




Huntingdonshire
DISTRICT COUNCIL

LOCAL PLAN

ISSUES PAPER SUMMARY
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO
YOU?

FIRSTLY, WHAT IS A LOCAL PLAN?

A Local Plan is the key document that guides new development within the district and is a government requirement for all local councils.

It sets out local planning policies, and it is shaped by understanding the development needs of the area and their social, environmental, and economic context.

It also contains policies to safeguard the environment, adapt to and mitigate climate change, and to promote high quality design that supports and creates attractive places that work well for the communities that use them.

A Local Plan shows what sort of development is and is not acceptable. It ensures the identified needs for housing, businesses, infrastructure, and open spaces are met and identifies specific sites to meet these.

Community engagement is crucial to the Local Plan preparation. The Local Plan update will be shaped by the views of local communities, individuals, businesses, infrastructure providers and interested organisations along with landowners and developers.



WHAT IS AN ISSUES PAPER?

The Issues Paper looks at issues that will need to be thought about when preparing the next Local Plan. It is one of the first stages of creating a new Local Plan, which means that no decisions have been made. It's important to find out what matters to local people first.

It is intended to provoke thought, comment, and opinions. It is shaped by exploring the issues faced by the district. It does not set out any form of draft policies or options. It will help to inform the direction and priorities for the new local Plan. While it seeks to bring forward discussion on a wide range of issues, it is not intended to prejudge the outcomes of any of them.

KEY ISSUES & WHAT THEY MEAN FOR YOU

The Engagement Paper seeks opinions from local residents, communities, businesses and organisations on what our future planning priorities should be. It is structured around 8 themes.

So what is it that we would like from you?

Throughout this Issues Paper Summary Document you will come across a number of questions relating to the 8 themes below. We want to know what is important to you when it comes to preparing a new Local Plan.

Let us know what you think the priorities are, what the issues are locally and what your concerns might be.

Visit our website at [XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX](#) to fill out a short form to give us your feedback on the Local Plan Issues Paper.

SPACE FOR QR CODE

Head online or scan the QR Code!

RESPONDING TO THE CLIMATE CRISIS

CREATING A VISION AND OBJECTIVES

SUPPORTING OUR PLACES

PROTECTING AND ENHANCING THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

PROMOTING A PROSPEROUS LOCAL ECONOMY

DEVELOPING HIGH QUALITY SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES WITH SUPPORTING INFRASTRUCTURE

DISTRIBUTING NEW GROWTH

MEETING THE HOUSING NEEDS OF ALL

A more detailed, full-length Issues Paper is also available on our website.

CREATING A VISION AND OBJECTIVES

The vision statement is a key element of a Local Plan. Its role is to provide a framework for all policies and proposals in order to set a clear direction for the Local Plan that will help to deliver the vision for Huntingdonshire.

Our Place Strategy engagement with local communities, residents and stakeholders identified 5 key aspects of the vision for Huntingdonshire: **Pride in Place, Environmental Innovation, Inclusive Economy, Health Embedded, and Travel Transformed.**

The Huntingdonshire Futures Place Strategy sets out a shared vision for the future of district for the next 30 years and has been co-developed with partners, organisations and Huntingdonshire residents. It articulates Huntingdonshire's aspirations and ambitions, and maps out plans for place, people, economy, and the environment.

We are asking people to shape the fundamental nature of the Local Plan by asking what the overarching vision and objectives should be for the Local Plan and the future growth of the district, in relation to the key issues that arise when thinking about future development.



DELIVERY MECHANISM

The Local Plan is a delivery mechanism for the vision and objectives through its policies and site allocations.



BALANCING ACT

The Local Plan needs to create a balance between what needs to be preserved vs. Sufficient growth to meet needs.



WHAT IS THE VISION?

What do you think the vision for the Local Plan should be?



WHAT SHOULD OUR TARGET DATE BE?

When do you think the end date for the Local Plan should be?

