

A meeting of the **CABINET** will be held in the **COUNCIL CHAMBER, PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON PE29 3TN** on **THURSDAY, 22 FEBRUARY 2007** at **11:30 AM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-


Contact
(01480)

APOLOGIES

1. MINUTES

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 15th February 2007 (to follow).

2. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

To receive Members' declarations as to personal and/or prejudicial interests and the nature of those interests in relation to any Agenda Item. Please see notes 1 and 2 below.

3. EXPANSION OF CUSTOMER SERVICES IN ST. IVES & ST. NEOTS (Pages 1 - 4)

To consider a report by the Head of Revenue Services regarding a proposal to convert the St Neots and St Ives cash offices to Customer Service Centres.

Mrs J Barber
388105

4. CASH PAYMENTS (Pages 5 - 10)

With the assistance of a report by the Head of Revenue Services to consider transferring the handling of cash payments at the Council's three cash offices to an alternate payment provider.

Mrs J Barber
388105

5. TREASURY MANAGEMENT INVESTMENT PERFORMANCE (Pages 11 - 14)

To consider a report by the Head of Financial Services on the performance of the Investment Fund for the period

Mrs E Smith
388157

6. DRAFT ISSUES AND OPTIONS FOR CORE STRATEGY DPD AMENDMENT (Pages 15 - 36)

To consider a report by the Head of Planning Services regarding the draft Issues and Options proposed for consultation with statutory consultees and stake holders.

Mrs C Bond
388435

7. EAST OF ENGLAND PLAN - THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE DRAFT REVISION OF THE REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY AND STATEMENT OF REASONS. (Pages 37 - 42)

With the assistance of a report by the Head of Planning Services, to consider a response to the Secretary of State's proposed changes to the draft revision of the regional spatial strategy and statement of reasons.

S Ingram
388400

8. REVIEW OF CONSTITUTION (Pages 43 - 44)

In conjunction with the Annual Review of the Council's Constitution, to consider a report by the Head of Administration.

R Reeves
388003

9. GREAT FEN PROJECT STEERING GROUP

To note the resignation of Councillor N J Guyatt from the Great Fen Project Steering Group and consider the appointment of Councillor P L E Bucknell to the vacancy.

10. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

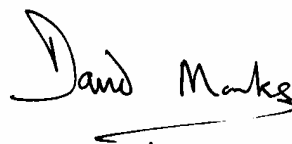
that the public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains exempt information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.

11. LAND AT BURY ROAD INDUSTRIAL ESTATE RAMSEY (Pages 45 - 48)

To consider a report by the Head of Legal and Estates regarding the freehold reversion of land at Bury Road, Ramsey.

C Meadowcroft
388021

Dated this 21 day of February 2007



Chief Executive

Notes

1. *A personal interest exists where a decision on a matter would affect to a greater extent than other people in the District –*
 - (a) *the well-being, financial position, employment or business of the Councillor, a partner, relatives or close friends;*
 - (b) *a body employing those persons, any firm in which they are a partner and any company of which they are directors;*

- (c) *any corporate body in which those persons have a beneficial interest in a class of securities exceeding the nominal value of £5,000; or*
 - (d) *the Councillor's registerable financial and other interests.*
2. *A personal interest becomes a prejudicial interest where a member of the public (who has knowledge of the circumstances) would reasonably regard the Member's personal interest as being so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Councillor's judgement of the public interest.*

Please contact Mrs H Taylor, Senior Democratic Services Officer, Tel No. 01480 388008/e-mail Helen.Taylor@huntsdc.gov.uk /e-mail: if you have a general query on any Agenda Item, wish to tender your apologies for absence from the meeting, or would like information on any decision taken by the Cabinet.

Specific enquiries with regard to items on the Agenda should be directed towards the Contact Officer.

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting as observers except during consideration of confidential or exempt items of business.

Agenda and enclosures can be viewed on the District Council's website – www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk (under Councils and Democracy).

**If you would like a translation of
Agenda/Minutes/Reports or would like a
large text version or an audio version
please contact the Democratic Services Manager
and we will try to accommodate your needs.**

Emergency Procedure

In the event of the fire alarm being sounded and on the instruction of the Meeting Administrator, all attendees are requested to vacate the building via the closest emergency exit and to make their way to the base of the flagpole in the car park at the front of Pathfinder House.

This page is intentionally left blank

3.2 One of the main services provided by the cash offices is the verification and scanning of the Housing Benefit documents. Before we installed the Anite Electronic Document Management system at these remote sites, any paperwork for Benefits was sent each day by post to Pathfinder House. Now, these documents are scanned immediately and become available to the assessment team at PFH.

3.3 This is a vital service that directly contributes to the speed of processing of benefit claims and the safety and security of customers' documents. For this service alone, St Ives see over 600 benefits visitors per year, and take over 8,000 scans of benefits information. St Neots see 2,000 visitors per year, and take 30,000 scans of benefit information. Without these services, customers would have to travel to Huntingdon or send valuable paperwork through the post.

3.4 At present, we have a purpose built cash offices in the Priory Centre and St Ives town hall. Offering an open plan style of premises would be conducive towards moving towards a customer service centred environment. St Neots town council are keen to revise the layout of the Priory Centre to increase office space and provide one service counter for all customers. A separate project (led by the town council) is being developed on this.

4 GROWING SUCCESS

4.1 In considering how we could develop our presence in St Neots and St Ives the following aims from Growing Success are considered.

Access

Enabling people to have access to services. Whilst it is particularly important to residents who need to claim benefits or who wish to pay their council tax instalments directly to the council to be able to have an office near to their home other customers may also benefit from a broader range of service provision from these offices.

Carbon Emissions

By providing essential face to face services in the main market towns, the Council will contribute towards the reduction of carbon emissions by reducing the number of journeys by car bus to Huntingdon.

Sustainable Communities

Promoting the development of sustainable communities by bringing people into these towns and villages to carry out their council business, they are likely to use the shops and other facilities available in the towns

5 PROPOSED SERVICE PROVISION

5.1 The service provided by the satellite offices will be as now (as per Paragraph 3.1 above) and will be expanded by the introduction of the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. This will enable the customer service centres to handle the same range of services as the call centre (see Appendix A).

5.2 The satellite offices will not be as fully able as Huntingdon to provide a comprehensive service where Huntingdon relies on back office support – for example

homelessness matters and viewing Planning documents. The physical location of either service support or paperwork will enforce some restrictions. However, where IT access is enabled, customers in the market towns will receive a greater range of services than they do now. It is also hoped that space will be available to allow officers from Huntingdon to work at the Customer Service Centres, for example Housing Benefit assessors, when required.

6 FINANCIAL

6.1 Most of the costs involved with setting up the CSC in Huntingdon have already been approved by Members as part of the Customer First and New Headquarters programmes. This paper therefore only highlights the additional costs of establishing St Ives and St Neots as satellite offices of the Customer Service Centre.

6.2 No account has been taken of communications or advertising costs. Such costs will be met from existing budgets.

6.3 To convert St Neots and St Ives Cash Offices to Customer Service Centres there will be additional costs over and above those already approved for Huntingdon. Specifically, the installation of the Customer Relationship Management System to two additional sites will be £4,000, which will be met from additional underspends and savings.

7 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that

- Members note the approach to developing the Customer Service team and approve the change in name of the cash offices at St Ives and St Neots

Contact officer

Julia Barber
Head of Revenues Services
01480 388105

Appendix A

Services currently provided by the Call Centre that would be available to CSC staff via the CRM system

- Request or remove Bin or bags
- Notify missed collection
- Order bulky collection
- Street cleansing
- Grounds and Trees
- Change of Address
- Assisted rubbish collection request
- Clinical collection request
- Street name plates problem reporting
- Change of name
- Various other Streetscene issues

In addition to these service requests the call centre also log quick queries when we provide the customer with the information or correct number to call. There is quite an extensive list for the quick queries which include:

- Car Parks
- Dogs
- Electoral Registration
- Housing - Home energy advice
- Pest Control
- Planning
- Streetscene - inc - Assets, Domestic refuse, Recycling, Street cleansing and Trade waste
- Land Charges
- Other HDC department information
- Other non HDC - including CCC, Highways, Luminous group, recycling centres etc.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY (SERVICE SUPPORT)
CABINET

13 FEBRUARY 2007
22 FEBRUARY 2007

CASH PAYMENTS

REPORT BY HEAD OF REVENUE SERVICES

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The current cashiering provision at Huntingdon, St Ives and St Neots is under review and plans are being developed to expand the range of customer services in these three locations. As well as offering a wider range of services, a more modern environment would improve customer relations. Part of this would be a move to a more 'open plan' service environment.

1.2 Moving to such an environment has implications for staff safety (especially at the satellite offices). As a result of this development, officers have examined the feasibility of moving cash payments away from the cash offices and using alternative payment services instead. Three alternative service providers have provided quotes to handle cash payments. All of these providers have many more outlets than the three we currently provide, and include Post Offices and other payment points within the community.

1.3 Moving cash payments to an alternative payment provider would improve services to our customers (by enabling payments to be made close to their home) as well as supporting economic development within the villages and market towns through increased use of Post Offices and local shops.

2 ALTERNATIVE SERVICE PROVISION – HOW IT WORKS

2.1 Customers who pay by cash will be offered a plastic payment card to take to the post office or other payment point. They present the card (which is encrypted with their council tax payment details) and a sum of cash to the teller. The teller swipes the card which creates a file that is passed overnight to the banking system. At the same time a receipt is produced and the card and receipt are handed back to the customer.

2.2 The next morning, the banking file is downloaded to the Council's IT system and payments are posted to the individuals council tax account the following day. Although the bank file is received the next day (or the day after), the payment does not reach our bank account for several days. Financial information at paragraph 8 indicates the cash flow cost of these delays.

2.3 The bulk of our cash payments are for council tax, and this report focuses on handling these payments. For other payments (for example sundry debt accounts) a barcoded form would need to be provided which could be read by the alternative payment providers.

3 MEETING THE COUNCIL'S AIMS

3.1 In considering the effects of ceasing to take cash payments, the following aims from Growing Success are considered.

Access

Enabling people to have access to services. By opening up the service provision to include Post Offices and other payment handlers, people will be able to access this service where it suits them best.

Carbon Emissions

By enabling cash payments to be made throughout the district, the Council will contribute towards the reduction of carbon emissions by reducing the number of journeys by car to Huntingdon, St Ives and St Neots.

