CONSULTATION ARRANGEMENTS

The Council has reached another major milestone in the preparation of a new Local Plan for the District which will guide decisions on the use and development of land up to 2029. We are consulting on a range of planning policies from xxxxxxxx until xxxxxxxxx.

We strongly encourage responses to be made on-line via the Council’s interactive consultation system

Please view and comment online at
www.southnorthants.gov.uk/planningpolicy
http://consult.southnorthants.gov.uk
or by email to
planning.policy@southnorthants.gov.uk

However if you are unable to provide your comments using the Council’s interactive consultation system you can submit your questionnaire response and comments by post to the address below:

Planning Policy Team
South Northamptonshire Council
The Forum
Moat Lane
Towcester
NN12 6AD.

The consultation is also being publicised in the main libraries across the District as well as on as many parish and town council noticeboards as possible. Reference printed copies of the documents will be available for viewing at the following locations:

- The Forum, Towcester
- Brackley Library
- Middleton Cheney Library
- Roade Library
- Deanshanger Library

For library opening times please visit the library pages on the County Council’s website at www.northamptonshire.gov.uk
Upon request the document can also be made available in different formats.
If you have any questions about the consultation please:

- View the FAQs (Appendix 1)
- Email the Planning Policy team on planning.policy@southnorthants.gov.uk
- Phone on 01327 322265

Following the close of the consultation, all responses will be summarised and the Council will respond to them.

Any comments received cannot be treated as confidential as the Council is obliged to make representations available for public inspection.
Foreword

We all know, South Northants is a great place to live, with its two successful market towns, of Brackley and Towcester, the dynamic Silverstone circuit supporting the High Performance Technology and Motorsport Engineering sector, a wonderful landscape and villages, many of which contain conservation areas, reflecting the history and heritage that is the foundation of the District. The Local Plan embraces that backdrop and seeks to ensure any new development is good development in the right locations to support growth.

This Local Plan for South Northants builds on the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy, by adding local detail.

This Plan reviews and reinstates confines for all the main villages across the District, to ensure they can grow in an appropriate way and proper scale.

The Plan contains a series of new policies to guide the construction of all types of housing, such as starter homes, self-build and homes for older people to ensure greater housing choice is provided for local residents. We want to support small scale local housing growth in addition to the large housing sites that are under construction at Radstone Fields, Brackley, Towcester South and the edge of Northampton, this Plan sets out how.

As a council we recognise that a strong economy is at the heart of our quality of life and the policies in the plan seek to retain the employment land we have as well as to increase the supply of new employment sites. We aim to meet the demand for small and medium sized units by suitable land allocation. The Plan proposes a safeguarding of the route of the proposed Chipping Warden bypass and contains policies to guide farm diversification, new equine developments as well as the expansion of the canal based economy.

In short, this is a plan which looks forward by embracing growth and guiding it to the right locations. It seeks to maintain the economic strengths of the District while meeting the needs of a growing population and ensuring that what makes the District special is at the heart of our planning.

Councillor Ian McCord
Leader
South Northamptonshire Council.
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1. **Introduction**

**What is the Local Plan?**

1.1 This is the Part 2 Local Plan for South Northamptonshire District. It covers the period from 2011 – 2029.

1.2 Throughout the process of preparing the Local Plan, a significant level of public consultation has been undertaken. This included seeking views on early policy documents, such as the Issues and Options, and also on specific pieces of evidence base including the Council’s Strategic Housing and Employment Methodology Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal.

1.3 This process ensured that the community and key stakeholders had the opportunity to influence key aspects of the draft Local Plan. This was guided by the adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

1.4 This Consultation covers a range of aspects of the Local Plan including:

- Introduction
- Spatial Portrait
- Vision and Objectives
- Building Sustainable Communities
- Settlement Hierarchy
- Housing Policies and Proposals
- Employment Policies and Proposals
- Connections Policies and Proposals
- Heritage Policies
- Town and Village Confiners
- Environment Policies
- Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Policy
- Retailing Policies
- Local Green Spaces
- Monitoring Framework
- Proposals Map
- The Sustainability Appraisal
- The Viability Study

1.5 Following these consultations and after any appropriate changes are made to this Plan it will be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for examination. The Inspector will need to be satisfied that the Plan meets the following requirements:

a) has been prepared in accordance with the duty to cooperate, legal and procedural requirements, and

b) is ‘sound’. Soundness means:

“*Positively prepared – the plan should be prepared based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements, including unmet requirements from neighbouring authorities where...*
it is practical to do so consistently with the presumption in favour of sustainable development;

- **Justified** – the plan should be the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate evidence;

- **Effective** – the plan should be deliverable over its period and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic priorities; and

- **Consistent with national policy** – the plan should enable the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the Framework.¹”

### Duty to Co-operate

1.6 In preparing the Plan, the Council has ensured that it has complied with all the necessary legal requirements. In terms of the duty to cooperate, the Council has worked with neighbouring authorities and other relevant bodies, as necessary, on all relevant matters. The Plan should be read as a whole. Proposals will be judged against all relevant policies.

### The Area Covered by the Plan

1.7 The Plan will cover the whole administrative area of South Northamptonshire. This includes those parts of the District which are allocated for development within the Northampton Related Development Area (NRDA) as set out in the WNJCS. These areas are:

- Norwood Farm
- Northampton West
- South of Brackmills

1.8 On adoption the Plan will replace the remaining saved policies in the 1997 South Northamptonshire Local Plan. The Plan makes provision for future needs in the District up to 2029. There will be additional documents to the Plan which together will form part of the development plan for South Northamptonshire. Planning decisions must be taken in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Further information on these documents can be found on the Council’s website at [www.southnorthants.gov.uk/planningpolicy](http://www.southnorthants.gov.uk/planningpolicy)

- The West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan (Part 1): Adopted 2014 (WNJCS)

- South Northamptonshire Local Plan (Part 2) (when adopted)

- The saved policies of the South Northamptonshire Local Plan: Adopted 1997²

¹ (Source: paragraph 182 National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG 2012).

² These will no longer apply following the adoption of the Part 2 Local Plan.
• The Northamptonshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan: Adopted 2017
• Kislingbury Neighbourhood Plan
• Other Neighbourhood Plans (when ‘made’)

Context for the Local Plan

1.9 The Plan has also been prepared to sit within a framework of other national and local documents. This includes the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (WNJCS) and local documents including the SNC Business Plan and approved Housing and Economic Strategies, in addition to other strategies which cover specific issues such as the Local Transport Plan.

National Context

1.10 The NPPF sets out the context within which the Plan must be prepared. In summary it considers that local planning authorities should:

• Plan for sustainable development.
• Encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land).
• Supports strong, vibrant and healthy communities by providing the type of development required to meet the needs of present and future generations, with accessible local services that reflect the community’s need.
• Where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby.
• Plan patterns of growth that make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable.
• Sustainable development should be promoted in rural areas by locating new housing where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities whilst balancing this with environmental considerations. For example, where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby.

1.11 The NPPF also states that local planning authorities should set out the strategic priorities for the area in the Plan (some of which are already covered in the higher tier WNJCS) including:

• the homes and jobs needed in the area;
• the provision of retail, leisure and other commercial development;
• the provision of infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, waste management, water supply, wastewater, flood risk, and the provision of minerals and energy (including heat);
• the provision of health, security, community and cultural infrastructure and other local facilities; and
• climate change mitigation and adaptation, conservation and enhancement of the natural and historic environment, including landscape.
1.12 The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) was published as practice guidance in support of the Framework. This reiterates that Local Plans “should be based upon and reflect the presumption in favour of sustainable development” and recognises the importance of “issues facing rural areas in terms of housing supply and affordability, and the role of housing in supporting the broader sustainability of villages and smaller settlements”. Reference will be made to the Framework and Guidance to justify policies and proposals throughout this Plan as appropriate:

Local Context

The West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (WNJCS)

1.13 This Plan will sit alongside the WNJCS Local Plan (Part 1) that was adopted in December 2014 as well as adopted Neighbourhood Plans. The WNJCS Examination took place post-publication of the NPPF. It provides up-to-date planning policies for the whole of Northampton Borough as well as the neighbouring areas of Daventry District and South Northamptonshire and sets local policies to guide decisions about new development and to protect the quality of life of residents, workers and visitors.

1.14 The WNJCS forms Part 1 of the suite of Local Plans in West Northamptonshire that will, together, guide the evolution of Northampton, Daventry and South Northamptonshire in the years that lie ahead. It provides a long-term vision for the area with an overall framework in which more detailed plans will be drawn up and decisions made. It contains a broad planning strategy aimed at meeting that vision. It provides a strategic framework to guide the preparation of Part 2 Local Plans which will provide more detailed planning policies and site allocations for each of the partner Borough and District Councils.

1.15 The WNJCS includes a number of key policies and proposals, relevant for South Northamptonshire, including the agreed development strategy, the agreed scale of development and strategic allocations for housing, leisure and employment development and a series of Development Management Policies within South Northamptonshire. This Plan is drafted in conformity with the WNJCS. The content of the WNJCS is not re-visited as part of the preparation of this Local Plan. The relevant policies of the WNJCS are set out in Appendix 2 to this Plan and are referred to throughout this Plan to justify policies and proposals as appropriate.

1.16 The WNJCS also requires or recommends that the Council includes policies and proposals on key issues in this Local Plan. These are as follows (WNJCS paragraph references included):

- Allocations of employment land within the WNJCS below the 40ha strategic threshold are restricted to provision at Sustainable Urban Extensions, where they seek to meet the economic needs of new communities on mixed-use schemes at an appropriate scale. Allocations at a scale of below 40ha should be considered positively during the preparation of Part 2 Local Plans where they comply with the objectives of this Plan alongside fulfilling local priorities and considerations (5.65).
The key aims for taking forward a strategy for community regeneration are detailed in the policies under the Places section of the WNJCS for each of the respective towns. These aims will be developed through accompanying Part 2 Local Plans and reflect the spatial objectives of the WNJCS (7.19).

Mechanisms for achieving improvements in the provision of open space, sport, recreation and cultural facilities will be detailed in the Part 2 Local Plans and Supplementary Planning Documents, as necessary (7.40).

Meeting community needs may therefore require contributions from new development to assist in refurbishing, adapting or extending vital community assets; details of this approach will be provided within the Part 2 Local Plans and Supplementary Planning Documents (as necessary), which will also specify facilities that are considered to be "at risk" (7.41).

New commercial floorspace at the rural service centres of Towcester and Brackley and other smaller settlements will be of a scale that is commensurate with their function. Detailed implementation of this Policy will be through the part 2 local plans (Policy E1).

Further guidance on the detailed requirements for the creation, enhancement and management of green infrastructure corridors and associated facilities, including the mechanisms for off-site delivery, may be included in the Part 2 Local Plans or through Supplementary Planning Documents (10.13).

Further advice relating to the consideration of biodiversity in the development management process will be provided in the Part 2 Local Plans (10.22).

Mechanisms to protect heritage assets, including non-designated assets, will be strengthened through policies in the respective Part 2 Local Plans (10.36).

Further detailed guidance on the operation of the approach to securing developer contributions may be provided in the Part 2 Local Plans and Supplementary Planning Documents as necessary. The approach will need to acknowledge the future implications of CIL when it is introduced (11.25).

The allocation of settlements within the hierarchy ("the detailed hierarchy") will be undertaken through Part 2 Local Plans which will be prepared for the rural areas within Daventry and South Northamptonshire districts (16.9)

Part 2 Local Plans will ensure that the scale of development is proportionate to the scale of each village within the hierarchy and will take into account the level of existing planning permissions and completions that have taken place within the village during the plan period (16.14).

Whilst in general terms the rural housing needs will be set by the requirements set out in Policy S3, it is not the intention of the Plan to prevent additional appropriate development in the rural areas from coming forward. For example, development considered under Policy H3 (Rural Exception Sites), would not be constrained by the rural housing requirement specified in
Policy S3. In addition the Part 2 Local Plans could allocate additional sites based on evidenced local need (16.16).

- The Partner Authorities of Daventry, Northampton Borough and South Northamptonshire Councils will also be able to add their own local information, including indicators for their Part 2 Local Plans or updates on Sustainable Communities Strategies, Neighbourhood Plans or Masterplans (17.14).

**South Northamptonshire Council’s Business Plan (2016/17)**

1.17 The Council's strategic priorities are set out in the Council's Business Plan (2017/18). These are of particular importance and provide a basis for the Local Plan. The long-term priorities for the District are set out below under the long-term strategic priorities of Serve, Protect and Grow.

**Serve the Residents & Business:**
- Maintain high quality waste and recycling services
- Provide enhanced leisure facilities
- Run cost-effective business-friendly regulatory services
- Provide support for voluntary sector
- Safeguard the vulnerable

**Protect the District:**
- Ensure the character of the District is preserved
- Protect the built heritage
- Preserve the environmental quality of the District
- Mitigate the effects of High Speed 2 construction
- Enhance community resilience as part of emergency planning
- Prevent homelessness
- Deliver the welfare reform agenda
- Deliver innovative and effective housing schemes

**Grow the District:**
- Reduce costs of services
- Increase commercial revenue
- Develop and sustain access to local services
- Increase council revenue through business rates
- Increase tourism in the District
- Continue to deliver the adopted Brackley and Towcester town-wide plans
- Increase employment at strategic employment sites
- Increase return on assets
- Support district growth
- Ensure there are effective governance and performance arrangements for all council-owned companies

1.18 These have been used as the basis for the vision, objectives and policies included in this Plan.
Neighbourhood Planning

1.19 National planning policy sets out the relationship between a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) and a local plan. It provides guidance about what happens if an NP is brought forward before an up-to-date local plan is place. NPs, when brought into force, become part of the development plan for the neighbourhood area. They can be developed before or at the same time as the local planning authority is producing its Local Plan.

1.20 A draft NP must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan in force if it is to meet the basic conditions. Although a draft NP is not tested against the policies in an emerging Local Plan the reasoning and evidence informing the Local Plan process is likely to be relevant to the consideration of the basic conditions against which a neighbourhood plan is tested. For example, up-to-date housing needs evidence is relevant to the question of whether a housing supply policy in a NP contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. It is best practice to work with the Council, to avoid any future potential conflict.

1.21 Where a NP is brought forward before an up-to-date Local Plan is in place the qualifying body and the local planning authority should discuss and aim to agree the relationship between policies in the emerging neighbourhood plan with:

- the emerging Local Plan
- the adopted Development Plan
- appropriate regard to national policy and guidance.

1.22 The local planning authority should work with the qualifying body and vice versa to produce complementary Neighbourhood and Local Plans. It is important to minimise any conflicts between policies in the Neighbourhood Plan and those in the emerging Local Plan, including housing supply policies. This is because section 38(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that the conflict must be resolved by the decision maker favouring the policy which is contained in the last document to become part of the development plan.

1.23 This Plan has been prepared to provide a strategic evidence base for NPs. These will need to conform with this Plan unless there are robust specific local circumstances, accepted at examination, which warrant a specific local approach to be taken. NPs will have the opportunity to take forward some of the issues highlighted within the Plan in more detail.

What will be in this Plan?

1.24 Set against the national and local context above it is important to set out the key content of the Part 2 Local Plan.

The Local Plan Part 2 will:

- include information about the District and the main issues this plan is to address;
• set out a vision, objectives and an overall strategy for the District;
• determine an appropriate development strategy for housing growth at the local level;
• allocate land for specific uses, including where appropriate: housing, employment, retail and recreation and leisure uses to ensure we have a healthy supply of developable land;
• include policies to increase the supply of affordable homes;
• provide for affordable home ownership and Self Build plots;
• set the Settlement hierarchy for the villages;
• set the limits to development around towns and villages;
• designate areas of land that are important and should be protected (such as local green spaces, green wedges, important landscapes as well as showing other key designations such as areas at risk from flooding, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, local nature reserves, wildlife sites and historic assets, including conservation areas, listed buildings and scheduled ancient monuments);
• set out polices and proposals for the regeneration and enhancement of the vitality of the two town centres;
• set out detailed planning policies that will be used to guide development;
• establish a monitoring and implementation framework and
• contain a separate Proposals Map that sets out which areas are covered by the policies, on an Ordnance Survey map base, so you can see exactly where development is proposed, and what areas are protected from development.

1.25 For clarity, the Plan does not include policies or proposals on the following key areas:

• The overall requirements for new housing, employment and other forms of development;
• The choice of Sustainable Urban Extensions and Strategic Employment Sites (which are included in the WNJCS);
• Strategic employment sites that have already been considered and dismissed through the WNJCS;
• Additional Strategic allocations for development. These will be considered in the review of the WNJCS in addition to any development needed to ensure the delivery of housing to meet identified needs;
• Other development management policies that are already in the WNJCS

1.26 Alongside the Plan there is a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) which explains the alternatives that were considered for the strategy, sites and policies, and the reasons for the choices made. There is also a Habitats Regulations assessment, which looks at the impacts of the Plan on sites of European nature conservation importance.

1.27 The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that all policy requirements need to be considered together when making an assessment of whether a proposed plan can be delivered. An important consideration in the drafting of the Local Plan Part 2 is to ensure that policies are sufficiently flexible so that they can respond to changing economic, social and environmental circumstances. Viability and the possible cumulative impact of policies on the costs of delivering
development are being considered whilst preparing the plan; including assessing the deliverability of site allocations.

1.28 The Plan reflects the comprehensive evidence base which has been prepared to ensure that there is a detailed understanding of key issues affecting the District. This covers issues such as housing need and requirements, employment land, flooding, retail and landscape issues and has been compiled primarily either by the Council, or on behalf of the Council, by specialist consultants, in conjunction with our partners and statutory bodies, such as the Environment Agency, in order to ensure buy-in and support and add credibility to the various findings.

1.29 This Local Plan and all related documents, including the Proposals Map, and evidence base is also available to view on the Council’s website at www.southnorthants.gov.uk. A summary of the evidence base is in Appendix 3.

1.30 The diagram below shows how all these documents fit together.
IMPORTANT NOTE

The policies avoid repetition so it is important they are all read as a whole. In assessing planning applications, the Council will take into account all of the relevant policies in the Local Plan (Parts 1 and 2), any relevant Neighbourhood Plans and any other material considerations before reaching a decision on the merits of the proposed scheme. Hence it will be necessary for applicants to identify, and have regard to, all relevant policies. These may, for example, include design, landscaping and car parking, as well as any specific land use or site-specific policy. The policies are intended to be the strategic policies for the purpose of providing context for Neighbourhood Plans.
2. Spatial Portrait of South Northamptonshire

Geography

2.1 South Northamptonshire lies in heart of England in the south-west corner of Northamptonshire and adjoins the South-East, East and West Midlands Region and the counties of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Warwickshire. The District is essentially rural in character with agriculture still remaining important as an employment source. The western part of the District is situated on the Jurassic chain of hills, which extend from Dorset through the Cotswolds to Lincolnshire, where light grey Oolitic limestone, “honeycomb” coloured sandstone and dark brown ironstone can be found in many of the villages. The District contains many fine listed buildings and lives up to its reputation of being part of the County of “squires and spires”. Many famous stately homes are to be found, among them, Castle Ashby, Easton Neston and Edgcote.

2.2 The District, being situated in the heart of the country, is excellently placed for communications. London and Birmingham are just an hour away by motorway and rail, whilst trunk roads link the District with other major towns in the region, such as Northampton, Oxford, Milton Keynes and Peterborough. Both the M1 motorway and west coast mainline (London-Glasgow) pass through the area, as does the M40 that provides an alternative route between London and Birmingham and the Chiltern railway line (London to Birmingham). These two motorways are linked by the A43 dual carriageway.

2.3 This good communication network is at the heart of the District’s strong relationships with the south-east, most notably Milton Keynes and London, Oxford, Banbury, Birmingham and Northampton. Surveys of households in the District indicate that a high number of people who live in South Northamptonshire commute out of the District to these larger centres for work. In addition many residents rely on Northampton and Milton Keynes for non-food shopping trips and major leisure activities including cinema, night-clubs, bowling and to watch sporting events such as football, rugby and Ice hockey.

2.4 For leisure pursuits, the District offers a wide choice including two canals (the Grand Union and its Northampton Arm, and the Oxford Canal), Stoke Bruerne Waterways Museum, Silverstone Motor Racing Circuit, Towcester Racecourse and Cosgrove Lodge Park.

Population and Housing

2.5 The 2011 Census reveals that the majority of residents (72%) live in the rural areas, 5% live within the urban fringe of Northampton with the remainder (23%) in the market towns.

2.6 The Halifax Quality of Life Survey (2016) has ranked South Northamptonshire the 16th most desirable place to live in the country. It is prosperous with a highly skilled workforce, good education rates and low deprivation. We have a number of strong assets in the District, in particular Silverstone and its High Performance Technology and Motorsport Engineering sector. We also have a strong tourism sector which supports many local jobs and attracts significant investment. There
is a good supply of existing and allocated employment sites which will provide for growth in the future.

2.7 The 2011 Census shows the population of South Northamptonshire is just over 85,000; up 21,000 in 30 years and 7.5% in the last ten years. Since 1981 the proportion of the District’s population aged over 60 has increased by 90% with an increase of 40% since 2001 (an increase of 6,025 people). Since 1981 the population aged 0 – 19 has only increased by 2%.

2.8 The 2011 census also reveals that the majority of our residents are in good health (88% compared with 81% nationally) while 13.9% have a long term limiting health problem or disability (17.6% nationally). There are more residents over 60 than children and young people 0-19, a trend (based on national population projections) that is set to accelerate over the coming decades. The population is estimated to grow to just under 98,000 by the 2021 Census when the age band 50-59 will be the largest single group. The age group that is expected to experience the biggest change is the over 70s, with an increase of 6,394 (51%) attracting a significant increase in the demand for housing related support services and more general needs accommodation that is suited to an older population.

2.9 The 2011 Census also reveals that BME (black and minority ethnic) population is low (3.1%) compared with the East Midlands (10.7%) and England as a whole (14.6%). There is very little international migration at local level with the key trends for in-migration coming from the South East, London and the East and out-migration northwards. However, the overall net-migration is relatively low and the majority of movement takes place within the district.

2.10 The 2011 Census shows there were 34,717 households in South Northamptonshire, living in 32,528 houses and bungalows, 2,091 flats, 93 caravans and mobile structures and 5 shared dwellings. The tenure of these dwellings was 42% owned with a mortgage, 35% owned outright; 11% private sector renting, 10% social rented, 1% shared ownership and 1% lives rent free. The main change from the 2001 Census results is that private renting has now overtaken social renting, home ownership is ahead of national level and social renting and private renting below, and detached and semi-detached properties and 4 and 5 bedroom properties are ahead of national averages.

2.11 House Prices continue to rise across South Northamptonshire. According to Land Registry\(^3\) the average sale price in the district is £301,990 as of April 2017. In addition Private rent costs average £783 a month in the District.

2.12 South Northamptonshire is a largely prosperous District that has not realised its development opportunities in the past. However, through housing and employment allocations, alongside a number of permitted developments, it faces an exciting future. Within this growth, a central priority for South Northamptonshire is to retain what is special about this District. To set the context of this strategy the Council produces a ‘State of the District’s Economy’

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\(^3\) UK House Price Index England: June 2016 Land registry
2017 report. The report provides a clear understanding and appreciation of the economy of the district and the economic trends it faces. It helps ensure our economic development actions and our work with partners remains relevant. Within each priority theme in this strategy, a series of key statistics are provided to set the context of that particular priority.

2.13 Infrastructure can be a barrier to growth and over recent years the Council has worked closely with Highways England to overcome these barriers. Most recently as a result of the recognition of the importance of the A43 in the national Roads Programme and the Route Based Strategies, funding was secured to complete the A5/A43 Tove Roundabout and have begun enabling work on A43 Abthorpe Roundabout. In total we are working to secure over £20million of infrastructure funding to unlock planned growth in the District with improvements to the Silverstone junction, Brackley junctions on the A43 and the Towcester Relief Road.

2.14 There are major growth sites in South Northamptonshire as detailed in the WNJCS including strategic employment sites at:

- Brackley Turweston Road North
- Towcester South
- Silverstone Park
- Grange Park
- Junction 16, M1
- Pineham Extension at Junction 15a, M1.

2.15 Other employment land growth is through the completion of the Moat Lane Regeneration project and the planned expansion of the RAF Croughton Airbase.

2.16 Business rates’ growth on the approved major sites will be a key area of focus for the District with mechanisms employed to ensure that the phasing of planning and development enables the best return on investment: The Economic Growth Service will work closely with the Business Support Unit which is tasked with maximising income streams through business rate retention, local investment such as New Homes Bonus and re-distributing locally to grow the economy, for example through business rate incentives and shop front grants.

2.17 South Northamptonshire has one of the lowest unemployment levels and one of the highest employment levels in the UK with a highly skilled and professional resident workforce. How we maintain and build on these features through a focus on skills and employment, business support and tourism will be critical to the District’s growth and quality of life. The top occupations listed (Census 2011) by people in South Northamptonshire are Professional 17.6%, Managers, directors and senior officials 15.0%, Associate professional and technical 13.7%, Skilled trades 12.5%, Administrative and secretarial 12.3%, Corporate managers and directors 10.5%, Administrative 9.3%, Elementary 8.9%, Caring, leisure and other service 7.8%, Business and public service associate professionals 7.7%
2.18 Key sectors include High Performance Technology and Motorsport Engineering (focused on Silverstone), Food and Drink, the Visitor Economy & Logistics. The District has 65 business parks that provide an anchor for many of the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) that underpin these sectors and associated clusters. Key sectors and business clusters by their nature change over time. For example due to the annual rule changes by the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) there is a risk that further smaller Formula One companies may go out of business. Formula One is important as it anchors a wide range of engineering and design companies in each District.

2.19 South Northamptonshire is classified as the 3rd least deprived district in England (DCLG: English Indices of Deprivation 2015). These measures however fail to recognise pockets of deprivation and individuals and groups whose opportunities to access employment, healthcare and essential services are severely restricted by the lack of transport options. The increasing proportion of older people in South Northamptonshire is more likely to become increasingly dependent on public or community transport to access essential services, especially healthcare.
3. Vision and Objectives

What you told us at the Options Stage

- Rural Areas should remain rural and future development should meet local needs to address specific sections of the community in both housing mix, infrastructure and affordability
- There are many thriving villages in South Northamptonshire district, which would benefit from more housing growth
- The vision should recognise that Deanshanger has been over developed
- The vision should recognise that Towcester will have seen disproportionate development in the early part of the plan period through the Sustainable Urban extension
- The vision should also include a requirement to improve, sustain and maintain local infrastructure particularly roads and public facilities.
- There should also be an inclusion of some vision of safe and sustainable environments especially with regard to potential flooding and changing weather patterns
- The Vision fails in any way to consider how the development plan can contribute to the strengthening of the main public transport corridors linking the major settlements of the District

3.1 The Local Plan “Vision” is a statement of how South Northamptonshire will be at the end of the Local Plan period, ie in the year 2029. The Vision, although aspirational, should be realistic and capable of being achieved through the Local Plan. It should be distinct to South Northamptonshire, rather than a general statement that could apply anywhere, and should reflect the key issues that have been identified, and show how the Local Plan will have addressed them. It is also important for the Local Plan Vision to be consistent with the vision and objective of the WNJCS.

The Vision for South Northamptonshire is:

In 2029 South Northamptonshire will continue to be an attractive and successful place where people want to live, work and visit. The challenges of an ageing population will be being addressed and younger age groups attracted and retained creating balanced and sustainable communities. Development will have taken place in a sustainable manner supported by the necessary infrastructure and with minimal effect on the environment and important landscapes.

In 2029 the District will have retained its local character and distinctiveness. The identity and unique natural assets and built heritage of South Northamptonshire will be valued, protected and enhanced, enabling people to access and enjoy them.

In 2029 there will be a diverse, high quality accessible housing offer which provides choice and meets the needs of all our community, including housing for older people and vulnerable people including those with specialist needs as well as affordable housing and smaller market dwellings for first time buyers.
and young families

In 2029 there will continue to be strong business growth on a range of employment sites supporting businesses of all sizes that will have delivered a diverse economy in South Northamptonshire. The District will be renowned for motor sport and high performance engineering specialisms centred on Silverstone, together with a growing food and drink and tourism sector.

In 2029 Brackley and Towcester will continue to prosper providing services, facilities and employment opportunities for the wider rural area with a distinctive character and where important local heritage and environmental assets have been protected and enhanced.

In 2029 the vitality of the rural areas will be maintained or enhanced with villages set in attractive, open countryside. In 2029, where need is identified there will be a wider choice of homes to meet locally identified needs and appropriately scaled local employment opportunities as well as local services to meet the identified needs of the local population. This will be delivered in a sustainable way that ensures the continued identity of individual settlements and avoids coalescence.

Objectives

What you told us at the Options stage

- There is a need to address areas where there is insufficient employment and services to meet the increase in housing
- Objectives also need to include the improvement, sustainment and maintenance of roads and public facilities and recognise the increased risk of flooding and environmental change
- A moratorium of development in the rural area for the remainder of the plan period would compromise the Plan’s ability to achieve these objectives
- Need to add an objective that development does not lead to coalescence between rural areas and communities.
- Development should be concentrated on brownfield sites and land within confines
- No mention of improved transportation, roads, rail or green alternatives such as biking
- Need to refer to biodiversity, wildlife and environmental character and tranquillity
- Need to refer to development that has full regard to the needs of security and crime prevention
3.2 The vision will be delivered by 10 focussed key objectives as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Objective 1</th>
<th>Objective 2</th>
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<tr>
<td>To facilitate economic growth encouraging investment and job creation, aligning training with employers’ requirements to get more local people into work and reduce levels of unemployment.</td>
<td>To deliver appropriate new employment opportunities in both the urban and rural areas, including home-based working and extended employment areas, facilitated by high-speed broadband.</td>
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<th>Objective 3</th>
<th>Objective 4</th>
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<tr>
<td>To facilitate tourism and leisure related growth creating a distinct offer within South Northamptonshire.</td>
<td>To provide a range of new housing, of high quality environmental and design standards, including those relating to designing out crime, to meet the needs of all sections of our existing population, including affordable, housing for the younger generation and housing for older persons, vulnerable people and those with specialist housing needs.</td>
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<th>Objective 5</th>
<th>Objective 6</th>
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<td>To ensure that appropriately scaled new development to meet locally identified needs is located on suitable sites in sustainable locations that can be served by sustainable transport measures.</td>
<td>To ensure good quality and a broad range of services that are accessible to all, and to promote the vitality and viability of our two town centres.</td>
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<th>Objective 7</th>
<th>Objective 8</th>
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<td>To work with partners to ensure that new development is supported by the necessary provision of/improvements to infrastructure to minimise the impact of development and support sustainable communities.</td>
<td>To ensure the sustainability of rural communities by retaining important community services and ensuring a diverse and resilient rural economy.</td>
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<th>Objective 9</th>
<th>Objective 10</th>
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<td>To protect and enhance the tranquillity and natural and built environment in South Northamptonshire through high quality design that is respectful to heritage assets, biodiversity and the environmental character of the locality and surrounding landscapes.</td>
<td>To protect the setting and separate identity of settlements by avoiding their coalescence and retaining the openness and character of the land around existing settlements.</td>
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4. **Building Sustainable Communities**

4.1 The WNJCS sets out the spatial strategy for the District and identifies how much new development will be provided and when, i.e. the overall phasing of development. The Spatial Strategy also sets out the principles of sustainable development that all development will follow in order to achieve the vision of West Northamptonshire, particularly in response to climate change. Policy SA of the WNJCS sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development when considering development proposals for proposals that accord with policies in the Development Plan.

4.2 The WNJCS states that some of the main factors that will need to be considered in ensuring sustainable design of new development include the layout and orientation of built development, appropriate densities, and the need to create attractive, usable and durable places, including high quality and inclusive design of development, open spaces and green infrastructure that support community health and well-being.

**Site Development Principles**

4.3 The WNJCS contains several policies aimed at improving the quality of development in the District that should be taken into account when considering proposals for development. This includes Policy S10 that sets out some key Sustainable Development Principles. This chapter builds on the spatial vision set out in the Core Strategy, and adds more detail to the principles set out in Policy S10.

**Design**

4.4 The NPPF makes it clear that the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. High quality design is a key element of sustainable development. This not only includes the physical design of buildings and their surrounds but also their layout and access arrangements, sustainable design and construction methods, and design which responds to local constraints such as flood risk. The NPPF explains how good quality and inclusive design should be applied to all development, including consideration of the wider public realm, in order to contribute positively to improving quality of life, social inclusion, health and safety of people, and in promoting regeneration. It states that “Although visual appearance and the architecture of individual buildings are very important factors, securing high quality and inclusive design goes beyond aesthetic considerations. Therefore, planning policies and decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment”.

4.5 In accordance with the NPPF, the best use should be made of previously developed land (which excludes residential gardens), including vacant and derelict sites and buildings, in order to optimise the potential of sites. The scale and density of development should have regard to the site’s accessibility and existing and proposed infrastructure without harming the character of the surrounding area. New development will be expected to reflect the nature and character of an area, taking account of local distinctiveness. The quality of
design of buildings and spaces is more important than any particular style, though many parts of the District have distinctive visual characteristics that contribute to their identity, and new developments can reinforce this character.

**Pollution**

4.6 Developments should aim to minimise their impact on neighbouring properties and will be expected to avoid potentially conflicting uses. Operations that are likely to give rise to noise, dust, vibration or other pollutants are also controlled by the licensing regime implemented by the Council’s Environmental Protection Team. In addition to the spatial approach to managing impacts of developments, care in the design of buildings needs to be taken to ensure that the scale and massing is appropriate to the location, and potential impacts on neighbours, such as noise, loss of outlook, privacy or sunlight/daylight are avoided, remedied or mitigated. It will be important to ensure that the operational requirements of existing businesses in the vicinity are not prejudiced through redevelopment and that residential amenity and the safety of occupants is maintained.

**Heritage and views**

4.7 Policy BN5 of the WNJCS seeks the appropriate conservation and enhancement of historic assets and landscapes when considering new development proposals. It considers that the relationship between new development and the existing built form is one that requires careful consideration. New development, when designed well, can help to enforce the character of an area which makes it unique.

4.8 There are a series of important local views which contribute to the character of the District, as defined in conservation area appraisals and village design statements. These should also be taken into account when considering proposals for new development.

**Utilities and Broadband**

4.9 Policy C1 of the WNJCS requires that new development should be accessed by fibre to the premises (fttp) technology enabling access to superfast broadband. It also supports information communication networks, such as superfast broadband. The Council will seek to ensure that there is adequate infrastructure available to serve all new developments, including social and transport infrastructure and utility infrastructure (water supply, sewerage, waste management, telecommunications, broadband, heat, power and cooling). Developers will be required to demonstrate that there is adequate capacity to serve the development and that it would not lead to problems for existing users. In some circumstances this may make it necessary for developers to carry out appropriate studies to ascertain whether the proposed development will lead to overloading of existing infrastructure. Where there is a capacity issue, the developer will be required to liaise with the infrastructure provider and/or the Council to agree required improvements.
Recycling and Waste

4.10 Good design and layout is also important in achieving opportunities for sustainable waste management, including incorporation of recycling facilities. New developments should integrate waste management facilities without adverse impact on the streetscene and/or landscape. The National Planning Policy for Waste provides more details for applicants and developers on best practice in this respect.

Access and Accessibility

4.11 It is important that design creates environments that are safe and accessible for people of all abilities. Part M to the Building Regulations require that people, regardless of disability, age or gender are able to gain access to buildings and use their facilities, both as visitors and people who live or work in them.

4.12 In accordance with Policy C1 of the WNJCS developments should be designed to reduce the need to travel and minimise car use.

Crime Prevention

4.13 It is also important that crime and disorder, or the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion; this includes counter terrorism design to protect crowded places. The design of the built environment can help reduce crime through simple strategies such as providing natural surveillance, access control and creating a sense of ownership. Secured by Design is the UK Police flagship initiative supporting the principles of 'designing out crime' by use of effective crime prevention and securing standards for a range of applications. Providing a safe and inclusive environment which maximises personal safety and minimises opportunities for crime and antisocial behaviour will be a key requirement of development proposals. Guidance on achieving this can be found at www.securedbydesign.com. The document Crowded Places the Planning System and Counter Terrorism (2012) also provide further guidance. The essential principles of the guidance in these documents are now contained in the NPPF and NPPG.

Lighting

4.14 Lighting can be very effective in enhancing the attractiveness of buildings and spaces. It also contributes to personal safety and security. However, it is important that lighting schemes take into account the importance of energy conservation as well as any harmful impacts on amenity, road users and nature conservation. Lighting that extends or intensifies the use of facilities should take into account the appropriateness of the location in terms of transport accessibility, amenity of neighbouring residents and personal safety and security, particularly after dark. Therefore, developments which include a lighting scheme will only be permitted if the amount of lighting and light spillage from the site is minimised to that necessary to achieve its purpose, and any adverse effects are minimised. Light pollution can have a detrimental effect on wildlife, particularly to birds, bats and other nocturnal species that will avoid over-lit areas. Guidance on appropriate lighting techniques is available from the Institute of Lighting Engineers.
**Health and Wellbeing**

4.15 Health Impact Assessment (HIA) assesses the impact of the wider determinants on the population’s health and wellbeing. It uses both quantitative and qualitative information; data from population needs assessments, literature reviews of the evidence base, and stakeholders and local people’s experience and knowledge. It suggests how any adverse health impacts could be mitigated and how positive impacts could be maximised to inform decisions on planning applications. The requirement for a HIA will be established at the pre-application stage as part of a screening process, with advice from the National Health Service (NHS). For developments requiring Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), the HIA can usefully be incorporated in the EIA so that environmental and health impacts are considered together. For major strategic developments, not subject to EIA a ‘stand alone’ HIA is normally required. Other developments will generally not be required to submit a HIA, but this should be confirmed at pre-application stage. Where a HIA is required, it should be undertaken in consultation with the NHS as a mechanism for ensuring that development proposals contribute to the health of existing and new residents and help reduce health inequalities within the District.

**Street Furniture**

4.16 The layout, design, paving and furnishing of public spaces should reflect the character and appearance of surrounding buildings. Signs, services and utility installations should be designed and sited so as to minimise clutter, obstruction and visual intrusion, and to enhance the street scene. Proposals to reduce street clutter will be supported.

**Coalescence**

**What you told us at the Options Stage**

- Once historic village boundaries have been lost they cannot be restored
  Attempts have been made to bring development south of M1 Junction 15 and the current green wedge must be preserved and not relinquished
- Those set out in paragraph 8.24, namely, on the fringes large settlements, villages and towns along transport corridors and significant gaps between villages in danger of coalescence. Parish Councils etc should also be approached for their views because land within communities may sometimes be suitable for designation as a green wedge
- New development can often be located in areas such as those proposed as green wedges and countryside gaps, without leading to the physical or visual merging of settlements. Would question the purpose of a wedge designation, particularly if this would prevent the development of otherwise sustainable and deliverable housing sites to meet South Northamptonshire’s needs. There appears to be no robust evidence supporting the extent of the current countryside gap designations.
- Should be opposed to the use of Local Gaps if these would only serve to act as an arbitrary tool to prevent sustainable development.
4.17 The Council recognises that local communities place great importance on maintaining the identity of settlements. There are a number of settlements in the District which are at risk of coalescence (or merging together) and many of these have Conservation Area status, meaning that protecting individual settlement character has added significance. In addition the village of Silverstone consists of three separate and distinct parts (West End, Cattle End and the main body of the village). Distances between these elements and between individual settlements are such that inappropriate development could lead to a loss of physical separation and, consequently, erode individual settlement character.