RESPONDING TO THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Climate change and responding to the climate crisis is one of the greatest challenges facing our society and is now a much bigger priority than ever before. Key issues are:

Carbon Emissions and Targets

Greenhouse gas emissions are the largest single driver of climate change. National policy is clear that plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change and transitioning to a low carbon future.

Carbon Sequestration and Offsetting

As well as offsetting new emissions, capturing carbon by removing and storing carbon that is already within the atmosphere should also be undertaken, this is carbon sequestration.

Renewable and Low Carbon Energy

Renewable energy generation within Huntingdonshire is provided through wind power, solar power and a small amount of biomass power generation but there is potential for more across Huntingdonshire particularly as the cost for renewables are reducing as technology improves and becomes increasingly available.

Energy Efficiency and Retrofitting

Planning and the built environment plays a significant part in contributing to a net zero carbon future. To assist in this goal, the Future Building Standards are expected to start from 2025 and will produce highly efficient new buildings which use low-carbon heat and have the best fabric standards possible, reducing carbon emissions by 75–80% for an average home, compared to current requirements.

Huntingdonshire Futures Place Strategy Feedback

Respondents wished to see action regarding climate change and to see house building that was more environmentally conscious and minimised environmental impacts through measures such as net zero building, renewable energy and generation, and reducing water and energy usage.

Flooding, Water Supplies and Water Pollution

Flooding is an important issue to many of our local communities. We also are within the driest region in the country. This means that we will be facing challenges not only relating to flooding and water supply, but also water management and pollution. The Local Plan will have to look at how our district can protect, adapt and become more resilient to these issues.

Waste and Recycling

Reducing the amount of waste created and recycling materials where possible can reduce the amount of waste that goes to landfill, minimising the environmental impact of landfills and prolonging their lifespan.

How should the Local Plan respond to the Climate Crisis?

PROTECTING AND ENHANCING THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The natural environment is an irreplaceable resource that shapes the character and identity of places. This section of the Issues Paper looks at issues relating to enhancing the natural environment. Seeking opinions on the importance of Huntingdonshire's landscapes, conservation, green infrastructure and how the Council can increase biodiversity net gain and address air quality. Key issues are:

Huntingdonshire's Landscapes

Conserving and enhancing the natural environment across the district means that diverse and high-quality landscapes can be enjoyed now and in the future. They can continue to provide habitats for a diverse range of wildlife and support the local economy. Local plans should recognise the character and beauty of the countryside, and should provide for the conservation and enhancement of landscapes.

The Natural Environment & Nature Conservation Designations

Nature conservation sites are designated at an international, national or local level depending on their biological or geological value. The natural environment, nature conservation sites and areas of ancient woodland are vulnerable to new development and land management practices which can fragment habitats and migration routes for wildlife which can impact their lifecycles.

How could the Local Plan help to protect and enhance the natural environment?

Huntingdonshire Futures Place Strategy Feedback

When asked about the best aspects of living in the district the countryside, access to green places, the rivers and wildlife featured strongly. These were valued by local communities, but concerns were frequently raised about them being at risk.

Green Infrastructure

Green infrastructure supports a range of functions, including recreation and wildlife as well as landscape enhancement. Green infrastructure is essential to enhancing biodiversity by creating new habitats and helping to protect against habitat fragmentation.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Net gain in planning describes an approach to development that leaves the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand.

Air Quality

Air quality impacts human health, quality of life, the natural environment and built environment in the short and long term. Huntingdonshire is home to four Air Quality Management Areas.

SUPPORTING OUR PLACES

This section of the Issues paper looks at how the Local Plan could support our places. It provides a portrait of the district's market towns, villages, and the countryside asking people specific questions on what the priorities should be and what the issues are that could be addressed through a new Local Plan.

Key issues are:

Huntingdonshire's Market Towns

The market towns offer people the greatest local access to services and facilities within Huntingdonshire and fulfil a significant role as service, employment and transport centres for their surrounding areas.

Huntingdon, St Neots, St Ives & Ramsey

Each of our market towns is unique, which means that they each pose very different questions when it comes to the Local Plan. In order to create an effective Local Plan we would like to know:

- What do local people like about the market towns?
- What is your greatest concern that is impacting your, or another, market town?
- What do you believe should be the priority for each market town?



Huntingdonshire Futures Place Strategy Feedback

Overall, people's sense of place and community lay with the particular town or village that they lived or worked in or had another specific connection to.

Huntingdonshire's Villages

Across the district, Huntingdonshire has a variety of different-sized villages and settlements. These have all grown and developed in differing ways based on natural and human influences over many centuries meaning no village and settlement is the same.

The Countryside

The countryside comprises of high quality agricultural land used for arable crops. The high quality agricultural land and important wildlife habitats need conserving.

Historic Environment

Huntingdonshire has a rich history and this is reflected in the large number of heritage assets found within the district. At the time of writing there were 2,216 listed buildings, 5 registered parks and gardens, 61 conservation areas and 84 scheduled monuments.

What issues and priorities are important to you and our places?

MEETING THE HOUSING NEEDS OF ALL

A key role of the Local Plan is to provide a strategy for meeting Huntingdonshire's housing needs in terms of the quantity, size, type and tenure of new homes. It will aim to ensure that the housing needs of all types of households are provided for. Housing is often seen as the crux of a Local Plan as proposals for new housing growth can have direct impacts on existing communities. However, housing is just one element of many that go towards making up sustainable communities and assisting people in having a high quality of life. Key issues are:

Huntingdonshire Futures Place Strategy Feedback

Concerns were over the need for new homes to be supported by new infrastructure, facilities and support services to help generate communities.

The Need for New Homes

With increasing average lifespans, established households retain the need for properties longer. Average household size is declining so more properties will be needed simply to accommodate the same number of people. It is calculated that Huntingdonshire needs 950 new homes per year at current levels.

Delivery of New Homes

The Local Plan is an opportunity to shape the nature, tenure, accessibility and environmental standards of these new homes.

*What housing issues do you think the Local Plan should seek to address?
What is important to you?*

Gypsy, Traveller, Travelling Showpeople & Boat-dwellers Accommodation

Planning Policy states that local planning authorities should identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites. It is also acknowledged that living on boats contributes to increasing the diversity of residential accommodation within the district.

Housing Mix

Housing mix covers a broad spectrum of size, tenure and specialist housing. Supporting the delivery of a wide range of housing sizes and types in new developments is important as it helps to create balanced, inclusive and vibrant communities.

Housing Tenures

Providing a range of housing tenures gives people choices over whether to: buy or rent a home, choose a shared ownership or homes available at discounted market prices with specific conditions attached to use and re-sale. Building affordable housing is also important for the district.

Housing Standards

The physical construction standards to which new homes must adhere are set through nationally approved Building Regulations supported by a series of approved documents. Sometimes higher standards can be sought locally.

PROMOTING A PROSPEROUS LOCAL ECONOMY

Local Plans must help create conditions where businesses can invest, expand, and adapt. Huntingdonshire has several locational advantages providing strategic business and commuting links across the Cambridge – Oxford – Milton Keynes area, to London, and north towards Peterborough, the Midlands and beyond. We are aiming to promote the development of more, higher-quality jobs for people locally. Key issues are:

A Green Economy

Only 62% of manufacturers identified that their workforce is equipped with the skills they need to manufacture goods and products in a more sustainable way.

Supporting and Diversifying the Local Economy

Planning policies that guide new economic growth and investment in Huntingdonshire need to ensure that they can support a strong and prosperous economy, linking skills with businesses. Council's should not just focus on investment, but also what can be done to increase productivity, entice new opportunities for development and support existing local businesses.

Logistics & Distribution

The Office of National Statistics reported in April 2022 that "The number of business premises used for transport, logistics and warehousing in the UK has almost doubled in the last decade". Our strategic transport connections mean there is growing interest in logistics development in the district.

Rural Economy & Agriculture

Huntingdonshire is a largely rural district, however whilst rural economies are associated with agriculture, 85% of rural businesses are unrelated to agriculture.