Sustainable Communities

Promoting the development of sustainable communities by supporting the use of local Post Offices and other facilities.

Efficiency and Finances

By developing or amending our provision we may seek to reduce costs but they may stay the same whilst offering enhanced service provision.

4 THE ALTERNATIVE SERVICE PROVIDERS

4.1 Officers have met with the three main service providers in the market and have received quotations from each of them. The number and type of service outlets is shown below.

	Post Office	Pay Point	Pay Zone
Alliance & Leicester (Post Office Girobank)	✓	✓	
Cooperative Bank	✓	✓	
AllPay Ltd	✓		✓

4.2 Pay Point and Pay Zone services are provided by retailers, usually in convenience stores or petrol stations. Typically, all the alternative payment providers take payments for utility companies, local authorities and mobile phone top ups and are known to people who tend to use cash rather than bank accounts.

4.3 We have 44 Post Offices and 21 Pay Points in the District. There are no details available of Pay Zone outlets in Cambridgeshire.

5 CURRENT SERVICE PROVISION

5.1 The three cash offices currently undertake other duties apart from taking payments. For St Ives and St Neots, approximately 30% of their time is spent handling cash. For Huntingdon, only 10% of their time is spent handling cash.

5.2 If cash payments are moved so that customers can pay cash elsewhere, and the Council decides to stop accepting cash at the cash offices, then the following amount of capacity is created.

	Staff numbers (FTE)	
St Neots	2 x 30%	0.6 FTE
St Ives	1.2 x 30%	0.3 FTE
Huntingdon	2 x 10%	0.2 FTE
	Total spare capacity	1.1 FTE

5.3 The spare capacity at Huntingdon will not be realised as there will be more back office work (downloading the files, balancing, reconciliation etc). This gives spare capacity at the satellite offices of just under 1 FTE.

6 PROPOSED SERVICE PROVISION

6.1 It is proposed that the customer service advisors stop taking cash payments and transfer this service to an alternative service provider.

6.2 Members should note that officers will still need to handle limited amounts of cash. For example, the canteen takings and petty cash payments for photocopies etc. Cash payments are often made at court when the Council is taking enforcement action. These payments will continue to be handled in cash.

6.3 Other types of payment (cheques, debit card etc) will continue to be handled by all three customer service centres.

7 OTHER MATTERS

7.1 As a result of not having cash on the premises, it will not be necessary to have two staff at the satellite offices at all times. To date, two staff have been retained at the satellite offices on health and safety grounds. If cash is no longer on the premises, the risk to staff is reduced and it is possible to have only one member of staff on duty at quiet periods. This enables the reduction in staffing numbers to be realised.

7.2 No redundancies are planned as a result of this change. Any reduction in staffing numbers would be achieved through natural wastage and only when the new procedures are fully implemented. This will involve a 'crossover' period of about six months (where alternative payment handlers are established, but cash payments are still handled at the Customer Service Centres). Should this change be approved, a paper will be prepared for ELAG and Employment Panel.

7.3 The cash payment cards will only be available to customers who pay by cash and not as a general facility for other payers. This is to keep transaction costs within planned estimates.

7.4 As well as offering many more payment locations, the proposed changes enable the introduction of a more open plan customer service environment, assist St Neots Town Council with their plans to adapt the office space at the Priory Centre and allow flexibility in seeking new accommodation in St Ives.

7.5 The cost of communicating the new procedures to customers will be provided from within existing budgets.

8 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The annual cost of an alternative payment provider handling cash is approximately £21k based on a sampling of existing cash transactions and assumed transactions of 40,000 per year. This will vary by £4.4k for a variation of 10,000 transactions. There is also a loss of interest on cash flow, as the cash reaches the Council's bank later, of between £2k and £7k depending on the provider appointed. £2k has been assumed for this report.
- 8.2 It has been assumed that payments will be made to the new providers as quickly as they would have been paid to the Council.
- 8.4 The cost of 0.9FTE of a cashier is in the region of £18k (including NI and pension).
- 8.6 Initial set up costs are £3k for the issue of cards. Set up of the feeder from the data file provided by the provider to the Council's systems is expected to be straightforward as it mirrors the existing process used for bank records and can be achieved from within existing staff time. Initial set up of barcode generation is expected to be straightforward but may require some consultancy time and in house support. To allow the new service to settle in, both with customers and operationally, there will be a transitional period of three months before the staff saving can be achieved which will result in a one-off additional cost of £4.5k.
- 8.7 The extra costs will be offset by potential reductions in property costs and anticipated reductions in the volume of transactions. Until that time they will need to be the first call on further corporate savings.
- 8.8 The table below, based on July 2007 commencement, summarises the position and highlights that there will be no long term additional cost if transactions fall to 30,000 per year:

	2007/08			2008/09 onwards		
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Transaction volume>>>	30,000	40,000	50,000	30,000	40,000	50,000
Payments to provider	12	16	20	16	21	26
Loss of interest	2	2	2	2	2	3
Start-up costs	3	3	3	0	0	0
Staff savings	-9	-9	-9	-18	-18	-18
Net Cost	8	12	16	0	5	11
Funded from						
First call on further corporate savings identified pending property savings.	8	12	16	0	5	11

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

That members:

- approve the proposal to stop handling cash (notes and coin) payments at the three customer service centres at an appropriate time and
- authorise officers to select a payment provider to handle cash payments
- note that the net cost will be the first call on additional underspendings and savings.

Contact officer

Julia Barber
Head of Revenue Services
01480 388105

This page is intentionally left blank

**TREASURY MANAGEMENT
INVESTMENT PERFORMANCE
(Report by the Head of Financial Services)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This report comments on the performance of the fund from October to December 2006. The Fund Managers are managing £63m of the Council's funds: £21.5m with Investec, £21.5m with Alliance Bernstein and £20m with CDCM.
- 1.2. The Monetary Policy Committee increased the base rate to 5% on 9th November 2006 and again in January 2007 to 5.25%. This latter increase surprised the markets and commentators; only 1 out of 50 economists surveyed by *The Times* predicted the January increase.

2. PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

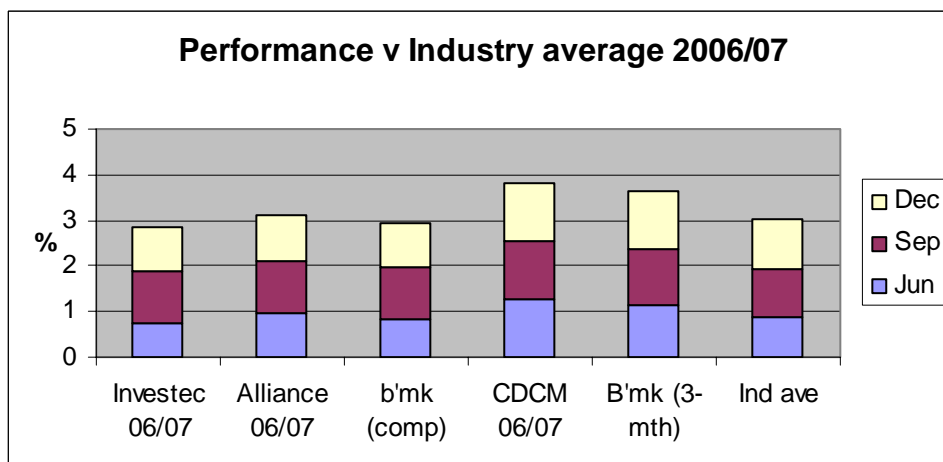
2.1 Annex A provides comparative tables showing investment returns over various periods.

2.2 October to December 2006

The performance of Alliance Bernstein and Investec was disappointing in real terms in the third quarter. The behaviour of the prices of gilts and CD's in this quarter presented an extremely difficult environment for Fund Managers to operate in, and had a detrimental impact on quarterly performances. However they both achieved the benchmark but, as in the first half year, the benchmark was below the rate for 7 day cash, and both Fund Managers underperformed cash. CDCM's performance was much better than the other fund managers, and outperformed 7 day cash by 0.04% but fell slightly below the benchmark by just 0.01%.

2.3 April to December 2006

CDCM continues to outperform Investec and Alliance Bernstein in real terms. Investec has not achieved the benchmark or the industry average for the first 9 months (see graph below) but Alliance Bernstein has marginally exceeded both the benchmark and the industry average.



2.4 Since start of new mandates (July/August 2000)

The Authority appointed the three Fund Managers and gave them new mandates in 2000. It has always been accepted that our mandates and choice of managers will lead to fluctuations but that in the longer run higher overall returns should be achieved. Since 2000 this is still the case as they are all exceeding their benchmarks, the industry average and the 7 day rate. CDCM is the best performing of the three Managers.

3. PERFORMANCE AGAINST BUDGET IN 2006/07

- 3.1** The last budgetary control report indicated that the budget for interest would be exceeded by £116k and this is still the case with improved cash flow and spending deferrals compensate for lower interest rates.

4. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

- 4.1** The Strategy considered by Cabinet on 1 February highlighted the intention of withdrawing our funds from Alliance Bernstein over the next few months.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1** It is recommended that Cabinet note this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Working papers in Financial Services

CONTACT OFFICER

Steve Couper – Head of Financial Services Tel. 01480 388103

ANNEX A

PERFORMANCE FOR THE QUARTER OCTOBER 2006 – DECEMBER 2006					
	Performance %	Benchmark %	Variation from benchmark	Industry average %	Variation from average %
Investec	0.96	0.95*	+0.01	1.06	-0.10
Alliance	1.03	0.95*	+0.08	1.06	-0.03
CDCM	1.28	1.29**	-0.01	1.06	+0.22

PERFORMANCE FOR THE PERIOD APRIL 2006 – DECEMBER 2006					
	Performance %	Benchmark %	Variation from benchmark	Industry average %	Variation from average %
Investec	2.87	2.96*	-0.09	3.04	-0.17
Alliance	3.27	2.96*	+0.31	3.04	+0.23
CDCM	3.82	3.66**	+0.16	3.04	+0.78

CUMULATIVE PERFORMANCE SINCE JULY 2000					
	Performance %	Benchmark %	Variation from benchmark	Industry average %	Variation from average %
Investec	34.2	33.9	+0.3	32.2	+2.0
Alliance #	34.7	33.3	+1.4	31.6	+3.1
CDCM	35.8	32.0	+3.8	32.2	+3.6

The mandate with Alliance Bernstein started in August 2000

* Composite of 60% Merrill Lynch 3 month LIBID (London Inter-Bank Bid Rate) and 40% ML 0-5yr Gilt Index.

