : Not Very : Not at All** (Please Circle One)

What could we do in order to achieve it?

What could you do to contribute?

7. A Northamptonshire that people can readily move around in.

How important is this for the county? **Very : Quite : Not Very : Not at All** (Please Circle One)

What could we do in order to achieve it?

What could you do to contribute?

8. A Northamptonshire where people are healthy, have a good quality of life and the most vulnerable are supported to access appropriate services according to need.

How important is this for the county? **Very : Quite : Not Very : Not at All** (Please Circle One)

What could we do in order to achieve it?

What could you do to contribute?

9. A Northamptonshire where every child and young person matters

How important is this for the county? **Very : Quite : Not Very : Not at All** (Please Circle One)

What could we do in order to achieve it?

What could you do to contribute?

10. A Northamptonshire with a thriving cultural economy

How important is this for the county? **Very : Quite : Not Very : Not at All** (Please Circle One)

What could we do in order to achieve it?

What could you do to contribute?

General Questions:

A. Do these objectives cover everything that needs to be done in the county? If not, what else needs to be done?

B. Are there any other comments you would wish to make?

Thank you for completing this consultation document.

The consultation can also be accessed online at:

http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/Community/Sustainable_Communities.htm

Please return completed forms by no later than **10th April 2008** to:

**LAA Office,
FREEPOST NH0676,
County Hall,
Northampton, NN1 1BR**

Or to scsn@northamptonshire.gov.uk