Huntingdonshire Futures Place Strategy Feedback

People noted that thriving high streets are important to residents and the local economy (particularly retail), the lack of a night-time and cultural economy and access to it was also raised, as was the impact of online retail. It was also felt that health and technology innovations in Cambridge were a missed opportunity for the district to create more jobs in this sector and to provide better opportunities for young people.

Retail & Adapting Our Town Centres

The health of retail in our villages, towns and on our high streets is a vitally important issue to our communities. How can we make our town centres thriving, attractive places?

Enhancing Tourism

Tourism is also an important contributing factor which becomes more significant when understanding employment opportunities in rural areas. The importance of small businesses should also not be underestimated.

What do you think should be the key priorities and what current issues could the Local Plan look at addressing for our economy?

DEVELOPING HIGH QUALITY SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES WITH SUPPORTING INFRASTRUCTURE

This issue section looks at the infrastructure that is important to our local communities, what services could help to support healthy vibrant communities and how these could be included in new development. Topics include place-making and building design, open spaces, travel, public transport and active travel, parking, community facilities and services and utilities and digital infrastructure. Key issues are:

Design of Buildings & Places

Development proposals need to respond to their context. Building design is a key way to match new buildings with how towns and villages currently look. Beautiful building design is also an important national planning priority.

Open Space in New Development

Open and green spaces in new development benefit the community by creating a sense of identity, belonging and happiness, whilst also providing both physical and mental health benefits, opportunities for social interaction and reducing stress.

Travel & Transport

Inefficient transport networks can lead to congestion making access to education and employment more difficult. Transport is one of the district's biggest polluters.

Public Transport & Active Travel infrastructure

The Government encourages Local Authorities to reduce emissions through promoting a move towards public transport. However, rural areas in the district face a lack of substantial public transport.

What can the Local Plan do to promote sustainable communities with appropriate infrastructure?

Huntingdonshire Futures Place Strategy Feedback

infrastructure provision, or more often the lack of it, was seen as a barrier to attracting economic growth and impeding Huntingdonshire's success. Public transport was seen as key to people getting around the district, reducing rural isolation, and contributing to net zero aspirations.

Parking Provision

Local Plans must take into account the need for parking provision and vehicle movement (motorised and non-motorised). Many of our rural residents rely on the car to travel for work and leisure.

Community Facilities & Services

Social and cultural well-being should be taken into account to help achieve the principles of sustainable development and include accessible local services and community facilities.

Utilities & Digital Infrastructure

The Council will have to ensure that sustainable development can be supported by the appropriate utilities and digital infrastructure. Rural areas are not likely to experience good internet provision.

DISTRIBUTING NEW GROWTH



Local Plans must set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places, and make sufficient provision for housing, employment, retail, leisure, other commercial development, infrastructure, community facilities and the natural and built environment, whilst addressing climate change.

The Local Plan should ensure that new growth follows the principles of sustainable development. National planning guidance states that at a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

This not only means placing locations for growth where employment, services and facilities are easily accessible, but also helping to support more rural communities by enabling growth to protect services and facilities.

What factors should we take into account?

Once a strategy for development is established the Council will look broadly at the most appropriate locations for growth. A number of studies to understand constraints to development will be produced on topics such as:

- ◆ Flooding
- ◆ Water resources and management
- ◆ Infrastructure
- ◆ Transport impacts
- ◆ Employment needs
- ◆ Identification of areas of green infrastructure, landscape, biodiversity and heritage value

How do you think the Local Plan can help the district to grow in a sustainable way? Where should we look to focus growth and what should growth look like?



NEXT STEPS

Thank you for providing feedback on the issues that are important to you, our local community and the district. Following this engagement, the comments received will be reviewed and used to feed into the next stage of local plan production. We will use your comments alongside additional evidence and studies to create our next engagement piece 'Further Issues and Options' which will tell you what we have found out and present you with options for consideration that could be included in the Local Plan.

To provide feedback on the Local Plan Issues Paper, visit our website at the following link:
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Or scan the QR Code 

A more detailed, full-length Issues Engagement Paper is also available on our website. The paper includes more specific questions if you would like to respond in more depth on a specific topic.