** 3 month LIBID

This page is intentionally left blank

CABINET

22nd February 2007

**DRAFT ISSUES AND OPTIONS FOR CORE STRATEGY DPD
AMENDMENT
(Report by Head of Planning Services)**

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report informs Members of the draft Issues and Options proposed for consultation with statutory consultees and stakeholders on the amendment to the Spatial Vision and Strategy element of the Core Strategy DPD as requested by the Inspector at the pre-examination meeting into the Core Strategy. The draft paper is contained in appendix A.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Following the publication of the Inspector's reports of the examinations into the Lichfield and Stafford Core Strategy Development Plan Documents, the Government clarified its approach regarding the required content of Core Strategies. Consequently the Council had discussions with the Government Office for the East of England about the need for further work to supplement the spatial element of our Core Strategy.
- 2.2 The Inspector appointed to consider the soundness of our Core Strategy duly postponed the planned date for the commencement of the examination into the strategy (which had been scheduled for January 2007). This postponement was to allow the Council to address the need to produce additional spatial guidance, particularly regarding the potential location of new housing and employment development. Since this time Go-East has requested that further guidance also be provided on the potential location of retail development.
- 2.3 Particular emphasis has been placed on the need to identify broad directions of growth in Core Strategies to provide guidance for site specific allocations in Planning Proposals DPDs. In order to ascertain the suitability of broad areas for growth it was necessary to first undertake the Housing Land Availability Assessment and the Employment Land Review to provide the required evidence base. With draft versions of these documents substantially complete it was possible to identify broad directions where growth might be suitable.
- 2.4 The draft consultation paper has also taken account of the proposed changes to the East of England Plan and PPS3: Housing (December 2006).

3 HOUSING, EMPLOYMENT AND RETAIL REQUIREMENTS

- 3.1 The Draft East of England Plan has confirmed an allocation of 11,200 new homes to be built in Huntingdonshire for the period 2001 – 2021. The housing numbers

allocated to a district should be regarded as a minimum target to be achieved. 8,500 houses have already been built or committed for the period 2001-2006 leaving 2,700 to find.

- 3.2 However, PPS3 specifies that Local Planning Authorities should set out policies and strategies that will enable continuous delivery of housing for at least 15 years from the date of adoption. It is anticipated that the Core Strategy will be adopted at the end of 2008. To ensure a 15 year supply the strategy would need to consider housing delivery up to 2024. The draft East of England Plan advises that the annual average rate of housing required for 2006-2021 should continue to be sought during the early years after 2021. For Huntingdonshire this means a further 550 homes per year would be required from 2021 until 2024, equal to a further 1650 homes. This gives a total of 4,350 homes to find.
- 3.3 Updated labour supply and demand projections forecast the provision of 8,000 additional jobs for period 2006 – 2016. The draft Employment Land Review (2007) identifies 70ha of employment land which is allocated and could contribute to creating sustainable, mixed communities. A further 60ha of employment land needs to be identified to meet demand to 2021.
- 3.4 The Huntingdonshire Retail Assessment Study (2005) considered the potential additional floorspace requirements to 2021 for convenience and comparison retailing. This has been supplemented by an Update (2007) giving more detailed assessments on potential distribution of the overall requirement. The study suggests a target of 21,600 sq m net additional comparison floorspace and 3,900 sq m net additional convenience floorspace.
- 3.5 Altogether the Core Strategy needs to consider the most sustainable broad directions of growth for 4,350 additional homes, 60 ha of employment land and 21,600 sq m of retail floorspace. The Core Strategy should give a broad spatial indication of the scale and location of growth. The proposed Issues and Options consultation paper considers how this might be achieved.

4 CONSULTATION

- 4.1 This draft Issues and Options paper was first discussed by Members at the Development Plans Advisory Group on 24 January. It was presented to Development Control Panel on 5th February and, following some amendments to the text, to Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) on 13th February. The intention is to proceed to Regulation 25 consultation with statutory consultees and other stakeholders, including town and parish councils by April subject to Go-East approving a revised Local Development Scheme. The representations received and our proposed responses to them will subsequently be reported to Members.

5. RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 That the Cabinet approve the attached draft Issues and Options paper (incorporating minor amendments from the DC Panel and Overview and Scrutiny Panel) for the purposes of consulting with statutory consultees, the community and stakeholders.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Huntingdonshire Core Strategy Submission DPD (April 2006)
Huntingdonshire Housing Land Availability Assessment (draft January 2007)
Huntingdonshire Employment Land Review (draft results January 2007)
PPS3: Housing (2006)
Minutes of the Pre-Examination Meeting into the Soundness of the
Huntingdonshire Core Strategy DPD (20 September 2006)

CONTACT OFFICER: Clare Bond, Principal Planner (Policy)
Tel: 01480 388435

This page is intentionally left blank

Core Strategy Amendment: Issues and Options

Section A: Background Information

1. Introduction

1.1 This amendment to the Huntingdonshire Core Strategy (submitted April 2006) should be read in conjunction with that document, in particular with chapter 2. At the pre-examination meeting held in September 2006 the Inspector requested that the examination be postponed to allow for further consultation on the spatial vision and strategy for the district including the scale and broad directions of future growth. It has been prepared in light of the proposed changes to the East of England Plan and the publication of PPS3: Housing in December 2006.

1.2 The vision set out in the submitted Core Strategy aspires for Huntingdonshire to continue to provide a good quality of life as a place which offers:

- Continued economic success
- Opportunities for everyone to gain access to suitable homes, jobs and services; and
- An attractive environment which is conserved and enhanced

1.3 It acknowledges that to achieve this, and to make the most of the opportunities that come from growth, we will need to:

- Accommodate development in a sustainable manner;
- Ensure that the nature of development meets local needs
- Secure developments that respond to the distinctive character of Huntingdonshire's towns, villages and countryside; and
- Achieve major improvements in infrastructure and community facilities.

1.4 Huntingdonshire's towns, villages and countryside offer diverse and attractive environments in which to live and work, each having their own distinctive character and role in the district.

Market Towns

1.5 Huntingdon is the administrative centre and is located toward the centre of the district on the northern valley sides of the River Great Ouse. It is accessible from the A14, which passes around the southern perimeter of the town. The south eastern edge of the town has a strong association with the river and the historic core of the town, which is centred on the High Street, remains intact. Huntingdon is a major housing and employment centre which is well served by road infrastructure (A1 and A14) and the east coast mainline railway. It also has a strong retail sector and functions as the primary shopping centre for the District.

1.6 St Neots is, in population terms, the largest settlement in the District. It is an historic market town which established on the banks of the River Great Ouse. This settlement has expanded significantly over recent years and the smaller and previously independent settlements of Eaton Socon, Eaton Ford and Eynesbury to the south and west have been largely assimilated into the urban fabric of St Neots, their historic character is still recognisable within the town. St Neots has its own railway station located in the north eastern quarter of the town, and has easy access to the A1. It is connected to Cambridge via the A428. Attracting retail,

leisure and employment development to St Neots is challenging due to competition from Bedford and Cambridge.

- 1.7 St Ives is an historic market town situated on the northern bank of the river Great Ouse. The town contains many original buildings and has a distinctive medieval street pattern. The form of the settlement is relatively unusual in that it has grown asymmetrically to the north of the river; the extensive floodplain to the south being retained as open land. The historic core of the town developed around the bridge over the River Great Ouse, and along the northern bank of the river which was an important mode of transport, part of this frontage still being known as The Quay. St Ives has developed a base of small specialist shops which have enabled it to successfully compete with the other market towns. St Ives is a picturesque town and is a popular destination for tourists and visitors.
- 1.8 Ramsey is located on the edge of the fenland landscape. The original settlement has effectively merged with the village of Bury and is referred to as the Market Town of Ramsey and Bury. Ramsey has a wide variety of urban character. Of particular note is the 'historic core' centred on High Street and Great Whyte and the 'abbey greens' associated with the former Abbey to the north of the town. The road system around Ramsey is not adequate and restricts the scale of future development of the town. Ramsey continues to be the focus of a number of regeneration initiatives and is developing its heritage assets.

Key Centres

- 1.9 Ten Key Centres are identified in the submitted Core Strategy all of which offer a reasonable range of shops and services, local employment opportunities and public transport services. Key Centres (Potential Growth) generally have greater employment opportunities and good access by foot, cycle or public transport to a city or market town compared to Key Centres (Limited Growth). Yaxley, Godmanchester, Sawtry, Brampton, Fenstanton and Little Paxton are categorised in the submitted Core Strategy as Key Centres (Potential Growth). These villages expanded rapidly in the 1970s, 80s and 90s and as a result their character has changed significantly. Warboys, Somersham, Buckden and Kimbolton are categorised as Key Centres (Limited Growth).
- 1.10 Some of the Key Centres (Potential Growth) have strong linkages with nearby Market Towns, in particular Brampton and Godmanchester with Huntingdon and Little Paxton with St Neots. Yaxley has strong linkages with Peterborough. Fenstanton and Sawtry have weaker linkages with any single nearby settlement both being adjacent to major transport routes giving greater options for accessing employment and higher order services and facilities.

Transport Infrastructure

- 1.11 There will be significant enhancement of transport links between Cambridge and the market towns that surround it, achieved through the implementation of the County Transport Plan. High quality public transport services will be developed in the Cambridge-Huntingdon corridor (to include a guided bus route between Cambridge and St Ives and on street bus priority measures between St Ives and Huntingdon) and along the A428 between Cambridge and St Neots. These measures will be complemented by major road improvements in these corridors, including a new route for the A14 between Ellington and Fen Drayton. The District Council supports the route which will pass to the south of Brampton and

Godmanchester, improving traffic flows and road safety on this key strategic route. Removal of the railway viaduct at Huntingdon as part of the scheme will also enable improved local road access to Huntingdon town centre. Delivery of these improvements will influence the distribution and phasing of residential and employment development.

- 1.12 Within each market town packages of integrated highway, public transport, cycling and walking improvements will be implemented through a programme of market town transport strategies and, where appropriate, by developer-led funding through planning obligations. A park & ride site will be developed at St Ives (in association with the proposed guided bus route). Consideration may be given to a second site serving Huntingdon and Godmanchester. At Yaxley, traffic on the A15 will be relieved through construction of a western peripheral road at Hampton, joining the A15 south of Yaxley with the Fletton Parkway in the north.
- 1.13 Improved access will be made from villages to the market towns and Peterborough, with better public and community transport services and further development of local and long-distance cycle routes. At the same time, significant improvements in the accessibility of services will be made possible through the increased availability and use of information technology (such as broadband internet access).