4.18 The 1997 Local Plan identified three specific Important Local Gaps (Policy EV8) where additional protection was considered necessary to protect settlements from the threat of coalescence. These were:

- Land adjacent to the boundary of Northampton Borough excluding the proposed residential development at Grange Park and at Wootton Fields
- Land within the District between the M40 and Chacombe, Middleton Cheney and Warkworth
- At Silverstone, the land between Silverstone Village, Cattle End and the line of the A43 bypass

4.19 Since the introduction of the NPPF, with its presumption in favour of sustainable development, there has been a number of planning appeal decisions which have called into question the effectiveness of defining Separation Areas. Planning Inspectors are increasingly assessing how individual development proposals impact on the degree of separation between settlements rather than simply taking into account the Separation Area designation without question.

4.20 The NPPF states that Local Plans should ‘identify land where development would be inappropriate, for instance because of its environmental or historical significance’ (paragraph 157, bullet point 7).

4.21 There remains the need for a robust policy approach which prevents the coalescence of settlements whilst allowing for sustainable development which does not unduly impact on the separation of settlements. The purpose of such a policy would be to prevent development which undermines the physical and visual separation of settlements. A specific criterion will be included in Policy Site Development Principles 1 (SDP1) that ensures that development on a particular site does not lead to settlements merging or does not undermine the physical and visual separation of settlements or distinct parts of individual settlements. This approach would ensure that the effect of the potential coalescence of settlements is taken into account across the District, not just in selected areas, and would allow for development which does not impact unduly on maintaining the separation of settlements.

4.22 All development proposals will be assessed against Policy SDP1. It is acknowledged that not all elements of this policy will be relevant for every development, however applicants must consider the relevance of all criteria to their proposal as they may be asked to justify why they consider a specific element is not relevant to their application. These policies are also complemented by policies contained in the WNJCS advice and guidance.
POLICY SITE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES 1: General development principles - Sustainable urban design and the quality of the environment

Planning permission will be granted for developments which comply with the following criteria where relevant:

a. use a design-led approach to optimise the potential of sites so that the layout and arrangement of buildings ensure a high level of physical integration with their surroundings; and

b. ensure that the scale, massing and appearance of the development provides a high quality, sustainable design and layout, that contributes positively to local spatial character; and

c. does not harm the amenity of occupiers/users and nearby properties through unacceptable noise, vibration, traffic congestion, air pollution, overshadowing, overbearing, unsatisfactory outlook, privacy or loss of sunlight/daylight; and

d. are sympathetic to local landscape characteristics and avoid, remedy or mitigate any impact on natural features, open spaces and locally important views as identified in approved Parish plans or village design statements; and

e. would not diminish the physical and/or visual separation of individual settlements or the component parts of individual settlements and either individually or cumulatively with other existing or compromise the integrity of the gap; and

f. ensure that development takes account of existing or planned social and transport infrastructure and contributes to additional infrastructure where necessary, so that development is adequately served by public transport and a range of community facilities; and

g. are adequately serviced with utility infrastructure related and appropriate to the development including water supply, sewerage, waste management, telecommunications, broadband, heat, power and cooling; and

h. are designed to reduce the need to travel and minimise car use; and

i. include waste and recycling storage facilities on-site unless there are exceptional circumstances, in which case off-site provision will be sought; and

j. are accessible to people with disabilities; and

k. are designed to provide a safe and inclusive environment which maximises personal safety and minimises opportunities for crime and antisocial behaviour including terrorist activities; and

l. take into account the operational needs of existing businesses and do not prejudice the existing uses/operations; and

m. minimise light pollution and reduce its harmful effects on neighbours and wildlife; and
n. contribute towards a healthy neighbourhood and consider the health impacts of development. The requirement for a Health Impact Assessment will be determined at pre-application stage; and

o. are designed to show that users of the site, occupants of neighbouring land and the environment will be adequately protected from any additional risk to health and safety development in the vicinity of sites where hazardous substances are used, stored or transported; and

p. are designed so that the layout, design, paving and furnishing of public spaces reflects the character and appearance of surrounding buildings, and that the visual intrusion and obstruction of street clutter is minimised in a manner consistent with South Northamptonshire’s Design Guide (and any successor document).

Design Principles

4.23 The NPPF emphasises the importance of good design as a basis for sustainable futures for people and places. It discourages the imposition of inflexible architectural styles, its key message being to promote high quality, inclusive design. The Council attaches great importance to the creation of attractive and usable developments. The Council has produced a Design Guide that complements and adds detail to Local Plan policy. The Guide provides good practice guidance, for example in relation to amenity, privacy and outlook and local character. It will be updated from time to time in the future.

4.24 There are a number of different settlements in the District, each with their own character. Many of these contain a conservation area and these should be referenced when considering the design of development proposals. Design should respond positively to the local character and pattern of the development within each settlement and local area. Design and Access Statements accompanying planning applications should demonstrate how this has been achieved. Consistency is often an important element of design, but this need not result in the rigid application of like-for-like design standards for new development. Rather, new forms of development will be expected to respond positively to existing buildings and improve the way that the area in which the development is located functions.

4.25 New developments should integrate well with their surroundings. Furthermore, new development should enhance the local sense of place. Better living environments should be created for the occupiers of the site and surrounding area by enhancing the legibility of the development and ensuring that the bulk, siting and design are complimentary to the surrounding area. The design of extensions to existing buildings should respect the building to which they are attached. Extensions to buildings will therefore be assessed stringently in respect of their visual effect.

4.26 Advertisements should integrate well with their surroundings and respect the character of the area in and, where relevant, building on which they are located.
**POLICY SITE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES 2: Design Principles**

Development which complies with the Development Plan will be permitted provided it:

- makes a positive contribution to the built and natural environment; and
- recognises and complements the particular local character of the area in which it is located, and
- results in a high quality design.

In order to achieve a high quality design, a development must:

- respect, enhance or improve the visual amenity of the area by virtue of its scale, mass, bulk, height, urban form; and
- does not have an unacceptable impact on the amenity of occupiers of the site, its neighbours, and its surroundings in terms of outlook, privacy, light, nuisance and pollution.

Major development proposals that accord with other policies in the Development Plan will be permitted provided they also:

- retain, enhance or create a high quality public or semi-public realm; and
- enhance legibility through the spatial pattern of development; and
- create a sense of place by complementing the local character, pattern of development or distinctiveness of its surroundings; and
- ensure an appropriate degree of functionality in terms of internal space, accessibility for users, facility provision and waste storage.

Consent will be given for advertisements, signage and displays which do not:

- adversely affect the character or appearance of the building or area; or
- hinder the view of a valued landscape, or feature; or
- cover important decorative features of a historic building; or
- include internally illuminated proposals within a conservation area; or
- result in proposals that are out of keeping in their setting in terms of size, design, illumination, materials, or colour; or
- have an adverse effect on traffic safety, including pedestrian safety and convenience.

All development should be consistent with South Northamptonshire’s
Public Services and Utilities

4.27 Successful infrastructure delivery is important to ensure the wider aims of this Plan can be met. These include delivering sustainable growth across the District. Infrastructure can cover a range of services and facilities. These can include:

- Physical and transport infrastructure such as roads, bus services, water, drainage, waste management, sewage treatment and utility services
- Social infrastructure such as education, health facilities, social services, emergency services and other community facilities such as libraries, broadband and cemeteries, and
- Green Infrastructure such as parks, allotments, footpaths, play areas and natural and amenity green space.

4.28 Delivery of certain types of infrastructure will be more important to development coming forward than others. Essential infrastructure is that which is required to make development happen in a timely and sustainable manner. Such infrastructure is therefore needed to ensure that impacts of development are mitigated and that new development comes forward with necessary supporting facilities. Not investing in this infrastructure may well result in delays to development coming forward. Examples of essential infrastructure associated with developments are roads, public transport improvements, schools and foul water treatment upgrades. Other infrastructure is that which is important to meet the overall cumulative needs of developments, but is not seen as likely to prevent an individual development coming forward in the short-term. Waste management and disposal is the responsibility of Northamptonshire County Council.

4.29 Any new development increases the use of, or demand for, existing services and facilities. Where new homes or jobs are developed and there is insufficient capacity to meet additional demand it is critical that essential infrastructure is provided to meet the demand created. Infrastructure delivery is important to ensure new development is sustainable. New services and facilities should be planned to meet the demand created by new development and be delivered at appropriate timescales. This will ensure that the needs of both the existing community and future residents are provided for. We will therefore only grant planning permission for new development once the delivery of infrastructure within appropriate timescales has been secured.

4.30 Infrastructure has been traditionally provided or funded by developers through legal agreements under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990). The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was introduced in the Planning Act 2008 and defined in the CIL Regulations 2010 (as amended). CIL provides a tariff that local authorities can levy on new development, thus providing more certainty over development costs. The Council introduced CIL in April 2016. The Developer Contributions SPD provides more details on the provision of public services as part of new development including emergency services (police, fire & ambulance). Preliminary enquiries with utility companies have taken place with a view to identifying the infrastructure requirements and constraints to future
development in the District. Gas, electricity and heat supply and investment in electricity infrastructure is provided by the private sector and the Council will continue to work with suppliers and distributors to provide the necessary services to strategic sites. Developers will need to take account of the location of existing services and will need to contribute financially to their relocation on development sites.

4.31 The requirement to provide new or enhanced infrastructure must not be so onerous as to render development unviable, taking into account other policy requirements such as affordable housing provision. For this reason an independent viability study has been carried out to inform this Plan. Effective partnership working is essential between public, private and voluntary sectors to ensure infrastructure is efficiently provided and maintained. The Council continues to work closely with a range of stakeholders, including the Environment Agency, Highways England, Northamptonshire County Council and Health providers. Anglian Water and Severn Trent Water provide the majority of the water supply and waste services in the District. Water services’ business plans are based on 5 year schedules and the scale of investment is substantial. Timelines vary on projects and the Council will work with the water companies to plan the delivery of specific projects. Telecommunications infrastructure will be provided as part of the strategic allocations. As a result of the investment by the Department for Culture, Media and Sports (DCMS), Northamptonshire County Council and South Northants Council full District wide broadband coverage will have been secured by 2017 to support increased business and residential use, supporting increased home working, new business formation and new service provision.

**POLICY SITE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES 3: Public Services and Utilities**

All new development will be required to provide for the necessary on-site and, where appropriate, off-site infrastructure requirements arising from the proposal. Infrastructure requirements will be delivered directly by the developer and/or through an appropriate financial contribution prior to, or in conjunction with, new development. Where appropriate, developers will be expected to collaborate on the provision of infrastructure which is needed to serve more than one site.

In ensuring the timely delivery of infrastructure requirements, development proposals must demonstrate that full regard has been paid to all other relevant policies of this plan.

If infrastructure requirements could render the development unviable, proposals for major development should be supported by an independent viability assessment on terms agreed by the relevant parties including the Council and County Council, and funded by the developer. This will involve an open book approach. Where viability constraints are demonstrated by evidence, the Council will:

i. prioritise developer contributions for essential and then other infrastructure in line with the definitions as set out in
### paragraph 4.27

- ii. use an appropriate mechanism to defer part of the developer contributions requirement to a later date, or
- iii. as a last resort, refuse planning permission if the development would be unsustainable without inclusion of the unfunded infrastructure requirements taking into account reasonable contributions from elsewhere including CIL

Where not covered by the CIL Charging Schedule, infrastructure and services, including provision for their maintenance, should be delivered directly by the developer through the development management process and in accordance with the Regulation 122 Tests*.

Infrastructure and services will be sought through the negotiation of planning obligations, conditions, levy, undertaking and/or other agreement as secured through the planning permission, to mitigate the direct impacts of development and secure its implementation.

All new developments will be expected to include provision for connection to Superfast Broadband.

* The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010.

### Health and Wellbeing

#### What you told us at the Options Stage

- More open spaces to improve health and wellbeing
- To ensure that there are sports and recreational facilities (for children and adults) and other outdoor activities it is essential that any new development does not use land that has been prepared and set side for this
- The provision of new and improved green spaces, leisure and recreation and sports facilities and walkways and cycle tracks to encourage and enable more active and healthy lifestyles
- Publicly available recreation facilities should be included
- All houses should have a sensible garden plot, as a minimum the same plot size as the house itself. In addition to this greener areas should be available to all homes within a short space

4.32 Wellbeing, health and equality are cross-cutting themes, and Policy Sustainable Development Principles 4 (SDP4) should therefore be read alongside other policies that address the wider determinants of health, wellbeing and equity in the Plan. With the increasing proportions of older people and greater diversity in our communities there will also be challenges ahead to make sure that the needs of all are met in a fair and inclusive way. The built environment can contribute to this through a considered approach to the location, design and accessibility of development. This will ensure that residents have equal access to opportunities in employment, housing and health, and that opportunities for social interaction in
a safe environment are provided. The loss of existing community and health facilities will be resisted.

4.33 By ensuring an equitable distribution of services and amenities, the Plan can help reduce health inequalities and encourage healthy lifestyle choices. The location of development can help to sustain neighbourhoods by encouraging physical activity and the provision of accessible facilities to meet the needs of our diverse communities. Locations for development will be assessed, in terms of compatibility and amenity, taking into account the potential risks from non-compatible neighbouring uses and environmental constraints, including potential contamination, ground instability and poor air quality.

4.34 Planning decisions can have a significant effect on travel to work, schools, noise and air quality, access to services, climate change and social networks which can all contribute to health and well-being.

4.35 The local environment has a fundamental impact on the health and well-being of local people. By providing facilities such as local open space this allows for activities such as walking and cycling, promoting healthy lifestyles. The Council will work with the local community to provide safe and accessible environments and to identify the need for and provide local facilities.

4.36 The Council will continue to work closely with the healthcare providers, partners and the NHS across its delivery bodies to:

- ensure the provision of additional and reconfigured health and social care facilities
- identify the anticipated primary care needs of local communities
- identify the capacity needs of local communities
- meet the healthcare requirements of local communities.

4.37 As part of the changes to the NHS brought about by the Health and Social Care Act 2012, Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) and Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs) ceased to exist on 31 March 2013. Their responsibilities were taken over by Clinical Commissioning Groups and the NHS Trust Development Authority. The Health & Wellbeing Board for Northamptonshire is designed to ensure that a range of public and third sector partners work together to improve health and wellbeing.

4.38 New health related facilities should be located in sustainable locations on the edge or within the built up limits of settlements. New buildings in the open countryside will not be supported.

4.39 The provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities is an important factor in the health and wellbeing of communities. Areas of open space that are valued by residents provide an important community function, and can make a significant contribution to quality of life. The accessibility, quality and quantity of open space, sport and recreation facilities will be addressed and monitored through the Local Plan.
Open Space Standards

4.40 The Council does not have an up to date evidence base that sets out the level of open space that it would expect from new developments. The current Developer Contributions SPD will be reviewed to provide more detail to the standards set out in this Plan. The Council has adopted the current Fields in Trust recommended benchmark guidelines for formal outdoor space as set out in Appendix 4 to this Plan. Further advice on provision can be obtained from Sport England, national governing sporting bodies or professional or trade organisations, such as the Institute of Groundsmanship and the Sports and Play Construction Association.

4.41 The Council has commissioned an Open Space, Sport and Recreation Strategy for South Northamptonshire. The conclusions and recommendations of this Study identify the facility network which will be required within the district to meet the needs of the district as a whole, and each sub-area of the district. Priorities for investment are proposed and the costs of this investment identified. An approach towards assessing the demand arising from further, unanticipated new housing, is also provided. This Study will be used in considering requirements from new developments.

POLICY SITE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES 4: Health and Wellbeing

The health and wellbeing of communities will be maintained and improved by:

1. Requiring development to contribute to creating an age friendly, healthy and equitable living environment through:
   - Creating an inclusive built and natural environment; and
   - Promoting and facilitating active and healthy lifestyles; and
   - Preventing negative impacts on residential amenity and wider public safety from noise, ground instability, ground and water contamination, vibration and air quality; and
   - Providing good access for all to health and social care facilities; and
   - Promoting access for all to green spaces, sports facilities, play and recreation opportunities in accordance with the Standards set out in this Plan and the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Strategy.

2. Promoting allotments and gardens for exercise, recreation and for healthy locally produced food.

The Council will support the provision of health facilities in sustainable locations which contribute towards health and well-being.

Health, Education and Community Facilities

4.42 The NPPF states that local planning authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area. This includes
community facilities and other services. The NPPF instructs local planning authorities to plan positively for the provision of facilities and services that the community needs, to guard against unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, to ensure that established facilities and services are able to develop and modernise and to ensure an integrated approach is taken when considering the location of community facilities and services. Proposals for the provision or enhancement of key community facilities will be supported providing that they meet the criteria set out in Policy Sustainable Development Principles 5 (SDP5). The policy seeks to deliver accessible, high quality, inclusive facilities in appropriate locations in order to meet local needs. The definition of ‘key community facilities’ includes:

- schools and colleges;
- nurseries;
- hospitals, doctors’ surgeries and dentists’ surgeries;
- other emergency services’ accommodation;
- extended residential care and supported accommodation;
- community, youth and children’s centres;
- public libraries, museums, community arts venues and theatres;
- places of worship and cemeteries;
- allotments and other urban open land including woodland, green infrastructure and town or village greens;
- parks and sports clubs and pitches;
- public leisure centres; and
- public houses in rural villages.

4.43 The Council maintains a list of Assets of Community Value under the provisions of the Localism Act 2011. Buildings or amenities which play an important role in local life may be nominated by the local community and included on the list. When an asset comes up for sale or change of ownership, the owner must give the community an opportunity to bid for the asset. This could occur when a development is under consideration. If an asset is a key community facility the Council will seek its retention through Policy SDP5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POLICY SITE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES 5: Health, Education and Community Facilities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposals and schemes, for all developments especially major sites for housing, employment or a range of uses should ensure appropriate health, cultural, recreational, sport and education facilities are provided either on site or in the surrounding area through CIL and/or developer contributions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposals for the provision of new community facilities will be permitted within town or village confines or on land immediately adjacent to the settlement confines of a Rural Service Centre, Primary, Secondary or Small Village.</td>
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</table>
Proposals for the extension of or new existing recreational or community facilities in open countryside will be permitted where:

- the scale is appropriate to the local community and
- they are appropriately located and designed having regard to other plan policies, and the amenity of adjoining occupiers and the local area; and
- they are or can be made accessible by public transport, walking and cycling; and

Community Facilities intended to meet the needs of the wider district should be located within or adjoining Rural Service Centres.

Development proposing the change of use and/or loss of any premises and/or land currently/last used as a community facility (including community centres, village and church halls, places of worship, and public houses) will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that:

- The use no longer serves the needs of the community in which it is located; or
- The use is no longer financially viable and it has been demonstrated through a marketing exercise or such process agreed with the Council; or
- A replacement facility of equal or greater value is provided in the locality

Meeting Education Needs

4.44 The provision of primary and secondary education, along with early years and lifelong learning will be needed throughout the District to accommodate population growth. The demand for pre-school facilities is likely to increase due to changes in lifestyles and work patterns.

4.45 We will support the growth plans of schools across the District and recognise the important role that schools have to play in maintaining the quality of life of communities across the District. Northamptonshire County Council as the Local Education Authority is usually responsible for the provision of new schools and school places. It has a statutory duty to ensure that there are enough school places. The District Council will work with the County Council and others to provide nursery, primary and secondary schools; further and higher education facilities; community learning facilities; special schools; free schools and other educational facilities as required.

4.46 We will work with the County Council to ensure sufficient primary and secondary school provision across the District to accommodate South Northants’ population growth. This may include seeking the provision of new
schools, contributions towards these facilities or contributions towards expanding existing facilities.

4.47 The Developer Contributions SPD provides further details on how developer contributions for education facilities will be sought.

4.48 The District has historically had a relatively high education and skills base. We will encourage development that will diversify and develop the skills base of the District into the future. We will support the continued development of the University Technology College at Silverstone and other similar proposals as an opportunity to strengthen the education and skills base of the District.

4.49 We will work with the County Council to ensure that the design of these schools is flexible enough to accommodate the changing needs of their users and the communities they serve and future changes to the demographic profile of the District. Where appropriate the use of school and college buildings and land after hours will be encouraged to support learning among the wider community and may be able to contribute towards recreation provision. New school buildings should be located in sustainable locations on the edge or within the built up limits of settlements.

POLICY SITE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES 6: Meeting Education Needs

The Council will work with partners to ensure the provision of pre-school, school, community learning and other facilities which provide for education and the development of skills. New schools’ buildings should be located in sustainable locations. The co-location of other services and facilities with schools should be considered to create community hubs.

Local Green Spaces

What you told us at the Options Stage

- Local Green Space Designations should not be used extensively eg as a pseudo Green Belt; this is particularly likely around major urban centres;
- Village green, local sports fields, footpaths, bridleways, pocket parks should always be taken account of;
- SNC needs to protect green spaces within and around villages;
- Paragraph 77 of the Framework makes it clear that the Local Green Space designation should only be used in the following circumstances:
  - where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
  - where the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land. We would draw attention to PPG which states that: Designating any Local Green Space will need to be consistent with local planning for
sustainable development in the area. In particular, plans must identify sufficient land in suitable locations to meet identified development needs and the Local Green Space designation should not be used to undermine plan making.

- Should endeavour to protect areas of natural and historic significance such as ancient ridge and furrow;
- Concerned that the Local Green Space designation will provide opportunities to groups opposed to development to designate areas on the basis of where they don’t want development rather than whether the green spaces are really special to a community. This policy needs to be policed with care.

4.50 The NPPF recognises high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation as vital components of sustainable communities. It contains a strong presumption against building on existing open spaces and sports and recreational land, including playing fields. Policy SDP5 affords a high degree of protection to key community facilities, including allotments and other urban open land, green infrastructure and town or village greens together with parks, sports clubs and pitches.

4.51 The NPPF also makes specific reference to Local Green Space: this should apply to green areas of particular importance to the local community and would rule out new development on them other than in very special circumstances. Local Green Spaces are shown on the Policies Map and listed in Appendix 4. 5

POLICY SITE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES 7: Local Green Spaces

Development proposals, which would result in the loss of a Local Green Space defined on the Policies Map or would have a negative impact on the features which make it locally significant, will not be permitted unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated.

The only form of development considered appropriate within Local Green Space is that which:

- are ancillary to the use of the space or to any buildings on that land; and
- will enhance activities associated with the use of the space; and
- are appropriate in scale; and
- will contribute positively to the setting and quality of the space.

5 NOTE: SUGGESTIONS FOR LOCAL GREEN SPACES MADE BY PARISH COUNCILS OR OTHERS AS PART OF THIS CONSULTATION WILL BE CONSIDERED AND WHERE APPROPRIATE WILL BE SUBJECT TO FURTHER CONSULTATION.
5. The Spatial Strategy for South Northamptonshire District

What you told us at the Options Stage

- High speed broadband should be included as it is critical to small businesses that those operating from home;
- Sewerage and wastewater infrastructure provision should be included;
- Publicly available recreation facilities should be included;
- Road access to the national road networks is important;
- Secondary schools should be lower and primary schools higher;
- Services and facilities which are considered the most important should be given a higher score although it is the quality and extent of the facility that is important, than simply the existence of a service/facility;
- Local employment should be top priority for sustainability;
- Where there is an absence of a general store, post office or public house, the provision of a bus service connecting to local urban areas should be elevated to ‘most’ important;
- Sports pitches, permanent police stations and churches should be classed as ‘very’ important;
- Village stores can have a significant impact on the sustainability;
- A GP surgery should only be given a high score if it serves the majority of the local population and is full service;
- Villages with most important facilities and which help to support smaller villages (in accordance with paragraph 55 of the NPPF) should be given considerable weight in the scoring of settlements;
- Duplication of a facility signifies a larger, more important settlement;
- More than one type of resource does not always add any value;
- Villages should be scored according to their own merits;
- The relationship with rural service centres is more significant for sustainability than clustering of local villages;
- If there are settlements which already have better facilities and are close to other villages, it would make sense for these settlements to become hubs for services;
- The distance of the village from a higher order settlement offering a wider range of facilities should be part of its assessment;
- Any significance of proximity of a settlement to a rural service centre or urban area should be assessed on accessibility rather than distance. This should be based on the opportunity to walk, cycle or use public transport to access such centres rather than reliance on the private car;
- Scores should be based on facilities as well as who they serve, including local villages, as well as population sizes, but not solely on populations;
- Population is not a reliable indicator of sustainability and may just reflect past development of homes without additional services;
- The criterion demanded by the NPPF and WNCJS is sustainability, not size. The indicators of sustainability are far more important than the population size;
- Majority of workforce is mobile with high car ownership levels so distance to employment is not relevant;
- Employment within the village or 2 miles of it, should be considered, but anything further than that will result in a car journey;
- Most employment is in CMK, Northampton or further afield. Business parks should be graded according to size;
- The more opportunities for employment within a business park the more sustainable the community will be;
- The provision of a bus service is often dependent on local authority subsidy and such subsidies could easily disappear due to cuts in Government funding leading to existing services being curtailed;
- Bus services to larger urban centres should carry more weight because of the more varied and number of job opportunities;
- Frequency of bus services is relevant, but there can be no guarantee of current levels of bus service. In particular, subsidies for bus services are reducing, so very many services may be affected; all impacted villages cannot be ignored for additional development due to that risk;
- King’s Sutton might, however, attract a score based on its rail service. As a caveat, the timetable is restricted as more and more train paths no longer stop at this and other intermediate stations between Banbury and Oxford, given the need for rail capacity to be preferentially directed to longer-distance services;
- Access to or in close proximity to passenger rail services is a key indicator of sustainable development. Deanshanger has access to both Wolverton and Milton Keynes train station;
- Although the sustainability scoring matrix should reflect rail provision, it should not influence the overall scoring to such an extent that it becomes a key determinant in the classification of settlements within the hierarchy and
- The sustainability of a settlement should be based on services and facilities that currently exist based on a list of criteria.

### What you told us at the Options Stage

#### Confines

- Villages who have none should have them reinstated with immediate effect
- Follow natural boundaries ie hedgerows,walls
- Instead of running through gardens they should take in natural boundaries ie hedgerows. Tidying up gardens does not mean houses with large gardens will have a new house built in the garden as in many case there would be no access available. If a house has been built in the village envelope and the gardens to it are outside the village confine then this should have been dealt with and the confines moved accordingly when planning permission was granted, as each application clearly shows the application site.
- Setting strict settlement boundaries does not allow adequate flexibility for development to come forward outside the settlement boundary if this is required (for example due to a shortfall of housing land). Would object to the use of settlement limits if these would preclude otherwise sustainable development from coming forward. The Framework is clear that development which is sustainable should go ahead. The use of settlement limits to arbitrarily restrict suitable development from coming forward on the edge of settlements would not accord with the positive approach to growth required by the Framework.
5.1 The Spatial Strategy sets out the overall approach toward providing for new homes, jobs, infrastructure and community facilities over the plan period and thus outlines the broad approach that will be followed towards managing development and change to 2029. It is consistent with the Vision for the District as set out in the adopted WNJCS and the strategic priorities needed to implement the vision and provides the link between those objectives and the policies that will guide the implementation of the Local Plan.

5.2 Policy S2 of the WNJCS sets out the Spatial Strategy for South Northamptonshire. It seeks to ensure that strategic development is directed towards the most sustainable locations, as illustrated by the South Northamptonshire District Key Diagram, and plans for making best use of, safeguarding and improving our existing facilities and infrastructure to create and maintain sustainable local communities. This strategy accords with the NPPF that requires local planning authorities to define a network and hierarchy of centres that are resilient to anticipated future economic changes and that meet the needs of their catchment population.

5.3 The WNJCS states that this Plan should identify a settlement hierarchy. This forms a useful basis for taking forward the principles of the Plan’s Spatial Strategy set out above. It allows for new development to be brought forward in a sustainable way, where local services are available and the need to travel is reduced. The towns and villages in the plan area have been classified into a settlement hierarchy on the basis of the availability of local services and the ease of access to them. To ensure that the principles of sustainable development are achieved across the plan area and in accordance with the WNJCS, the highest priority will be to focus development on the Market Towns where access to services, facilities and employment opportunities are most readily available. Furthermore new residential development in the Market Towns will enable affordable housing to be provided in a way that promotes a more sustainable pattern of development. Development outside of the Market Towns can contribute to maintaining the distinctive character and vitality of rural communities, and can provide some support for existing services and facilities. New residential development away from the Market Towns can also enable market and affordable housing to be provided to meet local needs.

5.4 The strategic approach to development across the plan area will be to:

- Concentrate development on the Market Towns – focus as much development as is feasible on previously developed sites and
- Provide modest development within the villages, of an appropriate scale, where opportunities exist to meet locally defined objective housing needs

5.5 The location, scale and distribution of new development can have an impact upon social, economic and environmental well-being. Inappropriately located new development can have unsustainable consequences. It is important, therefore, that in meeting the development needs of South Northamptonshire,
care is taken to ensure the principles of sustainable development are met, and community well-being is addressed.

5.6 Brackley and Towcester are Rural Service centres. These centres are the focus for new housing, employment, retail, office, leisure and cultural development including the need to ensure that local convenience shopping, services and facilities are met within the wider urban areas to deliver sustainable patterns of development, reduce the need to travel by car, shorten distances travelled and so respond positively to climate change. These settlements will be defined by a Settlement Confine Boundary within which development of an appropriate scale and nature will be allowed.

5.7 Policy R1 of the WNJCS sets out a spatial strategy for the rural areas where development will be guided by a rural settlement hierarchy with the specific villages in each level of the hierarchy determined in this Local Plan. Policy R1 advises that the detailed hierarchy must consider existing service provision and any opportunities to improve service provision to enhance the sustainability of the settlement.

5.8 A settlement hierarchy ranks settlements according to their size and their range of services and facilities. In the planning system the position of a settlement in the hierarchy is intended to inform decisions about new developments such as housing.

5.9 The rural settlement hierarchy complies with Policy R1 of the WNJCS. However the approach taken within the WNJCS provides some flexibility for the hierarchy within each area to be tailored to reflect specific local circumstances. In consultation with local communities the importance attached to a particular service/facility may vary or could take into account additional services and facilities to reflect local circumstances while still ensuring that this scoring is consistent and robust.

5.10 The WNJCS sets out a series of criteria that forms the basis for this assessment as well as defining the 3 categories of settlement within which villages will be placed. The hierarchy is based on a robust analysis of services and facilities either within a particular village or as part of a defined cluster of settlements, together with other factors specified in the WNJCS Policy R1.

5.11 The WNJCS sets the following settlement categories:

- **Primary Service Villages** - Have the highest level of services and facilities within the rural area to meet the day to day needs of residents including those from surrounding settlements. These settlements are the most appropriate for accommodating local housing and employment needs and would be the focus for service provision in the rural areas;

- **Secondary Service Villages** - These settlements have a more limited range of services, but still provide scope to meet some local needs for housing, employment and service provision and
• **Other Villages** - These villages have an even more limited range of services and are more reliant on the services of larger centres for day to day needs. The scope for development within these villages is likely to be limited to windfall infill development, although some housing to provide for local needs may be suitable.

5.12 Four villages are identified as Primary Service Villages. These villages are the most sustainable villages in the rural areas which generally have a good local social infrastructure, some local employment opportunities and good accessibility to the towns and larger centres. These villages also have an important role in terms of serving and supporting their immediate surrounding rural areas and smaller villages. The rural spatial strategy focuses the bulk of the rural development in these settlements and seeks to ensure that they are sustained and promoted as service centres. These settlements will be defined by a Settlement Confinement Boundary within which development of an appropriate scale and nature will be allowed. There is a significant range in terms of the size, and services and facilities available to villages in this category. As such the scale of new development in any of these villages will generally be relative to their current size and infrastructure and will take account of completed and committed development within the Plan period from 2011.

5.13 A further 50 villages are identified as Secondary Service Centres. Whilst it is recognised that in these villages there is a need to meet local needs for housing and other economic or community purposes these villages generally have a more limited range of services and facilities and it is often necessary for local residents to travel outside the village for most of their daily needs. Development on a large scale would be unsustainable in these villages, as this would generate a disproportionate number of additional journeys outside the villages and undermine the spatial strategy.

5.14 A further 23 other villages are identified as Other Villages. These have confines and development will be tightly controlled. For the purposes of this Plan these villages will be known as Small Villages.

5.15 The following Policy Settlement Hierarchy 1 (SH1) defines the settlement hierarchy and the associated broad approach to development in each instance.

**POLICY: SETTLEMENT HIERARCHY 1: Settlement Hierarchy**

Proposals for new development will be directed towards the most sustainable locations in accordance with the District’s settlement hierarchy. This will ensure that development reduces the need to travel and promotes sustainable communities based on the services and facilities that are available in each settlement. The use of previously developed land and buildings will be encouraged.

**RURAL SERVICE CENTRES – First Tier**

Brackley and Towcester
These are the District’s main towns. They are the primary focus for growth and development to safeguard and enhance their strategic roles as employment and service centres. They will continue to provide significant levels of jobs and homes, together with supporting community facilities and infrastructure to meet their economic potential in the most sustainable way, consistent with maintaining or enhancing key environmental attributes.

PRIMARY SERVICE VILLAGES – Second Tier

Bugbrooke, Deanshanger, Middleton Cheney and Roade

To maintain and enhance their role as large villages which provide employment, retail, and key services and facilities for the local area, the Primary Service villages will be a focus for accommodating an appropriate level of growth. These are the most sustainable villages within South Northamptonshire District. These have the ability to support sustainable patterns of living in the District because of the current levels of facilities, services and opportunities that are available. There is scope for limited development within or adjoining the village confines of these settlements where this is limited to meet any identified local needs or accommodation to meet individual or communal specialist needs including Starter or self build homes or where there are opportunities for the redevelopment of brownfield sites which will result in a positive environmental improvement.

SECONDARY SERVICE VILLAGES – Third Tier


These villages possess a limited level of facilities and services that, together with improved local employment, provide the best opportunities outside the first and second tier settlements for greater self-containment. There is scope for limited development within or adjoining the village confines of these settlements where this is limited to meet any identified local or specialist need including Starter and self build homes or where there are opportunities for the redevelopment of brownfield sites which will result in a positive environmental improvement. They will provide for reduced levels of development in comparison to higher order settlements in order to meet identified local needs and to help safeguard their role consistent with maintaining or enhancing key environmental attributes.
SMALL SETTLEMENTS – Fourth Tier

Abthorpe, Adstone, Aston le Walls, Bradden, Caldecote, Courteenhall, Eydon, Grafton Regis, Hinton in the Hedges, Horton, Maidford, Marston St Lawrence, Moreton Pinkney, Quinton, Shutlanger, Slapton, Sulgrave, Thorpe Mandeville, Whitfield, Wicken, Wood Burcote, Wappenham, and Wootton Fields

These remaining settlements have a lack of basic facilities to meet day to day requirements. However, there could be scope for very limited development within or adjoining the village confines of the settlement where this is limited to meet any identified local or specialist need or where there are opportunities for the redevelopment of brownfield sites which will result in a positive environmental improvement. The overall scale of development accommodated in these villages will however, be expected to be commensurate with the size of the settlement and reflect its position in the settlement hierarchy.

Settlement boundaries for First, Second, Third and Fourth Tier settlements are defined on the Proposals Maps. New development should be focused within the settlement boundaries of these settlements in accordance with their scale, role and function unless otherwise indicated in the Local Plan.

All other areas, including those villages, hamlets and isolated groups of buildings not identified above and where nearly all services and facilities must be accessed in higher order settlements are for the purposes of this Plan, considered as ‘countryside’. In these locations, development will be strictly limited to that which has an essential need to be located in the countryside. These include:

6. **General Housing Policies**

**Background**

6.1 The Spatial Strategy of this Plan sets out the overall approach toward providing for new homes, jobs, infrastructure and community facilities over the plan period and thus outlines the broad approach that will be followed towards managing development and change to 2029. It is consistent with the vision for the District as set out in the adopted WNJCS and the strategic priorities needed to implement the vision and provides the link between those objectives and the policies that will guide the implementation of the Local Plan.

6.2 Policy S2 of the WNJCS sets out the Spatial Strategy for South Northamptonshire. It seeks to ensure that strategic development is directed towards the most sustainable locations, and plans for making best use of, safeguarding and improving our existing facilities and infrastructure to create and maintain sustainable local communities. This strategy accords with the NPPF that requires local planning authorities to define a network and hierarchy of centres that are resilient to anticipated future economic changes and that meet the needs of their catchment population.

6.3 Throughout the District, growth will be located at the most accessible and sustainable locations in accordance with the Settlement Hierarchy and the key diagram. Development proposals will be expected to make efficient use of land and prioritise the use of previously developed land (PDL). Proposals will promote sustainability by minimising and/or mitigating pressure on the natural, built and historic environment, natural resources, utilities and infrastructure and areas at risk of flooding, whilst also mitigating and adapting to climate change and reducing the need to travel.

6.4 Policy R1 of the WNJCS sets out the spatial strategy for the rural areas where development will be guided by a rural settlement hierarchy with the specific villages in each level of the hierarchy determined in this Local Plan. Policy R1 advises that the detailed hierarchy must consider existing service provision and any opportunities to improve service provision to enhance the sustainability of the settlement.

**Scale of Development**

6.5 The NPPF sets out the key national policy objectives for housing delivery. The adoption of the WNJCS in December 2014 clearly demonstrated that the evidence underpinning the housing figures was robust and complied with the NPPF. The Government requires the Council to maintain a five year rolling supply of new homes. The WNJCS sets out where 6,300 new homes will be built within South Northamptonshire. Government policy states that the publication of new projections do not automatically mean that housing assessments are to be considered out of date and does not require local authorities to update assessments following the publication of the new projections. The Plan will therefore continue to plan for the housing figures in the adopted WNJCS. This approach is considered to be framework compliant.
6.6 The context for the distribution of housing numbers across the rural areas of the District is the WNJCS. The figures in the WNJCS are based on the latest (at the time) interim 2011-based population and household projections. Policy S3 of the Plan sets out the housing figures that it expects will be delivered within South Northamptonshire (excluding the Northamptonshire Related Development Area) between 2011 and 2029. It is important to note that these figures are 850 dwellings higher than the objectively assessed need housing numbers for the same plan area across the same plan period.

