

WHERE
CAREERS
THRIVE

When potential
is unlocked,
talent *thrives*



West
Northamptonshire
Council

Job description and person specification

Senior Natural Environment Officer (Ecology)

Planning Service - Place, Economy and Environment Directorate

Thank you for your interest in this role. Our vision at West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) is: 'to make West Northants a great place to live, work, visit and thrive'.



West
Northamptonshire
Council

We truly stand by this and work hard every day to make this a reality, and at WNC it's about our people. People who thrive with ambition, bring new ideas, demand better ways of working, care about every detail, and who never shy away from a challenge.

Our culture is a gateway for new experiences. A place to forge new opportunities. To empower you in your career and unite you with like-minded people. When potential is unlocked, talent thrives.

Purpose and impact:

To support the provision of appropriate specialist advice on natural environment issues, with a technical specialism in ecology.

To support the production and maintenance of an up-to-date suite of policy documents to guide and set high standards for future development in the area, including developing, maintaining and reviewing local plans, neighbourhood plans and other planning policy documents.

To support specialist monitoring, research and statistical activities to support the Planning Service.

Accountable to:

Principal Natural Environment Officer. The role sits within Planning and Development, part of the Place, Economy and Environment Directorate in West Northamptonshire Council.

Responsibilities:

1. To make a proactive and positive contribution to the effective delivery of the Planning Service, this will include working flexibly and positively to achieve the objectives of the council.
2. To deliver excellent customer service in every interaction for all internal and external customers, including Councillors.
3. To respond in a timely and professional manner to requests for support from members of the public seeking to engage with the Planning Service. This will include providing support to the Customer Contact Centre and the Complaints and Customer Feedback teams where required.
4. To support timely responses to customer, MP and Councillor complaints, feedback, FOI and EIR requests to ensure the Planning Service is consistently meeting corporate service standards.
5. To implement the Council's place shaping agenda and its objective to be positive and proactive in terms of allowing the 'right schemes' in the 'right place' at the 'right time'.
6. To provide appropriate technical advice to the public, developers, agents, Members, other departments of the Council and other persons and bodies as appropriate in connection with development proposals and related matters in writing, by telephone or in person.
7. To provide a high standard of timely natural environment advice to the development management service and other relevant services across the Council and in the Place Directorate.

8. To prepare advice on natural environment matters for the Planning Policy/Planning Committees or other meetings and site visits, as appropriate, including the briefing of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Elected Members.
9. To balance a high standard of nature conservation in development in West Northamptonshire with the need to support growth, inward investment, sustainability and energy efficiency.
10. To assist in the preparation and review of the Local Plan including policy making and site-specific advice as required.
11. To prepare and give evidence at hearings, public inquiries and examinations into development proposals and Development Plan related matters as required.
12. To input into the Council's other corporate strategies and plans as necessary.
13. To assist the Head of Service and Planning Policy and Specialist Services Team Leader by preparing consultation responses, for example to Government consultations that are accurate, timely and represent the best interests of the Council.
14. To support in the undertaking of a systematic review of existing policy, local nature recovery strategies and support in the implementation of biodiversity net gain, alongside appropriate public consultation.
15. To support the preparation of funding bids for biodiversity related projects.
16. To contribute to the preparation of development briefs as may be required by the Planning Policy and Specialist Services Team Leader.
17. To support the Assistant Director and Head of Planning Policy and Specialist Services with aspects of process improvement and systems review where needed.
18. To support the Assistant Director and Head of Planning Policy and Specialist Services with the delivery of aspects of the Planning Service's Communications and Engagement Strategy where required.
19. To support the Assistant Director and Head of Planning Policy and Specialist Services with the co-ordination of relevant Fora, Member training, Parish and Town Council training and staff CPD programmes as required.
20. To take responsibility and encourage personal development and continuous improvement within the team to develop a thorough understanding of current issues, processes, legislation or systems.
21. To support the Planning Policy Team Leaders and the Principal Natural Environment Officer in the training and support of Career Grade Officers, Graduates and Apprentices within the team and the Planning Service.

22. To follow, at all times, all planning and other legislation such as Data Protection - GDPR, Freedom of Information (FOI) and Health & Safety at work.
23. To undertake any other duties commensurate with the general level of responsibility of this post.
24. To maximise personal productivity, minimise duplication and errors: and manage our information efficiently and securely to reduce risk, through effective use of Office 365 and our internal IT systems and applications.
25. Actively challenge and seek to eliminate any directly or indirectly discriminatory practice or behaviours.
26. Demonstrate awareness and understanding of other people's behavioural, physical, social and welfare needs and ensure that reasonable care is taken at all times for the health, safety and welfare of yourself and other persons.

This job description reflects the major tasks to be carried out by the post holder and identifies a level of responsibility at which they will be required to work. In the interests of effective working, the major tasks may be reviewed from time to time to reflect changing needs and circumstances. Such reviews and any consequential changes will be carried out in consultation with the post holder.

Person specification:

The requirements for the role are outlined below and will be part of the selection process. Each of the criteria listed below will be measured by:

(**A**) Application Form, (**T**) Test, (**I**) Interview, (**P**) Presentation, (**D**) Documentation.

Minimum levels of knowledge, skills experience and qualifications required for this job.

Skills and abilities:	Essential / Desirable	Measured by
Displays a positive, 'can do', proactive and supportive attitude in a team environment	E	A/I
Consistently strives for continuous improvement and excellence	E	A/I
Time/priority management: high level of proficiency	E	A/I
Ability to work under pressure, handle stress and to deadlines	E	A/I
Displays good attention to detail and accurate research skills	E	A/I
Verbal: excellent level of professional ability; exhibits a clear & comprehensible verbal style	E	A/I
Self-awareness: Ability to communicate and display consistent professional conduct with a wide range of people, in person, by telephone and email including with Senior Management and Councillors	E	A/I
Writing: excellent level of professional ability; exhibits a clear & comprehensible writing style in line with Plain English principles	E	A/I
General IT skills: basic keyboard/typing skills, use of Windows, word- processing and email	E	A/I
Specialist IT skills: DEF MasterGov or other planning related system, QGIS or other mapping software, Microsoft Office packages, such as Outlook, Excel, PowerPoint, etc., ERP Gold (or other finance/HR system) & any other system used within the service or Council (Essential)	E	A/I
Demonstrate effective use of Office 365 (incl. Teams, OneDrive, etc.) or willingness to undertake training during the probation period.	D	A/I

Knowledge:	Essential / Desirable	Measured by
Good knowledge of planning legislation and guidance.	E	A/I
Sound up-to-date knowledge of environmental legislation, guidance, best practice and statutory procedures	E	A/I
A good understanding of the Local Plan system, including the role and content of national and local planning policy	E	A/I
Good knowledge of working effectively in a political environment with a wide range of stakeholders.	E	A/I

Relevant experience:	Essential / Desirable	Measured by
Experience working in a natural environment field at a senior level.	E	A/I
Experience of presenting effectively to a range of audiences	E	A/I
Experience of project management and commissioning consultants.	D	A/I

Experience of preparing evidence for, and presenting at, Local Plan Examination or Public Inquiry.	D	A/I
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Education, training and work qualifications:	Essential / Desirable	Measured by
Relevant undergraduate degree	E	A
Relevant Post-Graduate qualification	D	A
A member of the CIEEM (or equivalent or demonstratively working towards APC).	E	A

All appointments are subject to standard pre-employment screening. This will include identity, references, proof of right to work in the UK, medical clearance and verification of certificates.

Day-to-day in the role:

Hours:	37	Primary work base:	The Forum, Towcester
Job family band:	Regulatory and Technical Band 8	Worker type:	Part-Flexible
Salary range:	£40,316 to £43,675	Budget responsibility:	None
People management responsibility:	None		

Working conditions & how we work:

As a part-flexible worker you will have a specific work location, but also have the ability to work from other locations to meet the demands of your role.

When not working from an office you will be working remotely from venues such as community hubs, home, café or library for up to 3 days per week.

Our organisational values and behaviours

Everything we want to achieve for West Northants depends on having the right people in place and doing the right things and we want all colleagues to THRIVE, both personally and professionally. Our values and our behaviours framework underpin how we work and what partners and customers can expect from us. We want to do our very best for our residents, service users and businesses and for our staff – we want everyone to THRIVE.

T Trust	We are honest, fair, transparent and accountable. We can be trusted to do what we say we will.
H High Performing	we get the basics right and what we do, we do well. We manage our business efficiently.
R Respect	we respect each other and our customers in a diverse, professional and supportive environment.
I Innovate	we encourage curiosity, we are creative and seize opportunities to grow individually as an organisation and as an area.
V Value	We continually strive for best practice and ways of improving existing procedures, practices and systems and thereby promoting efficiency and cost effectiveness
E Empower	we believe in people, will listen, learn and trust them to make decisions. We help people to realise their ambitions.

“Valuing colleagues as individuals and encompassing our different perspectives to deliver our collective ambitions. One West inclusive culture”

When potential is unlocked, talent *thrives*

Choose a career that offers you a true sense of achievement, fills you with pride and challenges you in a positive way, everyday.

The benefits of a career at WNC include:

- **People** are at the centre of everything we do. Without our people, we wouldn't be able to deliver services to the people in our community.
- **Ambition** runs through everything we do at West Northants Council, we nurture and develop our people's ambition and willingness to succeed, to continually improve the service we provide to the community.
- **Care** is at the heart of West Northants Council, we care in so many ways; seen and unseen, helping our colleagues and community to thrive.
- **Flexibility** is key, we know work-life balance is critical to wellbeing, so we work hard to make sure our benefits package promotes and improves wellbeing; from annual leave, sick pay, family leave and flexible working, financial security offered by a local government pension scheme and life assurance, and discount schemes which make a difference to your day-to-day life, through to employee helplines offering free legal, health, financial and wellbeing advice and support.

We want you to have balance and be happy.