2. Housing, Employment and Retail Requirements

Housing

- 2.1 The Draft East of England Plan has confirmed an allocation of 11,200 new houses to be built in Huntingdonshire for the period 2001 – 2021. The housing numbers allocated to a district should be regarded as a minimum target to be achieved.
- 2.2 8,500 houses that have been built or committed for the period 2001-2006. The table below shows the location of these.

Location	Completions 2001-2006	Commitments at March 2006
Market Towns	1600	3750
Key Centres (Potential Growth)	750	1310
Key Centres (Limited Growth)	140	120
Rural Areas	410	480
Total	2900	5660
Balance of housing to be found	2700 dwellings up to 2021	

- 2.3 The thrust of settlement policy set out in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan (2003) and the draft East of England Plan (December 2006) has shifted towards an urban focus with greater emphasis on re-using previously developed sites. 85% of outstanding commitments are now located in Market Towns and Key Centres (Potential Growth). This compares to 81% of the housing completed in 2001-2006. If this trend continues then Huntingdonshire will successfully contribute to achieving the national focus on more urban growth.
- 2.4 The proportion of outstanding commitments in Key Centres (Limited Growth) and in the rural area stands at just 15%. PPS3: Housing (2006) acknowledges the need to provide housing not only in market town and local service centres but also in villages to enhance and maintain their sustainability. Current commitments should satisfy the immediate demand for housing making it unnecessary to allocate further housing in many villages. However, a limited amount of

development can still be expected to occur on small, previously developed sites in villages where this makes the best use of the land.

2.5 A draft Housing Land Availability Assessment has been completed to provide information on the availability and suitability of land for housing development. This has revealed that it may be possible to accommodate approximately 8650 dwellings in and around the Market Towns and Key Centres. These will not all be required to meet the housing target for the District for the next 15 years.

2.6 PPS3 specifies that Local Planning Authorities should set out their policies and strategies for housing delivery that will enable continuous delivery of housing for at least 15 years from the date of adoption. It is anticipated that the Core Strategy will be adopted at the end of 2008. To ensure a 15 year supply the strategy would need to consider housing delivery up to 2024. The draft East of England Plan addresses this issue and advises that the annual average rate of housing required for 2006-2021 should continue to be sought during the early years after 2021. For Huntingdonshire this means that provision of a further 550 homes per year would be required from 2021 until 2024. To achieve this land for a further 1650 homes will be required over and above the balance of 2700 homes to be found as advised by the East of England Plan (see table in paragraph 2.2 above).

Employment

2.7 Updated labour supply and demand projections forecast the provision of 8,000 additional jobs for period 2006 – 2016. The Employment Land Review (2007) identified a net take up of just over 8 ha of new employment land per annum over the five years from 2002 and 32 ha of new and deliverable employment land available for development.

Location	Taken Up (2002 – 06) ha	Available Deliverable ha	Not Brought Forward ha
Market Towns	24	16.9	7.2
Key Centres (Potential Growth)	9.7	11.1	8
Key Centres (Limited Growth)	2.6	1.6	2.4
Peterborough border	1.7	-	-
Rural Areas	4	2	0.8
Total	42	31.6	18.4

2.8 To support continuing economic growth, there is a requirement to bring forward sufficient land of a suitable quality in the right locations to meet expected needs for industrial and commercial development, taking into account accessibility and sustainable transport needs and provision of essential infrastructure. However the scale of employment land need for the period to 2021 will be the product of a complex interplay of factors shaping the demand for new accommodation and supply of new and existing employment land and property. It is anticipated that the main factors will concern: overall national economic growth; local labour supply and demand and changing conditions for business competitiveness most notably the need to reduce CO2 emissions and unsustainable modes of transport for employees and the distribution of goods.

2.9 In this context, two options are proposed. The first is the business as usual option. This assumes a net requirement of 93 ha based on a projection of development trends over the five years from 2002. The second is the business competitiveness

option. This assumes a net requirement of 60 ha and acknowledges the impacts of constraints on the labour supply and need to adjust to climate change.

Retail

- 2.10 The Huntingdonshire Retail Assessment Study (2005) considered the potential additional floorspace requirements to 2021 for convenience and comparison retailing. This has been supplemented by an Update (2007) giving more detailed assessments on potential distribution of the overall requirement. The study suggests a target of 21,600 sq m net additional comparison floorspace and 3,900 sq m net additional convenience floorspace. At present a high proportion of money spent by residents on comparison goods goes to Cambridge, Peterborough and Bedford rather than being spent in shops in our market towns and villages. This figure proposed allows for a slight increase in the proportion of expenditure retained locally as a result of more attractive retail opportunities being offered.
- 2.11 The Study recommends the target of 21,600 sq m net additional comparison floorspace should be distributed as 12,900 sq m to Huntingdon, 6,500sq m to St Neots and 2,100 sq m to other locations in the district. The scale of convenience floorspace required is far more modest and is the result of expenditure increases post 2011.

Summary

- 2.12 Taking into account the houses which have been built or committed since 2001 and the 70 ha of allocated and deliverable employment land, sites for new allocations for a further 4350 homes, either 60 ha or 93 ha of employment land and 21,600 sq m of retail floorspace need to be identified in the Development Proposals DPD and the Huntingdon West Area Action Plan for the period to 2021. Altogether the Core Strategy needs to consider the most sustainable broad directions of growth and the Core Strategy should give a broad spatial indication of its scale and location.

3. The submitted Core Strategy's approach

Housing

- 3.1 The submitted Core Strategy has objectives to:
- enable required growth to be accommodated in locations which limit the need to travel, while catering for local needs
 - ensure that the types of dwellings built are suited to the requirements of the local population, and that an appropriate proportion of units is 'affordable' to those in need
 - enable the specialist housing needs of particular groups to be met in appropriate locations
- 3.2 The submitted Core Strategy also says that in accordance with the need to make maximum use of previously developed land and the best use of land and existing infrastructure:
- major housing development of 10 or more dwellings should be accommodated in the Market Towns and Key Centres (Potential Growth) which offer a range of

services and facilities to residents with the minimum need to travel to access them;

- minor housing development up to nine dwellings should be accommodated in the Market Towns, Key Centres (Potential Growth) and Key Centres (Limited Growth) which offer a basic range of services and public transport appropriate to the form of housing to be provided.

3.3 The means to achieve housing development within this framework are to:

- promote mixed use schemes on large previously developed sites in the town centres of Market Towns and then sequentially on the edge of town centres and locations with good access to high quality public transport;
- promote housing schemes on smaller previously developed sites in the town centres of Market Town and then sequentially on the edge of town centres and locations with good access to high quality public transport;
- consider some large greenfield releases on the edge of the defined limits of settlements where balanced, comprehensive and mixed use development can deliver physical and social infrastructure, community facilities and opportunities to make necessary journeys by foot, cycle and public transport.
- consider some small greenfield releases on the edge of the defined limits of settlements where new housing and related investment in housing can supplement and make best use of existing infrastructure and facilities and opportunities realised to make necessary journeys by foot, cycle and public transport.

Employment

3.4 The submitted Core Strategy has objectives to:

- facilitate business development in sectors that have potential to meet local employment needs and limit out-commuting
- enable business development in rural areas, in locations and on a scale which helps to provide local jobs, limits commuting and avoids adverse environmental impacts
- help create and sustain strong, diverse communities for the benefit of all members of society.

3.5 The submitted Core Strategy says that in accordance with the need to make maximum use of previously developed land and the best use of land and existing infrastructure:

- office development should be accommodated in the town centres of Market Towns and then sequentially on the edge of town centres and locations with good access to high quality public transport; and
- industrial and warehousing development should be accommodated within the defined limits of the Market Towns and Key Centres (Potential and Limited Growth) and sites within established industrial estates, distribution and business parks.

3.6 The means to achieve employment development within this framework are to:

- promote mixed use schemes on previously developed land in the town centres of Market Towns and then sequentially on the edge of town centres and locations with good access to high quality public transport;

- consider some greenfield releases on the edge of the defined limits of settlements where balanced, comprehensive and mixed use development can deliver physical and social infrastructure, community facilities and opportunities to make necessary journeys by foot, cycle and public transport; and
- consider some greenfield releases on the edge of the defined limits of settlements where new employment development and related investment can supplement and make best use of existing infrastructure linked to established industrial estates, distribution and business parks and opportunities realised to make necessary journeys by foot, cycle and public transport.

Retail

3.7 The submitted Core Strategy has objectives to:

- strengthen the vitality and viability of Huntingdonshire's town centres as places for shopping and leisure
- to maintain and enhance the availability of key services and facilities in villages

3.8 The submitted Core Strategy says that in order to focus retail developments in the most sustainable locations possible in terms of accessibility and to not have an adverse impact upon town centre facilities:

- major retail developments (<500 sq m gross) should only be accommodated in the town centres of Market Towns and then sequentially on the edge of town centres and locations with potential to maximise accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport
- minor retail developments (>500 sq m gross) should be accommodated within Market Towns and Key Centres (Potential and Limited Growth) and within Smaller Settlements where the site offers potential to maximise accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport

3.9 The means to achieve retail development within this framework are to:

- promote mixed use schemes on large previously developed sites in the town centres of Market Towns and then sequentially on the edge of town centres and locations with potential to maximise accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport;
- consider smaller sites within the defined limits of existing settlements where the development would not have an adverse impact on the range of existing retail facilities in the settlement

Section B: Issues and Options

Issues to consider

When considering where new development should be built there are a number of issues which need to be considered.

Issue 1 - The need for sustainable development.