6.7 The agreed scale of housing development to be delivered in South Northamptonshire over the plan period (2011 – 2029) is as follows:

- BRACKLEY TOWN ABOUT 2,160
- TOWCESTER TOWN ABOUT 2,650
- SOUTH NORTHANTS RURAL AREAS ABOUT 2,360
- NORTHAMPTON RELATED DEVELOPMENT AREA ABOUT 3,850

General Housing Policies

6.8 The following policies need to be taken into account when considering all proposals for residential development in the District.

Housing Development within Town and Village Confines

6.9 A settlement confine boundary defines the extent of a settlement’s existing or proposed main built-up area, and is a tool that is used to direct the application of policies within this local plan. Settlement confine boundaries in this local plan have been drawn in order to encompass the built up area of each of the settlements within Tiers 1, 2, 3, and 4 of the Policy Settlement Hierarchy 1 as these are the focus for the majority of planned growth up to 2029, and any additional development in these towns and villages should be concentrated within their built up areas. These are listed in Policy SETTLEMENT HIERARCHY 1.

6.10 The following criteria have been used to define the extent of the settlement confine boundaries where appropriate:

- Existing commitments by virtue of an extant planning permission, for residential or employment development on the fringes of settlements;
- The presence of clearly defined physical features such as walls, fences, hedgerows, roads, streams;
- The inclusion of schools, halls, large houses and other buildings which stand in extensive grounds would depend on their relationship to the overall fabric of the settlement. In some cases, their relative isolation caused by their spacious setting would justify total exclusion, whereas in other cases, the building itself could be included within the Settlement Confine Boundary but the curtilage excluded;
Residential curtilages exclude paddocks, orchards, land used for recreational purposes and similar uses and land separated from the main curtilage by a physical boundary and

- Open areas including formal and informal recreation space, which contribute to the character or setting of a settlement, are excluded either to safeguard their use or to maintain their contribution to the wider landscape setting.

6.11 The WNJCS includes part of South Northamptonshire as being within the Northampton Related Development Area. This area is tightly defined and includes both existing development at Grange Park and Wootton Fields together with proposals for development to meet the housing needs of Northampton. Confines have been defined for these two existing developments and relevant policies apply. There are other areas within the NRDA that although allocated for housing development are yet to be built.

6.12 Residential development will therefore be appropriate within town and village confines under Policy HOUSING 1 below.

**POLICY HOUSING 1: Residential Development within Town and Village Confines**

Residential development will be acceptable within the defined town and village confines providing that the development:

- is of a scale, layout, density, design and appearance that is appropriate to and is compatible with the character, appearance and amenity of the locality within which it would be located; and

- provides for an appropriate mix of dwelling types and sizes, including affordable housing to meet the needs of all sectors of the community, including the elderly and vulnerable; and

- does not create an adverse significant impact on the amenity of residents; and

- would not result in harm to or the loss of public or private open spaces that contribute positively to the local character of the area (including residential gardens); and

- would not result in significant harm to the surrounding landscape; nearby heritage assets or important biodiversity networks; and

- it would not result in the loss of locally valued habitat which supports wildlife without equivalent compensatory provision being made elsewhere; and

- any natural or built features on the site that are worthy of retention are incorporated into the scheme; and

- is capable of having safe lighting and pedestrian access provided without significant impact on neighbours or on the integrity of the street-scene; and

- is able to be safely accessed from the local road network and the traffic generated can be accommodated on the wider road network; and

- does not need substantial infrastructure or other facilities to
support it; and
- would not displace an active use such as employment, leisure or community facility and
- preserves and enhances historic buildings and areas of historic or environmental importance including those identified in conservation area appraisals and village design statements; and
- where the proposed development is on an edge of settlement site, the proposal would not appear as an intrusion into the open countryside and would retain a sense of transition between the open countryside and the existing settlement's core.

Housing in the Open Countryside

6.13 The town and village confines are defined on the Proposals Map. Land outside these confines is defined as open countryside. Housing development in the countryside (ie outside the boundary of all settlements in the hierarchy) will be restricted to proposals that meet the exceptions tests set out in the Policy HOUSING 2. The NPPF clearly states that new isolated homes in the countryside should be avoided, unless there are special circumstances. Para 55 of the NPPF lists a number of exceptions to the general rule of restraint and these are replicated in the Policy below, alongside proposals for replacement dwellings and local needs/specialist housing schemes, that will need to be clearly justified through a local housing needs assessment or medical evidence. As both these types of proposal may be located within the countryside, they are included in the Policy for clarity.

6.14 Proposals for replacement dwellings will also need to demonstrate that the existing buildings on site have been there for a number of years and are no longer needed for their current use. This is to avoid speculative new buildings being built with a view to replacing them with new dwellings in the countryside at a later date – undermining the targeted nature of this policy.

POLICY HOUSING 2 – Housing in the Open Countryside

Development proposals for new housing outside of the defined town and village confines will only be permitted where they are:

a) for the re-use of a redundant or disused permanent building provided that the proposal:

- does not involve a building in such a state of dereliction or disrepair that significant reconstruction requiring planning permission would be required; and
- it does not result in the requirement for another building to fulfil the function of the building being converted; and
- the location would be suitable for a dwelling, having consideration to all other policies in the Development Plan

b) For a replacement dwelling that is not temporary in nature, or an extension to an existing dwelling provided that:
i. the residential use of the original dwelling has not been abandoned; and
ii. the original dwelling is not worthy of retention because of its design or negative contribution to the landscape.

Provided that both criteria can be met, any replacement dwelling should be:

i. of an appropriate scale to the plot and its setting in the landscape; and
ii. of a design appropriate to its setting; and
iii. located on the site of the original dwelling, unless an alternative suitable site exists within the existing residential curtilage, in which case the existing dwelling will be required to be completely removed immediately (likely to mean no more than one month) after the new dwelling is first occupied.

c) For a single dwelling that meets a locally agreed specific need for people with long term disabilities provided that:

- it is immediately adjacent to the town or village confines and would not result in an isolated form of development;
- the development will respect the qualities of the local landscape and be sympathetic to its character and visual quality;
- the development will respect and relate to the character, form and appearance of surrounding development, and respect the amenities of the residents of neighbouring properties;
- the size and form of the building, its access and parking provide for the specific needs of residents with disabilities;
- the local need or requirement via medical evidence for the housing is clearly evidenced and a local connection can be established;
- it can be demonstrated that there are no alternative suitable or available sites within the confines; and
- it can be demonstrated that there is no suitable property to meet the identified need available within the village.

d) For a new dwelling linked to an existing and viable agricultural, forestry, horse breeding and training, livery or equivalent rural business, where it can be shown that:

- there is an essential functional need for the occupant to be on site at any time during any 24 hour period; and
- no alternative suitable accommodation is available in the locality; and
- the rural business linked to the proposed new building must have been viable for the previous three years.

e) A dwelling that is of exceptional quality or innovative design which
should be truly outstanding and innovative, reflect the highest standards of architecture, significantly enhance its immediate setting and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area;

f) An affordable Housing Exception Scheme permitted under Policy H3 of the WNJCS

g) is a starter home exception site scheme permitted under Policy HOUSING 5 of this Plan

h) A housing scheme to meet Older Persons and Specialist Housing Needs permitted under Policy HOUSING 6

i) A residential care/nursing care home permitted under Policy HOUSING 7

j) A single plot exception site permitted under Policy HOUSING 8

k) A self build scheme permitted under Policy HOUSING 9

l) A build to rent scheme permitted under Policy HOUSING 10

m) A housing scheme to meet local needs housing growth under Policy LOCAL NEEDS HOUSING GROWTH

n) A housing scheme allocated for development in a Neighbourhood Plan which has been ‘made’ by the District Council

Any development permitted under this Policy may be subject to a restrictive occupancy condition and local connection condition on resale.

Where permission is granted future extensions may be controlled by the removal of permitted development rights.

Housing Mix

What you told us at the Options Stage

53% of respondents considered that provision be made for housing of all types to meet the needs of the elderly. 23% disagreed and 24% did not express an opinion.

64% of respondents considered that provision should be made for housing for all types to meet the needs of the elderly in more sustainable and accessible locations, close to services. 10% disagreed and 26% did not express an opinion.

- Some settlements are too small to support elderly people;
- 5% of all dwellings should be bungalows for the elderly to free up housing stock for others;
• Provision should be made for housing of all types to meet the diverse needs and aspirations of older people. This can include specialist retirement housing, communities, care homes, and affordable and market housing of all tenures, including rent to buy. Older households do not necessarily only require or even desire care homes or extra care housing, and this should be factored in to discussions on local needs;

• The new development in the village have all been ‘Family’ housing very few bungalows or social houses;

• 1 or 2 bed houses and bungalows to allow older residents to ‘downsize’ thus releasing family houses onto the market. Also need a mix of housing to provide mix of accommodation for older and younger residents in same area;

• Housing should be according to local need and sustainability criteria. The elderly require access to specific services and some communities may be too small and poorly provided with services to meet the needs of the elderly and

• Provision should be made for housing to meet the needs of all residents and in this context the NPPF (Para 50) requires local planning authorities to deliver a wide choice of high quality homes by planning for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community.

6.15 National planning policy expects local planning authorities to provide a wide choice of homes, widen opportunities for home ownership and create sustainable and mixed communities. It states that local planning authorities should:

- plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community (such as, but not limited to, families with children, older people, people with disabilities, service families and people wishing to build their own homes);

- identify the size, type, tenure and range of housing that is required in particular locations, reflecting local demand’.

6.16 Development with a mix of housing tenures, types and sizes will be more able to meet the changing needs and aspirations of its residents, through changing life stages, household shapes and sizes or changes in income. Providing greater housing choice increases the opportunities for households to remain within their communities and promotes social equality and inclusion by easing geographical constraints on the search for appropriate homes.

**Demographic information**

6.17 The following District wide demographic information compares key indicators against the region and country as a whole. The 2011 Census shows that there are 34,717 households in South Northamptonshire, living in 32,528 houses and bungalows, 2,091 flats, 93 caravans and mobile structures and 5 shared dwellings.
Table 1: 2011 Census Mix of Dwellings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Detached</th>
<th>Semi</th>
<th>Terraced</th>
<th>Flat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>4,929,216 (22.5%)</td>
<td>6,889,935 (31.5%)</td>
<td>5,396,459 (24.7%)</td>
<td>4,668,839 (21.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>615,938 (32.7%)</td>
<td>673,713 (35.7%)</td>
<td>386,411 (20.5%)</td>
<td>210,180 (11.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Northamptonshire</td>
<td>15,184 (43.9%)</td>
<td>12,155 (35.1%)</td>
<td>5,189 (15%)</td>
<td>2,091 (6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.18 The tenure of these dwellings is 42% owned with a mortgage, 35% owned outright; 11% private sector renting, 10% social rented, 1% shared ownership and 1% live rent free. The type of accommodation available across the district consists of 93% of dwellings that are houses or bungalows and 7% are flats, maisonettes or apartments. When looking at the houses and determining whether they are detached, semi or terraced, it can be seen that the largest percentage are detached dwellings (43%) whereas terraced houses only make up 15%. It is interesting to note that across the district 3 and 4 bedroom properties (Table 2) are the predominant property size, and conversely the number of 1 bed properties is relatively small.

Table 2: Size of Dwellings: 2011 Census

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of bedrooms</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>2,593,893 (11.8%)</td>
<td>6,145,083 (27.9%)</td>
<td>9,088,213 (41.3%)</td>
<td>3,166,531 (14.4%)</td>
<td>1,014,710 (4.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>153,288 (8.1%)</td>
<td>502,502 (26.6%)</td>
<td>860,782 (45.5%)</td>
<td>291,736 (15.4%)</td>
<td>83,599 (4.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNC</td>
<td>1,543 (4.4%)</td>
<td>7,268 (21%)</td>
<td>13,891 (40%)</td>
<td>9,184 (26.5%)</td>
<td>2,799 (8.1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.19 The disparity between types and sizes of accommodation across the district is likely to impact on the accommodation choices available for different client groups but in particular the elderly and the young. It can be seen that there has been a continual increase in the numbers of larger type properties via new build delivery. During the last five years (2011-2016) 1,768 dwellings have been completed in South Northamptonshire; the most common type of dwellings to be built in the district during between 2011-2016 were 4 bed market houses. This type and size of dwelling accounted for 41% of all dwellings built during this period.

Table 3: Number of persons per bedroom in household: 2011 Census

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Up to 0.5 persons per bedroom</th>
<th>0.5 and up to 1.0 persons per bedroom</th>
<th>Over 1.0 and up to 1.5 persons per bedroom</th>
<th>Over 1.5 persons per bedroom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England and Wales</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>50.7</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>51.8</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Northamptonshire</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.20 The Housing Market evidence report (2017) does show that overall overcrowding has increased since 2011, for South Northamptonshire this represents an increase of 48 households, totalling 881 overcrowded households in 2011.

6.21 Table 3 above shows that there is a significant lower level of overcrowding in South Northamptonshire (over 1.5 persons per bedroom) and higher level of relative under occupancy (under 0.5 persons per bedroom). This suggests that there may be a higher proportion of smaller households living in larger properties. This would suggest a need for smaller properties of high quality design that could potentially encourage those living in larger properties to ‘downsize’ and making a larger property available to the market.

6.22 Population modelling provided by the Housing Market Evidence study (June 2017) shows the projected change in population by 5 year age band for the Plan period 2011-29.

**Table 4: West Northamptonshire population projections 2011-29 by 5-year age cohort based on 2008 trended data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2029</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aged 0-4</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged 5-9</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged 10-14</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged 15-19</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged 20-24</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged 25-29</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged 30-34</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged 35-39</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged 40-44</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged 45-49</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged 50-54</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged 55-59</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged 60-64</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged 65-69</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged 70-74</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged 75-79</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged 80-84</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.23 Based on the housing projections provided in Table 4, a further analysis can be undertaken which shows the projected change in households by age of household representatives for the Plan period. These changes over time can identify possible trends which may have implications for future housing need.
Table 5: Total projected households for 2011 and 2029 and summary of 18-year change by age of household representative (Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of Household Representative</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-24</td>
<td>25-34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>5,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2029</td>
<td>6,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL CHANGE 2011-2029</td>
<td>+1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.24 It is clear from the above table that a key change is the increase in older persons’ households. However it is also important to note that many of these older people will already be established and living in existing homes and will not necessarily require alternative accommodation; they will simply get older during the Plan Period. Many will continue and potentially prefer to remain in their own homes, with support and care provided. However in some cases it may be better for people to move to more appropriate housing, for example a bungalow or Older persons and Specialist accommodation. For more information on the policy for supporting older persons’ and specialist housing see Housing Policy 6.

6.25 Table 5 also shows household growth in relation to the younger age cohort, this is more likely to lead to a need for new homes.

**Housing Affordability**

6.26 Real house prices have increased substantially across West Northamptonshire in the period 2001-2016; values reduced from 2008 due to the economic downturn, but have now recovered. The average house price in South Northamptonshire was £301,990 (Land Registry April 2017).

6.27 The ratio of lower quartile house prices to lower quartile earnings for West Northamptonshire in 2015 was 8.5%. The affordability ratios have worsened since 2010 with the ratio in West Northamptonshire increasing from 7% to 8.5%; a change of 21%.

6.28 The high costs of market housing impacts on those who can afford to live in the District. Using the 3.5 x earnings as a measure of affordability and the current lower quartile house price for West Northamptonshire being £159,000; a household would need an income of £45,000 to purchase an ‘entry level’ property. It is likely that the entry level for South Northamptonshire district would be higher and therefore the income required for properties in the district would be greater.

6.29 This recognition that earnings have increased at a slower rate than house prices illustrates the affordability issues that are prevalent across the District. However affordability is not just linked to owner occupation, concerns over rental costs in both the private and social sector should also be considered.
6.30 Table 6 sets out the weekly rents for different property sizes, it shows that across all property sizes, the median private rent is the highest. It also shows that the maximum local housing allowance (LHA) which helps towards rental costs for those who need support to afford their housing costs. The LHA is lower than the median private rental and therefore households are likely to have a shortfall and this would need to be covered from other financial resources. Additionally this can also be the case for the social rented sector and the costs of affordable rent, as changes to housing benefit in 2019 will introduce the LHA rate caps for social housing tenants; which will apply to tenancies that started on or after April 2016.

6.31 The Housing Market Evidence report (June 2017) suggested that providing new affordable rented housing based on target social rents would enable more households to pay their rent without the need for benefit support.

Table 6: Weekly rent thresholds in South Northamptonshire (Source: Valuation Office Agency)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>South Northamptonshire</th>
<th>Weekly rent £</th>
<th>Median private rent</th>
<th>Maximum Local Housing Allowance</th>
<th>Affordable Rent (80% of median)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 bedroom</td>
<td>132.24</td>
<td>100.05</td>
<td>105.79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 bedrooms</td>
<td>159.84</td>
<td>126.31</td>
<td>127.87</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 bedrooms</td>
<td>195.48</td>
<td>139.84</td>
<td>156.38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4+bedrooms</td>
<td>287.47</td>
<td>187.14</td>
<td>229.98</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.32 In relation to low cost homeownership, a number of products have been developed to assist households into homeownership. Table 7 shows the sensitivity of weekly costs for shared ownership to the equity share purchased and relative to the equivalent local rents. As can be seen 3 and 4 bedroom homes at any equity share above 25% are more expensive than private rent.
Table 7: Total weekly costs for shared ownership based on different equity shares (Note: Property values based on Lower Quartile. Mortgage costs based on a 25-year repayment mortgage at 6.0% interest. Rent based on 2.75% of the retained equity annually. Service charge assumed to be £10 per week. Cells highlighted in brown are above the LHA rate but below median private rent, cells in red are above the equivalent median private rent. Cells which are not coloured are lower than the equivalent maximum LHA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOUTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Weekly Cost</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 bedroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 bedrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 bedrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4+ bedrooms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.33 With regards to Starter homes, analysis has shown that weekly costs associated with Starter homes (Table 8) are higher than low cost home ownership (Table 7), and also larger properties are notably higher than median private sector rents. Therefore smaller properties may be affordable to those households identified as being unable to afford market housing, while larger starter home properties are unlikely to be affordable.

Table 8: Starter homes Initiative (Note: Mortgage costs based on a 25 year repayment mortgage at 6% interest)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>South Northamptonshire</th>
<th>Weekly costs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Property type</strong></td>
<td><strong>Property value</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 bedroom</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 bedrooms</td>
<td>160,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 bedrooms</td>
<td>235,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4+ bedrooms</td>
<td>350,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Adaptable and wheelchair accessible homes

6.34 Since the WNJCS adoption the Government has revised technical housing standards in a number of respects including the introduction of optional Building Regulation requirements for access. These changes were published in 2015 in the Approved Document M: Volume 1 (Access to and use of dwellings). This introduced three categories of dwellings:

- Category 1: Visitable dwellings – Mandatory, broadly about accessibility to all properties
- Category 2: Accessible and adaptable dwellings – Optional, similar to Lifetime homes
- Category 3: Wheelchair user dwellings – Optional, equivalent to wheelchair accessible standards

6.35 The Planning Practice Guidance for Housing Optional Technical standards states that ‘based on their housing need assessment and other available datasets it will be for local planning authorities to set out how they intend to approach demonstrating the need for Requirement (M4(2) (accessible and adaptable dwellings), and / or M4 (3) (wheelchair user dwellings), of the Building Regulations.

6.36 The Housing Market Evidence report (2017) highlights that given the increases in the demographic projections for the population aged 65 and over, coupled with the evidence that within South Northamptonshire the amount spent on Disabled Facilities Grants has grown exponentially over the last 5 years supports the need for at least 50% of all dwellings should meet the optional Category 2 requirements; this is equivalent to Lifetimes Homes and 5% of all market housing and 11% of affordable housing should meet Category 3 requirements, where practicable and viable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 9: Households needing Wheelchair Adapted Housing (Source: ORS Housing Model. Note: Figures may not sum due to arithmetic rounding)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modelled Need for Wheelchair Adapted Housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordable housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All households</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Providing a mix of housing

6.37 Considering the information above, it is important that we give a genuine choice and mix of accommodation in terms of size, tenure and costs to help create balanced and inclusive communities. By ensuring new developments provide a better mix of homes will help meet the needs of newly forming households, families and older households wishing to downsize.

6.38 Downsizer housing frees up family homes and encourages movement through the housing market. It is suggested by HAPPI 3 that every downsizer move triggers 3 further moves and releases more starter homes for people looking to enter the housing market. The Council is keen to try and encourage downsizing where suitable and the provision of a small percentage of bungalows on new developments can be a popular and attractive incentive to move.

| Table 10: Housing mix of OAN for South Northamptonshire for market and affordable housing 2011-29 |
|------------------------------------|--------|----------|--------|
| Flat                              | 1 bedroom | 100 | 140 | 200 |
|                                   | 2+ bedrooms | 100 | 170 | 300 |
| House                             | 2 bedrooms | 830 | 760 | 1,600 |
|                                   | 3 bedrooms | 2,720 | 350 | 3,100 |
|                                   | 4 bedrooms | 1,200 | 90 | 1,300 |
|                                   | 5+ bedrooms | 270 | 20 | 300 |

6.39 Table 10 identifies the different types (in terms of flats and houses) and sizes (in terms of number of bedrooms). The need for market and affordable housing overlaps with the need for older persons’ and other specialist housing needs.

6.40 Although the above table gives indicative information on the mix of different types of housing, the size and type of housing should also reflect the housing need and requirements in the locality, with a focus on the needs of particular groups including older people, young people and specialist housing requirements.

6.41 In establishing and determining an appropriate mix of housing types and sizes will depend on the size and location of a development. On smaller sites the need is likely to be considered with reference to the needs in the settlement where the development is taking place, which could be informed by housing needs assessments and influenced by discussions with individual parish areas. On larger sites, a more strategic view of the district needs will be required. In addition the proposals will need to ensure that they are viable and deliverable.
POLICY HOUSING 3: Providing a mix of housing

- New residential development should ensure that a mixture of different types, tenure, size and costs of homes are provided to meet the varied needs of existing and future residents to help support the creation of mixed, balanced and inclusive communities.

- The housing mix for development schemes shall be negotiated on a case by case basis taking into account any necessary viability considerations.

- To meet the needs arising from the increasing longevity of the District’s older residents, the Council will require developers to demonstrate how their proposal will be capable of meeting, and adapting to, the long term needs of this specific group of people. This will include the provision of 5% bungalows on all developments of 10 or more dwellings (unless an Locally objectively assessed need permitted under Policy LOAN suggests a different mix of dwellings.

The Council will seek to secure high quality accessible homes in all developments that include housing, in particular we will require that:

- 50% of new housing should meet Building Regulation requirement M4(2)
- 5% of market dwellings and 11% of affordable dwellings should where practical and viable be constructed to Part M4(3) of the Building Regulations Standards.

The Council will consider such proposals for “upward extensions” having regard to the following:

1. Where a bungalow is semi-detached or terraced, the Council will not grant planning permission for an upward extension on unless it is proposed for all of the dwellings.

2. Planning permission may be granted for an upward extension on a detached bungalow in certain circumstances:

   - where the dwellings in an area are of varied types, with little uniformity of design and layout, and there is already a mix of single storey and two-storey dwellings, and where new habitable room windows at first-floor level would be more than 18 metres from habitable room windows of existing dwellings to the front, side or rear and more than 9m away from a neighbour’s boundary.

Where an upward extension is considered acceptable in principle, it is essential that it be designed to minimise the effect on neighbours’ properties by overshadowing and overlooking.
An appropriate mix of housing will need to be provided within individual developments, proportionate to the scale of development proposed. Smaller schemes will need to contribute to the mix of housing required to meet identified local needs.

Affordable housing

6.42 Policy H2 in the WNJCS seeks to increase the amount of affordable housing in the District by delivering 40% in the market towns; 50% in the rural areas and 35% in the Northampton Related Development Area.

6.43 The threshold within the WNJCS states that on sites with 5 dwellings or more, the requirement for affordable housing should be triggered. However, in 2014 the Government published a written ministerial statement (WMS) on affordable housing and subsequently amended the online Planning Practice Guidance. The new policy proposed that ‘developments of no more than 10 homes (with a gross floorspace not exceeding 1,000 sq m) would be exempted from levies for affordable housing…’.

6.44 Following a series of inconsistent appeal decisions, some of which applied the WMS and others lower thresholds as set out in local plan policies, clarification was given by the Planning Inspectorate that the correct approach to applying local affordable housing policies and the WMS/NPPG, ie that decision makers should a) decide the application in accordance with the adopted local affordable housing policies; b) decide the weight to be attached to the WMS/NPPG as a material consideration; and then c) decide whether the WMS/NPPG outweighs the local policy requirement for affordable housing. This accords with section 38 (6) duty when determining planning applications affording primacy to the development plan policies unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

6.45 The evidence supports the need to retain the current Development Plan Policy H2 for affordable housing threshold as set out in the WNJCS. Since 2014 when the WMS was published a number of sites have come forward between 5 and 10 dwellings, by not implementing the Council policy H2 on thresholds, has resulted in a loss of 30 affordable housing dwellings/or a commuted sums in lieu of provision.

6.46 The Council’s housing register which identifies households that are in acute housing need consistently has a waiting list of 300+ households. Additionally viability on larger schemes has impacted on the delivery of affordable housing.

6.47 Given the housing needs and the research that shows that small sites constitute the majority of planning permissions, it is therefore important that we are able to secure affordable housing and retaining the threshold of 5 supports us in this.

6.48 The District is considered an affluent area, households on lower/medium incomes find it difficult to find suitable affordable accommodation that meets their housing needs, this results in these households moving away to areas with typically lower house prices. However this is not a cycle we want to
continue and therefore it is important that we work to improve the supply and choice of high quality residential accommodation that meets local residents’ needs.

6.49 As of April 2017 there were 337 households on the Council’s housing register, these are households that require social/affordable rented housing. The Council operates a restrictive waiting list, and only those who have meet the strict eligibility criteria and have an identified housing need are registered. However the demand for affordable housing locally is far greater than the number of homes available.

6.50 In addition there are also applicants on the Homebuy Register for those households seeking intermediate affordable housing to buy. As of July 2017 there were 156 applicants on the Homebuy register who wish to live in the district, of which 102 currently reside in the district and want to continue living here.

6.51 In 2015 the Government proposed to amend the definition of ‘affordable housing’ as provided for currently in Annex 2 of the NPPF. The proposed change is intended to broaden the range of housing types which come under the definition. The Government’s Housing White Paper 2017 sought views on an updated definition which included a revised definition of starter homes and the restriction on the availability of starter homes to first time buyers with a mortgage.

6.52 The White Paper has also proposed an amendment to the NPPF to introduce an expectation that housing sites deliver a minimum of 10% affordable home ownership units.

6.53 It is recognised that in negotiating for affordable housing, site specific constraints and financial viability may affect the amount of affordable housing that can be achieved on that site. The Council encourage early discussions with applicants during the pre-application stage when financial viability appraisals are required with planning applications. The Council will apply the principles and requirements set out in its Viability Protocol when receiving and assessing financial viability appraisals submitted with planning applications and in negotiating S106 agreements.

6.54 In some circumstances, it may be appropriate to redevelop social/affordable rented housing in order to improve the quality of the housing stock or to provide a better mix of housing. Where this is appropriate, the local community should be fully involved and there should be no net loss of social/affordable rented housing in terms of number of dwellings or habitable rooms provided.
POLICY HOUSING 4: Affordable Housing

The Council will use the definition of Affordable Housing provided in Annex 2 of the National Planning Policy Framework at the time of application

Housing development should increase the supply and improve the mix of affordable housing to help achieve more sustainable communities in the District.

Affordable housing should be provided as a proportion of the total number of dwellings to be delivered on individual development sites.

On sites with 5 or more dwellings should achieve:

- 40% affordable dwellings in the market towns of Towcester and Brackley; and
- 50% in the Rural Areas.
- 35% in the Northampton Related Development Area

Tenure split

- 75% Social /affordable rented provision
- 25% intermediate provision; the intermediate provision will include the expectation that 10% of provision will be for affordable home ownership units

The affordable housing mix for development schemes shall be negotiated on a case by case basis taking into account any necessary viability considerations.

Affordable dwellings should be located throughout a new development and not concentrated on one part of the site

In negotiating for affordable housing in a proposed development, the Council will seek the maximum amount of affordable housing and take into account:

- site size and site constraints; and
- financial viability; applying the principles set out in the Viability Protocol and having regard to the individual circumstances of the site and the availability of public subsidy.

Affordable housing should be provided on the application site as an integral part of the development, In exceptional circumstances, and
where it can be robustly justified off site provision and /or financial contribution in lieu of on-site provision may be supported where this would offer an equivalent or enhanced provision of affordable housing

There should be no net loss of social/affordable rented housing on any redevelopment sites

Starter Homes

What you told us at the Options Stage

38% of respondents considered that provision be made for Starter Homes as an exception policy. 25% disagreed and 37% did not express an opinion. 34% preferred a criteria based approach to encourage the development of Starter Homes with 20% disagreeing and 40% with no opinion.

- The young people of any settlement should be included to allow them to stay in the area, rather than having to move to find affordable housing;
- All settlements should have accommodation for older people and younger people;
- Generally, affordable housing provision irrespective of location should include a range of affordable housing which includes Starter Homes. A policy that encourages the development of Starter Homes as part of the affordable housing offer of a development would be welcomed and
- Any policy must be in line with the Starter Homes regulations once these are introduced.

6.55 The NPPF identifies that local authorities should seek to ‘widen opportunities for home ownership’ (Paragraph 50). The Housing and Planning Act 2016 encourages home ownership through the promotion of Starter homes (defined in Section 2 and 3 and any subsequent secondary legislation made under these sections).

6.56 A ‘starter home’ is defined as a new dwelling which is only available for purchase by qualifying first-time buyers, and which is sold at a price which is at least 20% less than the market value; and is subject to restrictions on sale or letting for the initial 15 year period of occupancy. In South Northamptonshire the maximum price at which a starter home may be sold to a first-time buyer is £250,000. A ‘qualifying first-time buyer’ is defined as an individual who is a first-time buyer and is at least 23 years old but under the age of 40 with a household income less than £80,000.

6.57 Starter Homes will be provided in two ways:
- Starter home exception sites on land where the current or most recent use was commercial or industrial and that has not currently been allocated for house building; and

- On sites of 5 dwellings or more there will be a requirement for a proportion of affordable homes in line with Policy Housing 4 – Affordable Housing. The intermediate element will incorporate that a minimum of 10% of all homes will be affordable home ownership which could include starter homes and other affordable home ownership products (this would not apply to LOAN sites)

6.58 Where Starter homes are substituted for affordable housing in development proposals, the Council will expect them to replace affordable home ownership products (primarily shared ownership) rather than social/affordable rented housing.

6.59 Restrictions will be applied to the resale of starter homes, to ensure that starter homes are purchased by people who wish to own their home rather than by people who wish to use the property for short-term speculation. The detail of the resale restrictions, for example for how many years they will apply and how the payment or discount will be calculated, will be set out in future regulations.

6.60 The Act places a general duty on all planning authorities in England to promote the supply of starter homes when carrying out their planning functions. These functions include, for example, preparing local plans, cooperating with neighbouring areas on strategic planning matters, and determining planning applications.

6.61 Analysis on the affordability of starter homes shows that weekly costs associated with starter homes are higher than low cost home ownership and also larger properties are notably higher than median private sector rents. It is considered that smaller properties may be affordable to those households identified as being unable to afford market housing, while larger properties are unlikely to be affordable.

6.62 Analysis by Shelter (Starter Homes – will they be affordable? August 2015) compared the median house price in each local authority at a 20% discount against the amount different types of households on varying wages in the area could afford to borrow. The analysis suggests that starter homes will only be affordable for a small proportion of the people who aspire to home ownership. The Report concluded that the Starter Homes programme will not help the majority of people on the new National Living Wage or average wages into home-ownership in England by 2020. It won’t even help many people on higher than average wages in many areas of England. The only group it appears to help on a significant scale will be those already earning high salaries who should be able to afford on the open market without Government assistance. The Council supports the Starter Home initiative but remains concerned at the extent to which starter homes will be affordable for first-time buyers in the District and that at £250,000 the scheme will not be genuinely affordable. Although permitted it is considered unlikely that
developers will offer Starter Homes at a price lower than the £250,000 maximum allowed.

POLICY HOUSING 5: Starter Homes

Proposals to deliver Starter Homes in the Rural Service Centres, Primary, Secondary and Small villages will be supported on qualifying Starter Home Exception Sites comprising underused or unviable industrial and commercial land, subject to the following:

- the site is located within or immediately adjoining the defined confine boundary; and
- the site is demonstrably unsuited for its current or former commercial or industrial use or cannot viably be used for alternative economic use reflecting its current or former use; and
- the mix of dwellings types and sizes proposed reflects the identified housing needs of new entrants to the local housing market.

Where it can be robustly demonstrated that a small proportion of market housing is required to enable delivery of the proposed Starter Homes, it will be supported provided that:

- the full development proposed can be located on sites comprising underused or unviable industrial and commercial land, and
- the element of market housing is the minimum amount required to enable the delivery of the significant majority of the site for Starter Homes; and
- the mix of open market dwellings in terms of type and size, complies with the requirements of Policy H1 of the WNJCS and Policy Housing 3 of this Plan; and
- the use of planning conditions, obligations or other legally defensible limitations to:
  
  I. restrict initial occupation to first time buyers who are below the age of 40 at the time of purchase and have a household income of £80,000 or less than; and
  
  II. ensure that the initial sales value of each Starter Home will be is subject to at least 20% discount from the open market value; and
  
  III. ensure that any resale or letting of a Starter Home must reflect the discount from an open market value achieved at the initial point of sale for a period of 15 years following the initial sale.

Older People

6.63 With an increasing ageing population and increasing prevalence of long term conditions, we need to focus on how we can enable and support communities
by providing them with choice and control over their accommodation and potential care needs. Table 5 showed a key increase in older persons’ households. The increase in people aged 65+ represented 50% of the overall population growth in West Northamptonshire. Older people are defined as people over retirement age including the active newly retired through to the very frail elderly who have a wide range of accommodation needs.

6.64 The PPG states that the ‘need to provide housing for older people is critical given the projected increase in the number of households aged 65 and over’…. ‘Plan makers will need to consider the size, location and quality of dwellings needed in the future for older people in order to allow them to live independently and safely in their own home for as long as possible, or to move to more suitable accommodation if they so wish’. The guidance requires a full range of need ie types of general housing, such as bungalows’, sheltered, extra care, registered care to be assessed and broken down by tenure.

6.65 It is recognised the importance of providing a variety of accommodation to meet the housing needs of people of they grow older. Policy Housing 3 ‘Providing a mix of housing’ helps to address this and sets out an approach that supports the delivery of suitable properties to enable downsizing and more manageable accommodation. We also want new homes to be adaptable and accessible so people can stay in living in their own homes for as long as they wish.

6.66 Northamptonshire County Council’s Social Care Accommodation Strategy for Older People 2016-2021 identifies the gaps in the market and sets out the direction the County need to take to support and enable the delivery of suitable housing and care home provision for older people.

6.67 The evidence base which supplements the above strategy is ‘A Study of Housing and Support Needs of Older People across Northamptonshire’ (March 2017) provides a local context and covers demand and supply, affordability, tenure and type of housing across the County. The key findings from this report found that:

- Social rented older persons’ housing stock is generally fit for purpose
- There is a significant additional stock of retirement bungalows or social rent, which are very popular with tenants
- The supply of social rented older persons’ housing is sufficient to meet the needs but the stock may require upgrading in order to meet modern standards
- Potential demand for sale housing exceed demand for shared ownership
- Potential demand for retirement housing with an annual target of 306 units a year for sale and shared ownership across West Northamptonshire; this equates to 91 retirement units per annum across South Northamptonshire.

Table 11: Housing and Support Needs of Older People Study March 2017:
Potential annual targets for provision of retirement housing by district West Northamptonshire
6.68 The above table shows the potential annual targets for retirement housing provision by district. It can be seen that there is no demand for additional social rented housing. Demand for home ownership exceeds potential demand for shared equity/shared ownership.

6.69 Housing for older people can fall within the planning use classes of C2 or C3 category. Use class C2 residential institutions all have an element of care, and residential care homes or nursing homes fall within this category. Proposals which fall within the Use Class C2 (residential institutions) and do not provide self-contained accommodation or support independent living, will not be expected to contribute to the provision of affordable housing.

6.70 The Council supports an increase in choice and availability of homes for older people. This however will need to be considered in conjunction with the provision of facilities for health, shopping and community uses that are accessible locally to meet their needs. This underlines the need to ensure that new accommodation for older people is provided only in sustainable locations where access to these facilities can be made by walking or by regular public transport.

6.71 Where required; the WNJCS Review will consider possible site allocations to enable and support the delivery of older persons/specialist housing accommodation needs for the District.

**Specialist Housing Needs**

6.72 The Council recognises that some residents will require specialist accommodation to enable them to live a certain quality of life and maintain housing independence, and where moving away to a different town or village is not always appropriate. The term specialist housing is used to describe a range of housing options to assist older people and/or vulnerable people with their accommodation and support needs. Specialist housing is intended for people with physical disability, frail elderly people, young vulnerable people, people with learning disability, mental health or sensory disability. It allows residents to live a higher quality of life near to where they have support or where they are familiar with their surrounding area.

6.73 Key features of specialist housing include self-contained individual dwellings with their own front door irrespective of whether the dwelling is for rent, sale or shared ownership, and can include communal areas such as lounges and restaurants, a scheme manager or other types of support service and varying levels of personal care and support. A desirable location for specialist accommodation is one which enables residents to continue to live independently to carry out their usual activities, remain part of the community...
and maximise their health and quality of life. This type of accommodation is normally delivered on sites that would not normally be permitted for housing development because they are subject to planning policies of restraint. Appendix 5 provides a more detailed description of the types of housing that are included under the term ‘older persons and specialist housing’:

6.74 The NPPF supports this position by setting out under Para 50 that LPAs should

‘plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community (such as, but not limited to, families with children, older people, people with disabilities, service families and people wishing to build their own homes)’

6.75 It is important that the delivery of specific specialist schemes for older or vulnerable people are considered in partnership with other agencies.

6.76 The Council will apply age restrictions through conditions/S106/ eligibility criteria by provider of the dwellings permitted under Policy HOUSING 6 depending on the type of dwellings being provided. If they are ‘supported dwellings’ then a care package identified by adult social care will also be required. These conditions will also apply to resales in order to ensure that these properties remain available to meet the needs of older persons or those in specialist need.

