

Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation Communications Plan

Autumn 2025

Overview

A Local Plan sets out a plan for future sustainable development in the district. It performs two specific roles:

- It identifies key areas of land for development to deliver the homes, jobs and services needed in the district, and
- Includes policies against which all planning applications are considered.

The Local Plan is the document by which all development in the district is judged, it provides the basis for what can happen, where it can happen and when it can happen.

In October/ November 2025, Huntingdonshire intend to run a **Preferred Options consultation** for six weeks.

We are consulting on:

- Preferred Options Draft Local Plan Update: a full draft of the proposed Local Plan Update which includes all preferred draft policies and site allocations and provides an opportunity to give feedback. It contains the amount and type of housing that we need to deliver, the level and nature of employment opportunities needed to support the local economy and provide jobs for local people; and the type and amount of infrastructure required to support this growth.
- Sustainability Appraisal: assesses the draft policies and proposed site allocations within the Preferred Options Local Plan Update against environmental, social and economic objectives.

This plan outlines how the council will communicate the consultations to the community and stakeholders in Huntingdonshire and the surrounding areas and will continue to be developed in the lead up to the Preferred Options consultation. It includes:

- What the Council are trying to achieve (Objectives).
- Who we want and are required to consult with (Audience).
- Some demographics of the Huntingdonshire population and the potential reach of the social media platforms (Huntingdonshire Demographics)
- Our approach to the engagement strategy (Strategy)
- The various methods of engagement we are going to implement (Implementation).
- How we will measure the success of the engagement strategy and improve for future consultations (Metrics and Evaluation).

Objectives

Primary Objectives:

- To engage and consult with the community and stakeholders in Huntingdonshire to gather feedback on the **Preferred Options consultation**, ensuring that the Local Plan Update reflects the needs and aspirations of the district.
- Ensure that the perspectives, ideas and concerns of people who live, work and study in Huntingdonshire inform the local plan process.

Secondary Objectives:

- Raise awareness of the Local Plan and its significance.
- Ensure transparent communication about the consultation process and how feedback will influence the plan.
- Encourage diverse participation from all community segments, including residents, businesses, and interest groups.
- Promote understanding of the vision and policy framework outlined in the key documents.

Audience

Audience	Details
Primary Audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents of Huntingdonshire • Local businesses and employers • Community and interest groups • Local developers, agents and landowners • Statutory consultees* • Town and Parish Councils • Neighbouring authorities • HDC Members
Secondary Audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local and regional media • HDC Staff • Cambridgeshire County Council

- Statutory consultees:
 - Cambridgeshire County Council Bedford Borough Council
 - Cambridge City Council
 - South Cambridgeshire District Council
 - Greater Cambridge Shared Planning
 - East Cambridgeshire District Council
 - Central Bedfordshire District Council
 - East Northamptonshire Area (formerly East Northamptonshire District Council) within North Northamptonshire Council
 - Fenland District Council
 - Parish Councils in Huntingdonshire
 - the Coal Authority (have advised HDC that Huntingdonshire is an area that they do not wish to comment on)
 - Homes England
 - Natural England
 - Environment Agency
 - Historic England

- Network Rail
- the Highways Agency
- the Marine Management Organisation
- electronic communications code applies + owns or
- controls electronic communications apparatus
- NHS England Midlands and East (East)
- Cambridge Water Services Ltd
- Anglian Water

Huntingdonshire Demographics

Census Maps - Census 2021 data interactive, ONS

Sex	Percentage
Female	50.4%
Male	49.6%
Age	Percentage
Under 15	18%
16 – 64	61.8%
65+	20.2%
Median age	43

Social media breakdown:

- Facebook: 70.90% Female, 29.10% Male. Main age groups 35-44 and 45-54.
- LinkedIn: Main age group 40+
- X: Main age group 40+
- Nextdoor: 29,978 members on the platform. Does not provide any detailed demographic data.

Nextdoor is a social media network where neighbours can connect, share information, and discuss local issues, essentially serving as a digital community bulletin board for specific neighbourhoods.

	Residents	Stakeholders	Community Groups
Demographics	Families, young professionals, elderly and students	Partner organisations, local media and members	Charities, local clubs and volunteer organisations
Preferred social network(s)	Facebook and Nextdoor	LinkedIn and X	Facebook and Nextdoor
Interests	Community events and family-friendly activities.	Policy updates and governance news. Partnership	Volunteer recruitment and engagement. Funding opportunities

	Local news and safety updates. Information on council services, i.e. waste collections. Job opportunities in the area.	opportunities and impact stories. Local governance and compliance.	and community support. Promoting local events and initiatives.
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Strategy

Approach:

- Utilise a multi-channel communication strategy to reach and engage with a broad audience.
- Communication and engagement by providing multiple platforms for feedback.
- Ensure accessibility of information and consultation materials.
- Build trust through transparency and regular updates on the consultation process.

Key Messages:

- The Local Plan Update is a crucial blueprint for the future development of Huntingdonshire, it is a delivery vehicle for the ambitions as set out in the Huntingdonshire Futures Place Strategy and Corporate Plan.
- Preferred Options Paper: Sets out our preferred version of the Local Plan Update, including proposed draft policies, overall development strategy and preferred sites to deliver housing, employment and infrastructure needs. Therefore, community input is essential in shaping a sustainable, inclusive, and prosperous district. Feedback will directly influence the final Local Plan
- We strongly recommend that residents, businesses, local organisations and interest groups to get involved now rather than waiting for a planning proposal which has already been agreed through the Local Plan.
- The consultation period is 6 weeks.

Implementation

- Digital communication
 - Website: Updating both the Huntingdonshire website and Let's Talk Huntingdonshire platform, reflecting new consultation, FAQs, downloadable document and links to submit feedback.
 - Organic social media: Utilise HDC's social media channels (Facebook and Nextdoor) to share key messages, updates, and reminders about consultation events and deadlines. Including visual assets and potential for video content. Use the location-based targeting on Nextdoor to reach people based in areas where there are sites in the Preferred Options Draft Local Plan Update. LinkedIn and X would be used to target stakeholders such as Councillors, local businesses and partner organisations.
 - Paid social: targeted Facebook ads to reach people in certain areas and certain age groups.
 - Email Newsletters: Utilise weekly Members Briefings and monthly Town and Parish Council newsletters and Economic Development newsletter.
 - Digital version of briefing note, posters, leaflets, response forms for those with limited access to the internet and exhibition boards and consultation documents to be sent out via email to Town and Parish Councillors and Members.

- Email banners for staff to include in all emails
- Videos to be posted on digital platforms:
 - A summary of the consultation documents, key dates and signposting to relevant websites.
 - How to respond – step by step guide showing people how to register an account on the consultation portal and submit a comment.
 - Shorter format videos to be posted on social media with Councillors covering key information and topics.
- HDC intranet post.
- Notification email when the consultation starts to the over 5,500 active accounts registered on the consultation portal.

- Public Engagement
 - Drop-in Sessions: Organise at least 7 drop-in sessions at local community centres and libraries where residents can view documents and ask questions.
 - Hold interactive workshops and focus groups for stakeholders
 - Enhanced marketing materials such as posters, leaflets, banners and potentially exhibition boards
 - Exploring additional online engagement options

- Traditional Media:
 - Press Releases: Issue press release to local newspapers, radio (Black Cat, Cambs Live) to announce the consultations and highlight key milestones. A series of articles in different formats with the potential for a Q and A, interview format, pictures included. Potential to have different portfolio holders for different subjects e.g. housing, planning, economy, climate change to embed key themes through the consultation process.
 - Posters and leaflets: Creation of artwork for distribution as posters and leaflets in public places, such as libraries, community centres, and, the mobile library, to inform about the consultation and how to participate.
 - Exhibition boards for in-person briefings and public exhibitions.
 - Banners for parks and One Leisure facilities
 - Bin lorry banners
 - Potential for advertisement boards in town centre locations or use of digital screens in Market Towns.
 - Packs including a cover letter, consultation documents, posters, leaflets, and briefing note distributed to Town and Parish Councils.
 - Documents available within the libraries across the district and Pathfinder House.
 - Notices to be put up in areas where there is a site

- Direct Outreach:
 - Public exhibitions (see public engagement above)
 - Parish and Town Councillor and Members briefings to ensure Parish and Town Councillors are well informed and understand the documents, process and timeline of the consultation.
 - Hold interactive workshops and focus groups for stakeholders

- Attendance of the Council to the Town and Parish Forum and Developers Forum
- Attendance of the Council to relevant events during the consultation which would allow engagement with stakeholders and increase the number of responses to the consultation.
- Duty to cooperate sessions with Local Authorities.

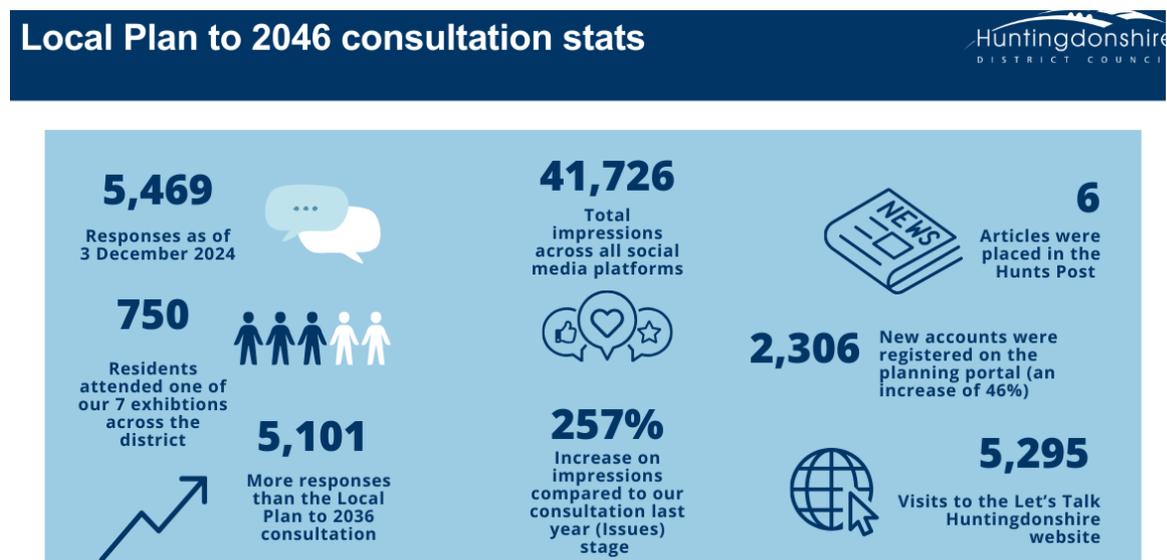
Accessibility:

- Support Services: Help via a dedicated email for those needing help with accessing or understanding the documents. Support for people who cannot read or write in making submissions if requested, via phone calls.
- Distribution of consultation documents to libraries and the mobile library (planning policy).
- Paper forms available at public exhibitions which will then be uploaded formally onto the consultation portal

Scoring and Evaluation

Metrics:

- Number of attendees at workshops and drop-in sessions public exhibitions.
- Volume of responses received through the planning portal.
- Engagement metrics on social media (likes, shares, comments).
- Media coverage and reach of press releases.
- Website traffic and downloads of consultation documents.
- Number of additional accounts registered on the planning portal
- Compare quantity of feedback compared to previous years' consultations.



A graphic will be produced following the end of the consultation which displays the key metrics identified above and made available to the public and posted on social media. Above is an example of a graphic produced for a previous Local Plan consultation:

Evaluation:

- Analyse the feedback received to identify key themes and concerns and amend the proposed draft policies and allocations.
- Review the effectiveness of each communication channel and tactic to refine future consultations.
- Provide a summary of how community input has been incorporated into the Local Plan Engagement 2024 in follow-up communications

The Communications and Planning Policy teams have collaborated closely in preparing this Communications Strategy. The schedule below sets out the key milestones which the Communications team will use to publicise messaging about the engagement opportunities. It will supplement the direct engagement activities led by the Planning Policy team such as email notifications to over 5,500 registered consultees in week 1 and the workshops, meetings and public exhibitions which will be concentrated within weeks 1 to 4 as far as possible to ensure people have time afterwards to prepare and submit their responses to the engagement. Reminder emails will also be sent to all current and new registered consultees in weeks 5 and 6 to remind them of the closing date of the online engagement opportunities and those who have comments in draft form but not yet submitted will receive reminder emails to encourage their completion.

More detail to the Comms schedule will be produced closer to the start of the consultation such as the planned content of the social media posts, the platforms they will be posted on and other Comms engagement methods outlined in the implementation section such as newspaper articles.

Preferred Options consultation – 29th October 2025 for 6 weeks

Dates	Comms Aim	Comms Actions	Audience	Progress/comments
Week 1 29 th October	Raise awareness of launch of the launch of the Preferred Options consultation	Websites updated and launched Press release Social media posts Reach out to local radio outlets to organise interview – add to schedule once booked	Members T&P Cllrs Press Social media followers	
Week 2	Promote engagement with consultation Advertise drop-ins	2 X Weekly social media post	Social media followers	
Week 3	Promote engagement with consultation	2 X Weekly social media post	Social media followers	

	Advertise drop-ins			
Week 4	Promote engagement with consultation	2 X Weekly social media post	Social media followers	
	Advertise drop-ins			
Week 5	Promote engagement with consultation	2 X Weekly social media post	Social media followers	
	Advertise drop-ins			
Week 6	Promote engagement with consultation	2 X Weekly social media post	Social media followers	