This could involve promoting development which:

- minimises greenhouse gas emissions
- reduces the need to travel and maximises accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport
- caters for local needs
- minimises risk to flooding and climate change
- helps create and sustain strong, diverse communities for the benefit of all members of society

Issue 2 – The need to take account of major infrastructure proposals

A number of major infrastructure developments are expected to be completed within the next 15 years which will significantly affect the district. These include the re-routing of the A14, the construction of the guided busway to St Ives and on-road bus priority measures to Huntingdon. Further into the future when a study is anticipated to consider options for improving the A428. These could involve:

- phasing development to reflect completion of infrastructure supply
- promoting development in locations with improved public transport services

Issue 3 - The need to provide housing for all members of the community

Huntingdonshire's current and future residents require a significant range of housing types, tenures and cost to meet their needs. Strategic Housing Market assessments will provide information and guidance on the proportion of households seeking market and affordable housing, the likely profile of household types requiring market housing and the size and type of affordable housing required. This could involve promoting development which:

- provides a range of housing types to meet the requirements of the local population
- ensure that an appropriate proportion of units is 'affordable' to those in need
- meets the specialist housing needs of particular groups within the community in appropriate locations.

Issue 4 – The need to provide employment opportunities

Huntingdonshire's business sector will need to evolve and grow if it is to remain competitive in the local, national and international economies and provide suitable employment opportunities for residents and the wider workforce. This could involve promoting development which:

- addresses economic structural change – the decline of traditional manufacturing and run down of defence bases – through the attraction of high order economic and high technology related activities
- provides existing businesses with real choice across a range of needs through competition
- caters for local needs, for example, in Ramsey where there is deficit of jobs
- offers a supply of land which the market will find sufficiently attractive to develop rather than land bank in the hope of a later change to higher value uses

Issue 5 – The need to provide retail opportunities

Huntingdonshire's retail sector will need to evolve and grow if it is to provide viable facilities which are attractive to the local community. Vibrant town centres offering an attractive range of retail and related facilities can significantly contribute to people's quality of life, reduce the need to travel and help retain a higher proportion of expenditure locally. This could involve promoting development which:

- is attractive to the retail sector
- will contribute to the vitality and viability of existing town centres
- caters for local needs

Question 1 - Are there any other issues which we need to consider?

Spatial planning areas

The following areas reflect the economic and social relationships between settlements within the district.

Huntingdon area

The Huntingdon area, including Huntingdon, Brampton and Godmanchester, had 31,000 residents in 2005. The area is a key driver of the local economy. Huntingdon is identified in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan (2003) as locations for future growth in the Cambridge Sub Region. The Housing Land Availability Assessment (HLAA) recently completed by the Council identified that this area offers significant opportunities for development. The realignment of the A14 could have significant implications for development opportunities, particularly post 2015.

St Neots area

The St Neots area, including St Neots and Little Paxton, had a population of 31,200 in 2005. Coupled with land in Bedfordshire around Wyboston, the area is also a key driver of the local economy. St Neots is identified in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan (2003) as locations for future growth in the Cambridge Sub Region. The HLAA recently completed by the Council identified that this area offers significant opportunities for development.

St Ives

St Ives is smaller in scale than Huntingdon and St Neots with a population of just under 16,000 in 2005. It offers fewer opportunities for sustainable development options. The HLAA identified a limited number of suitable sites with flooding being a major constraint. However, St Ives is within the prosperous Cambridge sub-region and will see significant changes in accessibility with the completion of the guided bus route.

Ramsey area

The Ramsey area, including Ramsey and Bury, but excluding Ramsey Forty Foot, Ramsey Heights, Ramsey Mereside and Ramsey St Marys, had a population of around 8,000 in 2005. Major housing growth was discounted by the Inspector during the 2002 Local Plan alteration due to Ramsey's poor sustainability. It has relatively poor transport infrastructure and, despite previous allocations, has limited employment opportunities.

Key Centres (Potential Growth)

Several of these are closely associated with market towns and could offer particularly sustainable opportunities for access to jobs, services and facilities. Others are more free-standing and further development could help make them more self-contained. The HLAA showed considerable variation in the number of houses different settlements in this category could accommodate. The Employment Land Review identified available allocated employment land in Fenstanton, Yaxley and Sawtry.

Key Centres (Limited Growth)

The submitted Core Strategy only recommends development sites of up to 9 dwellings in this category of settlement. Due to the small scale of sites involved directions of growth have not been identified as they would be too site specific.

Options to consider for housing growth

The scale of housing growth is pre-determined by the East of England Plan as described in paragraph 2.1. This sets a target of 550 new homes per year. Up to 2021 land for just 2,700 new homes needs to be found. However, to ensure a 15 year supply of land consideration needs to be given up to 2024 which results in a total target of 4,350 new homes.

There are many ways that the necessary number of new homes could be distributed across the district. We need to make fundamental choices on whether the district should pursue a very intense urban focus for new growth or a more dispersed approach; whether priority should always be given to re-use of brownfield land or whether in some circumstances developing greenfield land with very good access to services and facilities is preferable. The maps below indicate the scale and direction of growth options in and around each of the main settlements.

Huntingdon and St Neots areas

Huntingdon and St Neots have been identified in strategic guidance as locations for future growth in the Cambridge sub-area. In spatial planning terms the relationship between the Market Towns and their nearby Key Centres (Potential Growth) is an important consideration.

Question 2 – Do you agree with the approach of considering market towns in conjunction with adjoining key centres?

When considering development in these two areas the following options have been identified:

- Option 1 - Plan that the Huntingdon area should get most of the growth
- Option 2 – Plan that the St Neots area should get most of the growth
- Option 3 - Encourage both areas to grow at a similar rate

Question 3 - What proportion of growth should be focused in the two main urban areas?

Question 4 - Which of these options would you prefer and why?

Question 5 - Are there any other options which should be considered?

Question 6 - To achieve your chosen option which of the directions of growth shown on the maps would you rather see developed?

St Ives and Ramsey

Strategic guidance indicates that St Ives and Ramsey should receive a smaller level of growth. When considering development in these two locations the following options have been identified.

Option 4 – Allow growth only within the existing built framework in Ramsey and/ or St Ives
Option 5 – Allow small-scale extensions to Ramsey and/ or St Ives

Question 7 - Which of these options would you prefer and why?

Question 8 - Are there any other options which should be considered?

Question 9 - Which of the directions of growth shown on the maps would you rather see developed?

Key Centres Potential Growth

When considering development in key centres that are not closely linked with a market town the following options have been identified.

Option 6 – Plan that development is distributed across all Key Centres (Potential Growth) broadly in proportion to their existing size

Option 7 – Plan to limit development in those settlements which have recently received high levels of growth

Question 10 - Which of these options would you prefer and why?

Question 11 - Are there any other options which should be considered?

Question 12 - Which of the directions of growth shown on the maps would you rather see developed?

Key Centres (Limited Growth)

The submitted Core Strategy only recommends development sites of up to 9 dwellings in this category of settlement. Due to the small scale of sites involved directions of growth have not been identified as they would be too site specific. When considering development in Key Centres (Limited Growth) the following options have been identified.

Option 8 – Plan that development is distributed across all Key Centres (Limited Growth)

Option 9- Plan to focus higher levels of development in Key Centres (Limited Growth) with the best links to market towns or Key Centres (Potential Growth)

Question 13 – Which of these options would you prefer and why?

Question 14 - Are there any other options which should be considered?

Options to consider for employment growth

Overall scale

There are a number of ways in which the overall scale of employment land need can be calculated. One approach is to project recent trends and another is to take into account the impact of changing economic, social and environmental conditions. Two options have been identified:

Option 10 – Plan for a net requirement of 93 ha. This based on a projection of development trends over the five years from 2002. It assumes continued relatively high rates of economic growth, no constraints on the availability of labour and no concessions to climate change.

Option 11 – Plan for a net requirement of 60 ha. This is based on an acknowledgment of constraints to the availability of labour and the impacts of climate change: the policy, business and environmental imperatives to site large scale warehouses at multi modal locations and replace older CO2 emitting stock with zero carbon buildings.

Question 15 – Which of these of options would you prefer and why?

Question 16 – Are there any other options which should be considered?

Overall distribution

There are many ways that the additional employment land could be distributed across the district. We need to consider how much of the total should be located to follow population growth and how much should be located in accordance with market demand for locations in the Huntingdon area, the St Neots area and St Ives as opposed to remaining Key Centres (Potential Growth and Limited Growth) where a number of allocations remain either undeveloped or not brought forward for development.

Option 12 - Plan for location of employment development to follow population growth.

Option 13 – Plan to allow location of employment development to follow the market preference for location in the Huntingdon area, the St Neots area and to a lesser extent St Ives.

Question 17 - Which of these options would you prefer and why?

Question 18 - Are there any other options which you think we should consider?

Question 19 – To achieve your chosen option which of the directions of growth shown would you rather see developed?

Options to consider for retail growth

Overall scale

The Retail Study Update (2007) suggested that the Core Strategy should endeavour to increase the proportion of available expenditure which is spent locally. One way of encouraging this is to provide a greater quantity and choice of shops for people to use which has the added benefit of reducing the need to travel further afield for certain purchases. A target is suggested of 21,600 sq m net of additional comparison retail floorspace and a further 3,900 sq m net of convenience floorspace in the district for the period 2006-2021. This is based on the aspiration of a slow, steady increase in the proportion of expenditure being retained locally.

Option 14 – Plan for a target of 21,600 sq m net additional comparison retail floorspace and 3,900 sq m net additional convenience floorspace

Option 15 – Plan for a higher target

Option 16 – Plan for a lower target

Question 20 – Which of these options do you prefer and why?

Question 21 – If you prefer a lower or higher target what should it be and why?

Overall distribution

A target of 21,600 sq m net additional comparison floorspace is suggested above. The Study identified comparatively strong demand from retailers wishing to open in Huntingdon and an encouraging level of interest in St Neots which has traditionally been considered

less attractive by investors. The distribution given in Option 17 was suggested by the Study. Government guidance dictates that new retail facilities should be in town centres and edge of centre and out of centre locations only considered where this cannot be reasonably achieved. The Study suggested that although the level of quantitative need for convenience floorspace appears low there may be opportunities for provision based on qualitative grounds in order to increase the range of facilities available. In particular it noted the need for a discount foodstore in Huntingdon town centre.

Option 17 – Plan to allow the location of comparison retail growth to follow the market preference resulting in around 12,900 sq m net in Huntingdon, around 6,500 sq m net in St Neots and 2,100 sq m net in other settlements.

Option 18 – Encourage retailing in St Neots and Huntingdon to grow at a similar rate and to a lesser extent in St Ives and Ramsey.