6.77 The Council will work with the applicants/developers for future phases of the Towcester Strategic Urban Extension development to secure the provision of older persons'/specialist housing accommodation needs,

POLICY HOUSING 6 – Older Persons And Specialist Housing Accommodation Needs

Planning permission will be granted for proposals to meet older persons/specialist housing needs for 2 or more dwellings for older people and/or vulnerable people will be supported on sites that are within or immediately adjacent to the confines of the Rural Services Centres, Primary and Secondary villages as defined by Policy SETTLEMENT HIERARCHY 1 of this Plan and subject to the following criteria:

- The local need or requirement for the housing is clearly evidenced and has an established local connection to the District;
- The proposed location is well served by public transport or within walking distance of community facilities (within 400m) such as shops, medical services, public open space, and social networks appropriate to the needs of the intended occupiers, or where this is not the case, such facilities are provided on site;
- The scale, form and design of the development is appropriate to the client group and in relation to the settlement where it is
located;

- Highway, parking and servicing arrangements are satisfactorily addressed;
- Gardens and amenity space are provided and are of an appropriate size and quality;

Proposals for ‘retirement village’ type development will be supported on sites that are within or immediately adjacent to the confines of the Rural Services Centres or Primary Service Villages provided the applicant demonstrates that:

- local healthcare or social service provision can meet the needs of the proposal without detriment to the local community;
- the proposal will contribute positively to the creation and maintenance of balanced communities;
- the proposal is of an appropriate scale for the area within which it is located.

Proposals will need to include evidence that there are no alternative suitable or available sites within the confines

Proposals will need to include evidence that there are no suitable properties to meet the identified need available within the village

Where developments fall within Use Class C3 affordable housing will be required in accordance with policy H2 of the WNJCS.

Residential/Nursing Care

6.78 Communal establishments form their own category of housing for older and other residents, these include residential and nursing homes providing accommodation care and/or nursing for people whose care or health needs means they cannot live independently. Residents of such establishments will have a bedroom rather than a self-contained dwelling.

6.79 The Study of Housing and Support Needs of Older People across Northamptonshire (March 2017) states that there are currently 5,332 care home places in Northamptonshire\(^6\), equivalent to 4.3% of the population aged 65 and over. This is a higher figure than the national average (the 2011 Census recorded 3.2% of the total population of England and Wales aged 65 and over living in a care home). Nationally the proportion of the total population aged 65 and over living in a care home has fallen from 3.5% in 2001 to 3.2% in 2011\(^7\).

6.80 However the current supply of care home accommodation is much lower if the figures only include those care homes which score good or outstanding on the Care Quality Commission indicators. This gives a total of 4,410 care

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\(^6\) Source Northamptonshire County Council Care Home Customers and Population

\(^7\) Source ONS Changes in the Older Resident Care Home Population between 2001 and 2011 01 August 2014
home places. Table 12 shows there is a requirement for an additional 909 care home places by 2030 across Northamptonshire.

Table 12: Source: Housing and Support Needs of Older People Study March 2017: Target provision of additional care home places (this could be expressed as an annual target)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Total population aged 65 and over and over 2030</th>
<th>Care places required (2.9% of popn)</th>
<th>Current supply</th>
<th>Target provision (2017-2030)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corby</td>
<td>14,600</td>
<td>423.4</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>155.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Northants</td>
<td>27,300</td>
<td>792</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kettering</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>1018</td>
<td>790</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellingborough</td>
<td>19,800</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daventry</td>
<td>23,100</td>
<td>629</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northampton</td>
<td>47,000</td>
<td>1262</td>
<td>1656</td>
<td>-394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Northants</td>
<td>26,600</td>
<td>771</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>183,400</td>
<td>5,319</td>
<td>4,410</td>
<td>909</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.81 These targets make no allowance for any increase in retirement housing provision which reduces demand for care homes. The report suggests that ‘it will be necessary to keep targets and achievements in provision of retirement housing and care homes under review and to collect and monitor information from retirement housing providers on the proportion of residents who receive regular domiciliary care and who would otherwise be in a care home’

Policy Housing 7 – Residential Care/Nursing Care

Proposals for Residential care homes/nursing care to meet an identified local need will be appropriate on suitable sites where all of the following criteria are met:

- The local need or requirement for the housing is clearly evidenced and has an established local connection to the District; and

- Appropriate eligibility occupancy criteria and assessment of care needs can be demonstrated

Proposals will need to include evidence that there is no alternative suitable property or available sites within the confines of settlements within the same parish or those adjacent; and

Residential institutions which fall within use class C2 and do not provide self-contained accommodation or support independent living
South Northamptonshire Local Plan Part 2: Preferred Options Consultation (August 2017)

Single Plot exceptions policy

6.82 Policy H3 of the WNJC states that the provision of affordable housing to meet identified local needs in rural areas on ‘exception sites’ will be supported subject to specific requirements. The Single Plot Exceptions policy aims to complement this policy and delivery from other sources to provide a self-help solution for individual households to build their own affordable home to meet their own housing needs. These plots are intended for those people who have a strong local connection to a specific area who are unable to afford or secure open market housing in that area. The principal of the Single Plot exception policy is that the construction of affordable housing is funded from householders’ own resources, which can include the sale of existing property as well as through a commercial mortgage. It will help families to stay in the District and support the continued sustainability of rural communities.

6.83 Sites may be permitted in primary, secondary and small villages as defined in the WNJCS to obtain home ownership as an exception to the normal planning policies that restrict housing development in such locations.

6.84 Single plot exception sites are only permitted with restrictions. These are:

- The value of the property is based on a standard cost of construction plus a nominal plot value. This typically works out at around 80% of open market value. A legal agreement is used to ensure that a future sale of the property is capped at this percentage of market value, forever. The value of the affordable property will then rise (or fall) directly in proportion with the housing market.
- The property cannot be larger than 100 square metre gross internal floor area. This includes any attached garage. Normal permitted development rights will be removed so that express permission has to be sought for any future extensions.
- Any future occupiers would need to meet the ‘qualifying criteria’

6.85 Where a single plot exception plot site is proposed applicants will have to establish the following ‘qualifying criteria’:

- That they are in housing need and are unable to identify or afford a suitable alternative home currently available for sale on the open market in the local area or within 5km of the proposed site

6.86 Housing need is demonstrated where the household unit has no home of its own, or is renting and would like to become an owner-occupier, or occupies accommodation that is deemed to be unsuitable by the Council. The current home may be too large or too small for the household, be in a poor state of repair, be too costly for the household to maintain or sustain.

- That they have a strong local connection to the parish where the dwelling is proposed, this will be demonstrated if at least one of the applicants (or
one adult member of the applicants’ household) meets a minimum of the following:

- Has permanent employment in South Northants (and meet all the following criteria)
  - Is in paid permanent, fixed term employment or self employed; and
  - Works a minimum of 16 hours per week; and
  - Has been employed for a minimum of 12 continuous months at the time of the assessment

- Has continuously lived in the parish (or immediately adjacent parish) for a minimum of 3 years immediately prior to the assessment;
- Has previously lived in the parish (or one of the immediately adjacent parishes) for a minimum of 3 continuous years within the last 10 years;
- Has close relatives living in the parish (or immediately adjacent parish) for a period of at least 5 years. Close relatives are defined as parents, children, siblings, grandparents or grandchildren (including step relatives);
- Is a member of the Armed and Reserve Forces (and former service personnel within five years of discharge, including bereaved spouses and civil partners)
- that the proposed dwelling is affordable and will be occupied by the applicant. It will be required to remain affordable in perpetuity and any future re-sale shall be fixed, this would typically be 80% of market value.
Policy Housing 8: Single Plot exception sites

The Council will support single plot exception sites that come forward as low cost home ownership housing (as defined by NPPF definition affordable housing) within or adjoining the confines of rural service centres, primary, secondary and small villages as defined within the Policy SETTLEMENT HIERARCHY 1 providing it meets all of the following criteria:

- The applicant can demonstrate that they are unable to access a suitable home currently available on the open market in the parish;
- The applicant has an evidenced a strong local connection to the parish;
- The dwelling is affordable to the applicant and will remain affordable to subsequent occupiers in perpetuity
- The internal floor space of the proposed dwelling does not exceed 100 sqm

Self-Build/Custom Build Development

What you told us at the Options Stage

30% of respondents considered that provision be made for a percentage of serviced plots to be provided to ensure the delivery of Self Build plots. 24% disagreed and 46% did not express an opinion.

- Large property development builders tend to throw up identikit, boring and poor grade housing, driven by profit. Self builders tend to build higher quality and buildings of more interest and character;
- Self build is a great way to ensure people are able to obtain the type of housing they require rather than the off the shelf offerings normally found in developments. It also allows much more variation in the housing stock, both in design and aesthetics than normally found in large scale development. It also allows much more innovation which in turn may drive better housing elsewhere in the settlement in future expansion;
- Unless very strict regulations are set on the design/layout of any self build sites, they can be totally out of character with the surrounding dwellings;
- Surely those wishing to build their own houses are likely to wish to select their own locations, not have a site allocated to them. The allocation should be driven by demand, not the other way round;
- It is very unlikely in my view that someone would want to self build amongst a
new build development; and

- It will not be appropriate for all residential developments to include self-build plots, eg for instance on sites with very specific design details that need uniformity throughout the scheme which would be difficult to regulate with elements of a scheme being self-build. It could be appropriate for very large sites (200dw+) where such specific details are not so critical, where a portion of housing could be set aside for self-build as part of a much wider scheme.

6.87 The Council will support the principle of Self and Custom Build development as an opportunity to bring choice to the housing market as well as enabling local people to design and build their own home that will meet their bespoke needs. The NPPF makes it clear that LPAs should identify and make provision for the housing ‘needs of different groups in the community such as people wishing to build their own homes’. ‘Self-build housing’ is identified by the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations as a dwelling built by (or commissioned by) someone to be occupied by them as their sole or main residence for at least three years. Custom-Build homes encompass self-build but tends to be where individuals work with specialist developers to build their home.

6.88 This Policy will contribute towards the availability of self and custom build plots enabling local residents to deliver high quality homes, as well as supporting the local economy providing work for builders and associated trades.

6.89 The Council considers that priority should be given to those with a local connection to the District. The current Right to Build Register will help inform the level of need for Self Build. For the purposes of this Policy the Council’s current local connection criteria will be applied.

6.90 The Council will also support qualifying bodies in taking forward local self and custom build projects through the neighbourhood planning process, subject to the wider planning considerations within the strategic policies of the Local Plan.

6.91 The NPPF Para 50 includes the following specific reference to Custom and Self Build housing:

“to deliver a wide choice of high quality homes, widen opportunities for home ownership and create inclusive and mixed communities, local planning authorities should plan for ... the needs of different groups in the community such as people wishing to build their own homes.”

6.92 For the purposes of planning policy, Custom and Self Build dwellings share the same definition and the terms are used interchangeably. Custom Build is where a person commissions a specialist developer to help to deliver their own home, while Self Build is where a person is more directly involved in organising and constructing their home. Both routes require significant input from the home owner in the design process of the dwelling. For the purposes of this Local Plan the Council adopts the definition of Self Build as set out in
the Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 (as amended by the Housing and Planning Act 2016) as set out below.

“Self build and custom housebuilding” means the building or completion by -

a) Individuals,

b) associations of individuals, or

c) persons working with or for individuals

or associations of individuals, of houses to be occupied as homes by those individuals.

But it does not include the building of a house on a plot acquired from a person who builds the house wholly or mainly to plans or specifications decided or offered by that person”.

6.93 Serviced Self Build plots can be delivered in a number of ways, including the following:

- Multiple individual serviced plots located within larger sites which are generally allocated in this Local Plan around the towns and Primary and Secondary Service Villages;
- Single or small sites delivering open market plots – these are likely to be windfall sites (not identified in the Local Plan);
- Single or small sites delivering affordable plots, including on rural exception sites – these are windfall sites delivered primarily by organisations such as Housing Associations and the Council’s Local Housing Company and
- Sites delivered by Town or Parish Councils via their Neighbourhood Plans or Neighbourhood Development Orders

6.94 Other forms of ‘self finish’ Custom Build where the dwelling is not built or commissioned by the occupant may not be considered by the Council to be true self build and are not recognised as such by the CIL regulations.

6.95 The Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 places a duty on local councils in England to keep and have regard to a register of people who are interested in self-build and custom build housing. In October 2016, changes were made to the legislation and revised Regulations came into force. The changes strengthened the role of Local Authorities in making available plots of land that can be used for self-build and custom housebuilding. The Regulations allow local authorities to include a local connection test and a criterion to demonstrate that an individual has the financial resources to purchase land for self/custom build. The Council has maintained a register since 01 April 2016, in April 2017 the Council introduced a local connection and financial test.
To ensure that self-build and custom housebuilding is of high quality design, sites with multiple serviced plots will be required to be supported by a Design Code. A Design Code should be prepared by the plot provider at the outline planning stage and should provide the Council as well as potential self and custom housebuilders with a clear set of design rules and parameters that future development will have to comply with. Design Codes vary depending on the amount of development proposed and the context of the site. They may include some or all of the following:

- Building height, massing and bulk
- Plot size and width
- Plot ratios, site coverage and density
- Urban grain – street and building pattern and connectivity
- Building lines and boundary treatments
- Building orientation
- Landscaping and the public realm
- Building frontage and townscape features
- Car parking and cycle provision and access
- Provision of waste and recycling storage

**POLICY HOUSING 9: Self Build Homes**

Self-Build properties will be permitted on sites within the confines of Rural Service Centres, Primary, Secondary and small villages where it is required to meet an identified need on Part 1 of the Self and Custom Housebuilding Register and is developed for and occupied by the applicant. Applications for full planning permission will need to be made by the prospective occupier of the home.

Where there is an identified need on Part 1 of the Self and Custom Housebuilding Register, Self-Build properties will only be permitted on sites immediately adjoining the confines of Rural Service Centres, Primary, Secondary and small villages as an additional part of proposals brought forward under Policy LOAN. Reserved matters planning applications for plots will need to be made by the householder intending to occupy a custom build home.

Proposals for all self build dwellings will be controlled by the following means:

- the Council will require developments of more than 10 custom build dwellings in a single site location to be supported by a Design Code; and
- planning permissions will include conditions requiring custom build developments to be commenced within 3 years of a custom builder purchasing a plot; and
- where plots have been made available and marketed appropriately for at least 12 months and have not sold, the plot(s) may either remain on the open market as custom build or be...
A serviced Self Build plot is defined as a parcel of land with legal access to a public highway, and at least water, foul drainage and electricity supply available at the plot boundary.

**Build to rent**

6.97 House prices in the UK have increased by 8.7% in the 12 months to June 2016 (ONS). House prices across the UK and locally have continued to increase, as of April 2017 the average house price in the UK was £220,094 and the District average house price was £301,990 (Land Registry April 2017).

6.98 Whilst the dominant form of housing tenure in South Northamptonshire continues to be owner occupation; private rented housing has become a significant part of the national housing offer.

6.99 The English Housing Survey 2014-2015 showed that households aged 25-34 were more likely to be renting privately (46%) than buying a home up from 24% in 2004-05.

6.100 The growth in this sector is likely to continue and is driven by demand and supply factors including increasing demand from more households, reduction in income (in real terms), the affordability of owner occupation reducing, the large deposits required for owner occupation.

**Table 13: Mix of household types living in the private rented sector for South Northamptonshire** (Source: UK Census of Population 2011 and DWP)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Type</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student households</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households on housing benefit</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Would be” owner occupiers</td>
<td>&lt;100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households choosing private rent</td>
<td>3,100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.101 This growth in the private rented sector is growing via the conversion of other tenures rather than new build, therefore at the moment the private rented sector does not contribute significantly to new housing supply.

6.102 The 2017 Housing White Paper sent a clear message of the Government’s support for Build to Rent and the associated consultation paper ‘Planning and
Affordable Housing for Build to Rent (February 2017). The Government believes that local authorities should be considering the potential of the Build to Rent sector to help meet the housing needs of their area.

6.103 The main proposed measures are:

- Placing further emphasis on Build to Rent through planning policy;
- Encouraging an alternative approach to affordable housing for Build to Rent called Affordable Private Rent (sometimes referred to as Discounted Market Rent; and
- Strengthening the expectation on Build to Rent Schemes to offer family friendly tenancies of three years or more, to those tenants who want one.

6.104 The potential changes to the NPPF are:

- Will make it explicit that Affordable Private Rent can count as a form of affordable housing and LPAs should consider asking for Affordable Private Rent in place of other forms of affordable housing on Build to Rent schemes.
- Proposed terms for the provision of Affordable Private rent are a minimum of 20% of the homes, to be made available for rent at a level at least 20% below local market rent.
- The discount on the Affordable Private Rent homes would apply indefinitely (subject to a ‘claw-back’ arrangement if Affordable Private Rent homes are withdrawn).

6.105 The consultation on Planning and Affordable Housing for Build to Rent ended on 01 May 2017, further consideration of these proposals will be considered once the outcome of the consultation is known and the policy below will be updated accordingly.

POLICY HOUSING 10: Build to Rent

Proposals to deliver sites for Build to Rent housing schemes comprising up to 10 dwellings will be permitted on suitable sites within or adjoining the confines of Rural Service Centres, Primary or Secondary villages subject to the following:

- The site is located within or immediately adjoining the defined confine boundary; and
- All the units self-contained and let separately and
- All tenants in the development are to be offered (but not required to take up) a family friendly tenancy of three years or more and;
- The tenancies will have defined in-tenancy rent reviews.

- On a Build to Rent schemes 20% of the homes will be for Affordable Private Rent
- The Affordable Private Rental dwellings will be broadly representative of the mix and type of the overall development
• Affordable Private Rent will be provided with a minimum 20% discount of local market rents
• The discount on the Affordable Private Rent home will apply in perpetuity
• Clawback arrangements will be in place should in the future it becomes necessary to withdraw the discount there will be a requirement to make alternative provision for affordable housing in place of the Affordable Private Rent homes by way of a commuted sum

The commuted sum will be calculated in the following way:

\[
\text{Committed sum} = D \times E, \quad \text{where:}
\]

D is the price at which the home(s) withdrawn from Affordable Private Rent are sold;

E is the percentage discount that had been applied to the rent in respect of the Affordable Private Rent home(s) being sold.

So for example – if the home had a sale value of £500,000, and the discount level was 20%, this would generate a clawback of £100,000.

• the units are to be in a single ownership and management of the tenancies
• an agreed professional and on-site management scheme by a member of an accredited Ombudsman Scheme and a recognised professional body
• the homes are to be built as Build to Rent properties for at least 15 years
• a demonstration that the scheme is viable

Residential Garden Land Development

6.106 The existing built-up areas in the District are generally regarded as attractive places to live and their communities value both the built and natural environments which contribute to the distinct characteristics of each area. Factors including building sizes, plot sizes, existence of trees and other vegetation, distance from the road and boundary treatments give rise to local distinctiveness in any given locality. In many parts of the District the cumulative impact of private gardens creates a significant amenity for residents beyond their own private space. Over time, many of these gardens have matured to provide important wildlife habitats and green networks. The character of the residential areas within the District is determined not just by the form, size and layout of the dwellings and significant consideration must be given to the often mature landscapes that contribute as much to the positive character of an area as the buildings themselves.

6.107 The Council attaches great weight to the protection of the high standards of local character, residential amenity and biodiversity in the District and seeks
to prevent the inappropriate development of residential garden land which would result in the significant harm to, or loss of, such character, amenity and biodiversity. This approach is supported by Para 53 of the NPPF which advises planning authorities to resist inappropriate development of residential gardens, for example where development would cause harm to the local area.

6.108 It is important that applications for the redevelopment of residential garden land are considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development and planning permission will be granted if the proposed development is within the defined confines unless the adverse impacts on character, amenity and biodiversity outweigh the benefits of the development. The Council acknowledges that the development of residential garden land can contribute to achieving sustainable growth by making the most effective use of land - provided it reinforces the local character and maintains the appearance and amenity of the existing residential area.

6.109 Infilling, back land and the complete or partial redevelopment (ie that which includes the demolition of all or some of the existing dwellings) of residential garden land may be acceptable, subject to meeting all the necessary policy requirements. Tandem development means the introduction of a new dwelling or dwellings behind an existing dwelling or dwellings that front a road (generally with an access to serve the new development situated between the frontage dwellings). Piecemeal development is the development of individual or multiple plots rather than a comprehensive and properly planned redevelopment of an area. Proposals involving such tandem or piecemeal development of residential garden land are unlikely to be acceptable, particularly as continued incremental back land and piecemeal development of a series of sites in an area may lead to detrimental changes in the character and quality of the local environment. Such detrimental changes can be avoided where a site is properly and comprehensively planned. The Council acknowledges that these general principles cannot cover every instance and applications will be assessed on their individual merits, based on these general principles.

6.110 The Council will adopt a balanced approach to assessing applications involving the development of residential garden land by seeking to encourage sustainable development whilst maintaining local character and distinctiveness, high standards of residential amenity and biodiversity. In accordance with Para 64 of the NPPF poor design or design which is inappropriate in its context or fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions will be refused. Proposals will also be required to meet any other relevant Development Plan policies.

POLICY HOUSING 11: Residential Garden Land Development

A. Proposals involving infilling, back land or the complete or partial redevelopment of residential garden land will not be permitted within the town and village confines, unless the development scheme:

- Is appropriate to the surrounding area in terms of land use, size and
scale; and
- Maintains, or where possible, enhances the character and appearance of the area, reflecting the variety of local dwelling types; and
- Does not involve the inappropriate sub-division of existing curtilages to a size below that prevailing in the area, taking account of the need to retain and enhance mature landscapes; and
- Does not detrimentally affect the contribution of the frontage of the existing dwellings onto the streetscene. The utilisation of a shared access onto the main carriageway can help minimise this impact.
- Does not result in the loss of biodiversity or an essential green corridor / network or local green space.

B. Proposals that would result in the piecemeal or ‘tandem’ development of residential garden land, or the formation of cul-de-sacs through the ‘in-depth’ development of residential garden land will be resisted, particularly where they are likely to prejudice the potential for the satisfactory development of a larger area or result in multiple access points onto the existing frontage.

Provision of Private Outdoor Amenity Space in New and Existing Developments

6.111 The Council considers that, in addition to the provision of well-planned public spaces, the provision of high quality private outdoor amenity space for all types of new residential development must be considered to be an essential component of high quality design, and key to the creation of a sustainable residential environment both in terms of its contribution to liveability and to urban greening and the preservation and/or enhancement of local biodiversity and ecological networks.

6.112 Such space is needed for sitting out, socialising, play, drying washing, and gardening (flowers and food). Garden sizes need to be sufficient to accommodate most household activities and at the same time be adequate to offer visual delight, receive some sunshine, and encourage plant growth. The Building Research Establishment (BRE) report “Site Layout for Daylight and Sunlight” recommends that no more than two fifths and preferably no more than a quarter of the garden should be prevented by buildings, walls or fences from receiving sunshine. Gardens need to be calculated independently of any parking space(s) to be provided.

6.113 The Council’s Design Guide recommends that rear gardens should be 11m but requires a minimum of 9m with an 18m distance between dwellings with facing windows. It should be noted that for both sizes of dwellings, gardens may need to exceed the minimum size specified in the policy where they need to accommodate soakaways.

6.114 Key characteristics of well designed private amenity space will normally be required, and these are:
(i) a well shaped (rectangular), useable area having good accessibility and a well planned relationship to the internal living spaces within the dwelling;
(ii) provision for a private outside seating area not overlooked by any window of a neighbouring property either at ground or first floor;
(iii) high standards of security and privacy;
(iv) a reasonable outlook; and
(v) access to direct sunlight for part of the space for at least part of the day.

6.115 The Council considers that in the case of low-rise housing development conventional rear gardens remain the best option for private amenity space. For apartment schemes and other forms of higher density development an imaginative combination of gardens (private and communal), terraces, roof-gardens, and balconies should be considered. In addition to functional benefits, well designed and fully integrated outside space can enhance the architectural quality and interest of a scheme.

6.116 Apartment schemes may typically choose to provide a combination of communal gardens for use by all residents together with private balcony spaces or terraces for use by individual households. All balconies should be well designed, positioned where they are convenient and comfortable to use, and large enough to accommodate a table and four chairs to suit the occupancy of the flat as well as some additional space for plants (a minimum size of 5m$^2$ is a useful guide in this regard).

6.117 Poorly designed areas of grass to the rear of blocks of flats will no longer be an acceptable way of providing communal gardens. These spaces are rarely private and are often overshadowed by tall buildings. Private communal gardens therefore need to be:

- of sufficient size to be useable;
- secure and private;
- well-designed and integral to the character of the development; and
- providing a combination of sun and shade, particularly during the summer months of the year.

6.118 To ensure that new residential developments deliver a suitably high quality and environmentally sustainable living environment all such developments will be required to incorporate well designed and located private outdoor amenity space of an appropriate type and amount. Provision will be in accordance with the following standards unless this would unavoidably conflict with the need to meet other density and urban design requirements of the plan or an applicant is able to demonstrate that a lower figure would be acceptable having regard to the particular circumstances of the proposals. In all cases applicants will be expected to demonstrate that adequate provision of private outdoor amenity space will be provided for the likely occupancy of the proposed dwellings.
For all houses, bungalows, or ground floor maisonettes a minimum length of rear garden of 9m and a minimum of 18m between dwellings with facing windows

All private gardens and other outdoor amenity spaces should be safely and conveniently accessible to occupants, designed to take advantage of sunlight and daylight and provide a functional space having regard to the mix of housing/types to be provided.

Extensions to residential gardens and associated domestic uses

6.119 The change of use of agricultural land to domestic garden land is in principle, contrary to the objective of safeguarding the open, rural character of the countryside, which is advocated by the NPPF. The domestication of the countryside, through the replacement of open pasture with lawns, domestic plants and garden furniture is generally harmful to the integrity and character of rural landscapes. However, the introduction of appropriate domestic leisure and sports amenities such as tennis courts and swimming pools can add significantly to the health and social wellbeing of residents. This policy will safeguard against inappropriate and excessive extensions to domestic gardens and ensure that the development of associated domestic uses, whilst encouraged, will not result in inappropriate development.

6.120 Garden extensions and the introduction of domestic uses can have a significant visual impact. In many cases, such extensions gradually lead to urban characteristics. Proposals to extend gardens and the introduction of uses have to be considered in the context of a wider range of planning issues. The Council is committed to maintaining the character and appearance of the countryside and safeguarding it from unsuitable development. By enlarging residential curtilages, changing plot boundaries and introducing domestic uses to land which was previously agricultural, garden extensions can have a significant visual impact. In many cases, such extensions gradually lead to urban characteristics (for example, sheds, garages, hardstandings, etc.) being introduced to areas whose open and attractive landscape qualities are highly valued.

6.121 The Council recognises the interest of some rural householders in having larger gardens. Where these can be provided in such a way that the landscape and appearance of the area would not be harmed, a garden extension may be acceptable.

6.122 The Local Plan defines settlement confines beyond which the expansion of built up areas is not allowed. These limits, which generally follow the boundaries of existing properties or of land allocated for future development, establish a clear distinction between town, village and countryside. This distinction would be significantly weakened if domestic gardens were extended indiscriminately outside these approved limits. The end result would be a gradual encroachment of development into the countryside. Accordingly,
planning permission for garden extensions beyond settlement limits is only likely to be granted in exceptional cases

6.123 The amount of land which the Council will consider appropriate for inclusion in a garden extension will vary depending upon the size of the existing residential curtilage. Where a dwelling already has the benefit of a substantial garden area, an extension is unlikely to be permitted, however, where the area of an existing curtilage is severely restricted, an extension may be acceptable provided this is limited to the minimum amount of land appropriate for reasonable family enjoyment of the property.

6.124 Garden extensions to provide space for central heating fuel tanks, septic tanks or other services essential for domestic occupation are likely to be acceptable where there is insufficient space available for these services within the existing residential curtilage. However, the extension must be limited to the minimum area required to comply with installation requirements. In the case of above ground installations, structures and equipment will need to be coloured, screened or positioned in such a way that their effect upon the landscape would be kept to a minimum.

6.125 If a dwelling has no vehicular access, an access with obstructed visibility or no off-road parking space, a garden extension which would enable a significant road safety risk to be removed may be permitted. In these circumstances, the extension will normally be limited to the minimum area required to comply with the Council's highway and parking standards.

6.126 The Special Landscape Areas are the most important landscapes in the District. They have been designated in the development plan for their visual and environmental quality and the contribution which they make to the setting, amenity and character of settlements. Garden extensions could materially change the appearance of these areas and are therefore unlikely to be permitted without particular justification.

6.127 Substantial garden extensions erode open character between settlements or distinct parts of settlements and unless a proposal is of a very minor or insignificant nature, it is therefore unlikely that planning permission would be granted.

6.128 If the proposed extension would include a site, or part of a site, or affect the setting of areas of significant nature conservation or heritage assets including a listed building or conservation area, the need to protect these features is likely to take precedence over the case for extending a domestic garden or associated domestic uses.

6.129 Extensions to and new dwellings should be contained within the existing settlement confines. Development plan policies are intended to minimise the amount of built development in the open countryside and planning permission to extend gardens in order to create space for enlarging dwellings or the provision of new dwellings is, therefore, unlikely to be granted.
6.130 Conditions will normally be attached to planning permissions for garden extensions. The purpose of these conditions will be to mitigate the visual impact of extensions on the landscape.

**POLICY HOUSING 13: Extensions to residential gardens and associated domestic uses**

On land wholly within settlement confines, the principle of garden extensions and the development of associated domestic uses such as tennis courts or swimming pools will be supported.

In other locations, proposals to extend gardens or develop associated domestic uses that require planning permission on land that is wholly or partially outside settlement confines will be considered taking account of all the relevant criteria below:

- the aspect and location of the site;
- the landscape quality of the site;
- the presence of landscape features such as a break of slope, hedgerow, watercourse or woodland which could form a logical new boundary to the residential curtilage;
- the size of the proposal
- the extent to which high quality agricultural land would be taken out of productive use;
- the erosion of gaps between settlements or parts of settlements;
- the presence of features of heritage or nature conservation interest;
- the need for the extension to provide space for essential services or off street parking;

In all cases conditions will normally be attached to planning permissions for garden extensions extending to land outside settlement confines. As appropriate, these may include, but will not be limited to:

- removal of an occupier's permitted development rights to erect sheds, greenhouses and other garden structures,
- a prohibition on future residential extensions or new dwellings within the garden area;
- a requirement that the boundary of the extension (and, where relevant, other land in the control of the house-owner) should be enclosed either by a hedge formed of indigenous plant species or a natural stone wall,
- a landscaping requirement to ensure that the new garden area is assimilated into the surrounding countryside.
Residential Extensions

6.131 Well-designed residential extensions can add to the diversity and flexibility of the housing stock. All development should maintain and create good levels of amenity for future occupiers and neighbouring occupiers, and maintain or enhance the character of the area. All extensions, including those that can be carried out within the terms of permitted development are advised to have regard to the Design guide and successor documents. Early discussion with neighbours can smooth the path to successful household development.

6.132 The Council may impose appropriate conditions or in exceptional circumstances remove permitted development rights to protect the amenities of adjoining properties. For example, removing permitted development rights to insert new or alter existing windows and balconies in order to protect the amenities of adjoining occupiers.

6.133 When considering proposals for extensions the Council will have regard to parking standards and other guidance and standards for new dwellings. The Council will seek to maintain the standards for new dwellings and will not permit development leading to a reduction of provision below the standards for new dwellings unless there are compelling reasons to do so.

6.134 The Council is concerned that overlarge extensions in the open countryside would effectively represent new residential development. In order to adhere to a strategy of restraining development in the restraint villages and in the open countryside, residential extensions in these locations will be restricted in size to reflect the character, scale and appearance of the property

Policy HOUSING 14: Residential extensions

Within settlement confines development boundaries proposals for residential extensions will be permitted provided they:

a) Incorporate a good quality design which maintains or enhances the character and appearance of the building, street scene and surroundings; and

b) Do not have an unacceptable impact on the amenities of neighbouring occupiers or adversely affect neighbouring commercial uses.

Specifically, proposals must provide and maintain:

c) Suitable amenity and utility space; and
d) Adequate access and parking

Proposals for extensions to dwellings in the open countryside must not exceed a 50% increase by volume of the original dwelling, or of the residual floorspace if demolition is involved. Any further extensions will not be permitted.
## Housing in the Urban Areas

### What you told us at the Options Stage

47% of respondents considered that some additional housing sites should be identified in the urban areas. 17% disagreed and 36% did not express an opinion (262 responses).

- Building in already established urban areas is far more preferable than on green land or expansion. Development of brown field sites is preferable to any public green spaces;
- Towcester and Brackley are the main settlements of the District and should remain the focus for accommodating housing growth over the Plan period and beyond. Of these two settlements, Towcester is the largest, most sustainable and able to accommodate more development than currently planned for. Development in Towcester has also not progressed at the same pace as in Brackley, primarily for reasons of land ownership/control, where significant areas of allocated housing land fall within limited ownerships. Further land at Towcester should be allocated in the Part 2 Plan, to de-risk the WNJCS from delivery failure. It is important that the delivery of housing is not constrained, as it has been to date, by a reduced number of developer ‘outlets’;
- Towcester has been forced to accept the majority of growth to date. The town is now constrained by physical barriers - A5, A43, Easton Neston, New Relief Road. There are no vacant sites in the town;
- Given that the majority of the housing in the urban area is to come from two urban extensions, the Council need to consider further allocations in the urban area;
- Following a dispersed spatial distribution pattern across a large number of settlements is also undesirable and is not likely to be sustainable, will not be delivered and cannot generate the level of community benefits;
- More sites than needed to deliver the OAN should be allocated to account for slippage;
- The main two urban areas, Brackley and Towcester, already have the infrastructure to support additional housing and
- Urban areas should be the main focus of new and additional future developments to protect rural settlements from losing their identities.

### 7.1 Policy S3 of the WNJCS includes strategic housing allocations for major residential development in both Brackley and Towcester that are anticipated to generally meet the requirements of the WNJCS. The Brackley North Urban extension is currently under construction. The Towcester South Urban extension has outline planning permission and reserved matters approval for Phase One. This development commenced in 2017.

### Brackley

### 7.2 It is important to ensure that the Plan delivers the minimum housing requirement set out in the WNJCS. Residential development will generally be permitted on sites within the defined town boundaries as long as proposals accord with policy SDP1 of this Plan and other relevant development plan
policies and material considerations. It is anticipated that the Radstone Fields sustainable urban extension will be completed in 2021/22. It is accepted that when this development is complete then the total urban housing requirement for the urban areas would have almost been met. The 2017 Housing Land Supply Report indicates that in Brackley there will be 2058 dwellings completed (2011 – 2029) compared with a requirement of 2,160 dwellings.

7.3 A number of larger sites have been promoted to the Council through earlier consultations on this Plan that are within the confines of the town. These include land on the former railway embankment, land at Daniaud Court and at York Drive. As these sites are within the confines the principle of housing development is accepted and therefore planning applications that demonstrate the suitability and deliverability of a site for development under the other policies in the development plan and other material considerations will be considered favourably. Together with windfall developments on small sites that are likely to be delivered within the town during the remainder of the Plan period the full housing requirement for Brackley will be met.

7.4 A number of larger sites on land outside the town confines have been promoted to the Council through earlier consultations on this Plan. These included land to the West of Brackley, land to the north west of Radstone Fields with a new Sports Hub and related development at Westminster Road within the town, and land at Turweston Road and the A43. As has been stated whilst there is no need for any additional housing on sites outside the confines to meet any projected shortfall in delivery during the current Plan period it is also important to note that the requirement is a minimum figure and that there remains a need to demonstrate a continuing supply of housing to fulfil national planning policy to boost housing supply in sustainable locations.

7.5 The Council recognises the desire and supports the principle of the relocation of the existing sports clubs from their existing sites within the town to a new purpose built Sports Hub. This would allow for an enhanced level of provision to meet the needs of an increasing population. Furthermore it acknowledges that such a relocation could also provide land close to the town centre for development and some new car parking provision that has been identified as important to serve the town centre. In addition it acknowledges the need for additional allotment and cemetery land for the town. However, the Council must be clear that any new allocation in the Plan is suitable, available and deliverable and that it is viable. There remains a significant amount of work to be completed to ensure that any future development delivers its own infrastructure requirements including by way of example education, health, recreation and affordable housing as well as certainty over the mechanism required to deliver the Sports Hub that ensures that as many of the existing four clubs relocate. Confirmation is also required that the site identified for the Sports Hub is suitable especially in terms of topography, ground conditions and access and on site parking arrangements.

7.6 The Council will liaise with the promoters of the sites to the north west of the town and Westminster Road to determine whether a comprehensive masterplan can be developed that would demonstrate the satisfactory and co-
ordinated delivery of both sites. The Masterplan will need to demonstrate the following key aspects:

- A statement of objectives, principles, assumptions, policies and standards upon which the proposals are based.
- An indicative layout plan that describes the location of the key elements of the proposal (housing, sports facilities, allotments and cemetery space) in relationship to natural features such as: topography, soils, geology, groundwater recharge, streams, floodplains, ecology
- A demonstration that the land identified for the identified land uses is suitable in terms of topography and ground conditions
- A firm commitment from as many of the clubs as possible to relocate to the Hub
- A demonstration that the development of the site is viable
- A statement on the anticipated delivery timescales for both sites

7.7 If this can be to the satisfaction of the Council then an allocation will be considered for inclusion at the next stage of the Plan making process. Alternatively, the issue will be considered as part of the review of the WNJCS. The current WNJCS commits the Council to undertake a review of the Part 1 Plan to a plan period end date of at least 2036. This review will commence once the three Part 2 Local Plans covering West Northamptonshire have been submitted to the Secretary of State for Examination. In addition the Council is aware of the possible changes to the Plan making process that is set out in the Housing White Paper (2017). Of particular importance will be the introduction of a new regulation that will set a requirement for Local Plans to be reviewed at least every five years as well as a new standardised methodology to establish baseline housing need.

Towcester

7.8 The 2017 Five Year Housing Land Supply Report states that 2,584 dwellings will be delivered in Towcester by 2029. This compares to the minimum delivery figure of 2,650 dwellings in the WNJCS. It is therefore clear that nearly all the entire housing requirement has already been agreed in the town. Two sites have been promoted to the Council through earlier consultations on this Plan that are within the confines of the town. These include the former Nursery site at Green Lane and the ‘Hammerhead Land’ at Towcester Racecourse. As both sites are within the confines the principle of housing development is accepted and therefore planning applications that demonstrate the suitability and deliverability of a site for development under the other policies in this Plan will be considered favourably. Together with windfall developments on small sites that are likely to be delivered within the town during the remainder of the Plan period the full housing requirement for Towcester will be delivered. Sites suggested to the Council that are outside the town confines will be considered as part of the review of the WNJCS.

7.9 The future development of the Reffield Close site could provide for a key community benefit to link the existing Green Infrastructure around the town that currently comprises and links from Grafton Way to Belle Baulk through
the Shires and the Watermeadows to the southern part of the town and the proposed open space that will be developed as part of the Sustainable Urban Extension. This link will ensure that there will effectively be a circular route through and around the town and should be incorporated into any future planning application. The key issues affecting this site are flood risk as part of the site lies within an identified area of flood risk and access. No access will be permitted to the site that results in any breach of the existing listed boundary wall along the western boundary of Hammerhead Land and the A5.
8 Housing in the Rural Areas

What you told us at the Options Stage

42% of respondents considered that some further growth should be identified in the Plan for the rural areas. 37% disagreed and 21% did not express an opinion (262 responses).

As well as considering the option of no growth in the rural areas the Options Report stated 6 options for possible growth in the rural areas. Responses were as follows:

- Option 1: Straight Distribution of 9.5% across all villages (46%);
- Option 2: Growth based on past development rates (all sites) (8%);
- Option 3: Growth based on past development rates (Natural growth) (12%);
- Option 4: A combination (average) of Option 1 and Option 3. (8%);
- Option 5: A combination (average) of the Option 1 and Option 2 (2%);
- Option 6: A combination (average) of Option 2 and Option 3 (7%) and
- 18% did not express an opinion.

- Smaller villages need starter homes and bungalows for last homes. If people move to smaller properties as they age - this frees up larger properties for families which helps to sustain village schools. Starter homes need a clause in their contracts so they have to stay as starter homes to prevent money/people buying the cheapest properties to then rent out.
- There should be no further housing in Deanshanger and it should remain as it is as it has had far too much expansion already over the last 10/15 years.
- All parishes to take their share as we need more houses. However these should be from locally agreed sites where possible, not imposed. The character of the buildings, and the quality is key to gaining local acceptance.
- Whilst it is acknowledged that an option available to the Council is not to allocate further sites across the rural area, this is not considered to be a robust response and could lead to development coming forward in less suitable locations. Support for the preparation of a proactive and positive plan that meets the development needs of villages in a sustainable manner.
- To ensure that the needs of individual settlements are met, and in recognition of the need to plan positively to meet at a minimum the objectively assessed housing needs of the area, further growth should be identified for the rural areas.
- Should allow for additional development in settlements with the necessary facilities both for the convenience of the new residents and in order to minimise essential travel distances. Although the rural areas of South Northants have already more or less met the forecast housing requirements for the plan period. At the same time, National Planning Policy requires all communities to "meet objectively assessed local
### Proportionate Growth

- **Proportionate growth** should be identified to:
  - (a) meet a specific settlement's identified current or future needs;
  - (b) ensure viability of villages and services within villages;
  - (c) to a more limited extent, as contingency for unknown future needs.

### New Homes in Villages

- New homes are required in villages to ensure that services and facilities remain viable and additional homes may make other such facilities viable. Such development needs to cater for all the various needs of South Northamptonshire but in rural areas there is a particular need to help those wanting to buy their first home. The Council need to consider a policy to allow starter homes on exception sites in a similar way to the current policy which allows traditional affordable homes on exception sites outside, but adjacent to settlement limits. In addition sites should be allocated for market housing, but again a proportion needs to be in the form of affordable/starter homes. This will ensure that villages remain vibrant and that local needs are provided for.

### Development Should Be Minimal

- Development should be minimal. Need to retain the limited green space that we do have in our villages and retain some of South Northants inherent natural character and beauty.

### Limited Development

- Limited development will allow villages to meet the needs of residents especially to enable upsizing or downsizing without the need to move away from the community.

### Controlled Growth

- Controlled growth in the villages is essential in order to maintain primary schools and facilitate affordable housing, otherwise villages could die with an ageing population.

### Distribution of Housing Numbers

8.1 The context for the distribution of housing numbers across the rural areas of the District is the WNJCS. The figures in the WNJCS are based on the latest (at the time) interim 2011-based population and household projections. Policy S3 of the Plan sets out the housing figures that it expects will be delivered within South Northamptonshire (excluding the NRDA between 2011 and 2029. It is important to note that these figures are 850 dwellings higher than the objectively assessed housing numbers for the same plan area across the same plan period.

8.2 The WNJCS does not include any site specific proposals for residential development in the rural areas. The overall housing requirement set out in the
WNJCS for the rural areas (2011-2029) is 2,360 dwellings. The Council has already met this requirement through completions since 2011 or through sites with a current planning permission. Since 2011 1,196 dwellings had been completed on sites in the rural areas. At April 2016 there were outstanding planning permissions for a further 1,232 dwellings in the rural areas. This total of 2,428 dwellings exceeds the OAN for the rural areas by 68 dwellings.

8.3 Furthermore on the assumption that all of the dwellings identified in the rural areas were to be completed by 2029 as envisaged then some 2,923 dwellings would be delivered in the rural areas. This would be 563 (23%) higher than the 2,360 dwelling requirement.

8.4 There is clearly no need for additional housing to be allocated in the rural areas to meet the overall strategic need as set out in the WNJCS. Despite this fact the Council acknowledges that this figure is not a maximum and that, in accordance with the NPPF, in some villages there is likely to be some need for additional market and affordable housing in the future to meet identified local needs. Furthermore it is possible that this development may not all be able to be accommodated within the defined confines of a village. Policy R1 of the WNJCS sets out the circumstances where further housing development will be permitted once the strategic requirement has been met. These exceptions form the basis of the policy approach in this Plan.

8.5 Proposals for housing development will generally be permitted within the defined confines of a village where proposals accord with the policies of this Plan and the WNJCS.

Locally Assessed Housing Needs

8.6 In accordance with the NPPF it is important that where local objectively assessed needs (LOAN) for housing are identified these should, where possible, be met. A LOAN will be identified through a robust Housing Need Assessment (HNA).

8.7 In order to ensure that the most suitable sites are developed, development in villages should follow a sequential approach as per Policy S1 in meeting local objectively assessed needs.

8.8 The development of affordable housing to meet identified LOAN on sites outside defined confines is permissible under Policy H3 – Exception sites of the WNJCS.

8.9 If a HNA identifies a LOAN where the percentage of affordable housing required is above 80% then a rural exception site should be strongly considered and will be encouraged.

8.10 In the event that a LOAN identifies market housing that cannot be met through policy H3, this may require some residential development to be permitted on sites outside the defined village confines.
8.11 An application that includes the development of open market housing on sites outside the village confines, over and above those permissible under the Rural Exceptions Policy for cross-subsidy purposes (Policy H3 of the WNJCS) will need to be accompanied with evidence that alternative sites within the confines are not suitable or available for development.

8.12 In addition, an application will also need to be supported by a clear and robust justification quantifying the LOAN and the established local connection of those households in need to the particular town/parish that the proposal will deliver.

8.13 When assessing the acceptability and appropriateness of proposals for residential development outside the defined village confines, regard will be had to the extent to which the local community has been involved in the formulation of the proposals and the extent to which their views are reflected in the submitted proposals.

8.14 Development proposals will need to have been discussed with the relevant town or Parish Council and agreed with the District Council prior to an application being submitted.

8.15 All parishes with established confines can apply this policy approach. In the event a HNA identifies a LOAN in a parish, the expectation will be that the LOAN is provided within that parish. Where it can be robustly demonstrated that a parish cannot identify a site that is available or suitable to meet the identified LOAN then consideration will be given in delivering the LOAN on a suitable and available site within the closest parish with an equivalent or higher classification as set out in the Settlement Hierarchy.

8.16 For example the LOAN for a secondary village could be met in the closest available Secondary, Primary or Rural Service Centre if there were no suitable sites available in the that village.

8.17 The LOAN for a Small village could be met in the closest available Secondary, Primary or Rural Service Centre if there were no suitable sites available at that village.

8.18 All development proposals will have to have regard to WNJCS Policy R1.

8.19 Parishes/landowners or developers could consider undertaking a HNA based on a cluster of parishes. In the event that a LOAN is identified, it would be expected that the LOAN will be met on a suitable and available site located in the most sustainable parish within the cluster as set out in the Settlement Hierarchy.

8.20 The Council will require a robust evidence base for a development proposal to be considered. Ensuring public confidence in the impartiality and reliability of HNAs is vital. The use of secondary data (eg census, national surveys) will help to inform an evidence base, but as the requirement of Policy LNHG is to determine and meet LOAN there will be a requirement to carry out primary research to produce a locally determined housing needs evidence base.
8.21 It will be expected that the HNA will be funded by the prospective applicant and carried out by a professional and reputable organisation with knowledge and experience of carrying out such assessments. Any survey methodology needs to ensure compliance with Local Authority planning requirements, and consequently, the organisations that will be commissioned will need to have the prior approval of the LPA. The LPA will determine whether the HNA is a robust evidence base and whether it can be approved and used to support a planning application in the rural areas to deliver local housing needs.

8.22 It is intended that this Policy approach will help more effectively to meet local needs, by adopting a robust but flexible approach to the release of land for housing development. One of its effects should be to exclude competition for residential land at unfettered open market values whilst at the same time providing scope for the sale of land that would not otherwise carry any residential development potential – or ‘hope’ value. There is an expectation that land owners will sell land at values significantly lower than open market value but higher than existing use (generally agricultural) value. This approach will also help ensure that viability issues for these schemes will be limited.

8.23 In the event that viability of a scheme is to be a consideration in determining the application, then the applicant should provide details of this at pre-application stage.

Establishing a Local Objectively Assessed Need (LOAN)

8.24 Establishing future local need for housing should follow the approach set out below. The Housing Need Assessment (HNA) should identify as a minimum the following information:

Housing need

General

- An age profile;
- The type of household (e.g. singles, couples, families by age group, number of children and dependents currently in the parish);
- The current housing stock size of dwellings in the parish;
- The current tenure composition of housing in the parish;
- Affordability accessibility to the housing market (local evidence base/Rightmove data) and
- Assessments must take account of housing completed since 2011 or with outstanding planning permission at the time of the assessment

Specific need

- How many households need to move within 3/5 years;
- Current tenure and property types of respondents;
- Outline reasons why respondents may need to move;
- Breakdown of tenure and type of housing required in the parish, providing clear justification for a respondent’s need;
• How the property types suggested will help support local incomes and access to different tenures and
• Of those respondents who have a local need how many also have a local connection to the parish

8.25 Someone is in housing need if they fulfil one or more of the following:

• Households wishing to set up a home for the first time;
• Homeless households or insecure tenures (e.g., housing that is too expensive compared to disposable income);
• Households where there is a mismatch between the housing needed and the actual dwelling (e.g., overcrowded households);
• Households containing people with social or physical impairment or other specific needs living in unsuitable dwellings (e.g., accessed via steps) which cannot be made suitable in-situ and;
• Households that lack basic facilities (e.g., a bathroom or kitchen) and those subject to major disrepair or that are unfit for habitation.

Local Connection

8.26 To determine local connection the following criteria must be fulfilled:

The local connection is as follows:

• Has permanent employment in South Northants (and meet all the following criteria)
  o Is in paid permanent, fixed term employment or self-employed; and
  o Works a minimum of 16 hours per week; and
  o Has been employed for a minimum of 12 continuous months at the time of the assessment
• Has continuously lived in the parish (or immediately adjacent parish) for a minimum of 3 years immediately prior to the assessment;
• Has previously lived in the parish (or one of the immediately adjacent parishes) for a minimum of 3 continuous years within the last 10 years;
• Has close relatives living in the parish (or immediately adjacent parish) for a period of at least 5 years. Close relatives are defined as parents, children, siblings, grandparents or grandchildren (including step relatives);
• Is a member of the Armed and Reserve Forces (and former service personnel within five years of discharge, including bereaved spouses and civil partners)

8.27 Any proposal for a development that is supported by an approved HNA will need to ensure that the proposal directly relates to overall mix and type of dwellings defined by the HNA. An approved HNA will have a lifespan of 5 years. This approach would allow the local authority to be responsive to local circumstances and permit housing development that is required to meet
identified local needs whilst ensuring that the scale of development permitted in the rural areas does not exceed the OAN requirement in the WNJCS by such an amount so as to jeopardise the urban orientated development strategy of the WNJCS.

8.28 It is considered that this approach is consistent with Planning Practice Guidance on Rural Housing that states:

“It is important to recognise the particular issues facing rural areas in terms of housing supply and affordability, and the role of housing in supporting the broader sustainability of villages and smaller settlements. Assessing housing need and allocating sites should be considered at a strategic level and through the Local Plan and/or neighbourhood plan process. However, all settlements can play a role in delivering sustainable development in rural areas – and so blanket policies restricting housing development in some settlements and preventing other settlements from expanding should be avoided unless their use can be supported by robust evidence.”

Paragraph: 001 Ref ID:50-001-20140306

8.29 Communities could have a greater influence over their local area through a Neighbourhood Plan (NP). It allows Parish and Town Councils to prepare a plan that sets policies for the use of land in their area. NPs can be produced in locations in all tiers of the settlement hierarchy. Each NP will need to conform to the strategic policies of the Local Plan. A NP could for example seek to establish the local housing need for an area and allocate sites to meet that need. A NP will not be able to introduce policies that seek to change the policies in this Plan in order to reduce the number of dwellings that may be permissible under the policies of this Plan but they could provide for more dwellings (including through site specific allocations) if it is considered appropriate for that particular parish.

8.30 It is important to consider the scale of development relative to its surroundings. For example, a development of a given size will have a greater impact on a small village than on a larger one. It may be appropriate for a development that meets a small LOAN figure to be met on a single site, whereas a large development may benefit from being broken down into smaller areas each with its own identity. It is anticipated that the LOAN will be proportionate to the size of a village it is for but the actual figure for any given settlement is currently unknown. It is important that the scale of any development is appropriate in terms of scale to the settlement. Each development must be considered on its own merits taking into the account the scale and unique character and appearance of the village. Therefore an indicative ceiling for a single sited development is set of a maximum of 10% of the size of the village (the number of dwellings at the time of the survey) or a maximum of 50 dwellings on any single site (whichever is the smaller figure). If the LOAN exceeds these indicative figures then the residual dwellings should be developed on an alternative site in a different part of the village. Any proposal that exceeds these thresholds will need to be agreed with the District Council at Pre application stage and will only be considered where it can be demonstrated that the development would result in additional
local community benefits and where there would be no additional detriment to
the local landscape or amenity.

8.31 It is expected that LOAN development schemes will be viable as it is likely
that such sites would not have normally received planning consent for general
market housing development in the immediate or near future and therefore
the land value and return should reflect this. In extenuating circumstances
where a development proposal cannot meet planning policy requirement due
to viability these issues should form part of pre-application discussions. If an
applicant believes that the financial viability of development will be
jeopardised by the scale of planning obligations likely to be required this will
need to be discussed with Development Management officers. If policy
requirements are to be reduced, or waived, in order to assess this, the local
planning authority will then require a detailed viability assessment to assess
which particular elements of the policy requirements make the development
unviable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POLICY LOCAL OBJECTIVELY ASSESSED NEEDS (LOAN)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Applications for housing development that include market housing in the District will be permitted on suitable sites outside but immediately adjoining Settlement confines where it has been demonstrated that:</td>
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<tr>
<td>- alternative sites within the confines are not suitable or available for development.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- an exception site for affordable housing development is not considered appropriate</td>
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<tr>
<td>- a clear objectively assessed local housing need (HNA) for such homes has been agreed for that Settlement, in accordance with the criteria set out in this Plan, by the District Council prior to the submission of a planning application.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The HNA will be funded by the prospective applicant and carried out by a professional and reputable organisation with knowledge and experience of carrying out such assessments and nominated by the District Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>The HNA will be approved by the District Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>The prospective applicant who requested and paid for the first HNA will have 2 years from the HNA approval to obtain and implement planning permission for a development that is meeting the LOAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An approved HNA will be considered as an evidence base for a period of 5 years from the date of approval.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The applicant or developer will be expected to demonstrate community involvement and ensure that the views of the local community inform the proposals</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Unless previously agreed with the District Council, the scale of the development on a single site must be less than 10% of the existing number of dwellings in the settlement or a maximum of 50 dwellings (whichever is lower).

Development proposals will need to reflect the overall mix and type of dwellings defined by the HNA.

Where delivery of the HNA is on 2 or more sites the proportion of the mix and type identified by the HNA should be reflected on each composite site.

The LPA will need to ensure that the scale of development permitted in the rural areas does not exceed the OAN requirement in the WNJCS by an amount so to jeopardise the development strategy of the WNJCS

Where the LPA considers that the scheme is viable and appropriate and the applicant still declines to provide a detailed viability assessment, this will be a reason to recommend refusal of the application.
9 Housing to meet the needs of Northampton

What you told us at the Options Stage

- Reserve sites should be considered. These will be released for development in the event that housing delivery from the urban area falls behind expected provision. This is particularly important for the Northampton Related Development Area (NRDA). The recent Appeal (Ref: APP/V2825/A/14/2228866) regarding land at Hardingstone, Northampton confirmed that there was an overall shortfall in provision of 2,929 dwellings up to 2013/14 in the NRDA. This decision also confirmed that there was at best a 4.26 year housing land supply for this area. There is little in the scope of the existing NRDA boundary to meet this shortfall.

9.1 The WNJCS sets out the housing requirement for the NRDA. There are 2 separate issues that need to be considered in the preparation of this Local Plan. These are:

- The existing shortfall in the 5 year supply of housing land and
- The likely overall shortfall in provision of housing by the end of the plan period (2029)

9.2 The issue for South Northamptonshire is what this Local Plan can or should do to protect the District from the impact of the failure to deliver by the Borough in the short term. It is considered that the overall shortfall in delivery across the Plan period will be considered as part of the review of the WNJCS.

9.3 Work in currently underway to explore ways in which both the capacity of sites within the NRDA and the rate of delivery therein can be increased. Northampton Borough Council is preparing a Delivery Action Plan that is aimed at increasing delivery from sites within the town. It is also preparing an updated Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment to determine whether there are additional sites within the town that may be suitable for housing development. Progress on this work is expected later in 2017 alongside the 2017 version of the 5 Year Housing Land Supply Report.

9.4 It is considered that it is important to include a policy approach in this Plan that provides a positive yet controlled approach towards additional housing within the District to contribute towards the short term under delivery. Failure to do this could result in speculative applications in towns or villages across the District that may be difficult to resist. Until the work referred to in paragraph 6.177 is completed the scale of the shortfall cannot be ascertained. However, it is likely that given the current scale of under provision (c5,000 dwellings) it is considered highly unlikely that this will be delivered over the next 5 years in addition to the ongoing annual requirement. However this will be factored in to the preferred policy approach set out in Policy NRDA 1 below.
9.5 There are two large sites that have been submitted to the Council for consideration that both immediately adjoin the NRDA. These are as follows:

- Land between Wootton, Hardingstone and Preston Deanery (1,200 dwellings)
- Land South of Newport Pagnell Road (1,200 dwellings)

9.6 Significant further work is required to determine whether either of these 2 large sites is suitable and therefore deliverable for development. In order to be included as a proposal in a future Plan there is a need for a robust assessment of key issues of suitability and deliverability. These issues include, but are not limited to:

- The mix and type of market and affordable housing required to meet local needs;
- The viability of a site;
- The timescales for the delivery of housing within the next 5 years;
- The suitability of a site for development including:
  - physical limitations or problems such as access, implications for local and strategic highway network infrastructure, ground conditions, flood risk, hazardous risks, pollution or contamination;
  - potential impacts including the effect upon landscapes including landscape features, nature and heritage conservation and ecology;
  - environmental/amenity impacts experienced by would be occupiers and neighbouring areas.

9.7 The preferred approach is therefore Include a policy approach in the Part 2 Plan including the following key criteria:

- A site must immediately adjoin the existing NRDA boundary. This excludes those sections of the boundary that border allocations in the WNJCS that are yet to be completed. This is to prevent isolated developments in open countryside.
- Any proposal for delivery must be suitable and deliverable
- Any proposal must include a robust delivery trajectory setting out how many dwellings would be delivered within the next 5 year period;
- The Policy would only apply until the current shortfall in delivery is resolved or the review of the WNJCS is at an advanced stage. A decision to permit the development of a site, will be made by the Council in the light of regular and detailed monitoring of the sources of housing supply coming forward. It may be necessary for the annual housing monitoring report to be supplemented by a more frequent review of planning approvals and housing completions to assess whether an adequate supply of housing is coming forward to meet the baseline housing requirement for the NRDA.
POLICY NRDA 1: Residential Development Adjoining the NRDA

Residential development on land that immediately adjoins those sections of the NRDA boundary as shown on the Proposals Map will be considered acceptable in principle providing that the development:

- is of a scale, layout, density, design and appearance that is appropriate to and is compatible with the character, appearance and amenity of the area in which it would be located; and
- provides for an appropriate mix of dwelling types and sizes, including affordable housing; and
- does not create an adverse and significant impact on the amenity of existing and future residents; and
- would not result in harm to or the loss of public or private open spaces that contribute positively to the local character and amenity of the area; and
- would not result in significant harm to the surrounding landscape; nearby heritage assets, green infrastructure or important biodiversity networks; and
- it would not result in the loss of locally valued habitat which supports wildlife without equivalent compensatory provision being made elsewhere; and
- any natural or built features on the site that are worthy of retention are incorporated into the scheme; and
- is capable of having safe lighting and pedestrian access provided without significant impact on neighbours or on the integrity of the street-scene; and
- is able to be safely accessed from the local road network and the traffic generated can be accommodated on the wider road network; and
- does not need substantial new infrastructure or other facilities to support it; and
- would not displace an active use such as employment, leisure or community facility and
- preserves and enhances historic buildings and areas of historic or environmental importance including those identified in conservation area appraisals and village design statements and
- would not diminish the physical and/or visual separation of individual settlements or the component parts of individual settlements and either individually or cumulatively with other existing or compromise the integrity of the gap; and
- a robust trajectory is provided that clearly demonstrates that the full number of dwellings proposed would be delivered within the next 5 year period.

This Policy will only be applicable until the current shortfall in delivery is resolved or the review of the WNJCS is at an advanced stage. For the avoidance of doubt, once the 5 year housing shortfall has been resolved or the WNJCS has been reviewed, Policy NRDA 1 will no-longer form part of the development plan.
10. The Economy

10.1 The District lies on the A43, between the M40 and M1 and benefits from the presence of the Silverstone Circuit around which has grown a globally significant High Performance Engineering sector with close links to the Motorsport sector, we are looking to strengthen the District’s profile with Performance Engineering and will support investment made in the District in premises for new technology innovation. The District also has strengths in logistics centred at the motorway junctions on the M1, food and drink and the visitor economy.

10.2 The District’s economy has grown in recent years with significant planned employment and housing growth being delivered. We continue to welcome planned growth which is consistent with the WNJCS and our Town Masterplans for Brackley and Towcester and which meets the needs of our residents, adds value to the District and supports our key sectors; High Performance Technology, Logistics, Food and Drink and the Visitor Economy.

10.3 The District has 5,000 local businesses of which 90% are micro businesses (9 employees or less). The number of businesses has grown by around 13% since 2010, in line with national average. The current 5-year survival rate for new businesses is 50% which is one of the highest in the South East Midlands (equal with East Northants).

10.4 Much progress has been made in recent years to support the local economy. We have seen regeneration and planned growth in Towcester with the developments at Moat Lane and Brackley with new housing and employment facilities to the North of the Town. We aim to maintain the current low level of unemployment, high employment, while growing the overall size of District’s economy.

10.5 This Local Plan aims to support sustainable economic growth in the District. Creating a broad ranging, diverse and resilient economy is a key ambition of the South Northamptonshire’s Economic Growth Strategy.

10.6 Increasing the economic competitiveness of South Northamptonshire is fundamental to providing employment opportunities to reduce the level of out commuting as well as reducing traffic congestion in the District and in neighbouring districts and so shifting to a more locally self-sufficient, sustainable economy.

10.7 Improving South Northamptonshire’s economic future requires more than providing land and infrastructure. It also requires consideration of how we manage and reduce the environmental impact of proposed development and to ensure it is of sufficient quality and in keeping with the landscape and existing urban character of the District.

10.8 The Local Plan is designed to support the Council’s Economic Growth Strategy which sets out our priorities over the coming years to support growth in our local economy, to generate jobs for local people and help our local businesses grow and communities to thrive.
10.9 The South Northamptonshire Economic Growth Strategy (2016 - 2019) identified 4 key themes, as a set of interlinking priorities for the Council to guide the development growth and support the employment growth across the District. These themes are:

- Theme One: Improved skills and employment;
- Theme Two: Effective Business Support;
- Theme Three: Strengthening the Town and Village Economies and
- Theme Four: Supporting the Visitor Economy

10.10 Protecting the role and function of our existing town centres and employment areas, as well as enhancing our natural and built environment, will enable South Northamptonshire to become as business-friendly as possible in support of jobs and prosperity. Improving our town centres will also encourage tourism.

**Skills and Employment**

10.11 South Northamptonshire has one of the lowest unemployment levels and one of the highest employment levels in the UK with a highly skilled and professional resident workforce with 38% having qualifications at the NVQ4 level or above compared to 31% for East Midlands. The District has a higher than average number of residents employed in managerial, professional and skilled occupations. How we maintain and build on these features through a focus on skills and employment, business support and tourism will be critical to the District’s growth and quality of life.

10.12 Both Brackley and Towcester are the larger employment locations within South Northants and provide a good range of jobs and premises from engineering and scientific activities to specialist storage activities.

10.13 South Northamptonshire is a relatively affluent District with a highly skilled but ageing population. Earnings by residence is well above national average but earnings by workforce is lower suggesting many residents are commuting out to higher paid jobs than those available within the District.

10.14 The District has historically experienced high levels of out commuting and low job density which has impacted on the sustainability of urban and rural settlements. Future employment opportunities need to better reflect the profile of our resident population and contribute to maintaining the current low levels of unemployment and high levels of employment.

10.15 Currently the District has 43,800 economically active residents, but homeworking is increasing rapidly and levels of self-employment at 16% are higher than the national average. Superfast broadband provision is being rolled out across the District. We will support development proposals to enable working from home where appropriate. Home and flexible working reduces the need to travel, reducing travel impacts and congestion.
## Strengthening Town and Village Economies

### What you told us at the Options Stage

30% of respondents considered that provision be made for a percentage of serviced plots to be provided to ensure the delivery of Self Build plots. 24% disagreed and 46% did not express an opinion.

- Re-use of existing buildings, e.g. farm barns, is now a major factor in local employment as is home working (often for only part of a week). These must be recognised;
- some form of encouragement for start up business should be made as this should create long term advantages. MK gave rent free and business rate free periods and look at their business growth;
- Whilst the WNJCS identifies strategic employment land, additional employment land opportunities should be identified in the Part 2A Plan;
- Additional land should be made available at Towcester, the principle town and most sustainable location for employment and housing development in the district;
- Positively worded economic development policies should also relate to the provision of small, rural craft workshops and business units
- Provision of high speed broadband in villages to facilitate employment opportunities.

10.16 Whilst the urban population of South Northamptonshire is focused on the Market Towns of Brackley and Towcester, 74% of our population live in rural areas which include approximately 90 Villages and Hamlets, many of which are also part of conservation areas. The uniquely rural nature of the District presents its own attractions and challenges. The impact of out commuting can be seen in our towns and villages with concern about dormitory communities which threatens the viability of local services.

10.17 In addition, our towns are not exempt from changes to shopping patterns which threaten retailers throughout the country. We plan to take forward the recommendations of the recent South Northamptonshire Parking Strategy (2015) to expand on the promotion of our Market Town Centres. This marketing will be targeted at increasing awareness about the variety of services and shops on offer to both residents, to retain spend, and at visitors, to attract new investment.

10.18 Our Market Towns of Towcester and Brackley are both attractive traditional Market Towns. Like most Market Towns they have faced many challenges over recent years owing to the economic downturn as well as the changing needs of shoppers. The renewal and regeneration of Towcester and Brackley as set out in the Masterplan for each Town will help maintain their role as attractive venues for destination shopping.

10.19 Each Market Town has a strong sense of place and uniqueness partly from its concentration of independent shops. Development in these towns must provide the investment and flexibility sought by today’s shoppers but at the same time preserve what is special about them.
10.20 The support for business and economic development at both Towns through the Local Plan will reinforce the approach taken in the WNJCS and help us to secure:

- Business-friendly and well-functioning towns;
- Internationally connected and export driven economic growth;
- Investment in people to grow skills and the local workforce;
- Vibrant, creative and attractive market towns;
- Attractive, well designed housing;
- Measures to reclaim commuters where possible;
- Measures to increase labour productivity;
- Growth in the knowledge based sectors, high tech companies and the local manufacturing base;
- Maintain and increase the role of the motorsport industry and other performance engineering industries;
- New opportunities for additional retail, leisure and cultural activities;
- Exploit the transport connections to the M1 and M40 and
- Improve their sustainability and self-sufficiency.

10.21 Implementing the Masterplans for Towcester and Brackley will continue to strengthen their economies as well as develop the relationship with the surrounding villages.

10.22 The District beyond the two towns contains a wide variety of businesses either located in villages or other rural locations that bring vitality to the District’s economy. In previous strategies we recognised that the village and rural economy was about more than just employment through agriculture and also included home based businesses. We also recognise the importance of supporting rural businesses through re-use of redundant rural buildings and working with The Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) / BT to extend access to Superfast broadband.

10.23 Whilst we strive to support local village businesses, some shops and pubs which provide essential services to their communities have seen falls in use in recent years increasing the risk of reduced local services.

10.24 The supporting role we can play is to focus on supporting these services through promotion and maximising the heritage and beauty of these rural communities for tourism investment. We also remain a strong advocate of initiatives proposed by local communities to take over the running of vital services.

10.25 The support for business and economic development in the rural parts of the District through the Local Plan will reinforce the approach taken in the WNJCS and help us to secure:

- Small scale, appropriate employment sites;
- Sustainable growth in tourism including recreation based tourism;
- Improvement of existing employment sites and reuse of existing buildings and brownfield sites (reflecting their historic or cultural significance where appropriate) and
- Support for working from home.

**Existing Employment Sites**

10.26 South Northamptonshire retains a strong portfolio of rural premises and we have actively promoted awareness of these facilities through our Business Accommodation Guide. Demand for change of use for existing employment facilities remains especially in rural areas and we will continue to support the retention of appropriate employment sites.

10.27 The demand for office, manufacturing and warehouse premises can be expected to fluctuate over the plan period in line with changes in the economic cycle. It is important that these existing, good quality and productive sites are not permanently lost to alternative uses as a result of only short term changes in demand, whilst recognising that the permanent protection of a site that has no prospect of coming forward for its designated use is counter-productive for the local economy.

10.28 The Council will, as a general principle, continue to protect existing employment land and buildings for employment (B class) uses. The Council will support existing businesses and will seek to ensure their operational activity is not compromised wherever possible. Inevitably, over the period of the Local Plan, businesses will relocate or close, leaving land and premises available for re-use or re-development. Policy EMPLOYMENT 1 seeks to protect existing employment sites and the Council will only support the loss of that use where there is clear evidence that substantiates why the site should not be retained for its designated use. This must include evidence of, and the outcomes from, the concerted marketing of the site for its designated uses for a continuous period of at least 12 months prior to the applicant's submission via relevant commercial property publications and websites. In addition, applications should include an analysis of the on-going suitability of the site for its designated uses and its commercial viability for those uses. Both the suitability and viability assessments should evidence current market conditions and also the future prospects for the sectors for which the site is designated. The analysis of future prospects should look ahead at least 5 years to ensure a medium term view of market trends and employment land requirements is taken.

10.29 Redevelopment of such sites for non-employment generating uses will be permitted where the existing use has an adverse impact on residential amenity, causes highway safety issues or causes over-riding visual harm or where it is proven through the submission of a viability report that there is no realistic prospect of its commercial reuse.

10.30 The Council is supportive of the intensification, redevelopment or appropriate expansion of existing sites for employment uses. The ability for existing firms to expand is seen as a main component of job retention and creation. Whilst a high proportion of the existing industrial and employment
land is largely developed, there may be scope for the expansion of existing uses. Policy EMPLOYMENT 1 also allows for the redevelopment of employment and industrial land following the closure or rationalisation of existing uses.

POLICY EMPLOYMENT 1: Existing Employment Sites

Existing employment sites and land allocated for employment use should be retained for employment use unless the following criteria are met:

- the applicant can demonstrate that an employment use should not be retained, including showing the site has been marketed for at least 12 months and has been vacant in the long term; and
- the applicant can demonstrate that there are valid reasons why the use of the site for the existing or another employment use is not economically viable; and
- the applicant can demonstrate that the proposal would not have the effect of limiting the amount of land available for employment.

Regard will be had to whether the location and nature of the present employment activity has an unacceptable adverse impact upon adjacent residential uses.

New dwellings will not be permitted within employment sites except where this is in accordance with specific site proposals and policies set out in the Development Plan.

On existing operational or vacant employment sites employment development, including intensification, within the existing curtilage of the site, or in the form of appropriate extensions to the site, will be permitted subject to compliance with other policies in the Plan and other material considerations.

New Employment Development

10.31 Local Plans should support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of businesses and enterprise. The Government is committed to securing economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity, building on the country’s inherent strengths, and to meeting the twin challenges of global competition and of a low carbon future and in ensuring that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth. Planning should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable growth.

10.32 Planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development. The District contains over 70 villages and smaller settlements set within a large and highly valued rural hinterland. Although this includes relatively large areas of open countryside (woodlands and farmland) the
District does not have any ‘remote rural’ areas, since there is no part of the District that is more than about 15km from its nearest town, including those outside the borough boundary.

10.33 The Local Plan recognises that the rural areas include a large number of smaller settlements which vary in size and function, in addition to a variety of rural enterprises. As such, the policy incorporates sufficient flexibility to support economic growth and the creation of rural jobs and prosperity that will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities and meet identified needs.

10.34 The rural areas make a vital contribution to the strength and diversity of the local economy containing significant economic activities such as farming, traditional rural crafts, equestrian uses, locally based services and a number of regionally or nationally significant tourist attractions. As well as occupying a wide variety of business premises (both in terms of type and size), many of these activities comprise micro-enterprises or self-employed people working from home.

10.35 However, in common with rural areas elsewhere, the rural economy faces a number of challenges including the restructuring of agriculture, varying levels of economic infrastructure (including low speed or non-existent broadband connections) and lack of appropriate employment premises.

10.36 The Rural Economy Policy seeks to maintain and enhance prosperity of the rural area by recognising that the need for new jobs is not limited to the villages and towns, given the existing population within the rural parts of the borough. There are also existing businesses which may need to expand or relocate and these can be vital to local employment provision and local services in rural areas. By permitting small scale economic expansion, the Council can promote sustainable rural areas as set out in the strategy. The Local Plan needs to maintain a sustainable focus. With the potential for increased travel by private car by workers and other environmental impacts, justification for employment development on new sites in the rural areas will need to be provided. This should include an applicant demonstrating a need for and benefits of employment in the particular location proposed and explaining why the proposed development should not be located at the towns, close to the proposed labour supply.

10.37 The Policy applies to use classes B1, B2 and B8 proposals and other proposals for rural economic development. Such proposals will be supported where the use and scale of the development is appropriate to its location. This also applies to farm diversification schemes which can contribute a significant source of income for farmers, sustaining their main agricultural enterprise.

10.38 The redevelopment of previously developed land in the countryside will generally be encouraged provided that the site is not of high environmental value and that the proposed use and scale of development is appropriate to the site’s context.
10.39 The Council recognises that existing buildings within the countryside may be subject to proposals to replace them. However, this is limited to those which are not temporary in nature or the result of a temporary permission. Buildings constructed of temporary or short-life materials, or which are derelict or in an advanced state of disrepair, are not considered suitable for re-use. A structural survey of the building to be converted may be necessary.

10.40 The impact of a replacement building is likely to increase with its size especially in relation to its impact on surroundings and being out of scale with its plot. The building that is to be replaced should be demolished, having regard to other relevant policies in the plan.

10.41 Development proposals for uses that require a need for the occupant to have on site accommodation (eg stables) will only be permitted where the residential accommodation is already provided. Permission will not be granted for a subsequent dwelling.

10.42 There will be a number of businesses that will be affected and potentially displaced by the proposed HS2 development in South Northamptonshire. It is important that affected businesses are able to plan their relocations with as much advance notice as possible in order to ensure the smooth transition of operations from one location to another. The Government is offering discretionary financial assistance to assist those who need to be relocated. The Council considers that it is in the District’s own interests that a business is relocated within South Northamptonshire because the relocation will secure the retention of a significant number of jobs, or the relocation will secure the retention of key community assets or facilities. Therefore proposals for businesses forced to relocate as a result of the HS2 proposals will be generally be considered favourably.

POLICY EMPLOYMENT 2: New Employment Development

Appropriate employment development will be permitted on suitable sites within the confines of the Rural Service Centres, Primary Service or Secondary Service and Small villages

Appropriate employment development will also be permitted on suitable sites immediately adjoining the confines of the Rural Service Centres, Primary or Secondary Service villages (as defined under Policy SH1) where the proposal:

- is for a change of use or conversion of a suitable permanent building; or
- is for a replacement building that is not temporary in nature or for an extension to an existing building, provided that the proposal should not require substantial rebuilding, extension or alteration, and should not result in the requirement for another building to fulfil the function of the building being converted or replaced; or
- enables the continuing sustainability or expansion of a business or enterprise, including development where it supports a farm
If the proposal would involve the construction of a new building in the open countryside, this must be supported by a robust business plan that demonstrates the demand for the development and that the facilities to be provided would constitute a viable business proposition on a long-term basis.

Proposals for development outside confines will require the following:

- Sufficient justification to demonstrate why the development should be located in the rural area on a non-allocated site and
- Evidence that the scale of the proposal is appropriate to the relative sustainability of the settlement and site.

All proposals will require the following:

- Evidence of a very high standard of design using sustainable construction, and be of an appropriate scale and respect the character of villages and the surroundings; and
- Evidence that the proposal and any associated employment activities can be carried out without undue detriment to residential amenity, the highway network, settlement character and its setting, the appearance and character of the landscape and the environment generally including on any designated buildings or features (or on any non-designated buildings or features of local importance); and
- A demonstration that the proposal will not give rise to excessive or inappropriate traffic and will wherever possible contribute to the general aim of reducing the need to travel by private car. Development proposals that result in an increase in HGVs on C and U class roads, or a significant increase in other traffic on C and U class roads will generally not be permitted.

Proposals for the relocation of businesses required to relocate as a direct consequence of the HS2 development will be permitted in open countryside locations subject to meeting the criteria in POLICY SDP1 of this Plan.

**Employment Policy 3: Supporting Growth of the Visitor Economy**

10.43 The Council recognises that the visitor economy plays a significant role in the District's economy. It provides a valuable source of employment and growth which is vital for the sustainability of rural areas. Currently tourism makes a significant contribution towards the development of a sustainable local economy with visitors to the town centres and major attractions including:

- South Northamptonshire is home to Silverstone, an internationally known landmark for motorsport; with an allocation in the WNJCS;
- The District offers a range of tourism attractions, drawing on its heritage and sporting assets including Sulgrave Manor, the
ancestral home of George Washington and Towcester Racecourse and

- The District is also noted for its attractive Market Towns, beautiful countryside, ancient woodlands such as Salcey Forest, historic canal network such as the Grand Union Canal and Stoke Bruerne home of the national canal museum and over 50 tranquil conservation villages which are reminiscent of the nearby Cotswolds

10.44 With over 3 million visitors per year to the District and a total expenditure of £152 million, tourism can help support local services and facilities, provide employment and help preserve the natural and historic environment across the District. It can include day visits by local people through to visits from overseas.

10.45 Given the growing role that tourism has to play in the local economy, developments in this sector will be supported, especially new attractions and new hotels at the two towns to reinforce their central role as places to visit and stay. We will support new tourism provision that can demonstrate direct benefit for the local 'visitor' economy and which will sustain the rural economy given its impact in supporting rural services and facilities such as public houses, restaurants and village shops.

10.46 Other policies in this Plan and the WNJCS will contribute towards addressing these issues and encouraging sustainable tourism development; for example by:

- The regeneration of Moat Lane in Towcester;
- Supporting the town centres at both Brackley and Towcester;
- The maintenance of village services and facilities and
- The preservation and enhancement of the historic environment in both towns and villages.

10.47 We will support an increase in high quality accommodation available in our towns to meet the needs of visitors and to end the current under provision. Valuable expenditure associated with overnight stays is potentially being lost, meaning that tourism has scope to play a significant wealth-creating role for the District.

10.48 The Plan will support tourism by including an enabling policy to assist the development of the sector.

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<th>POLICY EMPLOYMENT 3: Supporting Growth of the Visitor Economy</th>
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<td>Proposals for tourism and leisure development, including tourist accommodation, will be granted within settlement confines where it can be demonstrated all the following criteria have been considered:</td>
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<td>- It is sensitively designed to maintain the tranquillity and character of the area; and</td>
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<td>- Evidence that the proposal can be carried out without undue</td>
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detriment to residential amenity, the highway network, settlement character and its setting, the appearance and character of the landscape and the environment generally including on any designated buildings or features (or on any non-designated buildings or features of local importance) including that of visitors or users of the facility; and

- It provides a high quality attraction or accommodation;

In the countryside planning permission will be granted for new tourism buildings including bed and breakfast, self catering and hotel facilities where the above and following criteria have been met:

- Be of a scale appropriate to the location and demonstrate they require a rural location and cannot be accommodated elsewhere, or
- the proposal is associated with the expansion of an existing facility; and would support the objectives of rural regeneration/diversification.

Proposals involving the loss of tourism related or leisure development, including holiday accommodation, will only be granted where there is no proven demand for the facility and that a 12 month marketing exercise demonstrates that it can no longer make a positive contribution to the economy.

Proposals for holiday caravan, camping and chalet sites and associated facilities and intensification/alterations to existing sites will be granted, where it can be demonstrated that all the following criteria are met:

- They meet a demonstrable need and require a rural location; and
- They are of an appropriate scale in relation to their setting and would not diminish local amenity; and
- They are sensitively sited and designed to maintain the tranquillity and character of the area; and
- They are sited to be visually unobtrusive and can be assimilated so as to conserve and enhance the surrounding landscape; and
- The road network and the site’s access can safely accommodate any additional traffic generated.

Where planning permission for caravans and chalet sites is granted a condition restricting the type of occupation to holiday use will be used in order to retain the tourist accommodation and ensure it is not used for permanent residential use.

Supporting skills

10.49 The Council will work with partners to accelerate economic growth through the development of skilled and flexible communities and workforce in order to underpin future economic growth to deliver the District’s Economic Strategy.
10.50 Proposals for major new industrial and commercial development will be required to contribute to the creation of local employment opportunities with the aim of increasing wage levels and to support growth in the overall proportion of local residents in education or training.

10.51 Applicants should reach an agreement with the Council about measures to achieve this, which could include: provision of specific training and apprenticeships that are related to the proposed development or support other agreed priorities for improving skills and education in South Northamptonshire or the creation of conditions to support a higher performing workforce, increasing productivity and the in work progression of employees.

POLICY EMPLOYMENT 4: Supporting Skills

To contribute to skills development, the Council will support development which relates to the operational needs of and/or expansion of all of the district's higher, further and specialist education establishments including the Silverstone UTC, University of Northampton and Moulton College

Ancillary and related uses will also be supported providing it can be demonstrated that such uses are:

a. genuinely linked to the education establishment and its operations; and
b. in locations where they are compatible with the surrounding land uses; and
c. in accessible locations which minimise the need to travel; and
d. where it does not conflict with the plan's other relevant policies.

Where appropriate any new or proposed extensions to existing campuses should be guided by a comprehensive, up to date strategy and masterplan.

Farm Diversification

10.52 Farming and its associated businesses remain integral to the present and future of South Northamptonshire. Food security, local produce and reducing 'food-miles' remain nationally important, and an increasing onus on a low carbon economy, will provide opportunities for key sectors such as land based industries and renewable energy. It is therefore important to establish policy, which supports a productive countryside and the transition from traditional to new rural enterprises.

10.53 National Guidance recognises that farm diversification, the diversification from the dependence on production of agricultural commodities into non-agricultural activities, is vital to the continuing viability of many existing farm enterprises. The Council is keen to support development that delivers diverse and sustainable farming enterprises, for example, farm shops, Bed and Breakfast and leasing of land or buildings to other non-agricultural businesses. It is important that proposals for diversification bring long-term
and genuine benefits to individual farming enterprises and the wider rural area.

10.54 In encouraging economic diversity and agricultural diversification, it is important that the countryside is not spoilt by the unfettered development of an inappropriate and unwarranted nature. Therefore diversification proposals should be of a scale and nature appropriate for the location and be capable of satisfactory integration into the rural landscape. Such proposals should have regard to the amenity of neighbours, both residents and other businesses that may be adversely affected by new types of on-farm development.

10.55 In some instances when a scheme is successful it can grow to such a scale, which would make it unacceptable and whilst the Local Authority would not wish to limit the growth of a successful business, consideration should be given to the potential impact on the character of the rural location. Also, in more isolated locations, difficulties may arise in terms of access and traffic activity and development may require the need to promote and advertise and therefore signage may also become an issue.

10.56 Proposals must be accompanied by a comprehensive farm diversification plan, which indicates how new uses will assist in retaining the viability of the farm and the agricultural enterprise, and how it links with any other short or long term business plans for the farm.

10.57 There is a potential policy conflict between farm diversification and the need to reduce reliance on the private car. Proposals would be more acceptable where they would only give rise to modest additional daily traffic movements, or where the impact on minor roads would not be significant.

10.58 Diversification proposals should contribute effectively to the agricultural business and the rural economy while integrating new activities into the environment and the rural scene. Planning applications for development related to diversification should be seen within the context of the future business plan for the farm or estate as a whole. Change that has not been properly thought through will be of little long-term benefit to the holding or to the rural economy. Whole farm business plans should, therefore, be submitted with applications for significant farm diversification proposals to help ensure that a coherent approach is undertaken, and to build in some certainty about the future activities of holdings. Such plans would not be a requirement in every case, but may be requested before considering an application.

10.59 When required, the business plan should include details of existing farm activities, the need for diversification, details of the proposal and implications of the proposal on the rural economy and the environment

POLICY EMPLOYMENT 5: FARM DIVERSIFICATION

Development that relates to the diversification of an existing farm, agricultural estate, or other land-based rural business will be permitted provided that:
the proposal would not prejudice the continued viable operation of the existing use; and
the character, scale and type of proposal is compatible with its location and landscape setting; and
it will not result in undue detriment to residential amenity, the highway network, settlement character and its setting, the appearance and character of the landscape and the environment generally including on any designated buildings or features (or on any non-designated buildings or features of local importance; and
existing buildings are reused wherever possible; and
a whole farm business plan is provided, where considered appropriate by the Local Planning Authority, to demonstrate how the proposal would support the continued operation of the agricultural and/or other land-based rural business.

Where new or replacement buildings are required, the proposal is in scale with the surroundings and well related to any existing buildings on the site.

Equine Development

10.60 By its nature equestrian development requires a countryside location but the cumulative impact of development can have an adverse impact on the rural character of the area. New buildings can adversely affect landscape character and natural beauty where they detract from existing characteristics eg due to scale or materials or design. Therefore it is important to consider the current character of the countryside and how equine development can ultimately impact upon it.

10.61 Consideration for such proposals should have regard to such aspects as:

• Whether the site is located within or adjacent to an existing settlement;
• It should avoid exposed skyline locations;
• It should avoid the loss of existing vegetation;
• The existing landform and vegetation should be utilised to integrate development with the surrounding landscape;
• Vernacular design and building hierarchy must be respected;
• Materials that blend with the surrounding landscape should be considered;
• Bright finishes and unsuitable materials should be avoided;
• New native planting can help to integrate buildings with their surroundings;
• The proposals should be close to the bridleway network; and
• Conflict that could arise between road users due to horse transportation, deliveries and horses using narrow lanes.
POLICY EMPLOYMENT 6: EQUINE DEVELOPMENT

Horse related facilities and equestrian enterprises in the countryside will be permitted provided:

- New stables/field shelters closely relate to existing settlements or groups of buildings and should not interfere with the amenities of the adjoining residents; and
- Their design, scale, siting and materials respect the landscape character of the locality; and
- It can be demonstrated that it will not result in any adverse impact to the integrity of wildlife and landscape designations, including features outside the site’s boundaries that ecologically support the conservation objectives of designated sites;

Any proposal for equestrian development including apparatus, jumps, ménages, schooling areas and field sub division should respect or enhance the characteristic pattern and features of the surrounding landscape.

Proposals for larger scale private or commercial enterprises should not be unacceptably harmful to highway safety. This should be demonstrated by means of a traffic impact assessment.

New Employment Allocations

10.62 The NPPF states that local planning authorities should positively and proactively encourage sustainable economic growth. Plans should meet anticipated employment needs over the plan period. Policies should, however, be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan and to allow a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances. The NPPF also promotes the role of planning in achieving sustainable economic growth, in building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, and by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type, and in the right places, is available to allow growth and innovation.

10.63 The provision of a sufficient number and variety of available employment sites and the formation of planning policies which allow employment generating development to come forward in sustainable locations is critical to enabling existing companies to grow and to provide for new company formation. Employment sites are also needed to respond to inward investment and capitalise on planned transport improvements to the A43, M1 and M40.

10.64 In order to grow our existing stock of business premises we will build on the land release for new employment generation agreed through the adopted WNJCS and Town Masterplans, which include strategic employment sites at:

- Brackley Turweston Road North;
- Towcester South;
- Silverstone Park
• Junction 16, M1.

10.65 Other employment land growth is through the completion of the Moat Lane Regeneration project, Grange Park, the Pineham Extension at Junction 15a, M1 and the planned expansion of the RAF Croughton Airbase.

10.66 Policy S1 of the adopted WNJCS sets out the overarching distribution of development for West Northamptonshire. Generally development will be concentrated in and adjoining the principal urban area of Northampton. Appropriate development of a lesser scale will be located in and adjoining the sub-regional centre of Daventry town. The development needs of the Rural Service Centres of Towcester and Brackley will also be provided for. Policy S8 relates to the distribution of jobs and states that the majority of new job growth will be concentrated within the principle urban area of Northampton and Daventry. Beyond those areas and within South Northamptonshire District, the WNJCS indicates that employment allocations at a scale of 40 hectares (ha) or below (non-strategic) should be considered positively during the preparation of Part 2 Local Plans, where they comply with the objectives of the WNJCS alongside fulfilling local priorities and considerations.

10.67 We will also identify and release additional employment land through this Plan. By facilitating more local employment growth, we aim to attract new investment and provide more jobs to match the skills of local people, thereby better balancing the ratio of in and out commuting. It is also recognised that the District will deliver a slightly higher level of housing than required by the WNJCS and that there is a need to seek to ensure that this is complemented by some additional provision of employment land.

10.68 Strategic employment generation is focused through the WNJCS at the two towns, Motorway junctions and at Silverstone. The District has 65 business parks and the new sites supported through the Plan are intended to:

• Meet local demand & strengthen the rural economy;
• Provide the ability to strengthen local supply chains;
• Local flexibility and choice of locations;
• Meet the demand for small and medium sized units and
• Contribute to reducing the level of out commute

10.69 The Plan has considered where a limited number of further allocations need to be made in the urban and rural areas to support the delivery of a flexible supply of employment land and help strengthen the economy of the District. These new sites are detailed below. Where new small sites are proposed we have considered the most appropriate use class for the location.

**Towcester Employment Allocations**

*Employment Land Bell Plantation Towcester*

10.70 The site is located at the A43/A5 junction, North West of Towcester and represents a significant employment location for the provision of additional small and medium sized commercial buildings close to the town as its
planned expansion takes place. The strategic road network and local distributor routes can be readily accessed from this area, so avoiding lorry movements through residential areas. Development in this area provides an opportunity for high visibility economic investment.

10.71 The Towcester Masterplan – Volume 2, adopted by SNC in March 2011 to guide regeneration proposals in Towcester, identifies part of this and the Woolgrowers site (Policy TOWCESTER EMPLOYMENT 3) as being within the ‘Tove Valley Business Park’ (Site TI - Northern Gateway). The Masterplan considers there to be an opportunity for business and general industrial development within Use Classes B1, B2 and B8 here.

10.72 The site also provides an opportunity for the creation of a new and improved community facility for use by the Towcester Town Football Club. The Club was formed in 1988 and now is a Chartered Standard Community Club with 23 teams from Under 7s through to Adults. Currently the teams play on the recreation ground in Towcester as well as on pitches in Greens Norton and Pattishall. This is because there are no facilities currently available within the town itself and the club does not own any land or facilities. The Club itself continues to grow but this will be severely limited by the lack of dedicated pitch provision in the future and it will be unable to meet the demands of the growing population.

10.73 The site reserved for the Football Club is relatively close to the main built up part of the town and is served by a traffic light controlled crossing at the A43/A5 roundabout and a footpath link on the A5. The site is considered suitable to meet the needs of the Club in the future without detriment to any nearby residents. Development of the employment site will be permitted with conditions ensuring the transfer of the land reserved for the Football Club within a S106 agreement. Such condition will allow for the land to be transferred to the club no later than completion of 20% of the total site as by this time viability should be assured as access and key infrastructure requirements would have been provided.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:**

The Council will require confirmation that a suitable access to the site to serve the proposed development has been agreed with the appropriate highway authority.

A small part of the site lies within a Minerals Consultation Area (MCA) as set out in Policy 28 of the Northamptonshire County Council’s Minerals Local Plan (2017). Within the MCA safeguarding should be limited to development where significant sterilisation may potentially occur, and thus where the prior extraction of minerals is likely to be viable (as small developments are unlikely to present viable opportunities for prior extraction). Within the MCA the Council will consult the County Council to determine whether the

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development of the site would sterilise resources of economic importance and if so, when the site could be developed.

These will need to be carried out before the site will be considered for inclusion at the next stage of the plan making process.

POLICY TOWCESTER EMPLOYMENT 1: Land at Bell Plantation, Towcester

Development Area: 45 hectares gross (including 4 ha of existing development)

Development Description: Located on land associated with and to the north of the Bell Plantation in an important position adjoining the A43 and A5, north of Towcester, this development site provides for 35ha. of new mixed employment generating development together with 6ha. of land for the creation of Towcester Town Football Club home ground. A variety of employment types will be sought to reflect the need for diversity and resilience in the local economy as expressed in the Council's Economic Growth Strategy.

An integrated, coordinated and comprehensive planning approach will be taken for the employment site and a masterplan must be prepared, in consultation with the District Council, Northamptonshire County Council and other statutory undertakers prior to the submission of a planning application covering the development of the whole site.

An integrated, coordinated and comprehensive planning approach will be taken for the Football Club site and a masterplan must be prepared, in consultation with the District Council, Highway Authorities and Towcester Town Council prior to the submission of a planning application covering the development of the whole site.

The Land allocated for the Football Club to be transferred as agreed in a S106 Agreement and at a point no later than the completion of 20% of the development.

Employment

Use classes – A market evidenced proportion of B1 (Office), B2 (General Industrial) and B8 (Storage and Distribution)

Towcester Town Football Club
Land area – 6ha.
Location – to be provided within the allocated site with consideration to topography

Access and Transport

- Access to the employment site to be from the A5 only;
- Access to the football Club site to be from either within the employment
site or from a new separate access from the A5;

- Good accessibility to public transport services should be provided for, including contributions to the cost of establishing bus services including stops to the site, to help reduce overdependence on the car and consequent congestion on the road network;

- A transport assessment and travel plan will be required to assess the transportation implications of the proposed development and to identify appropriate mitigation measures;

- Provision of new footpaths and cycleways that link to existing networks;

- Provision of an unfettered road access point and key utility services to the edge of the football club site

Key site specific design and place shaping principles (Whole Development);

- A high quality design and finish, with careful consideration given to layout, heights of buildings, architecture, materials and colourings to reduce overall visual impact, particularly with landscape planting to reduce the impact of the development on open countryside to the north and east of the site;

- A comprehensive landscaping scheme including on-site provision to enhance the setting of the new buildings and to limit visual intrusion into the wider landscape together with appropriate planting of vegetation along strategic route ways to screen the noise. The layout will, where possible, be expected to retain and enhance any significant landscape features (e.g. hedgerows) which are or may be of ecological value; and where possible introduces new features;

- Detailed consideration of ecological impacts, wildlife mitigation and the creation, restoration and enhancement of wildlife corridors to preserve and enhance biodiversity.

- Ecological Surveys to accompany any development proposal;

- Detailed consideration of any archaeological impacts including the need to record and preserve findings ahead of any development, together with a programme of archaeological mitigation;

- Detailed consideration of any impacts on designated and non-designated heritage assets including a programme of mitigation;

- Provision of appropriate lighting and the minimisation of light pollution based on appropriate technical assessment;

- Demonstration of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures including a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for the site and use of Sustainable urban drainage techniques in accordance with Policies BN7 and BN7A of the WNJCS;

- A detailed survey of the agricultural land quality identifying the best and
most versatile agricultural land and a soil management plan;

- Appropriate financial contributions to mitigate the impact of the development on services and facilities as required by the Council’s policies, taking account of the potential value of land transferred to Towcester Town Football Club.

Leisure and Sports Village at Towcester Racecourse

10.74 Towcester Racecourse is a significant regional sporting facility, that in addition to being a national centre for horse racing, has also grown as a centre for greyhound racing. The racecourse facilities are widely used as a conference facility.

10.75 Towcester Racecourse is identified through Policy T1 of the WNJCS as a strategic location for the ‘protection and improvement of facilities at the Racecourse’. WNJCS Policy T5 builds on the aspirations laid out in Policy T1 by further supporting the intensification of uses at Towcester Racecourse, including the development of additional leisure, recreational, tourism and exhibition facilities. Policy TOWCESTER EMPLOYMENT 2 builds on the proposals in the WNJCS. There is significant scope to diversify uses on site for leisure and tourism related development, with a view to creating a visitor ‘destination’. There is also scope to deliver complementary uses including a retail dimension.

10.76 Following the allocation of Towcester Racecourse in the adopted WNJCS, the opportunity has been identified to extend the current sporting activities at the racecourse with additional sports and leisure facilities to the south of the current racing stands. The aim is to enhance the role of the racecourse as a regional leisure and sport destination, with a significant promotional focus on the Far East.

10.77 This proposed leisure and sports development accompanies the growth of the town and aims to strengthen the tourism offer of the District and its ability to draw increased visitor numbers to major sporting events at the existing Towcester Racecourse (and Silverstone) and so generate additional employment in the entertainment and hospitality sector.

10.78 The site is well located on the A5 between Towcester and Milton Keynes, with public transport links and is within walking distance of the town centre. Development in this area provides an opportunity for high visibility economic investment, taking advantage of the improved access which the planned Towcester relief road will bring.

10.79 The Proposals include the following key elements:

- Further enhancement of the existing horse/greyhound racing facilities including Animal Care/Events/Leisure (veterinary surgery, kennelling for the greyhound racing);
• New high quality retail aimed at country sport, food and leisure uses to complement but not compete with historic Towcester and the town centre’s existing retailers;
• Sports/Leisure provision including new facilities for sports including for example dedicated gymnastics and squash facilities and a golf driving range;
• Hotel Development and
• Greenspace (landscaping and footpaths).

IMPORTANT NOTE:

The Council will require confirmation that a suitable access to the site to serve the proposed development has been agreed with the appropriate highway authority.

Part of the site lies within a Minerals Consultation Area (MCA) as set out in Policy 28 of the Northamptonshire County Council’s Minerals Local Plan (2017)\(^9\). Within the MCA safeguarding should be limited to development where significant sterilisation may potentially occur, and thus where the prior extraction of minerals is likely to be viable (as small developments are unlikely to present viable opportunities for prior extraction). Within the MCA the Council will consult the County Council to determine whether the development of the site would sterilise resources of economic importance and if so, when the site could be developed.

The Council has commissioned a detailed Stage 1 strategic flood risk assessment for this site. This is as a result of:

• The existence of 3 surface water flow paths within the site
• The existence of 2 ordinary watercourses that run through the site

These will need to be carried out before the site will be considered for inclusion at the next stage of the plan making process.

POLICY TOWCESTER EMPLOYMENT 2: Leisure and Sports Village at Towcester Racecourse

Development Area: 38 hectares gross (including existing development)

Development Description: Located at the southern edge of Towcester in an important position adjoining the A5, this

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development site provides for mixed employment generating, multi-use leisure and sports facility extending the allocation made in the adopted Joint Core Strategy. A variety of employment types will be sought to reflect the need for diversity and resilience in the local economy as expressed in the Council’s Economic Growth Strategy.

An integrated, coordinated and comprehensive planning approach will be taken for the employment site and a masterplan must be prepared, in consultation with the District Council, Northamptonshire County Council and other statutory undertakers prior to the submission of a planning application covering the development of the whole site.

Key land uses

- Further enhancement of the existing horse/greyhound racing facilities including an extended furlong to the east of the current horserace track and animal care including a veterinary surgery and kennelling for the greyhound racing);
- New small scale high quality retail associated with the Racecourse and aimed at country sport, food and leisure uses to complement historic Towcester and the town centre’s existing retailers. Any retail will be related to the sale of sports/country and leisure goods and not open A1 retail. This will be secured via a legal agreement;
- Sports/Leisure provision including new facilities for sports including for example dedicated gymnastics and squash facilities and a golf driving range
- Hotel Development
- A cinema
- Greenspace (landscaping and footpaths)
- Provision of a waste to energy plant

Access

- Access will be from existing access points to the Racecourse
- The existing listed boundary wall along the western boundary of the Racecourse with the A5 to remain intact

Key site specific design and place shaping principles

- Provision of new footpaths and cycleways that link to existing networks including to the Watermeadows land;
- Good accessibility to public transport services should be provided for including contributions to the cost of establishing bus services including stops to the site, to help reduce over-dependence on the car and consequent congestion on the road network;
- A transport assessment and travel plan will be required to assess the transportation implications of the proposed development and to identify appropriate mitigation measures;
- A high quality design and finish, with careful consideration given to layout, heights of buildings, architecture, materials and colourings to reduce overall visual impact, particularly with landscape planting to reduce the impact of the development on the Historic Park and Garden;
- The height of buildings to reflect the existing buildings on the racecourse site.
- A comprehensive landscaping scheme including on-site provision to enhance the setting of the new buildings and to limit visual intrusion into the wider landscape together with appropriate planting of vegetation along strategic route ways to screen the noise. The layout will, where possible, be expected to retain and enhance any significant landscape features which are or may be of ecological value; and where possible introduces new features;
- Detailed consideration of ecological impacts, wildlife mitigation and the creation, restoration and enhancement of wildlife corridors to preserve and enhance biodiversity. Ecological Surveys to accompany any development proposal;
- Detailed consideration of any archaeological impacts including the need to record and preserve findings ahead of any development, together with a programme of archaeological mitigation;
- Detailed consideration of any impacts on designated and non-designated heritage assets including a programme of mitigation;
- Provision of appropriate lighting and the minimisation of light pollution based on appropriate technical assessment
- Demonstration of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures including a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for the site and use of Sustainable urban drainage techniques in accordance with Policies BN7 and BN7A of the WNJCS
- A detailed survey of the agricultural land quality identifying the best and most versatile agricultural land and a soil management plan;
- Appropriate financial contributions to mitigate the impact of the development on services and facilities as required by the Council’s policies

The Woolgrowers Field

10.80 The Woolgrowers Field lies to the north of Towcester on the A5/A43 junction. The site is close to existing commercial uses including a car showroom; a garden centre/nursery/farm shop, petrol filling station and a building supplier. The ‘Tove Valley Business Park’ is an established employment location to the north of Towcester which is occupied by a range of employment uses. Together with the allocation at the Bell Plantation this area of Towcester will become an accessible sustainable employment hub to meet the needs of the growing population.
The site offers a suitable location for new employment development at the edge of the settlement of Towcester, in an established employment and edge of town retail area, with good links to the strategic highway network. Furthermore, the site is well screened by existing commercial development to the east, south and west, ensuring unrestricted sprawl into the Open Countryside would not result.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:**

The Council will require confirmation that a suitable access to the site to serve the proposed development has been agreed with the appropriate highway authority.

The site lies within a Minerals Consultation Area (MCA) as set out in Policy 28 of the Northamptonshire County Council’s Minerals Local Plan (2017). Within the MCA safeguarding should be limited to development where significant sterilisation may potentially occur, and thus where the prior extraction of minerals is likely to be viable (as small developments are unlikely to present viable opportunities for prior extraction). Within the MCA the Council will consult the County Council to determine whether the development of the site would sterilise resources of economic importance and if so, when the site could be developed.

These will need to be carried out before the site will be considered for inclusion at the next stage of the plan making process.

**POLICY TOWCESTER EMPLOYMENT 3: Land at Woolgrowers Field, Towcester**

**Development Area:** 4.5 hectares (in total)

**Development Description:**

Located on land bound by the A5 to the east and Towcester Road and the A43 to the south, north of Towcester, this development site provides for 4.5 hectares of mixed employment generating development. An integrated, coordinated and comprehensive planning approach will be taken for the employment site and a masterplan must be prepared, in consultation with the District Council, Northamptonshire County Council and other statutory undertakers prior to the submission of a planning application covering the development of the whole site.

**Employment**

- Use classes – An equal proportion of B1 (Office), B2 (General Industrial) and B8 (Storage and Distribution)

**Access**
• Access to the employment site to be from the existing access from the A5

Key site specific design and place shaping principles

• Provision of new footpaths and cycleways that link to existing networks;
• Good accessibility to public transport services should be provided for including contributions to the cost of establishing bus services including stops to the site, to help reduce over-dependence on the car and consequent congestion on the road network;
• A transport assessment and travel plan will be required to assess the transportation implications of the proposed development and to identify appropriate mitigation measures;
• A high quality design and finish, with careful consideration given to layout, heights of buildings, architecture, materials and colourings to reduce overall visual impact, particularly with landscape planting to reduce the impact of the development on open countryside to the north of the site;
• A comprehensive landscaping scheme including on-site provision to enhance the setting of the new buildings and to limit visual intrusion into the wider landscape together with appropriate planting of vegetation along strategic route ways to screen the noise. The layout will, where possible, be expected to retain and enhance any significant landscape features (e.g. hedgerows) which are or may be of ecological value; and where possible introduces new features;
• Detailed consideration of ecological impacts, wildlife mitigation and the creation, restoration and enhancement of wildlife corridors to preserve and enhance biodiversity. Ecological Surveys to accompany any development proposal;
• Detailed consideration of any archaeological impacts including the need to record and preserve findings ahead of any development, together with a programme of archaeological mitigation;
• Detailed consideration of any impacts on designated and non designated heritage assets including a programme of mitigation;
• Provision of appropriate lighting and the minimisation of light pollution based on appropriate technical assessment
• Demonstration of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures including a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for the site and use of Sustainable urban drainage techniques in accordance with Policies BN7 and BN7A of the WNJCS;
• A detailed survey of the agricultural land quality identifying the best and most versatile agricultural land and a soil management plan;
• Appropriate financial contributions to mitigate the impact of the development on education, health and other services and
The Rural Areas

Shacks Barn, Whittlebury

10.82 The Shacks Barn Farm site is located on the boundary of Silverstone and Whittlebury parishes. There are 10 businesses currently on site employing approximately 72 employees, 25 subcontractors and 10 volunteer positions, as well as various training provisions for apprentices and students at local colleges. The potential new development is expected to see a rise in the total number of jobs to 275 over the course of the development. The site is located alongside the main A43 trunk road with existing direct access to the site, and there is a Stagecoach bus route passing the end of the access road. The A43 provides good access to the M40 to the West and the M1 to the East allowing good direct transport links to the main conurbations in both the Midlands and London and the South East and as such will be attractive to incoming businesses looking to access those markets.

10.83 This allocation proposes to extend the business park with a range of new small and medium sized business units. A variety of employment types will be sought to reflect the need for diversity and resilience in the local economy as expressed in the Council’s Economic Growth Strategy.

10.84 Policy Rural Employment 1 therefore seeks to deliver this land for economic development in the interest of delivering jobs and investment by an appropriate extension to an existing site served by trunk road access.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

The Council will require confirmation that a suitable access to the site to serve the proposed development has been agreed with the appropriate highway authority.

The site lies within a Minerals Consultation Area (MCA) as set out in Policy 28 of the Northamptonshire County Council’s Minerals Local Plan (2017). Within the MCA safeguarding should be limited to development where significant sterilisation may potentially occur, and thus where the prior extraction of minerals is likely to be viable (as small developments are unlikely to present viable opportunities for prior extraction). Within the MCA the Council will consult the County Council to determine whether the development of the site would sterilise resources of economic importance and if so, when the site could be developed.

These will need to be carried out before the site will be considered for inclusion at the next stage of the plan making process.
POLICY RURAL EMPLOYMENT 1: Employment Land at Shacks Barn, Whittlebury

Development Area: 10 hectares (gross)

Development Description: Located an important position adjoining the A43, southwest of Towcester, close to the Whittlebury junction, this development site provides for 10 hectares of mixed employment generating development. An integrated, coordinated and comprehensive planning approach will be taken and a masterplan must be prepared, in consultation with the District Council, Northamptonshire County Council and other statutory undertakers prior to the submission of a planning application covering the development of the whole site.

Employment
- Use classes – An equal proportion of B1 (Office), B2 (General Industrial) and B8 (Storage and Distribution)

Key site specific design and place shaping principles
- Access to the site to be from the existing access only;
- Provision of new footpaths and cycleways that link to existing networks;
- Good accessibility to public transport services should be provided for including contributions to the cost of establishing bus services including stops to the site, to help reduce over-dependence on the car and consequent congestion on the road network;
- A transport assessment and travel plan will be required to assess the transportation implications of the proposed development and to identify appropriate mitigation measures;
- A high quality design and finish, with careful consideration given to layout, heights of buildings, architecture, materials and colourings to reduce overall visual impact, particularly with landscape planting to reduce the impact of the development on open countryside to the south and east of the site;
- A comprehensive landscaping scheme including on-site provision to enhance the setting of the new buildings and to limit visual intrusion into the wider landscape together with appropriate planting of vegetation along strategic route ways to screen the noise. The layout will be expected to retain and enhance any significant landscape features (eg hedgerows) which are or may be of ecological value; and where possible introduces new features;
- Detailed consideration of ecological impacts, wildlife mitigation and the creation, restoration and enhancement of wildlife corridors to preserve and enhance biodiversity. Ecological Surveys to accompany any development proposal;
- Detailed consideration of any archaeological impacts
including the need to record and preserve findings ahead of any development, together with a programme of archaeological mitigation;

- Detailed consideration of any impacts on designated and non-designated heritage assets including a programme of mitigation;
- Provision of appropriate lighting and the minimisation of light pollution based on appropriate technical assessment
- Demonstration of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures including a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for the site and use of Sustainable urban drainage techniques in accordance with Policies BN7 and BN7A of the WNJCS
- A detailed survey of the agricultural land quality identifying the best and most versatile agricultural land and a soil management plan;
- Appropriate financial contributions to mitigate the impact of the development on services and facilities as required by the Council’s policies

Former Furtho Pit, Cosgrove

10.85 The former Furtho Pit site is well situated lying east of the A5/A508 junction in the south of the District. A small part of the site (2ha) has an outstanding planning permission for B1 and B2 development. (S/2015/0674/MAR).

10.86 The site is a mixture of farmland, derelict former (now filled) gravel pit, plant hire testing and demonstration area and builder’s storage facility. The strategic road network and local distributor routes can thus be readily accessed from this area and be done so avoiding lorry movements through residential areas. Development in this area provides an opportunity for high visibility economic investment at a gateway site to the District.

10.87 Policy Rural Employment 2 therefore seeks to deliver this land for economic development in the interest of delivering jobs and investment on a site of poor environmental quality in a sustainable location close to Milton Keynes.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

The Council will require confirmation that a suitable access to the site to serve the proposed development has been agreed with the appropriate highway authority.

The site lies within a Minerals Consultation Area (MCA) as set out in Policy 28 of the Northamptonshire County Council’s Minerals Local Plan (2017). Within the MCA safeguarding should be limited to development where significant sterilisation may potentially occur, and thus where the prior extraction of minerals is likely to be viable (as small developments are unlikely to present viable opportunities for prior extraction). Within the MCA the Council will consult the County Council to determine whether the development of the site would sterilise resources of economic importance and if so, when the site
could be developed.

The Council has commissioned a detailed Stage 1 strategic flood risk assessment for this site. This is as a result of:

• The existence of 3 surface water flow paths within the site
• The existence of 2 ordinary watercourses that run through the site

These will need to be carried out before the site will be considered for inclusion at the next stage of the plan making process

POLICY RURAL EMPLOYMENT 2: Land at Former Furtho Pit, Cosgrove

Development Area: 16 hectares (in total)

Development Description: Located at an important position adjoining the A5 and A508, this development site provides for 16 hectares of mixed employment generating development. A variety of employment types will be sought to reflect the need for diversity and resilience in the local economy as expressed in the Council’s Economic Growth Strategy.

An integrated, coordinated and comprehensive planning approach will be taken for the employment site and a masterplan must be prepared, in consultation with the District Council, Northamptonshire County Council and other statutory undertakers prior to the submission of a planning application covering the development of the whole site.

Employment

• Use classes – An equal proportion of B1 (Office), B2 (General Industrial) and B8 (Storage and Distribution)

Access

• Access from a new roundabout from the A508.

Key site specific design and place shaping principles

• Provision of new footpaths and cycleways that link to existing networks including to a proposed new adjoining Country Park and utilising the existing pedestrian crossing over the A5 linking to Old Stratford;
• Good accessibility to public transport services should be provided for including contributions to the cost of establishing bus services including stops to the site, to help reduce over-dependence on the car and consequent congestion on the road network;
• A transport assessment and travel plan will be required to assess the transportation implications of the proposed
development (including noise from the A5 and A508) and to identify appropriate mitigation measures;

- A high quality design and finish, with careful consideration given to layout, heights of buildings, architecture, materials and colourings to reduce overall visual impact, particularly with landscape planting to reduce the impact of the development on open countryside to the north and east of the site;

- A comprehensive landscaping scheme including on-site provision to enhance the setting of the new buildings and to limit visual intrusion into the wider landscape together with appropriate planting of vegetation along strategic routes to screen the noise. The layout will, where possible, be expected to retain and enhance any significant landscape features (including the Donsmouth Brook watercourse and Former Buckingham Arm Canal embankment) which are or may be of ecological value; and where possible introduces new features;

- Detailed consideration of ecological impacts, wildlife mitigation and the creation, restoration and enhancement of wildlife corridors to preserve and enhance biodiversity. Ecological Surveys to accompany any development proposal;

- Detailed consideration of any archaeological impacts including the need to record and preserve findings ahead of any development, together with a programme of archaeological mitigation;

- Detailed consideration of any impacts on designated and non-designated heritage assets including a programme of mitigation;

- Provision of appropriate lighting and the minimisation of light pollution based on appropriate technical assessment;

- Demonstration of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures including a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for the site and use of Sustainable urban drainage techniques in accordance with Policies BN7 and BN7A of the WNJCS;

- A detailed survey of the agricultural land quality identifying the best and most versatile agricultural land and a soil management plan;

- Protection of the existing Anglian Water drainage and water infrastructure crossing that crosses the site;

- Appropriate financial contributions to mitigate the impact of the development on services and facilities as required by the Council’s policies.
11. Connections

11.1 South Northamptonshire has always had excellent transport links, via the A5 and A43, the M1 and M40 to all parts of the UK. But despite excellent connections the district has pockets of isolated rural populations for whom transport is a major concern, and for some simply not available. In addition, a number of these rural communities look to centres outside of the district (specifically Banbury, Milton Keynes & Northampton) to meet many of their daily needs including: work, shopping, leisure and schooling. This therefore requires any improvements to be in close partnership with neighbouring authorities and relevant local, regional and national partner agencies.

11.2 Traffic growth has seen a major impact on air quality in urban areas of the district, specifically Towcester town centre. In addition there is serious congestion around key transport nodes (the A5/A43 and A5/A508 interchanges), parking, access and an impact on the quality of life of those residents affected.

11.3 The rural nature of the District and the lack of public transport is clearly reflected by travel to work statistics which show that the District is one of the highest in the Country (12th out of 376) for travel to work by car and one of the lowest for travel to work by public transport (316th out of 376). This high car dependency means that improvements in traffic congestion, air quality and safety can only be achieved by the implementation of measures which encourage a modal shift to public transport or by reducing the need to travel, through more local employment and opportunities for “home” working.

Electric and Low Emission Vehicles and Associated Infrastructure

11.4 The NPPF was published by the Government in March 2012 and sets national planning policy for England. Para 35 states that plans should protect and exploit opportunities for the use of sustainable transport modes for the movement of goods or people and suggests a number of means to achieve this. In particular Para 35 states that developments should be ‘designed where practical to incorporate facilities for charging and plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles’

11.5 Further support is provided under paragraph 124 of the Framework which states that planning policies should sustain compliance with, and contribute towards, EU limit values or national objectives for pollutants, taking into account the presence of Air Quality Management Areas and the cumulative impacts on air quality from individual sites in local areas.

11.6 Whilst encouragement can be made for a ‘modal shift’ away from the private car to public transport, walking, and cycling, many trips (for example commuter trips and deliveries) will continue to be made by private car. Electric and low emission vehicles offer the possibility of making such trips more sustainable. Electric hybrid cars are becoming more popular as they become more affordable and as battery technology develops, allowing a longer range. The last three years have seen a remarkable surge in demand for electric vehicles in the UK – new registrations of plug-in cars increased
from 3,500 in 2013 to more than 75,000 at the beginning of August 2016. There has also been a huge increase in the number of electric and plug-in hybrid models available in the UK with each of the 10 best-selling brands in the UK now offering an EV as part of their model range. As a percentage of new car registrations, electric cars now represent around 1.3% of the total new car market in the UK.

11.7 As a result of sustained Government and private investment, the UK network of EV charging points has increased from a few hundred in 2011 to nearly 4,000 charging locations, 6,000 charging devices and over 10,000 connectors by April 2016. The proportion of charger types has also changed dramatically during that time with an increase in high power (rapid) units being installed across the UK. There are three main EV charger types: 'slow' charging units (up to 3kW) which are best suited for 6-8 hours overnight; 'fast' chargers (7-22kW) which can fully recharge some models in 3-4 hours; and 'rapid' charging units (43-50kW) which are able to provide an 80% charge in around 30 minutes. Rapid chargers also come in two charge point types – AC and DC – depending on whether they use alternating current or direct current.

11.8 Based on the above evidence that anticipates that such vehicles will become more popular as technology advances and vehicles become less expensive. It is therefore important for future development to be able to accommodate electric vehicles' recharging facilities. In determining the appropriate power capability to install at a given parking space the main consideration is how long cars would typically be expected to park at that location. For example, parking spaces at residential developments that are intended for use by residents could reasonably be fitted with 'standard' charge points as it is expected that vehicles would be parked overnight. In a similar manner, 'standard' charging infrastructure would generally suffice at employee parking spaces where cars would typically be parked for a number of hours. However, charging infrastructure at visitor parking at residential and employment developments, as well as retail parking, would generally be expected to provide an element of 'fast' charge capability due to the shorter amount of time a vehicle would typically be parked for.

11.9 The Northamptonshire Transport Plan (2012) sets out a strategic Policy approach aimed at building a naturally resilient environment and lowering carbon emissions, Measures to reduce CO2 emissions from road traffic include:

- supporting change to new vehicle technologies and lower carbon fuels;
- promoting lower carbon transport choices;
- encouraging a transfer to lower carbon vehicles, and
- education on lower carbon transport issues.

Strategic Policy 21 states:

We will aim to reduce transport-related carbon emissions by:
11.10 The Transport Plan also states that transport can have a significant effect on the local environment as it increases noise levels, increases the amounts of litter and can have a damaging effect on air quality. These can have a detrimental impact on the quality of life of people living near transport corridors and, in the case of air quality, can impact on people’s health.

Strategic Policy 22 states:

We will seek to reduce the impact that motor vehicles have on the local environment in Northamptonshire by minimising the effects of severance, noise and the emissions from transport.

**POLICY CONNECTIONS 1: Electric Charging Points**

On all sites where an additional dwelling is created (including conversions) with a garage or driveway, an AC Level 2 equipment or equivalent for charging electric vehicles will be required.

For residential developments of 10 or more units (including conversions) with communal parking areas two parking bays marked out for use by electric vehicles only together with AC Level 2 equipment or equivalent per 10 dwellings will be required.

For business, retail, commercial or leisure developments with a minimum of 10 parking bays, one parking bay marked out for use by electric vehicles only together with DC Fast Charging equipment or equivalent per 10 parking bays or part thereof will be required.

The location of charging points will need to be considered carefully where they are in a conservation area or where a new dwelling is created in a listed building (a change of use).

**Chipping Warden Relief Road safeguarded route**

11.11 The route of the proposed HS2 railway passes through the District to the east of Brackley and to the east of the village of Chipping Warden. Phase 1 of HS2 is due to start in 2017 and be operational by 2026. During the construction phase the highway network will be used and traffic management plans will be prepared based on the Environmental Statement supporting the proposals set out in the HS2 Hybrid Bill. It is expected that the Hybrid Bill will receive Royal Assent in early 2017.

11.12 In January 2015, following negotiations between HS2 Ltd and Northamptonshire County Council, the Government agreed to an amendment in the Hybrid Bill to include the construction of a bypass for Chipping Warden
as part of the HS2 north-south rail project. The new road will be of benefit to the local community particularly parents and pupils of the Chipping Warden Primary School on the Byfield Road (A361), a major road connecting Banbury and Daventry.

11.13 The changes are included in the additional provisions which were added to the HS2 Bill during its Parliamentary Passage at its Committee stage and the route is to be safeguarded in the Local Plan. The route of the relief road is covered by the HS2 safeguarding direction.

11.14 The relief road is described in the Hybrid Bill (Work No. 2/218) as “a road, being a diversion of the A361 Byfield Road/Banbury Road commencing at a point 280 metres south west of the junction of the A361 Banbury Road with Appletree Road and terminating at a point 285 metres north east of the junction of footpath AE16 with the A361 Byfield Road”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POLICY CONNECTIONS 2: Chipping Warden Relief Road safeguarded route</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The route of the proposed Chipping Warden Relief Road will be safeguarded in the SNC Local Plan as shown on the Proposals Map.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Chipping Warden Relief Road, associated junctions and roads linking with the existing A361 will be designed in accordance with the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB). The road will be a single carriageway road (7.3m wide) with ghost islands at junctions and with a design speed agreed with Northamptonshire County Council. An appropriate system of surface water drainage will be provided and where necessary, alterations made to any existing highway drainage arrangements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The road will have 2.5m grass verges on either side, widened as necessary to provide the requisite visibility requirements of DMRB. There will be no dedicated provision for pedestrians and cyclists, and they will be routed through the village along the existing A361, thus avoiding the relief road.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At Appletree Road a facility to maintain pedestrian access along this road will be provided, the form of which would be subject to further survey and assessment in accordance with DMRB, and in consultation with the County Council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other aspects such as lighting and safety fencing will be subject to assessments in accordance with DMRB. Lighting design will have regard to the County Council’s street lighting specifications under its Street Lighting PFI Agreement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public utilities will be altered/diverted as necessary to accommodate alterations to the existing road layout to tie in to the new road layout. Ducts will be laid in the verges of the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
new road and across all new sections of carriageway to facilitate the laying of public utilities in the future.

Where noise fencing is required, the nominated undertaker will be required to submit requests for approval of the plans and specification of earthworks and sight, noise or dust screens to South Northamptonshire Council as local planning authority.

Protecting and enhancing the Canal Network

11.15 Approximately seventeen and a half miles of the Grand Union Canal winds its way through South Northamptonshire, from the Iron Trunk Aqueduct at Cosgrove up to Stowe Hill bridge on the A5 near Nether Heyford. A short stretch of the 77mile Oxford Canal, which goes from Oxford to Coventry, also slips into South Northamptonshire, approximately one mile from Aynho. Although originally associated with the industrial revolution, today the local canal network is a tranquil haven from which to enjoy the unspoilt countryside. Many pretty canal villages sit alongside the Grand Union where you will find welcoming pubs, restaurants and shops, as well as interesting historic features such as the Iron Trunk Aqueduct, Ornamental Bridge and horse tunnel at Cosgrove, the Canal Museum and flight of locks at Stoke Bruerne and the Blisworth Tunnel.

11.16 In the NPPF, canals are defined as ‘open space’ and should also be regarded as green infrastructure. For example, the NPPF states “access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities” and “local planning authorities should set out a strategic approach in their Local Plans, planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure”.

11.17 Both canals are designated as conservation areas with the Oxford Canal designated in 2012 and the Grand Union in 2014. The Canal network has an important multi-functional role within the District and beyond. As well as its historical, architectural and educational value, the canal is an important landscape feature, with considerable biodiversity and ecological interest. The canal is an important part of the District’s green infrastructure network providing a green corridor for wildlife, as well as playing a crucial role in conveying flood waters.

11.18 The canal contributes towards economic and regeneration objectives by providing attractive locations for canal-side development including recreational and leisure activities, but enhancing its economic value must be carefully balanced with the canal’s overall conservation and enhancement.

11.19 The canal and canal towpath can also help in achieving more sustainable patterns of movement by providing attractive pedestrian and cycle routes and accordingly the Council will support appropriate measures to improve both the towpath and pedestrian and cycle linkages to it. Policy C3 of the WNJCS supports proposals for the use the canal network for freight movements.
11.20 The canal network provides important resources for nature conservation. This must, however, be carefully balanced with the needs of recreation. Proposals for development within the canal corridors should relate to the character of the area; and respect the leisure, heritage and ecological value of the waterways.

11.21 The Policy is intended to ensure that all development adjacent to the canal respects its character, setting, ecological and heritage value as well as having regard to improving and enhancing views along and from the canal. Development including environmental improvements to the canal's appearance will need to include enhancement of its historic and biodiversity value.

11.22 The Council will encourage the improvement and protection of the canal as crucial green infrastructure. It will seek to improve access to and along the canal to encourage use for transport and for leisure/recreational purposes.

**POLICY CONNECTIONS 3: Canal Facilities and New Marinas**

Proposals for new development alongside canals at Rural Service Centres, Primary, Secondary or Small villages within the settlement hierarchy will be supported where they take the opportunity to provide economic uses by creating an active canal frontage and have regard to the canal's use and accessibility, including safety measures.

Away from these settlements, marinas and moorings with limited service facilities will be accepted provided:

- Canal related proposals constitute uses that are essential to be located in proximity to the canal; and
- The countryside is protected, in terms of its openness, rural character and attractiveness; and
- The development respects the character of the canal conservation area and the setting of heritage assets along its route; and
- The proposal is appropriate in scale to its locality; and
- The development proposal has minimum or sensitively located lighting, to reduce light pollution and interference with nocturnal wildlife species; and
- Facilities, including car parking, have adequate landscaping and screening, to minimise visual impact; and
- There are no permanent moorings for residential purposes.

Proposals for new canal facilities and associated infrastructure will be supported where:

- Public access is improved and integrated with the canal frontage; and
- The development does not have an adverse effect on water quality; and
- The development does not adversely affect public access to the canal; and
- The development, particularly new build, is of high quality, which contributes and enhances the function and appearance of canals and their frontages, wherever possible, providing regeneration and re-use of redundant canals and related buildings, taking into account Conservation Area and Listed Building designations; and
- It does not create conflicts between different users of the canal, such as pedestrians and recreation users on/by the water; and
- The traffic generated by the proposal does not adversely affect the safety of the existing road network and adequate car parking facilities can be provided within the site for the likely needs arising from the proposal; and
- Adequate provision for short-stay moorings and related facilities are incorporated, where appropriate; and
- The wildlife value of the locality is conserved and, where possible, enhanced including wildlife corridors; and
- The proposal does not have any detrimental effects on area designations identified in the development plan; and
- does not result in the loss of any buildings, locks or other structures originally associated with the Canal; and
- does not destroy its existing or historic route unless provision is made for its restoration on an acceptable alternative alignment, including the restoration or improvement of the towpath and its linkage with existing rights of way and local communities; and
- does not prevent or impair restoration, improvement or reconstruction.
12. HERITAGE

What is special about South Northamptonshire

12.1 South Northamptonshire is a district rich in history with a rural and sparsely populated landscape that has remained largely unchanged for centuries. Once heavily forested by the former royal hunting forests of Whittlewood and Salcey, popular with King John, Richard I and Henry III the rolling green countryside is now set as a patchwork of copse and hedgerows interspersed with peaceful villages and the market towns of Brackley and Towcester. Early settlement is evident at a number of sites including the 5th century Rainsborough Camp hill fort near Charlton and the Berry a rare defensive ringwork in Rothersthorpe.

12.2 Occupation however predates even these early features with the Roman period in particular having a significant impact not least through the construction of Watling Street which passes through Towcester, the oldest town in Northamptonshire. Towcester has remained continuously occupied since that time with that occupation evident in today’s built form with features such as the medieval burgage plots still identifiable today along with Bury Mount, a 12th century motte, the influence of the wool trade and the importance of the town as a staging post for coaches travelling between London and Holyhead.

12.3 The medieval origins of most of the district’s other settlements also remains evident. These settlements are mainly nucleated with some linear or scattered settlements and isolated farmsteads also nestled within the landscape with their historic plan forms and significant remnants of the ridge-and-furrow of the medieval open field system still apparent.

12.4 The district prospered through the medieval period with a strong economy based on its rich and fertile agricultural lands and strategically important location on the drovers’ routes of the 13th century, including the Banbury and Welsh Lanes.

12.5 It was also during the 13th century that the current form of Brackley developed as a new town with its characteristic market square adding a second centre to the earlier castle. Like Towcester, Brackley profited substantially from the wool trade and grew to become the second wealthiest town in Northamptonshire by the early 14th century. That wealth extended across the district and the centuries with the 17th century a particularly prosperous time when many of the farms and buildings which define the character of the area today were constructed.

12.6 Although an agricultural area, over the centuries, the population of the district has been employed in a variety of industries including those associated with the arrival of the canals and railways. Blisworth and Stoke Bruerne in particular being the countries busiest inland ports during the 19th century a time in which lace-making was also an important industry as was ‘outworking’ for the booming shoe and boot industries of Northampton. Evidence of these activities still exists as do a number of distinctive building styles, reflecting
variations in geology as well as history, economic and social links within and beyond the district’s present boundaries.

12.7 Northamptonshire is a county famed for its spires and squires evident in the impressive churches and numerous country houses and this district is no exception. The churches, mainly built in local stone, mirror the medieval gothic styles developing nationally from the Early English to Perpendicular with a scattering of later churches. In addition to the fine churches, from the tall elegant spire at Kings Sutton to the wagon roof at Passenham, the area also has a rich architectural history that spans all the main architectural periods. Many of the country houses are connected with the famous architects of their day, including Indigo Jones, Nicholas Hawksmoor, William Kent and Sir John Soane with the work of Humphry Repton and Capability Brown also apparent in their associated parkland and reflect the important architectural styles of the days from Palladian to Georgian. The developing styles are also evident in the more vernacular buildings with medieval hall houses and timber framed buildings known to have survived, many of which have been subsequently altered or encased within later facades of buildings. The district also has particularly fine examples of vernacular farmhouses dating back to the 17th century and numerous cottages which all combine to create a distinctive character.

12.8 This rich and interesting history has resulted in a varied and significant historic environment which includes many individual heritage assets which combine to create an attractive local identity and distinctive character.

12.9 The NPPF defines the Historic Environment as being ‘all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora.’ It continues that a Heritage Asset is a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage assets also include designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority.

12.10 National policy indicates that planning should conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations. Also any positive strategy to secure the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment should recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource which should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.

12.11 Designated heritage assets are designated (or listed) under statute. Some heritage assets, such as listed buildings, benefit from statutory protection, requiring specific statutory duties to be exercised or specific statutory tests to be applied in assessing the impact of a development upon them. They may also be subject to a separate specific heritage-related consent regime.

12.12 Non-designated heritage assets are buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified as having a degree of significance meriting
consideration in planning decisions but which are not formally designated. Some of these assets will be identified on a Local List for South Northamptonshire others will be identified through the development management process. The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

12.13 In 2016 Heritage Assets in South Northamptonshire included:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asset</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Ancient Monuments</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic Parks and Gardens</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered Battlefields</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listed Buildings</td>
<td>1,842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation Areas</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12.14 Beyond providing an attractive area to live and work in these and other assets bring other significant benefits to the district with English Heritage’s 2016 Heritage Counts survey identifying a positive relationship between heritage, wellbeing, health, civic pride, and community cohesion.

12.15 Heritage also delivers significant economic benefits as a driver for tourism and business activity contributing to the districts dynamic market towns and a strong rural economy. Figures from Visit England 2014 show that tourism contributed £152million to the economy of the district with the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP) also reporting that 15% of the district’s jobs were within the visitor economy many related to heritage this comparing to 6.8% for the remainder of Northamptonshire. Assets such as Sulgrave Manor, Castle Ashby and Stoke Bruerne are significant tourist attractions that are promoted both nationally and internationally.

12.16 The Council recognises the importance of the district’s heritage assets and sees conservation as the process of maintaining and managing change to them in a way that sustains their values and benefits and where appropriate enhances significance.

12.17 The role of the historic environment in delivering sustainable development is set out in national policy and reinforced though the WNJCS specifically policy BN5. The WNJCS also identifies that: ‘mechanisms to protect heritage assets, including non-designated assets, will be strengthened through policies in the respective Part 2 Local Plans.’

12.18 Preserving what is special about the district is a complex activity with it being necessary to ensure that the importance of our heritage assets are appropriately recognised and understood and that change is managed sensitively and positive steps, where practicable are taken to reduce risk to those assets.
12.19 Where future proposals are considered to cause harm to the significance of a heritage asset that harm must be balanced against any public benefits that may also result from the proposals.

12.20 Such benefits could be anything that delivers economic, social or environmental progress as described in the NPPF and should be of a nature or scale to be of benefit to the public at large and should not just be a private benefit. Benefits do not always have to be visible or accessible to the public and may include heritage benefits such as:

- sustaining or enhancing the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting.
- reducing or removing risks to a heritage asset.
- securing the optimum viable use of a heritage asset in support of its long term conservation.

**POLICY HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT 1: The Historic Environment**

The Council will seek to preserve what is special about South Northamptonshire’s Historic Environment and its Heritage Assets, ensuring that their significance is properly understood and recognised allowing the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that they bring to be positively utilised in the delivery of sustainable development and the growth of the district.

The Council will ensure that the significance of the district’s heritage is properly understood, recognised and preserved by:

- systematically undertaking the review of conservation areas and where appropriate ensuring the production of up-to-date conservation area appraisals and management plans.
- considering the further designation of Article 4 Directions.
- developing and maintaining a local list of non-designated heritage assets.
- Identifying heritage assets that are ‘at risk’ and taking appropriate measures to secure their futures.

**POLICY HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT 2: Significance of Heritage Assets**

When considering proposals that affect both designated and non-designated heritage assets including those identified on
local lists, the significance of those assets, including their settings, should first be established by the applicant through a proportionate but thorough and systematic heritage assessment.

Such an assessment should be sufficient so as to understand the potential impact of the proposal on the significance of the asset.

Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Archaeology

12.21 Scheduled monuments are designated under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, providing protection for nationally important monuments and archaeological remains. In addition to any planning approval that may be required for proposals affecting scheduled monuments, they also have their own separate statutory consent regime. Scheduled monument consent (which must be obtained from the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport through Historic England) is required for most works and other activities that physically affect a scheduled monument.

12.22 South Northamptonshire is a place of some antiquity with 39 sites of archaeological importance having been scheduled. These include a large number of Roman villa sites, moated sites, ponds, barrows, motte and baileys and some sites of important 20th century engineering including a First World War Filling Factory. While some change may be possible to those identified assets, there is a presumption that they will be handed on to future generations in much the same state that we have found them.

12.23 In addition to these scheduled sites there will also be remains within the district that are yet to be discovered and/or properly understood including those archaeological assets identified on Northamptonshire County Council’s Historic Environment Record. It is therefore crucial that sites of known and potential interest are carefully considered and appropriately assessed. Archaeological assessments will be expected to define the location, extent, character, condition, quality and significance of any archaeological remains in order to establish the potential impacts of the development and to enable any preservation or mitigation strategies to be developed.

12.24 Development that harms the significance of any heritage assets of national importance will be resisted and the impact of development on all types of remains should be appropriately assessed as part of the application process.

12.25 Where permission for development is granted that would harm assets of archaeological interest, a programme of conservation/recording appropriate to their significance should be undertaken. In-situ preservation is preferred, but where this is not feasible, provision should be made for a programme of archaeological excavation, recording and analysis should take place before development commences. The reporting and publication of the evidence
should take place thereafter. This will be secured by planning condition, the discharge of which will be agreed in conjunction with Northamptonshire County Council’s Historic Environment Team.

**POLICY HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT 3: Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Archaeology**

Development that would harm nationally important scheduled ancient monuments or archaeological remains or their settings, whether scheduled or not will not be permitted except in wholly exceptional circumstances where a clear and convincing justification can be demonstrated.

Development that would harm regionally and locally important archaeological remains or their settings will only be permitted where the public benefits of that development are significant and can be demonstrated to outweigh the harm to the archaeological interest of the asset and its setting.

There is a presumption in favour of preservation in situ in the case of both nationally, regionally and locally important remains. Preservation of important remains by record will only be supported where the public benefits derived from a development can be demonstrated to outweigh the ability to preserve those remains in situ.

Where considering proposals that may affect sites that are considered to potentially have remains of archaeological importance, those proposals will not be assessed until an appropriate desk based assessment and where necessary, a field assessment has been undertaken.

Where archaeological sites are known or found to exist within a development site the design of the development should seek to preserve the site in the overall scheme to minimise any harm.

**Historic Parks and Gardens**

12.26 The Historic England Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of special historic interest in England was established in 1983. It currently identifies over 1,600 sites assessed to be of particular significance.

12.27 The main purpose of this Register is to recognise important designed landscapes of note, and encourage their appropriate protection. Parks and gardens are registered as either Grade I, II* or II and registration is a 'material consideration' in the planning process, meaning that planning authorities must consider the impact of any proposed development on the landscapes' special character and its setting.
12.28 Of the 1,600 nationally registered parks and gardens seven are located within South Northamptonshire. These are:

- Castle Ashby
- Aynho Park
- Courteenhall
- Easton Neston
- Stoke Park
- Sulgrave Manor
- Horton Hall Park

12.29 In addition to the historic parks and gardens identified on the national register other parks and gardens of local importance exist and are considered to be non-designated heritage assets. New development should not detract from the enjoyment, layout, design, character, appearance or setting of a park or garden. Neither should development cause harm to key views within, from or towards these landscapes or, where appropriate, prejudice their future restoration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POLICY HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT 4: Historic Parks and Gardens</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning permission for development that preserves or enhances the special historic landscape character and interest of a registered park and garden including its setting will be supported.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applications must seek to protect original or significant designed landscapes, their components, built features and setting. Proposals which seek to restore or reinstate historic landscape features to original designs must be supported by appropriate evidence. Such proposals and those to better reveal the setting of historic parks and gardens will be supported.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposals which are considered to cause harm to a park or garden require clear and convincing justification and will not be supported unless clear public benefits can be demonstrated that outweigh that harm. Where harm is considered to be substantial those benefits must be exceptional.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As part of any permission that is granted, the council may seek the adoption of a management plan to ensure the long-term preservation of the asset, to promote good land management and to encourage best use of resources.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Registered Battlefields

12.30 Historic England’s Register of Historic Battlefields identifies 46 important English battlefields. The purpose of the register is to offer them protection through the planning system and to promote a better understanding of their significance and public enjoyment of what are some of the most dramatic events in our history. One of these 46 battlefields is located within South Northamptonshire. It is the battlefield of the Battle of Edgcote of 1469.

12.31 Battlefields are heritage assets of the highest significance and when considering applications for development in or affecting the setting of the battlefield desirability should be given to conserving and enhancing its significance. Development should not harm the historic or archaeological interest of the site nor should it prejudice any potential for its future interpretation. Development proposals that would result in substantial harm to or total loss of significance of the battlefield or any associated features contributing to its significance, including its setting will be refused except in wholly exceptional circumstances.

POLICY HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT 5: Registered Battlefields

Proposals affecting the registered battlefield will be resisted where they cause harm to its historic, archaeological or landscape interest or prejudice any potential interpretation.

Listed buildings

12.32 Buildings that are considered to be of national importance are included on the list of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest compiled by the Secretary of State under the auspices of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

12.33 Architectural or historic interest is the criteria for listing with buildings being graded according to their significance. They are either:

- Grade I listed as buildings of exceptional interest. Only 2% of listed buildings are Grade I listed.
- Grade II* listed as buildings that are particularly important buildings of more than special interest. 6% of listed buildings are Grade II* listed.
- Grade II listed as buildings of special interest. 92% of all listed buildings are in this class and it is the most likely grade of listing for a home owner.

12.34 There are over 1,800 list entries for South Northamptonshire these include a diverse range of buildings and structures dating from the 10th century to the 1960s. These entries consist of buildings of different architectural styles, designs, materials and methods of construction and are listed at Grade I, Grade II* and Grade II in quantities reflective of the national averages.
12.35 Any works of alteration or extension which would affect the special architectural or historic interest of a listed building, including the manner in which it is constructed and development within its setting require permission from the local planning authority. This includes both internal and external alterations and works within its curtilage.

12.36 There is strong presumption in favour of the preservation of a listed building or its setting and any features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a listed building great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation. Whilst proposals which better reveal the significance of an asset should be treated favourably, proposals which are considered to cause harm to a listed building require clear and convincing justification and will not be supported unless clear public benefits can be demonstrated that outweigh that harm. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building should be exceptional. Substantial harm to or loss of grade I and II* listed buildings, should be wholly exceptional.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POLICY HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT 6: Listed Buildings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposals to alter or extend a listed building including its change of use or development within its setting will be permitted where they:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Contribute to the preservation of the building and are not detrimental to the buildings character or any features that contribute towards its special interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Are of an appropriate scale, form, massing and design and use appropriate materials and methods of construction which are compatible with the character and construction of the building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Have regard to the historic layout of the building and other internal features of significance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Respect the setting of the listed building including inward and outward views, being mindful that the setting may extend beyond the immediate curtilage of the building and include a street scene and a wider urban or rural context.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Proposals that cause harm to a listed building will not be supported unless clear public benefits can be demonstrated that outweigh that harm. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building should be exceptional. Substantial harm to or loss of grade I and II* listed buildings, should be wholly exceptional.

Conservation Areas

12.37 The Council has a duty to designate areas of Special Architectural and Historic Interest the character and appearance of which it is desirable to
preserve or enhance as conservation area under paragraph 69 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

12.38 Since 1967 approximately 9,800 conservation areas have been designated in England including 61 in South Northamptonshire. These cover both Brackley and Towcester, 54 of the district’s villages, the Grand Union and Oxford Canals and the Easton Neston Estate.

12.39 The designation of a conservation area provides a clear commitment to preserving and enhancing that area it also confers a greater degree of control over demolitions, strengthens controls over some minor development and protects trees.

12.40 Every conservation area has a distinctive character derived from, amongst other factors, its topography and historic development, past and current land uses and activities, street patterns, development form and architectural detailing. Understanding and appreciating an area’s character, including its social and economic background and the way such factors have shaped its form, should be the starting point for making decisions about both its management and future development.

12.41 Proposals within a conservation area should preserve or enhance those elements that make a positive contribution to its character and special architectural and historic interest. Such elements may include buildings, particular architectural features such as windows, doors and chimneys, boundary treatments, trees, hedges, spaces and landscape features. The loss of such existing features will be resisted and important characteristics and local distinctiveness must be recognised and reflected in development proposals. However new development does not always have to mimic the past but it must respond positively to its context.

12.42 The Highways Authority(s) and other statutory undertakers should also pay particular attention to the significance of the conservation areas and the need to ensure that paving, kerbing and all types of street furniture including lighting standards and signage are appropriate in design and frequency.

12.43 Proposals outside of conservation areas should have special regard to the setting of those areas.

12.44 When defining the ‘special architectural and historic interest’ of a conservation area it must be recognised that the distinctiveness of a place may well derive from more than its appearance. The Planning (Listed Buildings Conservation Areas) Act 1990 makes it clear that the character and appearance of a conservation area must be considered separately, although they may, in some cases, mean the same. Such distinctiveness may draw on other senses and experiences, such as sounds, smells, local environmental conditions or historical associations.

POLICY HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT 7: Conservation Areas

Within a conservation area proposals for development including alteration, extensions and change of use or the
display of advertisements will normally be permitted where:

- they respect the character and appearance of the area in terms of, scale, form, massing, design, materials and detailing;
- better reveal the significance of the asset;
- In the case of an intensification of use or a change of use the proposal will be in scale with and not harm the established character of the area.

The Council will seek to preserve or enhance the special character and appearance of its conservation areas by:

- Resisting the loss of attractive buildings, walls, trees, hedges and other features of importance to the significance of the area.

Planning permission will not be granted for any development proposals outside of a conservation area which have an adverse effect on the setting of the conservation area, any views into or out of the area or otherwise would result in harm being caused to its special interest.

Non-designated heritage assets

12.45 Non-designated heritage assets are defined in the NPPF as being buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions but which are not formally designated heritage assets.

12.46 Numerous non-designated heritage assets exist across the district, some will be identified on the local list. In all cases the effect of development proposals on their significance will be taken into account when determining planning applications. In assessing such applications a balanced judgement shall have regard to the scale of any harm that may be caused and the significance of the asset.

POLICY HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT 8: Non-Designated Heritage Assets

Development proposals which positively sustain or enhance the significance of any local heritage asset and its setting will be permitted.

Alterations, additions and changes of use should respect the character appearance and setting of the asset in terms of design, materials, form, scale and massing.

Proposals involving the full or partial loss of a non-designated asset will be resisted unless sufficient justification as to why
the asset is not capable of reuse or adaptation is provided to allow a thorough understanding of the proposed scheme and how its public benefits would outweigh the harm that would be caused by the loss of the asset. Where loss is permitted a full recording of the asset is likely to be requested.

**Enabling Development**

12.47 Enabling development is development that is contrary to established planning policy and in its own right would not be permitted. Such a proposal may however be allowed where it can be demonstrated that it would secure the long-term future of a heritage asset.

12.48 The following policy will only be used where the public benefit of securing the future of a heritage asset through enabling development clearly outweigh the dis-benefits of departing from planning policies in this or any other development plan documents.

**POLICY HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT 9: Enabling Development**

Development will only be permitted as enabling development where the following conditions are met:

- It takes the opportunity to enhance the heritage asset and its setting and will not result in harm to that asset.
- It will secure the long term future of the asset through a full and properly implemented scheme of repair and where applicable the continued use of the asset for a sympathetic purpose.
- The impacts of the enabling development are precisely defined from the outset.
- The heritage asset will be repaired or enhanced to an agreed standard at an agreed stage in the course of the enabling development, preferably at the onset and definitely before completion.
- It is demonstrated that the amount of enabling development is the minimum necessary to secure the future of the heritage asset.
- The public benefit of securing the future of the heritage asset through enabling development decisively and demonstrably outweighs the dis-benefits of overriding other planning policies and objectives.
- It is proven that financial assistance to secure the long term future of the asset is not available from any other source.
- It is necessary to resolve problems arising from the inherent needs of the asset rather than the circumstances of the present owner or the purchase price paid.
Planning strategically across local boundaries

12.49 Conservation of the historic environment may involve cross-boundary issues, where development proposals near the boundary of one local authority area potentially affect the setting of heritage assets in South Northamptonshire and vice versa. In such cases in exercising the Duty to Cooperate both authorities need to take into account the impact on the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment as one of the strategic priorities. The NPPF states that public bodies have a duty to cooperate on planning issues that cross administrative boundaries, particularly those which relate to the strategic priorities set out in paragraph 156. The Government expects joint working on areas of common interest to be diligently undertaken for the mutual benefit of neighbouring authorities. Paragraph 156 states that Local planning authorities should set out the strategic priorities for the area in the Local Plan. This should include strategic policies to deliver climate change mitigation and adaptation, conservation and enhancement of the natural and historic environment, including landscape.
13 Gypsy and Travellers

Context

13.1 Policy H6 of the WNJCS identifies pitch and plot requirements for Travellers accommodation up to 2029 and also includes a range of criteria against which the provision of sites should be assessed. The WNJCS was informed by previous assessments, for South Northamptonshire this was the Cherwell, West Oxfordshire and South Northamptonshire Gypsy and Traveller Housing Needs Assessment 2012/13.

Current and future pitch provision in South Northamptonshire

13.2 In August 2015 the Government published a revised version of the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS). The PPTS sets out the direction of Government policy, as well as amending the planning definition of a Traveller. The document states that (PPTS paragraph 9) that local authorities should set pitch targets for Gypsies and Travellers and plot targets for Travelling Show-people.

13.3 The revised policy included a change to the definition of travellers for planning purposes. The key changes that was made was the removal of the term "persons….who have ceased to travel permanently", meaning that those who have ceased to travel permanently do not now fall under the planning definition of a traveller for the purposes of assessing accommodation need in a gypsies and travellers accommodation assessment.

13.4 The planning definition will only include those who travel (or have ceased to travel temporarily) for work purposes and in doing so stay away from their usual place of residence. Households will also fall under the planning definition if they can provide information that they have ceased to travel temporarily as a result of their own or their family's or dependents' educational or health needs or old age. In order to have ceased to travel temporarily these household will need to provide information that they have travelled in the past. In addition households may also have to provide information that they plan to travel again in the future.

13.5 In 2016 the Council jointly commissioned with Daventry District Council, Northampton Borough Council and West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit an updated Travellers’ Accommodation Needs Assessment to provide a robust assessment of current and future need for gypsy, travellers and travelling showpeople accommodation in each administrative area. This study has now been completed.

13.6 The updated Travellers Need Assessment for South Northamptonshire shows that there is no need for additional pitches in South Northamptonshire for Gypsy and Traveller households that meet the planning definition. It also identified a need for 3 additional pitches for Gypsy and Traveller households who do not meet the planning definition, and whilst it does not need to be addressed through the GTAA, they will need to be addressed through other means such as the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). In addition there is no need for additional plots for Travelling Show-people.
households that meet that planning definition. Therefore the overall level of additional need for those households who meet the planning definition of a Gypsy or Travellers or Travelling show-person is no additional pitches/plots over the 15 year GTAA period.

13.7 Local Authorities have a duty to ensure a 5 year land supply to meet the identified needs for Travellers sites, it also notes in paragraph 11 that ‘where there is no identified need, criteria-based policies should be included to provide a basis for decision in case applications that nevertheless come forward. Criteria-based policies should be fair and should facilitate the traditional and nomadic life of Travellers, while respecting the interests of the settled community’.

13.8 The Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople community should have access to appropriate accommodation to meet their needs and sufficient sites are identified. These sites can be either in the defined settlement confines or within the countryside provided that they are in locations where facilities and services, such as schools and local shops, are safely accessible. Policy GT1 requires development proposals to satisfy a series of criteria that determine the site’s capacity and suitability to provide Gypsy and Traveller accommodation in the configuration proposed. First, proposals must be accompanied by robust up to date evidence to establish local need for specialist accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers. The Council currently has an up to date evidence base in relation to Gypsy and Travellers but recognises the need to keep this up to date. If it is considered that there is a need, then in demonstrating this, applications will need to be supported by evidence, prepared in the same way as the current GTAA. The methodology should be agreed with the LPA.

13.9 Secondly, the suitability of the site for use as a Gypsy and Traveller site is an important consideration. Gypsy-Traveller accommodation as with mainstream housing, requires sites of suitable quality in terms of amongst other things, exposure to noise and other environmental pollutants and availability of supporting infrastructure. Infrastructure requirements will range from conventional servicing such as waste management, to (potentially) specialist utility and communal spaces, and accommodation and access for large vehicles. All such needs should be set out and met on site through the proposed design and necessary management plans, demonstrating that they will deliver appropriate housing quality and highway safety, capacity and environmental quality.

13.10 Thirdly, the site should be in a sustainable location and should be in safe and reasonable proximity to local services and facilities. As with other residential development, in order to be considered ‘accessible’, such services and facilities should generally be within a 5 to 10 minute safe walk (400-800m taking into account barriers). Community infrastructure needs will include health, education and transport links, but any proposal should set out specific consideration on this point, including any specialist needs.
POLICY GT1: GYPSIES, TRAVELLERS AND TRAVELLING SHOWPEOPLE

The Council will seek to ensure that the needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpersons are considered and that appropriate forms of accommodation are provided where the need for such accommodation has been clearly demonstrated. Provision to meet these needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpersons, including those for new sites and pitches will be supported where need is adequately evidenced through an up to date Needs Assessment, undertaken using an agreed, quality-assured methodology.

Site allocations and applications for planning permission must meet the following criteria:

a) the site has safe and convenient vehicular access from the public highway, and provides adequate space for parking, turning and servicing on-site.
b) the site is reasonably and safely accessible to a range of services set out in national policy, i.e. shops, public transport, primary health care and schools.
c) the site will provide an acceptable standard of amenity for the proposed residents. sites which are exposed to high levels of flood risk and noise and air pollution are not acceptable.
d) the site will be capable of providing adequate on-site services for water supply, power, drainage, sewage disposal, waste disposal, composting and recycling facilities.
e) the scale and location of the site will not have an unacceptable impact on the landscape, local infrastructure and existing communities.
f) in the case of sites for travelling showpeople there will be sufficient space for the storage and maintenance of equipment and the parking and manoeuvering of all vehicles associated with the occupiers. additional screening may be required having regard to the nature of the equipment that is being stored.

Arrangements are put in place and included in an appropriately detailed management plan, to ensure the proper management of the site in line with the above policy requirements.
14 Retailing and Brackley and Towcester Town Centres

National Planning Policy Framework and context

14.1 The NPPF sets out policies for plan-making in relation to main town centres including retail developments. These policies are stated in paragraph 23 of the NPPF document which is quoted in full below.

“Planning policies should be positive, promote competitive town centre environments and set out policies for the management and growth of centres over the plan period. In drawing up Local Plans, local planning authorities should:

- recognise town centres as the heart of their communities and pursue policies to support their viability and vitality;
- define a network and hierarchy of centres that is resilient to anticipated future economic changes;
- define the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas, based on a clear definition of primary and secondary frontages in designated centres, and set policies that make clear which uses will be permitted in such locations;
- promote competitive town centres that provide customer choice and a diverse retail offer and which reflect the individuality of town centres;
- retain and enhance existing markets and, where appropriate, re-introduce or create new ones, ensuring that markets remain attractive and competitive;
- allocate a range of suitable sites to meet the scale and type of retail, leisure, commercial, office, tourism, cultural, community and residential development needed in town centres. It is important that needs for retail, leisure, office and other main town centre uses are met in full and are not compromised by limited site availability. Local planning authorities should therefore undertake an assessment of the need to expand town centres to ensure a sufficient supply of suitable sites;
- allocate appropriate edge of centre sites for main town centre uses that are well connected to the town centre where suitable and viable town centre sites are not available. If sufficient edge of centre sites cannot be identified, set policies for meeting the identified needs in other accessible locations that are well connected to the town centre;
- set policies for the consideration of proposals for main town centre uses which cannot be accommodated in or adjacent to town centres;
- recognise that residential development can play an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres and set out policies to encourage residential development on appropriate sites; and
- where town centres are in decline, local planning authorities should plan positively for their future to encourage economic activity.”
14.2 For shopping, Northampton town centre together with its retail parks is the main attractor for the majority of South Northamptonshire residents. However, there is also a strong pull from Milton Keynes in the southern part of the District and likewise from Banbury for the western part of the area.

14.3 The towns of Towcester and Brackley operate at a local level providing for the service and convenience retailing needs of the residents of the towns and surrounding villages. There is limited floorspace capacity for both towns for retailing needs in either the convenience or comparison sectors. For comparison retailing the South Northamptonshire Retail Study (Chase and Partners 2010) advises that there is scope for both Towcester and Brackley to improve their vitality and viability. The study sets a range of environmental improvements and other actions suggesting how this can be achieved. Even with the new housing growth within Towcester and Brackley there is only a modest increase in the requirement for comparison floorspace and this can be accommodated within the existing town centres and which could be accommodated as extensions to existing stores. The extent of the floorspace requirement would not fundamentally alter the nature of the towns in retail terms. South Northamptonshire Council has prepared master plans for both Towcester and Brackley town centres which provide the detailed strategy to improve their service centre roles.

The West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy

14.4 For convenience retailing the WNJCS concludes that there is a relatively limited amount comprising some 750 sqm net convenience retailing to 2026 and 500 sqm for Brackley that will be accommodated within the respective Sustainable Urban Extensions.

14.5 Policy S9 of the WNJCS considers that retail floorspace should be accommodated firstly within Brackley and Towcester town centres and that proposals for new retail development which cannot be accommodated within the town centres will be subject to a sequential approach where first preference is given to well-connected edge of town centre sites, and then sites within district/local centres (where of an appropriate scale). Only if sequentially preferable sites are not suitable and available should out of centre sites be considered. The Policy also considers that proposals for retail development outside the primary shopping area of the town centres will be subject to impact assessment for floorspace over 1,000sqm gross in order to demonstrate that they do not have a significant adverse impact on the vitality and viability of the primary shopping area centres within the catchment area of the proposal.

Brackley And Towcester Town Centres

14.6 The WNJCS sets out the hierarchy of the town centres and sets out the town centre boundaries for Brackley and Towcester.

14.7 As well as retail shops, the District’s two town centres are host to a variety of activities. These include leisure activities such as restaurants and pubs; businesses such as banks and estate agents and residential use. It is
recognised that the town centres are at the heart of the community and the Council will plan accordingly to support their viability and vitality. It is important that town centres are attractive, well-designed and well managed. A good mix of uses for shoppers and visitors can have positive sustainability benefits including reducing the need to travel, enhancing community cohesion and acting as a key focal point for businesses and social interactions. Main town centre uses all contribute to the vitality and viability of the District’s town centres, reinforcing their importance in the communities they serve.

14.9 This Plan builds on the WNJCS and promotes a range of town centre uses to provide new retail and associated uses. This will maintain and improve the appeal and offer of the centres, ensuring multi-functionality, meet future identified need and retain expenditure and shoppers within the expanding towns. Proposals in accordance with the Brackley and Towcester masterplans and the Watling Street West Planning Brief will have a key role in place-shaping within each of the town centres.

Primary Shopping Frontages and Secondary Shopping areas

14.10 In accordance with the NPPF this Plan sets out the primary shopping frontage area for Brackley and Towcester within which Policy S9 of the WNJCS and related policies within this Local Plan will apply. The remainder of the town centre is defined as secondary area. Primary Shopping Areas are These areas are characterised by the highest proportion of Use Class A1 shop uses in the town centres. The attraction of the town centres for shoppers is particularly influenced by retaining the overall and predominant retail character and a critical mass of shops is important in sustaining ongoing vitality. In order to protect the vitality and viability of the town centres as a whole, it is necessary to protect the retail uses in this Frontage, particularly A1(shops). These primary areas are shown on the Proposals Map. Whilst some Use Class A2 and A3 uses may enhance primary shopping areas, they should not be at a level or concentration that undermines their primary retail role. The remaining parts of the town centre areas generally contain a wider mix of retail and other uses including offices and residential. These will be termed as the Secondary town centre area. A more flexible approach will be taken to the type and mix of uses permitted in secondary areas but these should not result in an imbalance of retail uses, where this affects the vitality, viability or character of the area, particularly in terms of its specialist retail offer.

Primary Shopping Frontages

14.11 Surveys of the primary retail frontage areas in 2007 and 2017 indicate that since 2006 there has been a loss of A1 units in both town centres. To ensure that a healthy balance of uses is maintained, the Council will actively manage the concentration of different Use Classes (under the Use Class Order) within these Primary areas. By designating and protecting key frontages within the town centre it is possible to control the distribution of retail and non-retail uses to ensure the District’s town centres remain attractive places to shop. It should be noted however, that the Council is unable to determine exactly what the final use of a shop may be. For example, permission may be granted
for an ‘A1’ use retail shop, but no distinction can be made as to whether this shop is, for example, a clothing shop, a hairdresser, or a charity shop.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Towcester Primary Retail Frontage</th>
<th>July 2017</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>A4</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>A5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>86</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brackley Primary Retail Frontage</th>
<th>July 2017</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14.12 It is important that primary areas retain a mix of uses that provide a useful service to local communities. Changes of use that undermine this balance and therefore the role of such centres will not be supported. Within the Primary Shopping Frontages the Council will seek to protect existing A1 uses along these frontages, maintaining at least 44% of Brackley and 51% of Towcester town centres’ primary frontage width as A1 use. Maintaining the current level of concentration of A1 retail uses ensures the attractiveness of the town centres as accessible, diverse shopping areas; which is paramount to the vitality and viability of the local economy. The following street sections are designated as Primary Frontage (see Proposals Map):

Brackley

- 2 – 10 Banbury Road
- 2 – 8 Bridge Street
Temporary Uses

14.13 Under permitted development rights, buildings in specific Use Classes (A1, A2, A3, B1, D1 and D2) will be able to change to one of a limited number of alternative Use Classes (A1, A2, A3 and B1) for a single continuous period of up to two years without requiring planning permission. Such permitted development is subject to certain conditions and is temporary in nature. However, there will remain instances where the change of use of a building does not constitute permitted development and would require the granting of planning permission.

14.14 For the purposes of calculating the proportion of retailing in any given frontage (in the application of Policy RET1), any building operating under a permitted ‘flexible use’ at the time of assessment will be considered on the basis of the use class it had prior to the temporary use change. For example, a retail shop (A1) which has temporarily changed its use to a restaurant (A3) under the new permitted development rights would still be considered as an A1 unit for the purposes of determining the overall percentage of retailing (A1).

14.15 The Council recognises that the short-term use of temporarily empty buildings (‘meanwhile’ uses) can bring welcome benefits to what might otherwise be blighted shop frontages. A ‘Meanwhile’ use is the temporary use of vacant buildings or land for a socially beneficial purpose until such a time that they can be brought back into commercial use again. It makes practical use of the ‘pauses’ in property processes, giving the space over to uses that can contribute to quality of life and better places whilst the search for a commercial use is ongoing. The options for buildings range from soft touch visual interventions to make the building more interesting and attractive such as window installations to transforming the space into a public venue such as an exhibition or entertainment venue. Potential uses include visual interventions which don’t require regular use/access such as window painting, window displays and installations, changing exhibitions to be viewed from outside; License agreements with a meanwhile users with no public access.
such as workshop space, studio space, office/work space, rehearsal space, storage or License agreements for projects which generate public access making the building more fully active such as exhibition/gallery space, events space, pop up cinema, bar/cafe/restaurant, space used as venue for local festivals, pop up shop/indoor markets.

**Secondary Town Centre Areas**

14.16 In accordance with the NPPF, the Council seeks to ensure that retailing remains the main function in the Primary Shopping Frontage Area. However it recognises that a mixture of other uses such as professional offices (e.g. solicitors, estate agents etc.), restaurants, and community facilities can contribute towards a diverse, vibrant and more sustainable town centre. The Secondary areas are characterised as areas that, whilst containing a clear retail element, offer greater opportunities for flexibility and a diversity of uses. This is in acknowledgement that these are not just shopping destinations and that appropriate complementary uses can enhance town centres, often encouraging footfall beyond the working day. It is however, important that the prevalence of non town centre uses is managed to ensure they do not begin to compromise or undermine the vitality and viability of the Shopping Area.

14.17 The introduction of residential accommodation into town centres is a sustainable form of housing and supports the vitality and viability of town centres. Residential development should comply with other Policies in the Plan, particularly those relating to design and housing. Ground floor residential uses should not create ‘dead frontages’ in the street scene and are not therefore considered to be appropriate in the primary retail frontage areas but are appropriate in the secondary areas of town centres.

14.18 Whilst cafés, restaurants, pubs and takeaways add to the diversity of a town centre and can make a positive contribution to the vitality of the evening economy, there are also a number of undesirable impacts which can occur as a result of an over-concentration of such uses, including smell, noise and anti-social behaviour. Therefore, when considering applications for such uses in the town centre, the Council may seek to impose conditions such as limiting the hours of opening or requiring the installation of fume extraction equipment in order to protect the surrounding residential amenity.

14.19 Both town centres contain historic elements, and Policy RET1, in conjunction with the Heritage policies seek to balance this important heritage and use it to add value to the economy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POLICY RETAIL 1 BRACKLEY AND TOWCESTER TOWN CENTRES</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WITHIN THE TOWN CENTRES OF BRACKLEY AND TOWCESTER, THE COUNCIL WILL SUPPORT PROPOSALS FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT, REDEVELOPMENT, EXTENSION OR CHANGE OF USE WHERE THEY ARE APPROPRIATE IN TERMS OF SCALE, TYPE AND DESIGN.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL FUTURE GROWTH IN RETAIL AND TOWN CENTRE USES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**SHOULD FOLLOW A TOWN CENTRE FIRST APPROACH, RESISTING OUT-OF-TOWN AND OUT-OF-CENTRE RETAILING THAT WOULD HARM THE VITALITY AND VIABILITY OF TOWN CENTRES. THE LOCAL PLAN SUPPORTS THE FOLLOWING:**

I. **THE DELIVERY OF MASTERPLANS FOR BRACKLEY AND TOWCESTER;**

II. **EMPLOYMENT AND HOUSING PROVISION, WITHIN AND NEAR TO TOWN CENTRES, PARTICULARLY WITHIN THE PART OF THE TOWN CENTRE NOT COVERED BY PRIMARY SHOPPING FRONTAGE AREA DESIGNATION;**

III. **THE RE-USE OF UNDER-UTILISED OR OUTDATED FLOORSPACE, ABOVE EXISTING COMMERCIAL PREMISES IN TOWN CENTRES, AS A SOURCE OF EMPLOYMENT SPACE AND HOUSING SUPPLY;**

IV. **THE INTRODUCTION OF ‘MEANWHILE’ USES THAT DELIVER MORE VITALITY TO TOWN CENTRES, WHERE THESE HELP REDUCE THE NUMBER OF VACANT PROPERTIES AND WILL SUPPORT VALUABLE, LONG TERM USES**

V. **MIXED USE EDGE OF CENTRE DEVELOPMENTS THAT HELP TO ACHIEVE MORE BALANCED COMMUNITIES BY DELIVERING A MIX OF EMPLOYMENT, LEISURE, RETAIL, FAMILY HOUSING, HEALTHCARE, EDUCATION AND LOCAL CENTRE FACILITIES;**

PROPOSALS INVOLVING THE CHANGE OF USE OF GROUND FLOOR PREMISES FROM USE CLASS A1 TO A2, A3, A4, A5 OR OTHER APPROPRIATE MAIN TOWN CENTRE SUI GENERIS USES WITHIN THE TOWN CENTRE (EXCLUDING THE PRIMARY FRONTAGE AREA) WILL BE PERMITTED ONLY WHERE:

THE PROPOSAL MAINTAINS, WHERE EVER POSSIBLE, AN ‘ACTIVE’ SHOP FRONT I.E. A WINDOW DISPLAY; AND

THE PROPOSAL DOES NOT ELIMINATE SEPARATE ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS TO THE UPPER FLOORS, WHICH COULD BE USED FOR RESIDENTIAL, COMMUNITY OR EMPLOYMENT USES.

PROPOSALS FOR A3-A5 USES WILL NEED TO COMPLY WITH POLICIES IN RESPECT OF POLLUTION AND NOISE. REGARD WILL BE HAD TO THE CONTRIBUTION THAT COULD BE MADE TO THE EVENING ECONOMY AND THE LOCATION OF PROPOSALS WITHIN THE TOWN CENTRE, AS PREMISES WHICH MAY PRODUCE NOISE OR GIVE RISE TO DISTURBANCE FOR LONGER HOURS SHOULD NOT BE LOCATED WITHIN RESIDENTIAL AREAS.

**PRIMARY SHOPPING FRONTAGE**
PROPOSALS INVOLVING THE CHANGE OF USE OF GROUND FLOOR PREMISES FROM USE CLASS A1 TO A2, A3, A4 OR A5 WITHIN THE PRIMARY FRONTAGE OF A TOWN CENTRE WILL BE PERMITTED ONLY WHERE:

1. NO LESS THAN 44% OF BRACKLEY AND 51% OF TOWCESTER TOWN CENTRES’ TOTAL PRIMARY FRONTAGE WIDTH REMAINS IN RETAIL (CLASS A1) USE; AND

2. NO MORE THAN TWO NON-RETAIL UNITS WOULD BE LOCATED ADJACENT TO ONE ANOTHER WITHIN THE SAME PRIMARY FRONTAGE SECTION; OR

3. THE PROPERTY IS VACANT OR IS CURRENTLY OCCUPIED BY A POP-UP OR TEMPORARY USE AND THE APPLICANT IS ABLE TO DEMONSTRATE THAT THE PROPERTY HAS BEEN EFFECTIVELY MARKETED FOR SALE OR LETTING AT A REALISTIC PRICE ON THE OPEN MARKET FOR A MINIMUM PERIOD OF 12 MONTHS AND THAT NO REASONABLE OFFERS HAVE BEEN REFUSED*.

PROPOSALS FOR THE LOSS OF GROUND FLOOR RETAIL USES (A1-A5) TO NON-RETAIL USES IN THE DEFINED PRIMARY SHOPPING FRONTAGE WILL NOT BE PERMITTED.

PROPOSALS FOR THE CHANGE OF USE OF GROUND FLOOR PREMISES TO A1 USES IN THE DEFINED PRIMARY SHOPPING FRONTAGE WILL BE PERMITTED.

IN ALL CASES, PROPOSALS MUST NOT ADVERSELY AFFECT THE VIABILITY AND VITALITY OF THE SHOPPING AREA, OR THE ENVIRONMENT AND AMENITIES OF THE SURROUNDING AREAS INCLUDING RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES, BY REASON OF SMELL, NOISE OR OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS.

* THE COUNCIL MAY SEEK INDEPENDENT ADVICE TO TEST THE VERACITY OF ANY MARKETING EXERCISE.

Shopfronts and Signage

14.20 Shopfronts make an important impact on the street scene in shopping areas and influence the quality of the environment, particularly in Conservation Areas. Whilst well designed shopfronts make a positive contribution to the appearance of a street, insensitive and obtrusive shopfronts spoil the character of the area. Shopfronts are often regarded as transient features of a building but it is important that historic examples, including the best of those installed in the 20th Century, are retained or restored, and others are sensitively adapted to meet modern needs. Of particular interest will be those historic shopfronts which form part of listed buildings and unlisted buildings in conservation areas, or other undesignated heritage assets.
14.21 The District Council produced “Conservation Advice Note No.11: Shop Fronts” in March 2016. The aim of this guidance is to guide property owners and their advisors in the principles of good design and is relevant to all areas of shop front design whether they require Planning Permission or Advertisement Consent or not. The Guidance is not intended to inhibit or to stifle creative and innovative design solutions, but to outline elements that should be carefully considered in the process of designing.

14.22 This document will be updated periodically and is principally aimed at guiding the design of new shopfronts affecting heritage assets, where the planning authority has greatest control.

14.23 Retractable blinds and canopies are traditional elements of the commercial streetscene and well designed blinds and canopies which form an integral part of the overall design of the shopfront will be permitted. Non-retractable canopies and blinds, or those which are garish and obtrusive, or whose principal function is to advertise are unlikely to be permitted, particularly in conservation areas or on listed buildings.

14.24 There is a range of security measures that can be used to protect shopfronts, including the security shutter. When placed internally with an open lattice grille, the display function of the window is maintained outside shopping hours, and improved protection is provided for the premises. Where solid, impermeable shutters or external solid shutters are incorporated they tend to mar the appearance of the building and deaden the shopping street to the detriment of the attractiveness of commercial areas and the night time economy. They are therefore rarely an appropriate solution and will be resisted in town and village centres.

### Policy RETAIL 2 – Shopfronts

**Proposals that alter or replace existing shopfronts which currently contribute to the character of the building or area, will only be permitted if they continue to preserve or enhance the character of the area and are designed to relate closely to the overall character of the building in terms of scale and style.**

Blinds and canopies will be permitted providing the size, colours, design and materials are appropriate to the character of the building.

Shutters requiring planning permission will only be permitted where they are designed as an integral part of the shopfront and allow visual permeability into the shop when in use. Solid external shutters which obscure the shopfront will not be permitted. Permanently blanked out shopfronts, or other designs which discourage active frontages, will not normally be permitted.

New shopfronts in conservation areas should normally incorporate traditional design elements and materials.
Advertisements

14.25 Signage on buildings and within the streets normally requires advertisement consent and can, when well designed and located, add vitality and interest to a town centre. Poorly designed signage schemes can seriously affect the appearance and character of the area and create physical as well as visual clutter. In conservation areas in particular, careful control over the design, form, size, location and materials used for signs is needed to ensure they are in keeping with the area and the buildings they serve. The use of signs can contribute to visual and physical clutter and this will be a consideration when determining applications for their display.

14.26 Traders which lie off the main shopping frontages within the town centres can be at a disadvantage in terms of attracting footfall. Well designed and located signs may therefore be acceptable. However Advanced Warning Signs in close proximity to street furniture can cause physical obstructions as well as visual clutter and may also cause obstructions or hazards for pedestrians who may be visually impaired or disabled. Where permitted, Advanced Warning Signs will be limited to one per premises advertised, also taking account of any cumulative impact, and the Council will take appropriate action to remove unauthorised signs within the town and village centres.

14.27 Illumination on shop fronts should be kept to a minimum. In many cases, sufficient illumination is provided by street lighting and the internal lighting of the shop. Non-illuminated signs are preferable, though consideration will be made to businesses that operate outside normal working hours. Lighting should be discrete and not interfere with the design of the shopfront. Internally illuminated box fascias or internally illuminated hanging signs are unacceptable within conservation areas or on listed buildings due to their unsympathetic and indiscreet appearance. Large floodlights, trough lights and rows of lamps should be avoided.

POLICY RETAIL 3: Advertisements in town centres

in order to maintain commercial and visual attractiveness, consent will be granted for advertisements and signs which respect local character.

Internally illuminated signs will not be permitted within conservation areas.

Where consent is required, hanging or projecting signs will only be permitted where they do not contribute to visual clutter or detract from architectural features on the building. These will be expected to be located at fascia level, unless replacing existing historic signs.

Advanced Warning Signs (A-Boards) will only be permitted in the Primary Shopping frontages where they do not obstruct the highway or contribute to visual clutter or safety.

Street furniture should be located so as to avoid obstruction to all users
Other Centres and Villages

14.28 Outside of the District’s two town centres, there are scattered shops, many of which are isolated from other retail and commercial uses. These shops are predominantly located in residential areas and can include anything from an individual shop, to neighbourhood or village shops and local centres. Very often the retail (A1 use) shops provide a quick stop for local residents wishing to purchase essential day-to-day ‘top up’ or convenience items such as bread or milk. Whilst the type and quantity of these shops varies considerably, the Council recognises the importance of these shops in serving their community – particularly those who find travelling difficult – and as such will seek to retain these facilities where possible.

14.29 In considering proposals that involve the loss of existing retail (class A1) use shops situated anywhere outside of the defined town centres, the Council will need to be satisfied that there is no longer a demand for the premises in the current retail (class A1) use. In addition, where a proposal is for the change of use away from an essential day-to-day ‘top up’ retail (A1) use (including, but not limited to; post offices, newsagents, convenience stores, selling food items and pharmacies), it must be demonstrated that the overall shopping provision available to meet local residents’ day-to-day ‘top up’ needs is not adversely affected.

14.30 Shops located outside of these centres often provide an especially important service to local communities and help to sustain their viability. They can help to reduce car trips for day-to-day convenience needs, and are particularly important both in rural locations and built-up areas that are not within easy walking distance of local or established centres.

POLICY RETAIL 4

CORNER SHOPS, VILLAGE SHOPS AND ISOLATED SHOPS

PROPOSALS FOR CHANGE OF USE OF CORNER SHOPS, VILLAGE SHOPS AND OTHER ISOLATED SHOPS WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED WHERE THIS WOULD NOT RESULT IN THE SIGNIFICANT LOSS OF FACILITIES SERVING THE DAY-TO-DAY NEEDS OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES.
15. THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

What is special about South Northamptonshire

15.1 South Northamptonshire’s environment is key to its identity and widely valued by our residents, visitors and businesses.

15.2 Once heavily forested by the former royal hunting forests of Whittlewood and Salcey, popular with King John, Richard I and Henry III South Northamptonshire now crosses the boundary between arable and pastoral country and is a district where rolling green countryside is set as a patchwork of copse and hedgerows interspersed with peaceful villages and the market towns of Brackley and Towcester.

15.3 This attractive and distinctive landscape helps to raise both the overall quality of the environment and the quality of people’s lives and it also represents an important ecological resource.

15.4 The West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan Part 1 (WNJCS) recognises the significance of this natural resource and presents strategic guidance on a variety of matters such as biodiversity, flooding, landscape and heritage. In many cases these provide an adequate basis for decisions in relation to South Northamptonshire but there are some areas where more detailed guidance and policy is needed.

Rural Character and Locally Significant Landscape

15.5 Northamptonshire’s existing identity is given by its distinctive iron age landscape, by its often hilltop villages and settlements and the broad floodplains of the Nene and Welland which have given form to transportation routes through the county whilst giving historic character and importance.

15.6 The Eastern fringe of the county contains a varied landscape. The North is characterised by its vast armed Claylands with arable fields and wide views. The South is an acting contrast to this with its wooded ridgelines which create an intimate character, rich in wildlife whilst also containing historic significance with its remnants of the Royal Forest of Rockingham which are now ancient woodlands. Extending across the clay plateau which is respected for its historic and ecological value, the county also contains distinctive limestone plateau landscapes. These are important footprints from the Cotswolds to the Southwest with its distinctive geometric pattern of fields, some of which are still enclosed by dry stone walls.

15.7 The majority of South Northamptonshire’s geology is Limestone, particularly across the southern part of the district. Lias clay and pockets of ironstone are located across the northern edge of the district. In the far east, a small part of the district is on Oxford Clay. This geology has informed the overlying countryside which is characterised by its range of landscapes and recurring landscape elements and features. The tapestry of the landscape is built by hedgerows, designed parklands, woodlands and agricultural land and are
present in all of the landscape types identified, creating a strong blend and visual harmony.

15.8 The landscapes of South Northamptonshire are accounted for in the Northamptonshire Environmental Character and Green Infrastructure suite which contains online and downloadable content including the Northamptonshire Current Landscape Character Assessment and other biodiversity and green infrastructure documents. These documents give a written and mapped description of geological character, landform, topography, land use, biodiversity, historic landscape character, commenting on Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), Special Protection Areas (SPA) and can be found at http://www.nmrpenvironmentalcharacter.org.uk/.

15.9 All landscapes in the district are considered to have character and particular distinctive features to be conserved, positive characteristics to be enhanced and detracting features to be mitigated or removed.

POLICY NATURAL ENVIRONMENT 1 – RURAL CHARACTER

Appropriate development proposals on sites outside defined settlement confines, will only be permitted where they do not cause significant harm to the character, quality, distinctiveness or sensitivity of the landscape, or to important features or views, or other perceptual qualities such as tranquillity unless the benefits of the development clearly outweigh the impacts.

Developments should not have an unacceptable effect on the rural tranquillity of the area, including the introduction of lighting or noise occurring as a result of the development, taking account of the relative remoteness and tranquillity of the location. New lighting will generally not be permitted in unlit areas and the type, size, design and operation of any lighting may be controlled where necessary by the use of conditions.

Development proposals should be informed by, and be sympathetic to, the distinctive landscape areas identified in the Northamptonshire Landscape Character Assessment or any successor document(s), and contribute, where appropriate, to the conservation and enhancement, or restoration and recreation of the local landscape taking into account its wider landscape character type.

Special Landscape Areas

15.10 The landscape of South Northamptonshire is diverse and rich with a wide range of features and forms, qualities and characteristics that are unique to its history and typography.

15.11 In recognition that some areas of the district are of even greater landscape value Northamptonshire County Council designated a number of Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) across the district. As part of the Local Plan Part 2 the Council has completed a review of the landscape of the district. This review considered a number of factors including the distinctiveness of landscapes, their scenic quality, natural and cultural character and function.
This work resulted in the following areas being identified as SLAs. These are shown on the Proposals Map.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special Landscape Areas</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong> Yardley Chase &amp; Castle Ashby with extension</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong> Tove Valley with Extension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3</strong> Whittlewood Forest &amp; Hazelborough Forest with extension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4</strong> Hemplow Hills, Cottesbrooke &amp; Brington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5</strong> Catesby, Fawsley, Maidford &amp; Litchborough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6</strong> Aynho, Cherwell Valley &amp; Eydon</td>
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woodland belts. The valleys contain waterways lined with established mature tree form giving its distinctive age and charm.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7</th>
<th>Sulgrave &amp; Great Central Railway</th>
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<td></td>
<td>A intimate landscape characterised within the topography given by the transition of the landscape character from the Northamptonshire Uplands to the Northamptonshire Vales and the Yardley - Whittlewood Ridge.</td>
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15.12 The character of an area is fragile and can be affected by a variety of factors that can contribute to or detract from landscape composition and quality. These factors are varied and include impacts from agricultural techniques, operation and scale, highways and infrastructure, new built form (domestic and agricultural), energy generation, trees and hedgerows.

15.13 A significant element of most landscapes is the population of native trees and hedgerows which provide visual presence, stature and composition of spaces which create landscape quality and character. It has been noted that in some areas of the districts there is a high percentage of quality trees that have reached maturity or are over mature. These trees are beginning to decline and become very prone to storm damage and failure and will be lost to the landscape. This is particularly within the Catesby, Fawsley, Maidford and Litchborough and the Aynho, Cherwell Valley and Eydon SLA’s where the decline of mature individual and hedgerow trees is apparent in certain locations and will continue to progressively change the landscape quality, composition and experience. It is important to recognise this change and to ensure that the key components are renewed in order to maintain that landscape quality.

15.14 In response to the significance and sensitivities of the districts SLA’s the Council will seek to conserve and enhance the quality of the landscape and development opportunities within those areas will be limited because of their special environmental quality.

15.15 Any development proposal within or affecting such an area will be expected to be particularly sympathetic in terms of their siting, form, scale, materials and design and to contribute positively to the conservation and enhancement of the protected landscape. There are also specific types of development that would be generally inappropriate within an SLA including garden centres, tourist camping and caravan sites, intensive food production units and sand and gravel extraction. Proposals for golf courses, which can involve intrusive development and introduce an artificial character to the landscape if insensitively designed, will need to be carefully considered.

15.16 Any application will need to demonstrate that particular regard has been given to design and that the level of development has been kept to a minimum.
Applications will need to be supported by the document A Review of Special Landscape Areas in South Northamptonshire 2017.

**POLICY NATURAL ENVIRONMENT 2- SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREAS**

PLANNING PERMISSION WILL ONLY BE GRANTED FOR DEVELOPMENT ON SITES OUTSIDE SETTLEMENT CONFINES AND WITHIN SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREAS WHICH WILL NOT HAVE A DETRIMENTAL IMPACT ON THE CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE OF THE AREA. PARTICULAR ATTENTION MUST BE PAID TO DESIGN, MATERIALS, SITING OF BUILDINGS AND THE USE OF LAND.

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS SHOULD BE INFORMED BY, AND BE SYMPATHETIC TO THE QUALITIES OF THE SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREA AS DISCUSSED IN THE SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREAS REVIEW DOCUMENT OR ANY SUCCESSOR DOCUMENT(S), AND CONTRIBUTE, WHERE APPROPRIATE, TO THE CONSERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT, OR RESTORATION OF THE AREA.

ANY DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS ON SITES OUTSIDE SETTLEMENT CONFINES AND WHICH ARE WITHIN SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREAS WILL EXPECTED TO BE ACCOMPANIED BY A LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (LVIA). THE LVIA SHOULD SYSTEMATICALLY ASSESS THE EFFECTS OF CHANGE ON THE LANDSCAPE, BOTH LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS, AS A CONSEQUENCE OF A DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL. THROUGH SUCH AN ASSESSMENT DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS SHOULD BE DESIGNED TO AVOID NEGATIVE LANDSCAPE EFFECTS AND WHERE THIS IS NOT POSSIBLE NEGATIVE LANDSCAPE EFFECTS SHOULD BE REDUCED OR OFFSET THROUGH APPROPRIATE MITIGATION/COMPENSATORY MEASURES.

**Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows**

15.17 Trees and hedgerows are important natural features which can define landscape character and contribute to the quality and enjoyment of the environment. They can have great nature conservation, amenity, recreational and environmental value.

15.18 The positive contribution that such features make to the special character of South Northamptonshire is recognised in South Northamptonshire Council’s Special Landscape Area review and through the Northamptonshire Landscape Character Assessment. The ancient woodlands of Salcey, Whittlewood and Yardley Chase dominate parts of the district a fact detailed under Policy BN3 of the WNJCS which supports measures to enhance and manage existing woodlands, to create new woodlands and to protect aged or veteran trees. Development proposals that would result in the loss, or damage, to aged or veteran trees, or areas of mature or ancient woodland will not normally be permitted.
15.19 Other trees, woodlands and hedgerows are also sensitive to the impacts of development, either directly through their removal or indirectly through the impacts of construction, and are worthy of protection. Trees and hedgerows within developments have a vital role to play in helping to offset the potential effects of climate change, through shading, carbon storage, and reduction of pollutants, interception and storage of water. They can also help integrate development and connect with the existing landscape framework and the contribution they can make to the quality of development, they should always be considered at the outset of the design process. Trees and hedgerows should be retained and protected, wherever possible.

15.20 Individual trees, tree groups and woodland can be, and often are, protected by Tree Preservation Orders. Protection is also given if they are located in a conservation area and reference should be made to the Council’s suite of conservation area appraisals and management plans. When necessary, the Council will use Tree Preservation Orders as a means of protection if their loss would be significant in landscape, nature conservation or amenity terms. In addition, the Hedgerow Regulations 1997 afford special protection to substantial hedgerows which are considered to be ‘irreplaceable’ due to their age, and their archaeological, historical, landscape or wildlife significance.

15.21 Where their loss is unavoidable trees and hedgerows should be replaced with suitable new planting either within the site or in the locality if this is more appropriate. Development can make a positive contribution to the local tree and hedgerow resource through new planting or the restoration and improved management of existing features. Planting schemes which use species and varieties native to the area, are locally sourced, and maximise the benefits to the local landscape and wildlife, will be preferred.

15.22 In order to properly assess impacts, where there are trees that could affect, or be affected by a planning application, the Council will require a tree survey and assessment to be carried out to recognised standards and submitted in support of the application. Such assessment which should be carried out early in the design process should make clear which trees are to be retained and how these will be protected during the construction phase. Conditions will be imposed to secure the implementation of any necessary protective measures to secure their retention.

**POLICY NATURAL ENVIRONMENT 3 – TREES, WOODLAND AND HEDGEROWS**

Proposals for development should provide for the protection and integration of existing trees, woodland and hedgerows for their wildlife, landscape, and/or amenity value.

Development that would result in the unacceptable loss of, or damage to, or threaten the continued well-being of protected trees, hedgerows, orchards, veteran trees or woodland (including those not protected but considered worthy of protection), will not be permitted.

Where trees, woodland or hedgerows will be lost to development and this is considered to be acceptable, suitable replacement planting on site where it is
practicable to do so, or off-site if not, will normally be required.

**POLICY NATURAL ENVIRONMENT 4 – TREE PRESERVATION ORDERS & TREES IN CONSERVATION AREAS**

Proposals for felling or pruning will generally not be permitted to a tree in a conservation area or to a tree the subject of a tree preservation order except where the proposal is justified in the interests of good arboricultural practice or other clear environmental benefit.

**Biodiversity**

15.23 Biodiversity is defined as the variety and diversity of life-forms and the role that they play in the natural world. Biodiversity includes all species of plants and animals and the natural systems that support them.

15.24 The NPPF makes it clear that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils;
- recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services;
- minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government’s commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;
- preventing both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability; and
- remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

15.25 South Northamptonshire’s existing biodiversity and geodiversity assets provide the building blocks for the natural environment. These features are integral parts of the high quality environment and surroundings that make the area such a desirable place to live and for businesses to operate.

15.26 The district has a rich biodiversity which comprises a network of designated sites important for their nature conservation and geodiversity value. There are 12 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in South Northamptonshire, designated for protection because of the ecological, geological or physiographical features they contain. In addition to these, approximately 160 locations have been classified as County Wildlife Sites by the Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust. Further information on these sites can be found at [http://www.wildlifebcn.org/wildlife-sites-northamptonshire](http://www.wildlifebcn.org/wildlife-sites-northamptonshire). Many other non-designated sites across the district also have wildlife or nature
15.27 Certain species of flora and fauna are to be found on these and other sites across the district and are specifically protected by European or national legislation. The level of protection will vary according to the species and the particular legislation. In addition, the England Biodiversity List records species of flora and fauna and habitats considered to be of principal importance for the purposes of conserving biodiversity. The Northamptonshire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) sets out targets for the county, including South Northamptonshire, for the protection and creation of a range of habitats and species that have been identified as being important to Northamptonshire.

15.28 Where appropriate and in particular where there is likely to be an adverse effect on sites identified in the district as being of local or regional importance for biodiversity, or protected species and/or priority habitats or species are known or likely to be present, planning applications should be accompanied by ecological assessment from suitably qualified and experienced persons. Ecological surveys and assessments should be proportionate to the nature and scale of the development proposed and the likely impact upon biodiversity. All surveys should be carried out at the correct time of the year, using methods suitable to the species and the area.

15.29 Policy BN2 of the WNJCS offers general policy and guidance in relation to biodiversity across West Northamptonshire taking into account the guidance found at paragraph 118 of the NPPF which states that Local Planning Authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Policies NE5, NE6 and NE7 below expand on this with particular emphasis to the natural environment of South Northamptonshire.

**POLICY NATURAL ENVIRONMENT 5 – BIODIVERSITY AND GEODIVERSITY**

Development proposals should seek to conserve biodiversity and geodiversity, and actively enhance biodiversity in order to provide net gains wherever possible.

Development proposals will be expected to incorporate measures to enhance biodiversity within or around a development site, and to contribute to the consolidation and development of local ecological networks, including beyond the District’s boundary. Measures should be appropriate and compatible with existing biodiversity, ecosystems and designated wildlife sites.

The Council will seek to ensure new development maintains, enhances, and extends networks of natural habitats. Proposals for improved access, recreation and tourism within such networks will be supported where they are compatible with biodiversity aims.

Development proposals will not be permitted where they would result in significant harm to biodiversity or geodiversity, including protected species and sites of international, national and local significance, ancient woodland,
and species and habitats of importance identified in the United Kingdom and Northamptonshire Biodiversity Action Plan.

**POLICY NATURAL ENVIRONMENT 6 – SITES OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST**

Development proposals on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest that are likely to have an adverse effect on the Site of Special Scientific Interest will not be permitted.

Where an adverse effect on the site’s notified special interest features is likely, an exception will only be made where:

(I) There are no suitable and available sites of lesser ecological value; and

(II) The proposal can be justified by reason of overriding public interest where the public benefits of the development, at this site, significantly and demonstrably outweigh both the impacts that it is likely to have on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

**POLICY NATURAL ENVIRONMENT 7 – PROTECTED SPECIES**

Development proposals which would have a demonstrable adverse impact on protected species or their habitats including sheltering or resting places, will not be permitted unless there are demonstrable reasons of overriding public importance for European Protected Species or, in the case of other protected species, the benefits of development significantly and demonstrably outweigh the adverse impacts; and adequate mitigation or compensation measures can be provided.

**Green Infrastructure**

15.30 Green Infrastructure (GI) is a network comprising the broadest range of multifunctional green spaces, their connections and other environmental features including but not limited to parks, private green spaces, woodlands, wetlands, open and running water, wastelands and disturbed grounds, rivers and canals and their banks, roads and rail corridors, public rights of way, allotments, cemeteries and churchyards. GI is an asset that enables the environment to support and maintain ecological processes whilst sustaining land, air and water resources and is important within and beyond urban areas.
15.31 The WNJCS identifies there to be a number of sub-regional and local green infrastructure corridors in West Northamptonshire and at Policy BN1 provides guidance on the management and enhancement of the network.

15.32 South Northamptonshire is a district rich in character, biodiversity and Green Infrastructure. In addition to the infrastructure corridors identified in the WNJCS the district benefits from many attractive green spaces and much infrastructure. The Strategic Green Corridors are identified on the proposals Map as follows:

1. The Grand Central Railway - Brackley to Woodford Halse.
2. Branch Line - Towcester to Woodford Halse.
5. Branch Line - Banbury to Woodford Halse.
7. Grand Union Canal.

15.33 It is considered important that there are safeguards to maintain the continuity and identity of these historic corridors and their place within the history of South Northamptonshire and to ensure they continue to contribute to the wider visual quality of the landscape of South Northamptonshire whilst providing a significant wildlife environment and habitat together with potential recreational opportunity. The Council will seek to conserve and wherever possible enhance green infrastructure along these routes.

**POLICY NATURAL ENVIRONMENT 8 – GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE CORRIDORS**

Development proposals which would have a demonstrable adverse impact on Green Infrastructure including those green corridors identified on the proposals map will not be permitted unless the benefits of such development significantly and demonstrably outweigh the adverse impacts and adequate mitigation or compensation measures can be provided.

Development proposals which accord with the Development Plan will be permitted where they contribute to the delivery of green infrastructure that meets the needs of communities both within and beyond its boundaries, including the establishment of new infrastructure and improvements to the quality, use and provision of existing infrastructure.

**Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area**
15.34 Established in 2012 the Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area covers an area of 41,000 hectares running through the heart of Northamptonshire including the northern part of the South Northamptonshire District. It covers a landscape that has been altered by man with fragments of wildlife habitats like wildflower meadows, woodlands and wetlands need to be protected, managed better, enlarged, and connected up. All of this needs to be surrounded by a sustainably managed landscape of farmland, towns and villages.

POLICY NE9 - DEVELOPMENT IN THE NATURE IMPROVEMENT AREA

Development within the Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area will be permitted where it:
A. Enables the functioning of the nature improvement area;
B. Contributes to the opportunities for habitat creation and/or habitat management as set out by the Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area; and
C. Is consistent with other policies in the plan.

HS2 and other major developments and infrastructure projects

15.35 High Speed Rail (London – West Midlands) Act 2017 gained royal assent on 23rd February 2017. The proposed route passes through South Northamptonshire and will have a major impact on the environment and local communities in the plan area.

15.36 Policy C6 of the WNJCS recognises this and considers the impact of High Speed Rail 2 (HS2) and states that the design and construction of HS2 must minimise adverse impacts on the environment, the local economy and local communities and maximise any benefits that arise from the proposals.

15.37 Under the 2017 Act South Northamptonshire Council is a Qualifying Authority with responsibility for issuing consents and approvals in respect of the detailed design and appearance of structures and other elements of the scheme. But not the principle of the construction which is permitted by the Act itself.

15.38 The Council will expect proposals for the development of the HS2 to have special regard to the landscapes of the route, biodiversity and geodiversity. Any loss to these should be fully mitigated and compensated with opportunities taken to address the shortfalls identified in the Northamptonshire Biodiversity Action Plan and wider landscape enhancements. The use of native species is encouraged as will the enhancement of existing and creation of new biodiversity and green infrastructure corridors and habitats.

15.39 In addition to HS2 the matters raised above are relevant to all major developments and future nationally significant infrastructure projects proposed throughout the district.

POLICY NE10 – HS2, MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS AND NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

The design and construction of the HS2 and other major developments and nationally significant infrastructure projects must minimise adverse impacts on
the environment.

Any environmental harm that would occur as a result of such developments should be fully mitigated and compensated with opportunities taken to address any shortfalls identified in the Northamptonshire Biodiversity Action Plan and to bring about wider landscape enhancements. The use of native species is encouraged as will the enhancement of existing and creation of new biodiversity and green infrastructure corridors and habitats.