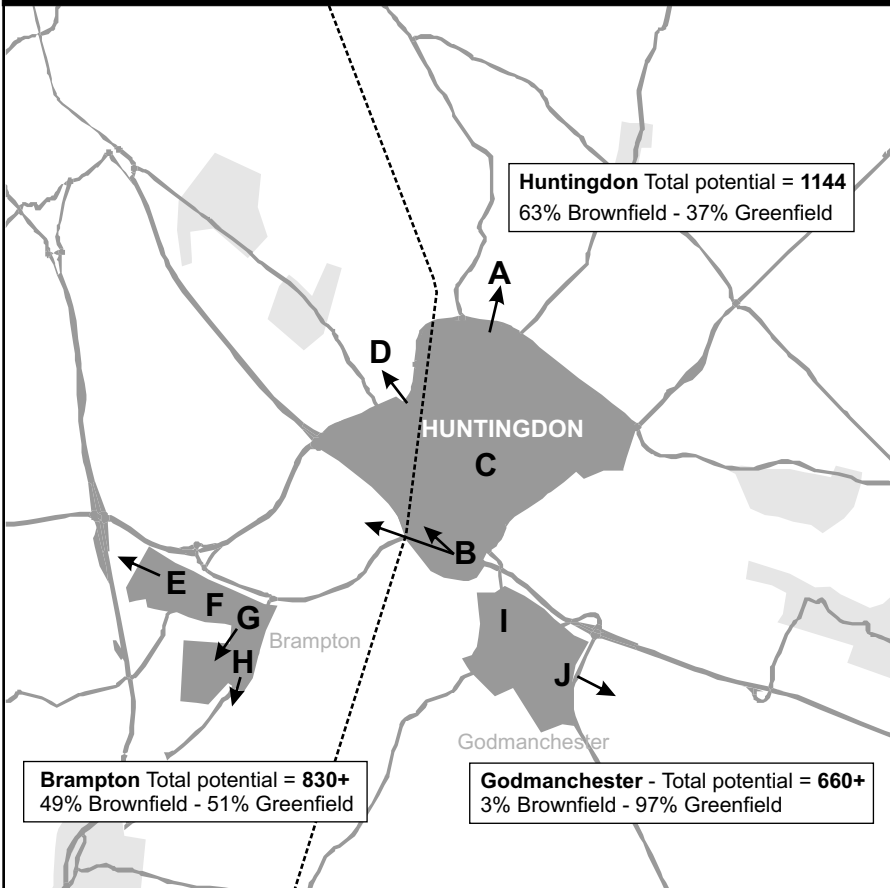
Question 22 - Which of these options would you prefer and why?

Question 23 - Are there any other options which you think we should consider?

DRAFT

Figure 1: Huntingdon

NB. Arrows indicate the potential directions of growth.

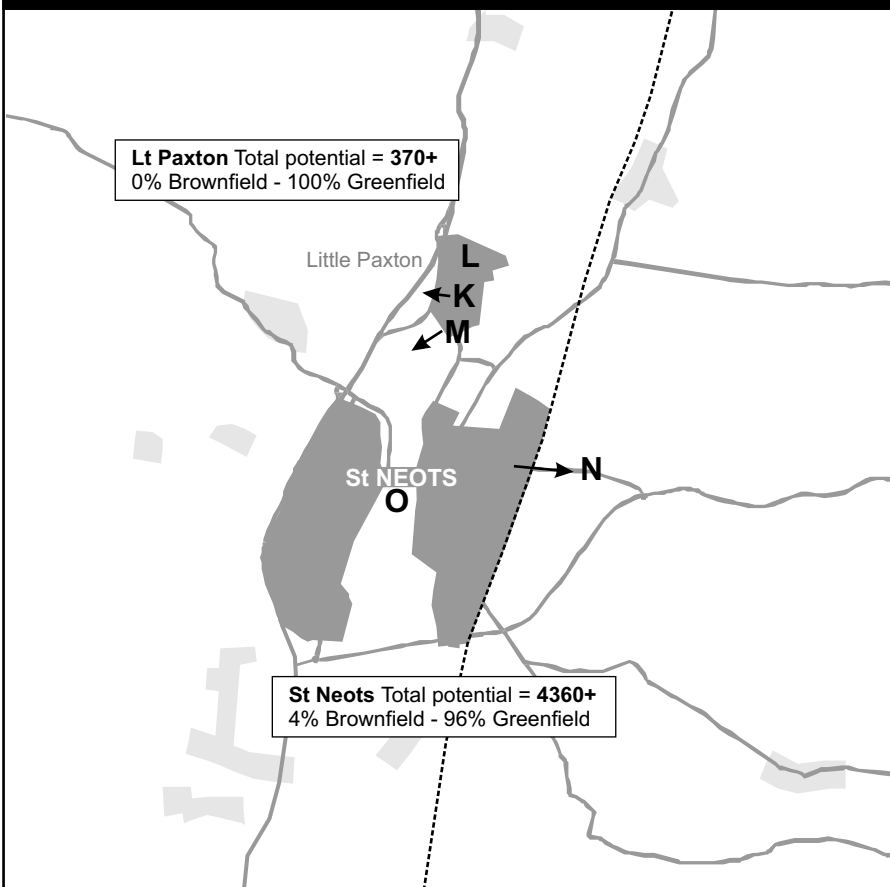


- A. Greenfield development
- B. Brownfield mixed use development
- C. Development of small scale sites within or adjacent to the built up framework
- D. Greenfield employment Development
- E. Greenfield housing development
- F. Development of small scale sites within or adjacent to the existing built up framework
- G. Brownfield mixed use development
- H. Greenfield Employment development
- I. Development of small scale sites within or adjacent to the existing built up framework
- J. Greenfield housing release

(c) Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Huntingdonshire District Council licence No. 100022322

Figure 2: St Neots

NB. Arrows indicate the potential directions of growth.

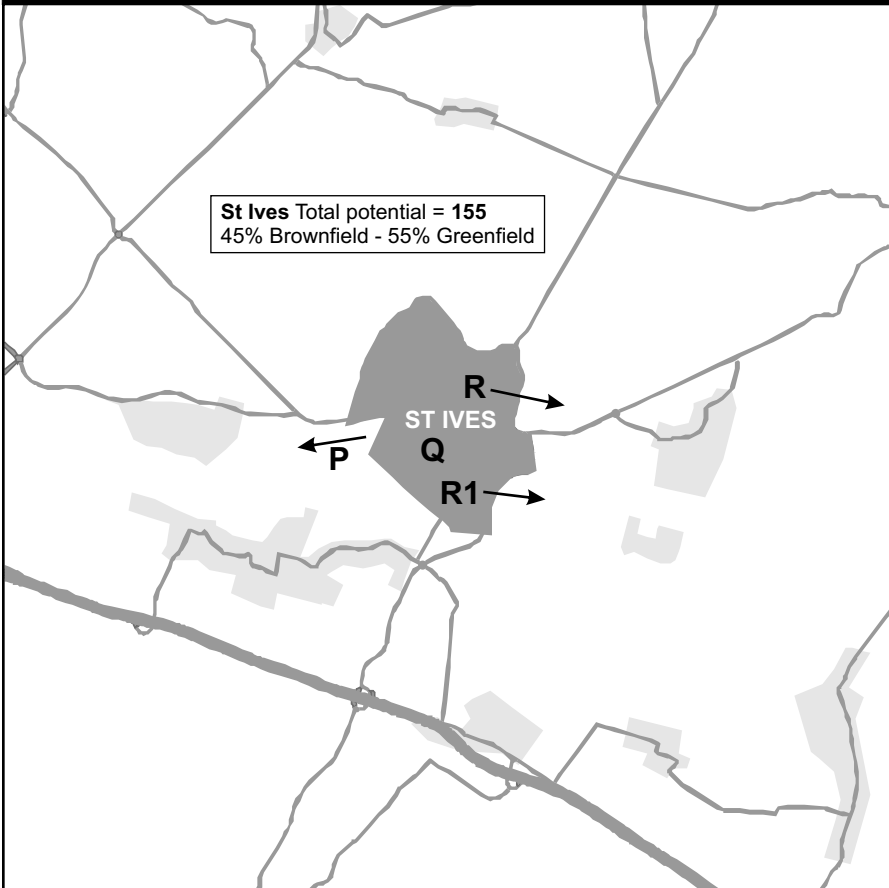


- K. Greenfield mixed use development
- L. Development of small scale sites within or adjacent to the built up framework
- M. Greenfield Employment development
- N. Greenfield development
- O. Development of small scale sites within or adjacent to the built up framework

(c) Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Huntingdonshire District Council licence No. 100022322

Figure 3: St Ives

NB. Arrows indicate the potential directions of growth.

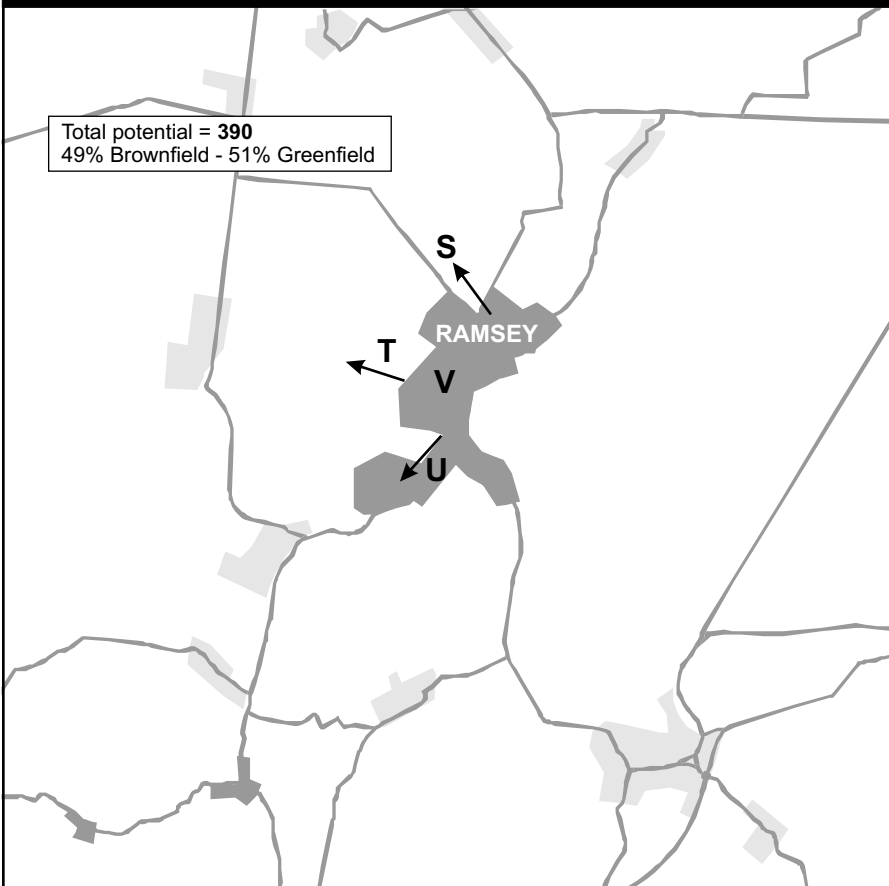


- P. Greenfield mixed-use development
- Q. Development of small scale sites within or adjacent to the built up framework
- R. & R1. Greenfield employment development

(c) Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Huntingdonshire District Council licence No. 100022322

Figure 4: Ramsey

NB. Arrows indicate the potential directions of growth.

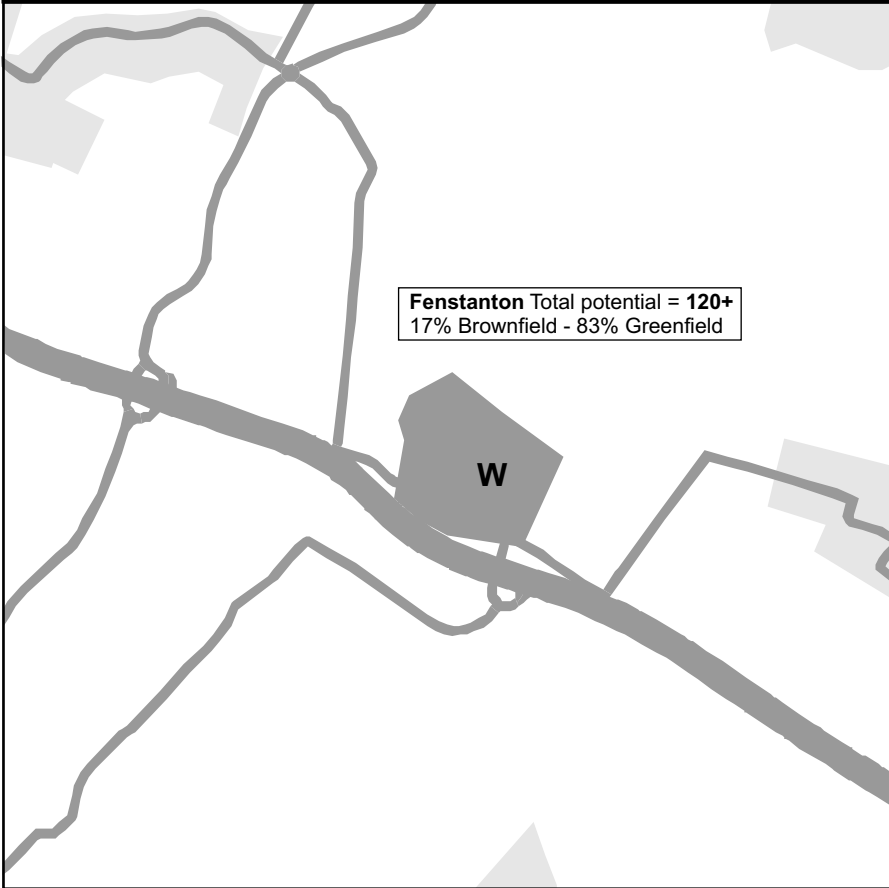


- S. Greenfield mixed use development
- T. Greenfield housing Development
- U. Brownfield mixed use development
- V. Development of small scale sites within or adjacent to the built up framework

(c) Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Huntingdonshire District Council licence No. 100022322

Figure 5: Fenstanton

NB. Arrows indicate the potential directions of growth.



W. Development of small scale sites within or adjacent to the existing built up framework

(c) Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Huntingdonshire District Council licence No. 100022322

Figure 6: Sawtry

NB. Arrows indicate the potential directions of growth.

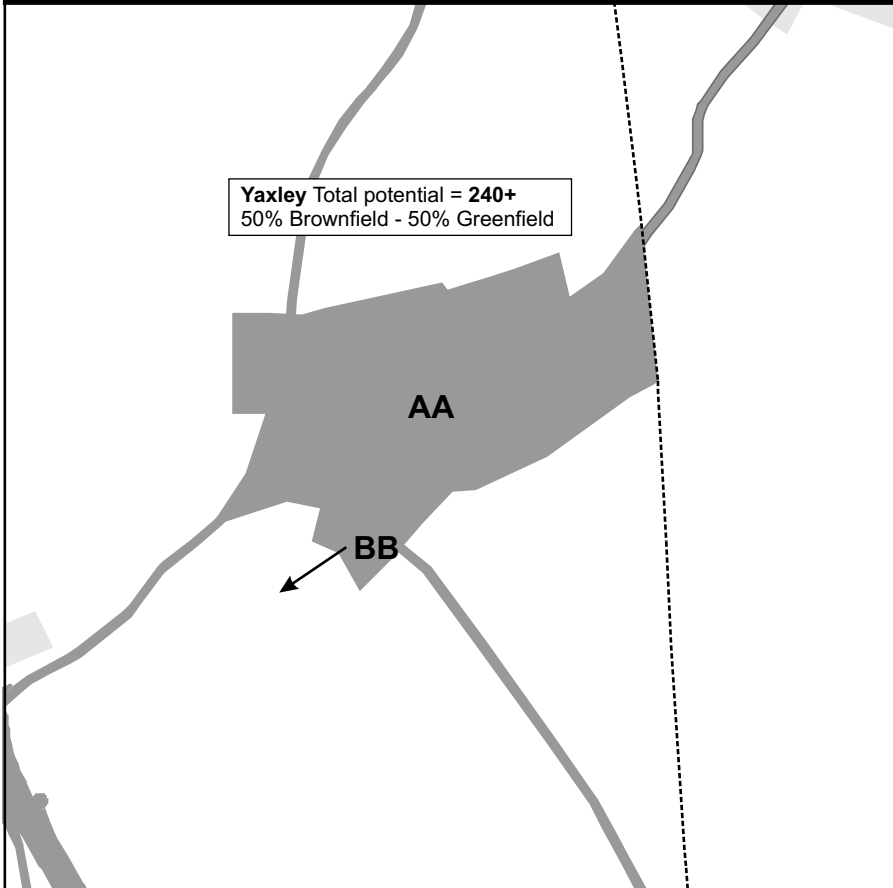


- X. Greenfield development
- Y. Development of small scale sites within or adjacent to the existing built up framework
- Z. Greenfield employment development adjacent to A1

(c) Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Huntingdonshire District Council licence No. 100022322

Figure 7: Yaxley

NB. Arrows indicate the potential directions of growth.



- AA. Greenfield housing development
- BB. Development of small scale sites within or adjacent to the built up framework

(c) Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Huntingdonshire District Council licence No. 100022322

This page is intentionally left blank

CABINET

22ND FEBRUARY 2007

**EAST OF ENGLAND PLAN – THE SECRETARY OF STATE’S PROPOSED
CHANGES TO THE DRAFT REVISION OF THE REGIONAL SPATIAL
STRATEGY AND STATEMENT OF REASONS**

(Report by Head of Planning Services)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Secretary of State’s Proposed Changes to the Draft Revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England and Statement of Reasons were published in December 2006.
- 1.2 Comments are now invited in respect of the Secretary of State’s Proposed Changes with the formal consultation period ending on 9th March 2007. Following consideration of the responses received in respect of this consultation the Secretary of State is then expected to publish the finalised East of England Plan later in 2007.
- 1.3 The Cabinet is requested to note the conclusions emerging from the Secretary of State’s Proposed Changes and to endorse the proposed responses to this consultation as set out in Section 3 of this report.

2. THE SECRETARY OF STATE’S PROPOSED CHANGES

THE REGIONAL CORE STRATEGY

- 2.1 The proposed regional spatial strategy strongly reflects the Government’s aspirations for further significant growth throughout the region. The plan continues to direct strategically significant growth to the region’s major urban areas, applying the key principle of urban concentration, with Policy SS3 accordingly defining 21 Keys Centres for Development and Change (including both Cambridge and Peterborough). The Core Strategy goes on to advocate, in Policy SS4, that development within market and other towns will be supported where it would promote urban and rural renaissance, secure appropriate amounts of new housing, local employment and other facilities and improve the town’s accessibility (especially by public transport).
- 2.2 Previously the draft Plan stressed the need for a strong policy linkage between the planned locations for new growth and the need to deliver associated improvements in related infrastructure provision. The revised strategy does not sustain this requirement and the emphasis on this necessary requirement is therefore diluted via its replacement by a reference in Policy IMP1 to the need for high-level regional co-ordinating arrangements and an associated regional implementation plan.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- 2.3 The Secretary of State in Policy SS1 is seeking to deliver 'sustainable developments' by maximising the potential for people to form more sustainable relationships between their homes, their workplaces, the services they use and their means of travel between them (and thereby by respecting environmental limits upon development). The proposed changes also reflect recent guidance on climate change in that Policy ENG1 advocates reductions in carbon dioxide emissions, Policy WAT1 seeks reductions in water usage and the Plan proposes the general application of the precautionary principle to reduce, avoid or mitigate against adverse environmental changes. As per PPS3 a regional target for the re-use of previously developed land has been set at 60%. Policy ENV1 recognises the importance of The Great Fen Project (as a strategically significant green infrastructure project).

HOUSING

- 2.4 The proposed housing strategy, in Policy H1, proposes a further increase in the planned overall housing numbers for the region (from the draft Plan's 478,000 and the Panel's recommendation of 505,500) to at least 508,000. This is a modest increase (above the proposed scale of development previously supported by the Panel) with the stated intention being that this increase would be delivered via further planned expansion at Harlow.
- 2.5 With regard to Cambridgeshire the proposed overall housing target of 98,300 new dwellings, to be provided between 2001 to 2021, remains the same with all of the district totals therefore also remaining as advocated by the Panel; that is 11,200 for Huntingdonshire, 19,000 for Cambridge City, 8,600 for East Cambs, 11,000 for Fenland, 23,500 for South Cambs, 25,000 for Peterborough. These figures include increases (over the draft targets) for Cambridge City (+4,300), Peterborough (+3,500) and Fenland (+900) and there are some obvious concerns regarding the capacity of Cambridge to actually accommodate that number and the potential impacts upon Huntingdonshire of that extra housing in Fenland (at Chatteris).
- 2.6 However, and of particular concern because of the potential for Huntingdonshire to accommodate additional housing growth, the Secretary of State has stated in Policy H1 that the district allocations should be regarded as minimum targets to be achieved rather than ceilings which should not be exceeded. Planning authorities are advised that they should aim to deliver more housing, without breaching environmental limits or infrastructure constraints, by increasing density on appropriate sites in accordance with the advice in PPS3; by positively encouraging opportunities on suitable previously developed sites; and by making best use of rural exception policies.
- 2.7 The various proposals for further new settlements have been rejected at this stage but the Secretary of State has indicated that all growth options, including the potential for major new settlements, will need to be considered during the planned early review of the RSS (which would extend the plan period up to 2031). Local Development Documents are however required to consider making provision for post 2021 based on this Plan's extrapolated rates of growth.

- 2.8 With regard to affordable housing provision, and again this is an issue of some concern, the Secretary of State has advocated a regional aspiration for 35% affordable housing provision (in Policy H3). Obviously this revised aspiration is already in conflict with our current planning policies which already seek 40% affordable housing provision to meet the needs of the Cambridge Sub-Region.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- 2.9 The Plan's economic development strategy advocates the continued growth of the regions already 'relatively strong economy' although this aim is also tempered by recognition of the need to better align the location of homes and jobs. Therefore, alongside the planned growth in homes, large amounts of new jobs are also proposed in Policy E1 (an indicative 452,000 for the whole region up to 2021 which is an increase from the Panel's recommended 440,000) with 95,000 of those being proposed within Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (with that total being made up of 75,000 new jobs within the districts and 20,000 in Peterborough).
- 2.10 Regional strategic employment locations are defined by Policy E3 with the Cambridge Sub-Region being designated as a centre for world-class research and development whilst Peterborough, to achieve regeneration, is advocated as a centre for the growth of environmental services. Policy E4 on cluster development goes on to outline support for a life-science regional super-cluster with concentrations at locations including the Cambridge Sub-Region, an environmental technologies cluster stretching from Essex to Cambridgeshire with a particular focus on Peterborough and a strong ICT cluster in the Cambridge area.

THE REGIONAL TRANSPORT STRATEGY

- 2.11 The proposed regional transport strategy generally endorses the principle of reducing the need to travel in Policy T2 (although the previously announced aim of producing an absolute reduction in traffic levels within the plan period has been deleted). In terms of traffic management Cambridge is highlighted, in Policy T5, as a location where further study is required in order to identify the nature of the required interventions. Identified transport priority areas include the London, Stevenage, Peterborough corridor. The efficient movement of strategic freight is also identified as a priority by Policy T10.
- 2.12 There is also now a lack of reference to the planned delivery of the required improvements in transport infrastructure (with all previous references to specific transport schemes now being deleted). In terms of transport policy proposals there appears to be a strong emphasis upon the radial routes into London but little reference to the need for effective improvements to the east-west corridors (including the need for Felixstowe to Nuneaton east-west rail route or the A428 Trunk Road).

WASTE

- 2.13 The waste management strategy proposes that there would be a progressive reduction in waste imported into the region (from London) up to 2015 and then amounts would remain stable up to the end of the plan period. Planned importation into Cambridgeshire and Peterborough would rise to 410,000 tonnes per annum by 2010/11 before falling back to 200,000 tonnes per annum thereafter. It is proposed in Policy WM4 that Cambridgeshire and Peterborough would continue to accommodate some 21% of all of the imported waste (and this issue will of course be a major material consideration in respect of the emerging Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Plan).

SUB-AREAS AND KEY CENTRES FOR DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE

The Cambridge Sub-Region

- 2.14 The definition of the Cambridge Sub-Region has been clarified in effect to reinstate its wider hinterland including the four towns (Newmarket, Haverhill, Saffron Walden and Royston) located outside of Cambridgeshire. The strategy for the sub-region, as set out in Policies CSR1 to CSR4, emphasises the sequential approach to accommodating growth (within Cambridge, on the periphery of Cambridge, at Northstowe and then within, or on the peripheries of, the sub-region's market towns. The plan also stresses that the focus in the early years from 2007 will be on the delivery of the sub-regional growth strategy. Although references to Cambridge as 'a compact city' have been deleted other policies still emphasise the need to maintain the Green Belt around the city and to demand manage further transportation growth.

Peterborough

- 2.15 Peterborough is defined in Policy PB1 as a Key Centre for Development and Change (but not as a defined sub-region) with the aim being to strengthen Peterborough's role as a major regional centre and focus for the northern part of the London-Stansted-Cambridge-Peterborough Growth Area. Peterborough is also identified as being a priority area for regeneration.

3. PROPOSED RESPONSES TO THE PROPOSED CHANGES

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Council responds to this consultation on the basis that it can positively support;
- The Plan's commitment to the application of positive locational planning policies in order to deliver sustainable developments (in Policies SS3 and SS4),
 - The Plan's commitment to reductions in carbon dioxide emissions, water usage and the effective usage of brownfield land (in Policies SS1, ENG1, WAT1 and as per PPS3),
 - The Plan's retention in Policy H1 of the previously outlined housing targets for Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire

(although there are some concerns regarding the scale of proposed development in Cambridge and Fenland and the impacts of both potential non-delivery or unsustainable delivery of that housing upon Huntingdonshire).

- The clarification of policy regarding the approach to development within the Cambridge Sub-Region and particularly the sequential approach to locating development therein, as set in Policies CSR1 to CSR4.

3.2 But it is concerned that;

- Policy IMP 1 effectively deletes the previously defined policy linkage between the planned locations for new growth and the need to deliver associated improvements in infrastructure provision.
- Policy H1, which states that the district allocations should be regarded as minimum targets to be achieved rather than ceilings not to be exceeded, will put undue pressure on Districts, such as Huntingdonshire, which have previously delivered large amounts of housing growth, and where there are now serious questions arising about whether there is sufficient environmental capacity to accommodate further large scale growth, and whether the discernable mounting pressures on local infrastructure provision can actually be rectified.
- The Plan's stated commitment to a regional 35% affordable housing aspiration (in Policy H3) will be in conflict with existing planning policies for the delivery of affordable housing within the Cambridge Sub-Region, where there is already an identified need for 40% provision on qualifying sites.
- The lack of reference in the applicable Transport policies to the planned delivery of the required improvements in transport infrastructure (with all reference to specific transport schemes now being deleted) and no real recognition of the need for improved east-west linkages.

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 It is important to acknowledge that the East of England Plan will set the strategic planning framework for this region for the period up to 2021. Therefore it will be a fundamental aspect of policy, which will guide all strategic development and planning decisions, and the application of its policies will have a pronounced impact on the future form, nature and character of Huntingdonshire. Accordingly it is considered that the Council responds to this consultation as set out in Section 3 of this report and that we also commit ourselves to continuing to work closely with our partners within Cambridgeshire, and elsewhere across the region, in order to present appropriate co-ordinated strategic responses to these overarching planning policy issues.

5. RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 That the Cabinet notes the basis of this report and endorses the proposed responses to the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to the East of England Plan as set out in section 3 of this report.

- 5.2 That the Cabinet also endorses the Council's commitment to working with the other Cambridgeshire Planning Authorities, and our other regional and sub-regional partners, in order to submit appropriately co-ordinated responses to these strategic planning issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

East of England Plan - 2004
Report of the Panel – June 2006
The Secretary of State's Proposed Changes – December 2006

Contact Officer: Steve Ingram, Head of Planning Services
01480 388400

REVIEW OF CONSTITUTION (Report by the Head of Administration)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The requirements of the Local Government Act 2000 were implemented fully in the Constitution as from the Annual Meeting in May 2002. Since then and up to 2005, the Standards Committee and more recently the Corporate Governance Panel has undertaken an annual review of the Constitution in the light of the experience of individual Councillors, the Cabinet, Panels, Chief Officers and Heads of Service over the preceding year.
- 1.2 The Corporate Governance Panel was established by the Council in July 2004 to deal principally with the non-executive issues of audit and governance. Its terms of reference also include responsibility for “oversight of the Council’s constitutional arrangements and advising the Council of any changes that may be desirable”. During the 2005 review, the Panel formed the view that the Constitution should be reviewed comprehensively at biennial intervals thereafter.
- 1.3 Therefore, the Corporate Governance Panel is required to undertake a review of the Constitution in 2007. Any changes recommended for adoption to the Council will take effect from the next annual meeting which is to be held on 16th May 2007.
- 1.4 All Members of the Council previously have been supplied with a copy of the Constitution and this can also be found electronically on the Council’s website and intranet. A hard copy is available in the Members’ Room.

2. REVIEW

- 2.1 The Council may amend their Constitution at any time, subject to regard being paid to formal guidance issued by the Secretary of State. Any change will require reference to the Secretary of State only if the Council proposed to change significantly the present form of Executive and Scrutiny arrangements.
- 2.2 In the past, constitutional changes resulting from the review have, for example, enabled an Independent Member to be elected to chair the Standards Committee, concluded other matters relating to the appointment of Independent Members and created the Elections Panel.
- 2.3 As the Constitution has operated satisfactorily for some time now, it may be questionable whether there is a requirement for any significant change to its content. However, some adjustments may be suggested to improve its effectiveness and operation. The opportunity also will be taken to implement changes as a result of updates in legislation and practice.

2.4 The timetable for the review is as follows:-

- ◆ the Cabinet and all Panels will be provided with an opportunity to comment collectively on those aspects of the Constitution which affect their terms of reference during February;
- ◆ Members have been invited to submit comments individually by the end of January;
- ◆ comments raised, plus any forthcoming from Officers will be considered at the Corporate Governance Panel meeting to be held on 28th March;
- ◆ Group Leaders will be invited to attend, if appropriate, to present the views of their Groups to the Corporate Governance Panel;
- ◆ revisions to the Constitution recommended by the Corporate Governance Panel will be considered by the Council at their meeting to be held on 18th April;
- ◆ revisions to the Constitution adopted by the Council will be implemented with effect from the annual meeting on 16th May 2007.

3. CONSTITUTION

3.1 The Cabinet are invited to submit any comments that they may wish to make on the present constitutional arrangements for consideration by the Corporate Governance Panel.

BACKGROUND PAPERS Council Constitution

Contact Officers: Christine Deller, Democratic Services Manager
☎ (01480 388007)

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3, 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3, 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank