

A meeting of the **CABINET** will be held in **CIVIC SUITE 0.1A, PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON, PE29 3TN** on **THURSDAY, 19 NOVEMBER 2015** at **7:00 PM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

**Contact  
(01480)**

## **APOLOGIES**

**1. MINUTES (Pages 5 - 10)**

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 22nd October 2015.

**M Sage  
388169**

**2. MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

To receive from Members declarations as to disclosable pecuniary and other interests in relation to any Agenda item.

**3. CORPORATE PLAN AND FINANCE - INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE REPORT (QUARTER 2) (Pages 11 - 56)**

To receive a report by the Corporate Team Manager and Head of Resources on progress against the Key Activities and Corporate Indicators listed in the Council's Corporate Plan for 2015/16 for the period 1st July 2015 to 30th September 2015.

**D Buckridge  
388065  
R Maxwell  
388117**

**4. REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S LETTINGS POLICY (Pages 57 - 98)**

To consider a report by the Head of Customer Services on the necessary changes to the Lettings Policy in light of new legislation and statutory guidance.

**J Collen  
388220**

**5. ESTABLISHMENT OF A PROCESS FOLLOWING THE RECEIPT OF AN EXAMINER'S REPORT INTO A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN (Pages 99 - 112)**

To consider a report by the Planning Policy Team Leader regarding the options upon receipt of an Examiner's report into a Neighbourhood Plan, the proposed process to determine whether a Neighbourhood Plan progresses to referendum and the procedures for conducting a Referendum.

**C Bond  
388435**

**6. ST NEOTS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN EXAMINATION OUTCOME AND PROGRESSION TO REFERENDUM (Pages 113 - 284)**

To consider a report by the Planning Policy Team Leader regarding the Examiner's report into the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan leading to a Referendum on whether or not it should be brought into force as part of the statutory development plan.

**C Bond  
388435**

7. **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING WORKING GROUP** (Pages 285 - 290)
- To consider a report and respond to the recommendations made by the Affordable Housing Working Group.
- D Buckridge  
388065**
8. **LOCAL PLAN TO 2036 UPDATE** (Pages 291 - 298)
- To consider a report by the Head of Development following recent Government announcements relating to a timescale for the production of Local Plans, an update on progress with preparing the Huntingdonshire Local Plan and the proposed way forward.
- P Bland  
388430**
9. **TREASURY MANAGEMENT 6-MONTH PERFORMANCE REVIEW** (Pages 299 - 306)
- To receive a report by the Head of Resources on the Council's treasury management activity for the first 6 months of the year, including investment, borrowing activity and treasury performance.
- C Mason  
388157  
R Maxwell  
388117**
10. **HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP** (Pages 307 - 310)
- To receive the notes of the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group meeting held on 16th October 2015.
- A Green  
388169**
11. **COMMENTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY** (Pages 311 - 314)
- Summary of the comments from the Overview and Scrutiny Panels on respective items on the Agenda.
- D Buckridge  
388065**
12. **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**
- To resolve:
- that the press and public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) and information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees
13. **ONE LEISURE NEGOTIATIONS** (Pages 315 - 320)
- To consider a report by the One Leisure Business Manager – Development regarding future negotiations relating to One Leisure.
- B Gray  
388058**

Dated this 11 day of November 2015



Head of Paid Service

## **Notes**

### **1. Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

(1) *Members are required to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests and unless you have obtained dispensation, cannot discuss or vote on the matter at the meeting and must also leave the room whilst the matter is being debated or voted on.*

(2) *A Member has a disclosable pecuniary interest if it -*

*(a) relates to you, or*

*(b) is an interest of -*

*(i) your spouse or civil partner; or*

*(ii) a person with whom you are living as husband and wife; or*

*(iii) a person with whom you are living as if you were civil partners*

*and you are aware that the other person has the interest.*

(3) *Disclosable pecuniary interests includes -*

*(a) any employment or profession carried out for profit or gain;*

*(b) any financial benefit received by the Member in respect of expenses incurred carrying out his or her duties as a Member (except from the Council);*

*(c) any current contracts with the Council;*

*(d) any beneficial interest in land/property within the Council's area;*

*(e) any licence for a month or longer to occupy land in the Council's area;*

*(f) any tenancy where the Council is landlord and the Member (or person in (2)(b) above) has a beneficial interest; or*

*(g) a beneficial interest (above the specified level) in the shares of any body which has a place of business or land in the Council's area.*

### **Non-Statutory Disclosable Interests**

(4) *If a Member has a non-statutory disclosable interest then you are required to declare that interest, but may remain to discuss and vote providing you do not breach the overall Nolan principles.*

(5) *A Member has a non-statutory disclosable interest where -*

*(a) a decision in relation to the business being considered might reasonably be regarded as affecting the well-being or financial standing of you or a member of your family or a person with whom you have a close association to a greater extent than it would affect the majority of the council tax payers, rate payers or inhabitants of the ward or electoral area for which you have been elected or otherwise of the authority's administrative area, or*

*(b) it relates to or is likely to affect a disclosable pecuniary interest, but in respect of a member of your family (other than specified in (2)(b) above) or a person with whom you have a close association, or*

*(c) it relates to or is likely to affect any body –*

*(i) exercising functions of a public nature; or*

*(ii) directed to charitable purposes; or*

*(iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a Member or in a position of control or management.*

*and that interest is not a disclosable pecuniary interest.*

## **2. Filming, Photography and Recording at Council Meetings**

*The District Council supports the principles of openness and transparency in its decision making and permits filming, recording and the taking of photographs at its meetings that are open to the public. It also welcomes the use of social networking and micro-blogging websites (such as Twitter and Facebook) to communicate with people about what is happening at meetings. Arrangements for these activities should operate in accordance with guidelines agreed by the Council and available via the following link [filming, photography and recording at council meetings.pdf](#) or on request from the Democratic Services Team. The Council understands that some members of the public attending its meetings may not wish to be filmed. The Chairman of the meeting will facilitate this preference by ensuring that any such request not to be recorded is respected.*

**Please contact Mrs Melanie Sage, Democratic Services Team, Tel No. 01480 388169/e-mail [Melanie.Sage@huntingdonshire.gov.uk](mailto:Melanie.Sage@huntingdonshire.gov.uk) 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 Committee/Panel.**

**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](http://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 Elections & 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.*

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the CABINET held in the Civic Suite 0.1A, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Thursday, 22 October 2015.

PRESENT: Councillor J D Ablewhite – Chairman.

Councillors R B Howe, R C Carter, S Cawley,  
D B Dew, R Harrison, J A Gray and  
D M Tysoe.

### **39. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17th September 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **40. MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary or other interests received at the meeting.

### **41. REPLACEMENT FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

The Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Resources (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) that was presented in his absence by the Corporate Director (Services) regarding the joint procurement and implementation of a new Financial Management System (FMS) in partnership with the Councils strategic partners, Cambridge City Council (CCC) and South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC).

It was reported to the Cabinet that the Councils current FMS had been in operation for a number of years with little improvement or modifications to the system. Although the system continued to meet basic accounting requirements a new system would provide better financial reporting, improved financial management and support the sharing of financial resources.

Both CCC and SCDC had recently gained approval from their Members for the joint procurement of a new FMS and it was considered that there were distinct advantages for the Council to enter into a joint procurement exercise.

Until the formal procurement had concluded the exact costs of a new FMS were unknown and it was noted that the financial figures contained within the Officer's report were indicative figures. CCC had undertaken some preliminary soft market testing earlier in 2015 and the initial costing exercise had indicated a range of possible costs, which ultimately depended upon the system eventually procured. As both CCC and SCDC were statutory landlords, and the service was financially resource intensive, it was assumed that the Councils implementation and subscription costs would be less as Huntingdonshire District Council did not operate a Housing Revenue Account.

The Cabinet agreed that although the matter had progressed quicker than expected it was an opportune time to enter into a joint procurement exercise with CCC and SCDC and therefore the Cabinet supported the recommendations. Although all three Councils did not need to operate the same FMS system it was important that each system provided the same standard of information and the main issue was that the Council's current FMS was no longer fit for purpose. The new system needed to be versatile and meet the progressing demands of the commercial market. It was suggested that savings would be generated from areas identified via the new FMS rather than from the IT system itself.

In response to questions the Cabinet were assured that the replacement FMS would meet the required International Financial Reporting Standards. The savings would be generated from the licence fee of the current FMS and other efficiency savings that the replacement system would deliver. It was confirmed that financing the replacement FMS would be obtained from the Revenue side of the Special Earmarked Reserve budget and that there were no Minimum Revenue Provision implications as the Council was not borrowing any money. Whereupon it was,

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet:

- i. Agreed the involvement of the Council in the procurement and implementation of a new Financial Management System in partnership with its strategic partners, Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council.
- ii. Approved the release of up to £258,667 to finance the £192,000 capital acquisition and implementation costs and £66,667 first year revenue costs from the Special Earmarked Reserve.
- iii. Delegated final approval, subject to a 10% contingency, to the Head of Resources in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Resources for the release of the reserve to finance the project.

#### **42. URGENT REPAIRS TO THE OCTAGON BUILDING, ST IVES**

The Cabinet received a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) regarding the funding of repairs to the Octagon Building in St Ives from the Strategic Assessment of Estates and Estates Management Surveyor which was presented in their absence by the Executive Councillor for Resources.

The Octagon building was owned by the Council and located within the Cattle Market Car Park in St Ives. The building was not listed but did have protection against demolition by being in the Conservation Area.

The condition of the building condition was such that repairs were now required to ensure that the structure was made safe, was able to be secured and to improve the use of the internal space.

It was noted that the repairs identified via the visible condition survey were estimated at £40,629. However, as the estimate did not include a contingent for other works that might be necessary a budget of £50,000 was considered more appropriate.

It was further noted that the requested £50,000 could be accommodated from underspend in the 2015/16 capital programme budget.

The Cabinet were reminded of the two representations that they had received prior to the meeting from the two Local Ward Members, Councillors J Davies and Mrs A Dickinson, who both supported the recommendation contained within the Officer's report.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor R Fuller as a Ward Member for St Ives, addressed the Cabinet. Councillor R Fuller concurred with the representations from the two Local Ward Members that emphasised the heritage and importance of the building. Although the building was not listed it had been in existence for a long time and was of historical importance. The building was showing signs of neglect and was the first building observed by people arriving at the bus station. The building was of community value and once the repairs had been undertaken had potential for community use. In concluding Cllr Fuller urged the Cabinet to support the recommendation.

It was noted that the Officer's report was factually incorrect as it stated that the Octagon building and the old railings was the only evidence left of the former usage. However, there was other evidence still in existence.

The Council had undertaken a significant amount of work on the building a number of years ago and since there had been little maintenance. Therefore if the funding of the repairs was approved it was important that the building was maintained in the future.

In discussing the potential uses of the building it was felt that the building was more appropriate to community use than commercial and community groups were encouraged to approach the Council.

Whilst considering the requested funding it was noted that there would be on-going implications on the budget for the maintenance of the building particularly as an occupier for the building would not be immediate. The Cabinet were assured that the estates budget was robust enough to fund the maintenance of the building and once the building was in a good condition depending on its future use some of the costs could potentially be recouped.

The Cabinet hoped that the Local District Ward Members would engage with the Local Town Councillors regarding potential future uses of the building.

In concluding the Cabinet agreed that the capital allocation to repair and preserve the building would demonstrate that the Council was committed to the longevity of the building and subsequently the Cabinet,

RESOLVED

To approve the capital allocation of £50,000 to repair and preserve the Octagon building in St Ives.

**43. PRESENTATION ON EMPLOYEE OPINION SURVEY RESULTS 2015**

By means of a presentation by the Corporate Team Manager the Cabinet were informed of the results of the Employee Opinion Survey 2015.

For comparison purposes and to measure progress, the questions contained in the Survey were largely based on those questions previously asked in 2014. The Council was committed to asking the same questions again on an annual basis to see whether the actions introduced were making a difference.

There had been an increased response rate to the 2015 survey and the response rate of 55% was considered to be good for a local authority. 82% of responses indicated which of the seven service areas they worked in, compared to 64% last year, which demonstrated that more people felt able to share the details of where they worked.

The Cabinet were acquainted with the broad findings under each of the subject areas in the questionnaire. While there was an overall improvement in nearly all results since the 2014 Survey, with many results appearing to show that the actions taken in response to last year's survey were making a difference, more action was required to make the Council a better place to work.

In response to questions the Cabinet were informed that although the Operations Team had the lowest response rate to the Survey it was only by 1% compared to the next lowest responding service area, and that the Corporate Management Team were most disappointed with the results in relation to questions on communication and harassment and bullying.

The Cabinet agreed that the results of the Survey were positive and moving in the right direction, which was expected given the significant changes that had occurred last year and the new Senior Management Team that were now in place. However, there was still room for improvement which was going to be difficult given the financial pressures that the Council continued to experience. The Cabinet anticipated that the results of the Survey next year would improve further.

**44. SAFETY ADVISORY GROUP**

RESOLVED

The report of the Safety Advisory Group meeting held on 9th September 2015 was received and noted.



Chairman

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**Public**  
**Key Decision - No**

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Title/Subject Matter:** Integrated Performance Report, 2015/16 Quarter 2

**Meeting/Date:** Overview and Scrutiny (Economic Well-being) Panel,  
5 November 2015  
Cabinet, 19 November 2015

**Executive Portfolio:** Executive Leader and all other relevant Portfolio Holders

**Report by:** Corporate Team Manager and Head of Resources

**Ward(s) affected:** All

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### Executive Summary:

The purpose of this report is to brief Members on progress against the Key Activities and Corporate Indicators listed in the Council's Corporate Plan for 2015/16 for the period 1 July 2015 to 30 September 2015. The report also incorporates progress reporting for current projects being undertaken at the Council and details of financial performance on revenue and capital spend as at the end of September.

The Corporate Plan's strategic priorities have been allocated to Overview and Scrutiny Panels as follows:

Social Well-being	1. Working with our communities
Economic Well-being	1. A strong local economy 2. Ensuring we are a customer focused and service-led Council
Environmental Well-being	1. Enable sustainable growth

### Recommendations:

Cabinet are recommended to consider and comment on progress made against Key Activities and Corporate Indicators in the Corporate Plan and current projects, as summarised in Appendix A and detailed in Appendices B and C.

Cabinet are recommended to consider and comment on the Council's financial performance to the end of September, as detailed in the Financial Performance Monitoring Suite at Appendix D.

Cabinet are asked to approve the inclusion of a supplementary capital bid to the 2015/16 capital programme for an upgrade to the Capita payments system, as described in Appendix E.

## **1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present performance management information on the Council's Corporate Plan for 2015/16 and updates on current projects.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Council's [Corporate Plan](#) was adopted as a two-year plan in 2014, with an update approved in April 2015 setting out what the Council aims to achieve in addition to its core statutory services during 2015/16. The information in the summary at Appendix A and the performance report at Appendix B relates to the Key Actions and Corporate Indicators listed for 2015/16.
- 2.2 As recommended by the Project Management Select Committee, project updates are now included in this performance report at Appendix C. There are currently 28 open, pending approval or pending closure projects logged on the HDC SharePoint site across various programmes. This report covers all of the Council's current and pending projects, including all Capital Projects. Four Capital Projects have currently been approved for spend in 2015/16.
- 2.3 This report also incorporates financial performance to the end of September. Performance is summarised in section 4 below and details are listed in the Financial Performance Monitoring Suite at Appendix D.

## **3. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**

- 3.1 Members of the Overview and Scrutiny (Economic Well-being) Panel have an important role in the Council's Performance Management Framework and a process of regular review of performance data has been established. The focus is on the strategic priorities and associated objectives to enable Scrutiny to maintain a strategic overview.
- 3.2 Progress against Corporate Plan objectives is reported quarterly. The report at Appendix B includes performance data in the form of a narrative of achievement and a RAG (Red/Amber/Green) status against each Key Action in the Corporate Plan and results for each Corporate Indicator. Appendix C gives a breakdown of projects including the purpose of the project and comments from the Programme Office as to the current status of each project's SharePoint site as part of the new governance arrangements.
- 3.3 Performance Indicator data has been collected in accordance with standardised procedures. Targets for Corporate Indicators and target dates for Key Actions have been set by the relevant Head of Service, after discussion with the appropriate Portfolio Holder.

## **4. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE**

- 4.1 Attached at Appendix D is the September Financial Performance Monitoring Suite. Highlights from this report are described below.
- 4.2 **Revenue Forecast Outturn and Variations in Revenue Spend**

In February 2015, Council approved a:

- Net revenue expenditure budget of £18.881m
- Contribution to reserves of £0.797m, and
- Budget Requirement of £19.678m

As part of the 2014/15 accounts closure process, and approved by Cabinet in June 2015, carry-forward requests of £0.262m were brought into the 2015/16 budget. This adjusted the contribution to reserves to £0.535m and the net budget to £19.143m.

At the end of September 2015 the 2015/16 net revenue forecast is £18.524m; £0.619m less than the updated budget of £19.143m. The effect of this will be an increase in the forecast contribution to reserves to £1.154m. The reduced spend is mainly due to vacant posts and a general reduction in service spend at this point in the financial year. In addition to the service saving, there is a further £0.660m as a consequence of additional Section 31 new-burdens grant (e.g. funding to support reduced business rates for small business); therefore the overall saving against the budget is £1.814m.

#### 4.3 Capital Forecast Outturn and Variations in Capital Spend

As previously reported to Members, the updated capital programme for 2015/16 is £9.363m as detailed in the table below.

<b>Capital Summary</b>	<b>£'000</b>
Original Approved Budget	11,065
Approved reductions by FGB	1,428
Approved carry forwards from 2014/15	274
Updated Capital Programme	<u>9,363</u>

As at the end of September 2015, the capital programme showed a net spend of £188,000, this is low as a consequence of the receipt of government funding in respect of disabled facilities grant, sale of land, and a number of the planned projects not yet starting or postponed. A summary of the programme is included in Appendix D. The Finance Governance Board are actively reviewing the capital programme to ensure available resources are managed with potential projects being brought forward from the 2016/17 draft plan.

#### 4.4 General Fund Reserves

As noted in paragraph 4.2, the total forecast saving for this financial year is **£1.814m**; this has been established as follows:

	<b>£m</b>
Original budgeted contribution to reserves	0.797
Less 2014/15 carry forward adjustments	(0.262)
	<b>0.535</b>
Plus the service saving	0.615
• <b>Net forecast revenue surplus</b>	<b>1.154</b>
• <b>Additional government funding</b>	<b>0.660</b>
<b>Total forecast saving</b>	<b>1.814</b>

However, the actual apportionment of the £1.814m forecast saving to Reserves is to be as follows:

### **General Fund**

The 2014/15 Annual Financial Report shows a General Fund Balance of £9.287m. It is considered that the forecast contribution to the General Fund should be in line with the original budget net of the carry forward of budget adjustments from 2014/15 (£0.535m); thereby giving a forecast year-end General Fund Balance of **£9.822m**.

### **Earmarked Reserve: Capital Investment Earmarked Reserve**

The 2014/15 Annual Financial Report shows a balance of £4.737m for this Earmarked Reserve. As the purpose of the Capital Investment Earmarked Reserve is to acquire capital assets that will generate future revenue benefits, it is considered that the forecast service saving and a proportion of additional government funding (£0.979m) should be allocated to the Capital Investment Earmarked Reserve; thereby giving a forecast year-end balance for this Reserve of **£5.716m**.

## **5. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANELS**

- 5.1 Comments from the Overview & Scrutiny (Economic Well-being) Panel have been included separately on the Cabinet's agenda at item 11, Comments from Overview and Scrutiny.

## **6. RECOMMENDATION**

- 6.1 Cabinet are recommended to consider and comment on progress made against Key Activities and Corporate Indicators in the Corporate Plan 2015/16 and current projects, as summarised in Appendix A and detailed in Appendices B and C.
- 6.2 Cabinet are recommended to consider and comment on the Council's financial performance to the end of September.
- 6.3 Cabinet are asked to approve the inclusion of a supplementary capital bid to the 2015/16 capital programme for an upgrade to the Capita payments system, as described in Appendix E.

## **CONTACT OFFICER**

### **Corporate Plan Performance Monitoring (Appendices A and B)**

Daniel Buckridge, Policy, Performance & Transformation Manager (Scrutiny)

☎ (01480) 388065

### **Projects (Appendix C)**

Laura Lock, Programme and Project Manager

☎ (01480) 388086

### **Financial Performance (Appendix D)**

Rebecca Maxwell, Accountancy Manager

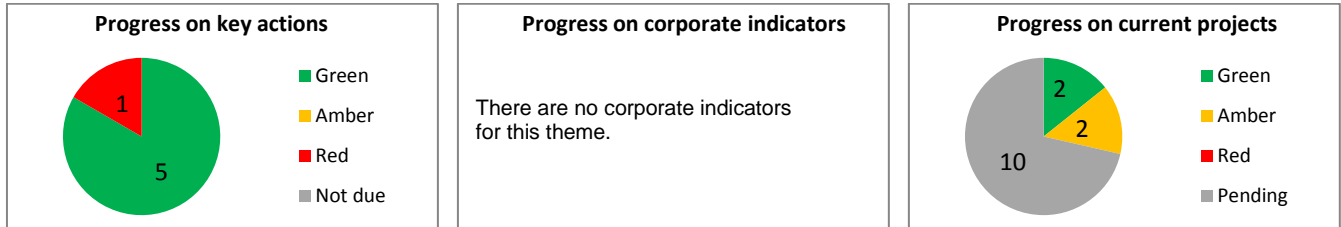
☎ (01480) 388117

## Appendix A

### Performance Summary Quarter 2, 2015/16

#### A strong local economy

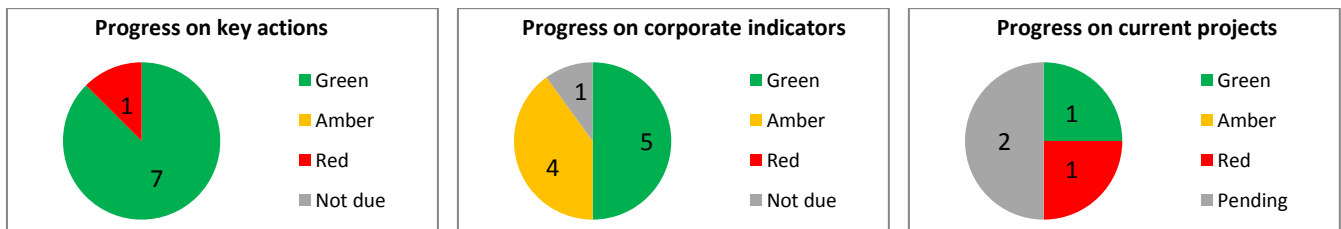
Making Huntingdonshire a better place to live, work and invest



Highlights include a successful apprenticeship event with the EDGE partnership which generated 47 registrations.

#### Enabling sustainable growth

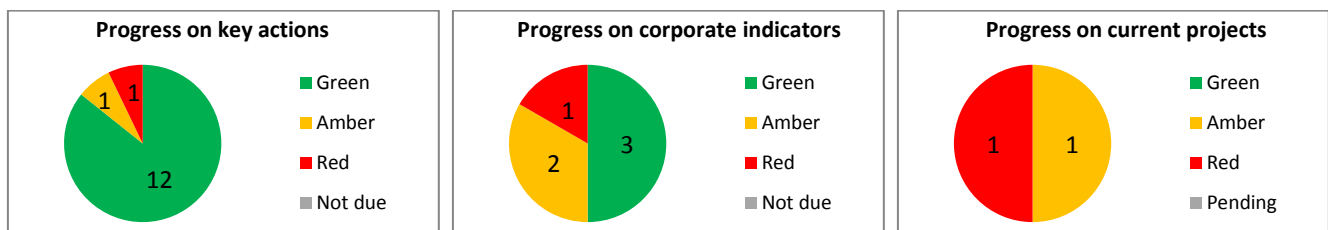
Delivering new and appropriate housing with minimum impact on our environment



Highlights include the signing of a loan agreement with Luminus for the delivery of extra care housing at St Ives.

#### Working with our communities

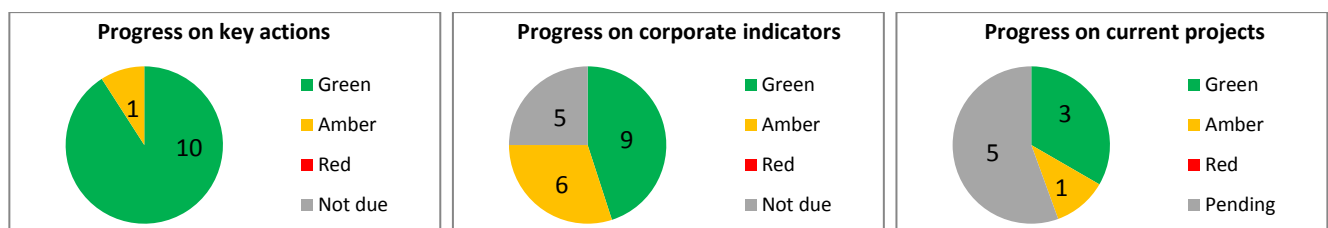
Making sure they thrive and get involved with local decision making



Highlights include improved performance in waste collection, with fewer missed bins per 100,000 households.

#### Ensuring we are a customer focused and service led council

Delivering value for money services



Highlights include a 14% reduction on energy used in Council buildings compared to the previous year.

CORPORATE PLAN – PERFORMANCE REPORT

**Appendix B**

STRATEGIC THEME - A STRONG LOCAL ECONOMY

Period July to September 2015

Summary of progress for Key Actions

<b>G</b>	Progress is on track	<b>A</b>	Progress is within acceptable variance	<b>R</b>	Progress is behind schedule	?	Awaiting progress update	n/a	Not applicable to state progress
	5		0		1		0		0

Target dates do not necessarily reflect the final completion date. The date given may reflect the next milestone to be reached.

Summary of progress for Corporate Indicators

<b>G</b>	Progress is on track	<b>A</b>	Progress is within acceptable variance	<b>R</b>	Progress is behind schedule	?	Awaiting progress update	n/a	Not applicable to state progress
	n/a		n/a		n/a		n/a		n/a

**WE WANT TO: Accelerate business growth and investment**

Status	Key Actions for 2015/16	Target date	Portfolio Holder	Head of Service	Progress Update – Q2 2015/16
<b>G</b>	Deliver a programme of themed business information clinics and events, and measure their impact.	Ongoing	Cllr Harrison	Andy Moffat	<u>Economic Development</u> Q2-Attendance for the Make it Here event at Alconbury was lower than expected with 10 'no shows' on the day. Next event scheduled is a presentation/clinic on technical support available from The Welding Institute targeting the composite manufacturing cluster. Planning also started for next major event – launch of Invest Huntingdonshire web site. Q1-Preliminary work for information clinics at Alconbury underway, including needs analysis sessions with some existing tenants. Date and speakers confirmed for next main event 'Make it Here' to focus on manufacturing in the district, 29 <sup>th</sup> September 2015.
<b>R</b>	Report on the effectiveness of the fast track pre-application advice available to	Quarterly	Cllr Dew	Andy Moffat	<u>Development Management</u> Q2- One enquiry was received which took longer to deal with



Status	Key Actions for 2015/16	Target date	Portfolio Holder	Head of Service	Progress Update – Q2 2015/16
	potential growing businesses				<i>than the target. Procedures are being reviewed and the subsequent application is being fast-tracked. Q1- None received in Quarter 1.</i>

**WE WANT TO: Remove infrastructure barriers to growth**

Status	Key Actions for 2015/16	Target date	Portfolio Holder	Head of Service	Progress Update – Q2 2015/16
<b>G</b>	Develop Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) governance structure	March 2016	Cllr Dew	Andy Moffat	<b>Planning Policy</b> <i>Q2-This project is underway and the aim is to report a proposed CIL governance structure within the December 2015 committee cycle. Q1-The scoping of this project is on track, with options under development and including consideration of HDC's potential role in shaping / leading a broader CIL service as part of a shared services project in partnership with other authorities.</i>
<b>G</b>	Influence the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to secure resource to facilitate delivery and mitigate the impact of new housing and to drive economic growth	Ongoing	Cllr Dew and Cllr Harrison	Andy Moffat	<b>Economic Development</b> <i>Q2- Further meeting of the Senior Sponsors Group at which again it was reiterated that the LEP needs to respond to LA inputs and provide a draft vision. Some consensus reached on future role of this group to inform/influence LEP and work programme to be developed. Q1-Meeting held of all LEP area local authority (LA) representatives (Senior Sponsors Group) to identify infrastructure priorities (immediate/critical and longer-term/strategic) over a 30-year period. Local Authority inputs have been provided to the LEP, awaiting the LEP's collation of the information and response.</i>

17

**WE WANT TO: Develop a flexible and skilled local workforce**

Status	Key Actions for 2015/16	Target date	Portfolio Holder	Head of Service	Progress Update – Q2 2015/16
<b>G</b>	Commit resources to 'EDGE smarter skills for enterprise', a public/private sector partnership to improve the business/ education-training skills match, ensuring that the agreed business plan targets are	Ongoing, official launch November	Cllr Harrison	Andy Moffat	<b>Economic Development</b> <i>Q2-Successful apprenticeship event which generated 47 registrations with EDGE. Q1-EDGE is now operational from its Huntingdon town centre location. Planning is underway for an official launch event at the</i>

Status	Key Actions for 2015/16	Target date	Portfolio Holder	Head of Service	Progress Update – Q2 2015/16
	met				<i>Houses of Commons, to be hosted by MP Jonathan Djanogly in November. Business plan target currently being reviewed.</i>
<b>G</b>	Work in partnership to identify skills and competency gaps in high value manufacturing and develop gap closure strategies.	May 2015	Cllr Harrison	Andy Moffat	<u>Economic Development</u> Q2- <i>Developed strategy now being implemented. Economic Development Team working with Huntingdonshire Regional College on the curriculum development for iMET (formerly known as the Technical Vocational Centre to be located on the Enterprise Zone)</i> Q1- <i>Institute for Manufacturing report completed in May.</i>

**STRATEGIC THEME - ENSURING WE ARE A CUSTOMER FOCUSED AND SERVICE LED COUNCIL**

Period July to September 2015

**Summary of progress for Key Actions**

<b>G</b>	Progress is on track	<b>A</b>	Progress is within acceptable variance	<b>R</b>	Progress is behind schedule	?	Awaiting progress update	n/a	Not applicable to state progress
<b>10</b>		<b>1</b>		<b>0</b>		<b>0</b>		<b>0</b>	

Target dates do not necessarily reflect the final completion date. The date given may reflect the next milestone to be reached.

**Summary of progress for Corporate Indicators**

<b>G</b>	Progress is on track	<b>A</b>	Progress is within acceptable variance	<b>R</b>	Progress is behind schedule	?	Awaiting progress update	n/a	Not applicable to state progress
<b>9</b>		<b>6</b>		<b>0</b>		<b>0</b>		<b>5</b>	

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**WE WANT TO: Become more business-like and efficient in the way we deliver services**

Status	Key Actions for 2015/16	Target date	Portfolio Holder	Head of Service	Progress Update – Q2 2015/16
<b>G</b>	Continue zero base budgeting (ZBB) for 2016/17 including a 'service challenge' process	December 2015	Cllr Gray	Clive Mason	<u>Accountancy</u> Q2- Tranche 2 of the ZBB process has been completed with savings currently identified for the years 2016/17 to 2019/20. Tranche 3 of the process is underway and will be completed in November when officer and member challenge will take place. Q1-The ZBB process started again in April 2015, with Tranche 2 services being subject to Star Chamber on the 20th & 21st July 2015. The Tranche 3 review has commenced with the Star Chamber scheduled for November 2015.
<b>G</b>	Deliver 'Facing the Future' (FtF)	Ongoing	Cllr Gray for programme / Various for themes and activities	Adrian Dobbyne	<u>Corporate Team</u> Q2- As Q1, no further action Q1-Facing the Future activities have now been all fully assessed and broken down into new categorisations as either business as usual, projects or pending. This means that the main reporting on activities is through normal service reporting and the newly established project reporting through Overview and Scrutiny Panels and Cabinet.

Status	Key Actions for 2015/16	Target date	Portfolio Holder	Head of Service	Progress Update – Q2 2015/16
G	Develop full business cases for previously identified energy reduction projects across the Council's estates	31 March 2016	Cllr Gray	Head of Operations	<u>Environment Team</u> Q2-Work to determine which of the Council's main sites require the development of full Investment Grade Proposals completed in Q2, full business case to be presented in Q3 Q1-Desk-top assessments of energy saving potential at the Council's main sites are complete. Work to determine which sites require full investment grade proposals to be completed by end of second quarter 2015/16.
G	Carry out a staff satisfaction survey	Aug 2015	Cllr Ablewhite	Jo Lancaster	<u>Corporate Team</u> Q2-The survey was carried out in July/August and we had an increased participation rate of 55% based on 331 respondents. This year the survey has seen a significant increase in participants indicating the Service area they work in, which will enable the results to be analysed at a more detailed level. Results are being reported in all Services and to Employment Panel/Cabinet in September/October. An Action Plan will be drawn up following a series of focus groups across the organisation. Q1-Survey launched in mid-July and ran until mid-August. Results will be shared with Employment Panel in due course.
G	Build and launch a new council website that focuses on customer need	October 2015	Cllr Tysoe	John Taylor	<u>IMD</u> Q2- The site will be launched in Oct. Extensive development of the site, together with a testing programme involving staff and the public means the site is on track. Over 550 members of the public used the test site, with a very positive reaction. Q1-Work is on track. A site has been built and is going through a series of development activities. Alongside that content for the site is being produced – with the new site being written in more customer focussed language. There is also a focus on fewer pages, making it easier for customers to find what they need. The site is also designed to work on tablets and phones –which now make up the majority of visits to the Website.
G	Maximise the income generating potential of One Leisure sites to fully cover the cost of the operation	March 2016	Cllr Howe	Jayne Wisely	<u>One Leisure</u> Q2- Income continues to remain above last years levels, and now sits £143K up on the previous year to date. With a good 6 months now monitored a more realistic 3%increase on last year should see the final year outturn slightly up on budget target.  Expenditure is well under control and is predicting a saving in

Status	Key Actions for 2015/16	Target date	Portfolio Holder	Head of Service	Progress Update – Q2 2015/16
					<p>excess of £100K. This is mainly due to the various staffing structural changes.</p> <p>The net position for the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of the year shows a SURPLUS for the first time in One Leisure history. Q1 -Income is UP (£20K) on the same period last year and, when factoring in a trend of a general 5% increase for the rest of the year due to price rises, is suggesting that we will exceed income targets. We will have to be very watchful over the next 3 months as this is traditionally when income levels fluctuate the most.</p> <p>Expenditure is DOWN (£140K) which is all down to a reduction in employee costs. This suggests that we are ahead of our net target of £340K surplus.</p> <p>The July to September period is crucial. Income streams from October onwards have been pretty easy to predict and have been good in years gone by.</p>
<b>G</b>	Develop a full business case for a Building Control Shared Service	July 2015	Cllr Dew	Andy Moffat	<p><b>Building Control</b> Q2-The Shared Building Control Service went live on the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2015 Q1-A report and Business Case was prepared for July's O&amp;S (Environmental Well-Being) Panel and Cabinet meetings. The business case has been approved by Cabinet.</p>
<b>A</b>	Publish Online Schedule of Proposed Procurements to promote future contract opportunities	September 2015	Cllr Gray	Clive Mason	<p><b>Procurement</b> Q2- As Q1 Q1-This requirement has been incorporated into the new website design and once live will be populated as opportunities arise</p>
<b>G</b>	Provide two training events to local businesses in Public Procurement	January 2016	Cllr Gray	Clive Mason	<p><b>Procurement</b> Q2- As Q1 Q1-Advertised through Economic Development's business contacts and coordinated with preceding economic development events, the first event is booked for 7th October 2015. The second event will piggyback on a major economic development event planned for January 2016.</p>

**WE WANT TO: Ensure customer engagement drives service priorities and improvement**

Status	Key Actions for 2015/16	Target date	Portfolio Holder	Head of Service	Progress Update – Q2 2015/16
G	Implement a consultation exercise with residents to inform 2016/2017 budget planning	September 2015	Cllr Gray	Adrian Dobbyne	<p><u>Corporate Team</u>  <i>Q2-An on-line consultation was launched in September, running into October using eight statements on spending plans (sliding rating of agree strongly to disagree strongly) and allowing for free text commentary. This has been publicised in the residents newsletter and is very visible from the home page on our website.</i>  <i>Q1-This is being planned and will take place in Quarter 2.</i></p>
G	Revisit and relaunch the Customer Service Strategy to ensure it continues to meet the needs of our customers and provide value for money services	Mar 2016	Cllr Tysoe	John Taylor	<p><u>Customer Services</u>  <i>Q2- It is intended the Strategy will come to Members in November. Final work is underway on the document, which will be a concise and useful document for both Staff and Members.</i>  <i>Q1-This is on track. The Overview &amp; Scrutiny (Social Well-being) Panel and Cabinet have seen and commented on a simple vision document, and Officers are now working on a final version of the strategy prior to resubmission to Members.</i></p>

## Corporate Performance and Contextual Indicators

### Key to status

<b>G</b>	Progress is on track	<b>A</b>	Progress is within acceptable variance	<b>R</b>	Progress is behind schedule	?	Awaiting progress update	n/a	Not applicable to state progress
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Performance Indicator	Full Year 2014/15 Performance	Q2 2014/15 Performance	Q2 2015/16 Target	Q2 2015/16 Performance	Q2 2015/16 Status	Annual 2015/16 Target	Forecast Outturn 2015/16 Performance	Predicted Outturn 2015/16 Status
Number of days to process new benefits claims Aim to minimise	25 days	28.5 days	26 days	22.5 days	<b>G</b>	26 days	c. 23 days	<b>G</b>
Number of days to process changes of circumstance Aim to minimise	5 days	7.9 days	7 days	4.2 days	<b>G</b>	7 days	c. 5 days	<b>G</b>
Number of days to process new council tax support claims Aim to minimise	25 days	27.4 days	26 days	22.5 days	<b>G</b>	26 days	c. 23 days	<b>G</b>
Number of days to process council tax support change events Aim to minimise	6 days	7 days	7 days	4.6 days	<b>G</b>	7 days	c. 5 days	<b>G</b>
Comments: (Customer Services) Performance remains on track to slightly exceed the annual target for the team. During this quarter, refinements were made to some elements of the on-line claim form to make the claim process more streamlined. Further work is planned for quarter 3.								
% of Council Tax collected Aim to maximise	98.4%	57.3%	57.3%	57.4%	<b>G</b>	98.5%	98.5%	<b>G</b>
Comments: (Customer Services) Performance remains on target for the year								
% of Business Rates collected Aim to maximise	98.8%	59.2%	60%	56.8%	<b>A</b>	99.0%	98.8%	<b>A</b>
Comments: (Customer Services) "In Year" (2015/16) Collection Performance is good but Business Rates are being affected by large insolvency cases, and national issues on backdated appeals and avoidance on "Empty Property Rates".								

Performance Indicator	Full Year 2014/15 Performance	Q2 2014/15 Performance	Q2 2015/16 Target	Q2 2015/16 Performance	Q2 2015/16 Status	Annual 2015/16 Target	Forecast Outturn 2015/16 Performance	Predicted Outturn 2015/16 Status
The percentage of Benefit claims with overpayments where recovery action is taking place  Aim to maximise	New indicator for 2015/16	n/a	n/a	82%	n/a	To be set (see comments)	n/a	n/a
Comments: (Customer Services) This is a new indicator for 2015/16 and shows the work taking place to recover benefit overpayments from customers no longer in receipt of Housing Benefit. Data will be collected during the year to establish targets for 2015/16 and 2016/17. Performance will never reach 100% as there is a statutory right of appeal against an overpayment decision which the statistics must take into account. All of this recovery work has now been consolidated under the Benefits Team and processes are in place to maximise recovery.								
Telephone satisfaction rates  Aim to maximise	98%	95%	n/a	n/a	n/a	95%	97%	G
Customer service centre satisfaction rates  Aim to maximise	98%	99%	n/a	n/a	n/a	95%	97%	G
Comments: (Customer Services) We have continued to work on our redesigned annual customer satisfaction survey for all sites, but due to ZBB work and other priorities have decided to send and process the survey in Q3. We continue to record and publish to advisors positive comments we receive from customers.								
Staff sickness - working days lost per Full-Time Employee (FTE)  Aim to minimise	11.5 days	5.9 days	5 days	5.2 days	A	10 days	11 days	A
Comments: (LGSS HR services/Corporate Team) Sickness increased by almost 400 days last quarter compared to Q1 resulting in the cumulative total exceeding the target. However, performance is better than at the same point in 2014/15. More information on sickness will be included in the workforce report to Employment Panel.								
Subsidy per visit to council owned leisure facilities  Aim to minimise	-£0.03	-£0.39	£0.11	£0.10	A	£0.15	£0.15	G
Comments: (Leisure and Health) Net cost per head figure is on track to reach the end of year target. Admissions are up on last year, but trends suggest they will not quite reach the growth target set – much of this is based around decreases at Huntingdon and across swimming in general. Changes to the management structure and forecasts on staffing budgets are still unclear but will only improve the net position.								
% of rent achievable on estates portfolio  Aim to maximise	97%	97%	100%	97%	A	100%	98%	A



Performance Indicator	Full Year 2014/15 Performance	Q2 2014/15 Performance	Q2 2015/16 Target	Q2 2015/16 Performance	Q2 2015/16 Status	Annual 2015/16 Target	Forecast Outturn 2015/16 Performance	Predicted Outturn 2015/16 Status
Comments: (Resources)								
% of space let on estates portfolio Aim to maximise	97%	96%	95%	97.7%	G	95%	98%	G
Comments: (Resources)								
% of rent arrears on estates portfolio Aim to minimise	1.3%	1.5%	<1%	1.2%	A	<1%	1%	A
Comments: (Resources)								
Total amount of energy used in Council buildings Aim to minimise	12,218,851 (kWh)	6,197,543 (kWh)	6,073,592 (kWh) (2%↓)	5,318,281 (kWh)	G	11,974,473 (kWh) (2%↓)	11,974,473 (kWh)	G
Comments: (Operations) Q2 shows cumulative energy use for the half year and represents a 14% reduction on previous year.								
Total fuel used from the Council's fleet of vehicles Aim to minimise	552,686 (Litres)	146,197.54 (Litres)	144,735.56 (Litres) (1% ↓)	140,058.05 (Litres)	G	547,159 (Litres) (1% ↓)	540,051.71 (Litres)	G
Comments: (Operations) Q2 performance is a 4% reduction on same quarter last year and exceeds the target required.								
% of residents satisfied with the overall waste collection service Aim to maximise	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	TBC	n/a	n/a
Comments: (Operations) Satisfaction survey to be undertaken in the third quarter annually. Survey prepared for distribution in November 2015 to be co-ordinated with the launch of the Council's new website.								
Cost per household of waste collection Aim to minimise	£44.49	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	TBC	n/a	n/a

Performance Indicator	Full Year 2014/15 Performance	Q2 2014/15 Performance	Q2 2015/16 Target	Q2 2015/16 Performance	Q2 2015/16 Status	Annual 2015/16 Target	Forecast Outturn 2015/16 Performance	Predicted Outturn 2015/16 Status
Comments: (Operations) This is an annual indicator, no target reduction for the total cost of waste collection to be set for 2015/16 until the planned reconfiguration of the Waste Collection Service is complete.								
% of green bin debt outstanding after three months  Aim to minimise	15.46%	26.88%	20%	9.3%	G	0%	0%	G
Comments: (Operations) Invoices for second green bins go out on a annual bases. Finance provide details of outstanding invoices to date. 9.3% of all payments still outstanding working to reduce this to 0 by the end of Q3								
% of invoices from suppliers paid within thirty days  Aim to maximise	98.5%	98.1%	98%	98.9%	G	98%	98%	G
Comments: (Resources) The key to the achievement of this indicator is the processing on time the significant number of invoices the Council receives by a number of teams across the Council. The performance so far this year exceeds the performance of last year and the target, this can be attributed to the increasing competency of the staff and of the processing arrangements across the Council.								

**STRATEGIC THEME - ENABLE SUSTAINABLE GROWTH**

Period July to September 2015

**Summary of progress for Key Actions**

<b>G</b>	Progress is on track	<b>A</b>	Progress is within acceptable variance	<b>R</b>	Progress is behind schedule	?	Awaiting progress update	n/a	Not applicable to state progress
<b>6</b>		<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>		<b>0</b>		<b>0</b>	

Target dates do not necessarily reflect the final completion date. The date given may reflect the next milestone to be reached.

**Summary of progress for Corporate Indicators**

<b>G</b>	Progress is on track	<b>A</b>	Progress is within acceptable variance	<b>R</b>	Progress is behind schedule	?	Awaiting progress update	n/a	Not applicable to state progress
<b>5</b>		<b>4</b>		<b>0</b>		<b>0</b>		<b>1</b>	

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**WE WANT TO: Improve the supply of new and affordable housing to meet future needs**

Status	Key Actions for 2015/16	Target date	Portfolio Holder	Head of Service	Progress Update – Q2 2015/16
<b>G</b>	Invest in initiatives that will deliver affordable housing	Ongoing	Cllr Dew	Andy Moffat	<p><u>Housing Strategy</u>                      Q2-The Due Dilligence has been completed and the loan agreement between HDC and Luminus for the delivery of extra care at St Ives has now been signed.                      Q1-Due diligence for the potential loan to Luminus for the redevelopment of Langley Court in St Ives is ongoing.</p>
<b>A</b>	Implement action plan to adopt the Local Plan 2036	Revised Local Development Scheme, setting out timescales for the Plan, to be prepared over Summer 2015	Cllr Dew	Andy Moffat	<p><u>Planning Policy</u>                      Q2- An update report is being prepared for the November 2015 Overview and Scrutiny (Environmental Well-Being) Committee and Cabinet meetings.                      Q1-The revised Local Development Scheme will take account of the need to focus time and resources on key elements of the evidence base for the Local Plan, including a major programme of highways and transport modelling and analysis with Cambridgeshire County Council and others, and updated flood risk assessments with the Environment Agency.</p>

Status	Key Actions for 2015/16	Target date	Portfolio Holder	Head of Service	Progress Update – Q2 2015/16
G	Facilitate delivery of new housing on the large strategic sites at: Alconbury, St Neots, Wyton and Bearscroft (Godmanchester)	Ongoing	Cllr Dew	Andy Moffat	<p><u>Development Management, Planning Policy, Economic Development and Housing Strategy</u></p> <p>Q2- Alconbury – Infrastructure works for new school and Phase 1 of housing underway. Reserved matters application for first tranche of housing being negotiated.</p> <p>St Neots – Viability and S.106 discussions continuing</p> <p>Wyton – Highways work still being scoped.</p> <p>Bearscroft – The reserved matters application for the first tranche of housing is being negotiated.</p> <p>Q1-Alconbury – Reserved matters consent granted for strategic roads and landscaping for Phase 1. Permission granted for new facilities building to support the Enterprise Zone. Design Code approved and reserved matters application for first tranche of housing under consideration.</p> <p>St Neots – Viability and S.106 discussions progressing positively.</p> <p>Wyton – Highways work being scoped.</p> <p>Bearscroft – Design Code approved. Revisions to A1198 approved. Affordable housing dwelling mix now agreed with the developer. Cross Keys homes in contract with developer to own and manage the affordable homes. A reserved matters application for the first tranche of housing was received at the end of July 2015.</p>
G	Monitor 5 year housing land supply position on an annual basis and carry out light touch reviews on a quarterly basis	Quarterly	Cllr Dew	Andy Moffat	<p><u>Development Management and Planning Policy</u></p> <p>Q2- A further report will be prepared for Corporate Management Team in October/November 2015.</p> <p>Q1-The outcome of a review confirming the Council had continued to maintain a 5 year housing land supply at the end of Q1 was reported to Corporate Management Team in July 2015.</p>
G	Review council assets to identify which could be used to facilitate affordable housing and dispose to appropriate partners	Ongoing	Cllr Dew	Andy Moffat	<p><u>Housing Strategy</u></p> <p>Q2-Earith – planning application amended and being considered.</p> <p>Q1-Earith – A planning application has now been submitted for the development of 11 affordable homes on the Council's exception site at Hermitage Road. The land sale is expected to complete in the next few months.</p>

**WE WANT TO: Develop sustainable growth opportunities in and around our market towns**

Status	Key Actions for 2015/16	Target date	Portfolio Holder	Head of Service	Progress Update – Q2 2015/16
<b>R</b>	Develop a market town centre improvement strategy and action plan for St Neots	March 2016	Cllr Dew	Andy Moffat	<p><u>Planning Policy</u>  <i>Q2- Work will begin in Q3 but this project may not now be achievable by March 2016. To be successful it needs full engagement with St Neots Town Council and other key partners and there is a capacity issue within Planning Service (Policy) team that is likely to constrain project delivery within 2015/16.</i>  <i>Q1-This project is still achievable by March 2016. Initial progress planned for Q1 has been delayed due to the need to focus on other workstreams, but full scoping and early engagement with partners will take place in Q2.</i></p>

**WE WANT TO: Enhance our built and green environment**

Status	Key Actions for 2015/16	Target date	Portfolio Holder	Head of Service	Progress Update – Q2 2015/16
<b>G</b>	Update the 'Buildings at Risk' register	March 2016	Cllr Dew	Andy Moffat	<p><u>Planning Policy</u>  <i>Q2-This project is on track for completion within 2015/16.</i>  <i>Q1-This project is on track using resources in the Heritage and Conservation team. Community engagement will now take place early in Q3.</i></p>
<b>G</b>	Complete the updated Design Guide, setting out the Council's requirements of new development	March 2016	Cllr Dew	Andy Moffat	<p><u>Planning Policy</u>  <i>Q2- This project is on track for completion within 2015/16.</i>  <i>Q1-This project has slipped slightly due to staffing issues but can still be completed within the current financial year.</i></p>

## Corporate Performance and Contextual Indicators

### Key to status

G	Progress is on track	A	Progress is within acceptable variance	R	Progress is behind schedule	?	Awaiting progress update	n/a	Not applicable to state progress
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Performance Indicator	Full Year 2014/15 Performance	Q2 2014/15 Performance	Q2 2015/16 Target	Q2 2015/16 Performance	Q2 2015/16 Status	Annual 2015/16 Target	Forecast Outturn 2015/16 Performance	Predicted Outturn 2015/16 Status
Number of affordable homes delivered gross Aim to maximise	161	70	16	11	A	61	61	G
Comment: (Development) A target of 328/year (82/quarter) would be required to meet the Strategic Housing Market Assessment identified need of 8,188 homes over the Local Plan (25 years) but this would only be achieved if 39% of all new dwellings built over the Local Plan period are affordable which, having regard to current viability, will not be achieved. The target of 61 was set as a realistic target based on the trajectory of new affordable homes within Housing Association's programmes. 37 homes have been delivered in Q1-Q2.								
Net additional homes delivered Aim to maximise	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	840	TBC	TBC
Comment: (Development) This information is published annually in the Council's Annual Monitoring Report. The number of homes delivered in 2014/15 will be published in December 2015. The annual target is an average of the 'Objectively Assessed Need' for the emerging Local Plan to 2036, which is 21,000 dwellings over a 25 year plan period (i.e. 21,000 divided by 25 = 840). This is an average target for monitoring purposes. The Annual Monitoring Report identifies a trajectory which more accurately reflects what is likely to be delivered, based on primary research with relevant developers and landowners. This is necessary as the delivery of new dwellings is not in the control of the local planning authority – it is led by the market based housing providers. The role of the local planning authority is to create the conditions for new housing development, not to build it.								
Number of unintentional priority homeless acceptances (Cumulative fig for the year) Aim to minimise	210	109	110	107	G	220	220	G
Number of unintentional priority homeless acceptances per 1,000 households (Cumulative fig for the year) Aim to minimise	2.9	1.5	1.5	1.5	G	3.0	3.0	G
Comment: (Customer Services) The rate of homelessness in the district, measured by the number of households accepted as homelessness has increased slightly. The main cause of this is the growth in number of private sector tenancies being brought to an end through no fault to the tenant and this is an increasing trend at both a local and national level.								

Performance Indicator	Full Year 2014/15 Performance	Q2 2014/15 Performance	Q2 2015/16 Target	Q2 2015/16 Performance	Q2 2015/16 Status	Annual 2015/16 Target	Forecast Outturn 2015/16 Performance	Predicted Outturn 2015/16 Status
Number of households living in temporary accommodation (including B&B) - snapshot  Aim to minimise	102	92	110	93	G	110	110	G
Comment: (Customer Services) Number of households in temporary accommodation is increasing as ability to move homeless households into permanent housing becomes more difficult due to shortages in new build social rented housing and reducing opportunities in the private rented sector								
Number of families in B&B - snapshot  Aim to minimise	9	15	10	9	G	10	10	G
Comment: (Customer Services) The number of households in B&B has reduced given the provision of alternative temporary accommodation schemes. The risk is that households will back up in all forms of temporary accommodation as the ability to move homeless households into permanent housing becomes more difficult due to shortages in new build social rented housing and reducing opportunities in the private rented sector								
Processing of planning applications on target - major (within 13 weeks)  Aim to maximise	49%	72%	60%	23% (77%)	G	60%	70%	G
Comment: (Development) Local Planning Authorities now have to report to DCLG based on the percentage of major applications determined within 13 weeks or any other statutory period as agreed with the applicant through extensions of times or Planning Performance Agreement, rather than the previous indicator of percentage determined within 13 weeks only. The Q2 performance figure in brackets is the one now reported to DCLG, with the preceding figure showing the percentage determined within 13 weeks. This changed criteria enables further discussions and/or information to enable applications to be approved within an agreed timeframe rather than determined/refused simply to meet targets. The Development Management team is therefore working to ensure that a minimum of 60% of major applications are determined within 13 weeks or any other statutory period as agreed with the applicant through extensions of times or Planning Performance Agreement, rather than the previous target of 60% within 13 weeks. The Forecast Outturn of 70% and predicted outturn status are based on the percentage of major applications determined within 13 weeks or any other statutory period as agreed with the applicant through extensions of times or Planning Performance Agreement.								
Processing of planning applications on target - minor (within 8 weeks)  Aim to maximise	43%	49%	65%	27% (53%)	A	65% for Q2-Q4	65% for Q2-Q4	G
Comment: (Development) The number of undermined out of time applications and the backlog of applications in the validation team at the start of Q1 meant that the Development Management Service Plan only realistically seeks to achieve the target of 65% of minor applications determined in time for the Q2-Q4 period.								
Local Planning Authorities now have to report to DCLG based on the percentage of minor applications determined within 8 weeks or any other statutory period as agreed with the applicant through extensions of times or Planning Performance Agreement, rather than the previous indicator of percentage determined within 8 weeks only. The Q2 performance figure in brackets is the one now reported to DCLG, with the preceding figure showing the percentage determined within 8 weeks. This								

Performance Indicator	Full Year 2014/15 Performance	Q2 2014/15 Performance	Q2 2015/16 Target	Q2 2015/16 Performance	Q2 2015/16 Status	Annual 2015/16 Target	Forecast Outturn 2015/16 Performance	Predicted Outturn 2015/16 Status
<p>changed criteria enables further discussions and/or information to enable applications to be approved within an agreed timeframe rather than determined/refused simply to meet targets. The Development Management team is therefore working to ensure that a target of 65% of minor applications are determined within 8 weeks or any other statutory period as agreed with the applicant through extensions of times or Planning Performance Agreement during the Q2-Q4 period, rather than the previous target of 65% within 8 weeks. The Forecast Outturn of 65% and predicted outturn status are based on the percentage of minor applications determined within 8 weeks or any other statutory period as agreed with the applicant through extensions of times or Planning Performance Agreement.</p> <p>The Q2 status is amber rather than red having regard to the direction of travel of performance during Q2 towards the 65% target for Q2-Q4 – 41%, 44% and 86% of minor applications were determined within 8 weeks or any other statutory period as agreed with the applicant through extensions of times or Planning Performance Agreement for July, August and September respectively.</p>								
Processing of planning applications on target – other (within 8 weeks)	65%	67%	80%	69% (76%)	A	80% for Q2-Q4	80% for Q2-Q4	G
<p>Aim to maximise</p> <p>Comment: (Development) The number of undermined out of time applications and the backlog of applications in the validation team at the start of Q1 meant that the Development Management Service Plan only realistically seeks to achieve the target of 80% of other applications determined in time for the Q2-Q4 period.</p> <p>As above in relation to major and minor applications, Local Planning Authorities now have to report to DCLG based on the percentage of other applications determined within 8 weeks or any other statutory period as agreed with the applicant through extensions of times or Planning Performance Agreement, rather than the previous indicator of percentage determined within 8 weeks only. The Q2 performance figure in brackets is the one now reported to DCLG, with the preceding figure showing the percentage determined within 8 weeks. This changed criteria enables further discussions and/or information to enable applications to be approved within an agreed timeframe rather than determined/refused simply to meet targets. The Development Management team is therefore working to ensure that a target of 80% of other applications are determined within 8 weeks or any other statutory period as agreed with the applicant through extensions of times or Planning Performance Agreement during the Q2-Q4 period, rather than the previous target of 80% within 8 weeks. The Forecast Outturn of 80% and predicted outturn status are based on the percentage of other applications determined within 8 weeks or any other statutory period as agreed with the applicant through extensions of times or Planning Performance Agreement.</p> <p>Performance improved during Q2 towards the 80% target for Q2-Q4 – 71%, 79% and 79% of other applications were determined within 8 weeks or any other statutory period as agreed with the applicant through extensions of times or Planning Performance Agreement for July, August and September respectively.</p>								
Tonnage of residual waste collected	29,901.05 (tonnes)	14,950	14,800 (Tonnes) (1%↓)	15,110	A	29,602 (tonnes) (1%↓)	29,602 (tonnes)	G
<p>Aim to minimise</p> <p>Comment: (Operations) Q2 is the half year cumulative performance, which is marginally higher than required to meet annual target. Householders will be receiving a waste information pack in December providing up to date information on what materials are collected. It is anticipated that this will assist in improving public participation and knowledge of materials and have an impact on our percentage recycled or composted and therefore reduce residual waste</p>								



## STRATEGIC THEME - WORKING WITH OUR COMMUNITIES

Period July to September 2015

### Summary of progress for Key Actions

<b>G</b>	Progress is on track	<b>A</b>	Progress is within acceptable variance	<b>R</b>	Progress is behind schedule	?	Awaiting progress update	n/a	Not applicable to state progress
12		1		1		0		0	

Target dates do not necessarily reflect the final completion date. The date given may reflect the next milestone to be reached.

### Summary of progress for Corporate Indicators

<b>G</b>	Progress is on track	<b>A</b>	Progress is within acceptable variance	<b>R</b>	Progress is behind schedule	?	Awaiting progress update	n/a	Not applicable to state progress
3		2		1		0		0	

### WE WANT TO: Create safer, stronger and more resilient communities

Status	Key Actions for 2015/16	Target date	Portfolio Holder	Head of Service	Progress Update – Q2 2015/16
<b>G</b>	Continue to manage and enhance the joint CCTV service with Cambridge City Council	March 2016	Cllr Howe	Chris Stopford	<p><u>CCTV</u>                      Q2-Work continues to identify opportunities for generating further efficiency savings, and new customers to the service. The CCTV budget will be considered in Tranche 3 of the Council's Zero based Budget Star Chambers.                      Q1-The Shared Service is now operational and staffed as per the original business case. The Management Board and members Board meetings are scheduled for 2015/16. Work has commenced to identify opportunities for generating further efficiency savings, and new customers to the service.</p>
<b>G</b>	Increase the use of fixed penalty notices (FPN) for littering	March 2016	Cllr Carter	Head of Operations	<p><u>Street Scene</u>                      Q2-18 FPNs were issued up until the end of Q2 15/16.                      Q1-20 FPNs were issued in 2014/15. 7 FPNs were issued in the first quarter of 2015/6. A card reporting system for all HDC employees to report littering has been introduced and this system will be used to maximise the number of FPNs issued.</p>

Status	Key Actions for 2015/16	Target date	Portfolio Holder	Head of Service	Progress Update – Q2 2015/16
<b>G</b>	Manage the Community Chest to encourage and promote projects to build and support community development	September 2015	Cllr Harrison	Chris Stopford	<p><u>Community</u>  Q2-An 'Award Ceremony' was held with the Chairman and Leader of the Council on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015. £46,615 of the allocated £60,000 (78%) has been claimed by award recipients</p> <p>Q1-The Grants Panel met on the 9<sup>th</sup> July 2015 and has agreed the Awards for the 2015/16 Community Chest. 68 applications were received, up 20 on 2014/15. The total requested funding was £194k, up 32% on 2014/15. The Awards made on the 9<sup>th</sup> July 2015 allocated the whole funding of £60k available for 2015/16.</p>
<b>R</b>	Deliver diversionary activities for young people	March 2016	Cllr Howe	Jayne Wisely	<p><u>Sports and Active Lifestyles Team</u>  Q2- Diversionary activities remain challenging. Street Sports are 6% down on last year and 53% down on target. Whilst the gap has closed it is still of some magnitude. Two locations are holding their own (Godmanchester and Yaxley) but St Neots and Sawtry are failing. The loss of CCC Youth Service support following restructure in these localities has not helped. The decision has been taken to temporarily suspend these two locations from mid Oct while alternatives are considered for the spring with a new staffing model. Additional targeted activities were delivered during the summer in Coneygeare Park, Huntingdon North but greater numbers of outdoor activities were cancelled than usual over the summer.</p> <p>Q1-Street Sports delivered in 4 locations. Despite a new location being added at Godmanchester, together with ongoing St Neots, Sawtry and Yaxley sessions, attendances are 10% down on same period last year and 35% down on the Q1 target. Changes to CCC Youth Services and school programming have affected delivery in the past quarter.</p> <p>Meetings are planned with CCC Youth Services over the summer period with a view to relaunch Street Sports in September with the new school term. Changes planned include revised timings and increased marketing. Overall Under 17's attendances (street sports/holiday programmes etc) are 29% down on the same period last year and 33% down on the Q1 target.</p> <p>Programmes have been affected by a short term secondment to</p>

Status	Key Actions for 2015/16	Target date	Portfolio Holder	Head of Service	Progress Update – Q2 2015/16
					<i>East Cambs DC (which has now ended) affecting ability to plan programmes as well as partner clubs being less willing to participate under strict budgetary restrictions. This has combined to result in less activities being offered overall than forecast. Take up of those activities provided has also been affected by price increases and inclement weather. To recover position opportunities are being pursued to deliver additional commissioned activities as well as a review of overall School Holiday Activity Roadshow currently ongoing.</i>
<b>A</b>	Further analysis of our current partnership commitments to deliver value for money and ensure alignment with the corporate priorities	September 2015	Cllr Ablewhite	Adrian Dobbyne	<u>Corporate Team</u> <i>Q2-This work has been started but will roll into Q3 when a report will be produced on the range and scope of our partnerships.  Q1- Following on from the initial analysis undertaken in 2014/15, we now need to do further work as the scale of the Partnerships was greater than first anticipated. This is being resourced to be undertaken in Quarter 2.</i>

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**WE WANT TO: Improve health and well-being**

Status	Key Actions for 2015/16	Target date	Portfolio Holder	Head of Service	Progress Update – Q2 2015/16
<b>G</b>	Increase physical activity levels through the provision of activities in One Leisure sites and in community settings	March 2016	Cllr Howe	Jayne Wisely	<u>One Leisure and Sports &amp; Active Lifestyles teams</u> <i>Q2- One Leisure admissions continue to track ahead of the previous year by around 2%. This is slightly down on the growth target of 3% which can be explained by continuing decline in Hospitality and Soft Play at Huntingdon and St Neots and general swimming admissions across all sites. Sites trends remain the same as Q1.</i>  <i>Q1-One Leisure admissions on the whole appear to be up slightly on the previous year. Across sites Ramsey, St Ives and St Neots increased, Huntingdon is similar, while Sawtry has decreased.</i>  <i>Areas of concern surround Zest (Hospitality) and Funzone (Soft Play Centres) at Huntingdon especially and St Neots.</i>

Status	Key Actions for 2015/16	Target date	Portfolio Holder	Head of Service	Progress Update – Q2 2015/16
					<p>Swimming is down across all sites except St Ives, however this is following a nationally reported trend from the Active People Survey. Lessons up everywhere except Sawtry.</p> <p>Fitness Classes are showing very small signs of improvements at some sites and Impressions attendances are up everywhere except Huntingdon. Sports Hall activities are up everywhere and the Burgess Hall is up significantly.</p> <p><u>Sport &amp; Active Lifestyles</u>  Q2- Attendances are still up, 5% on last year. Physical activity programmes and DASH continue to perform strongly. Youth Sport programmes remain challenging. Inclement weather has affected the summer programme with more outdoor sessions cancelled or affected than usual.  Q1-Attendances are up as a whole 8% on the same period in 14/15 and 47% up on the 15/16 target. Health and physical activity programmes are performing exceptionally well. Sport programmes are more challenging, particularly under 17's and equity work. Right Start class average reached 15 per class and new class added at Buckden in response to customer demand.</p>
<b>G</b>	Support healthy lifestyles through the provision of open space on new developments and maintenance of existing open spaces	Ongoing	Cllr Dew	Andy Moffat	<p><u>Development Management</u>  Q2- As Q1  Q1- Open space was negotiated where relevant in line with the Local Plan policy.</p>
<b>G</b>	Prevent homelessness where possible by helping households either remain in their current home or find alternative housing, with the assistance of the Council's Rent Deposit Scheme where appropriate	Ongoing	Cllr Tysoe	John Taylor	<p><u>Housing Needs</u>  Q2-Prevented 87 households from becoming homeless in Q2 through a variety of interventions.  Q1- Prevented homelessness for 93 households in Q1 through a variety of interventions.</p>
<b>G</b>	Assist non priority single homeless people with housing options through the Cambridgeshire Single Homelessness Service	Ongoing	Cllr Tysoe	John Taylor	<p><u>Housing Needs</u>  Q2- 20 single homeless people referred to the service in Q2 resulting in 4 placements in accommodation.  Q1- 22 single homeless people referred to the Single Homelessness Service in Q1. 10 of these have been accommodated through the scheme, resolving their homelessness.</p>

Status	Key Actions for 2015/16	Target date	Portfolio Holder	Head of Service	Progress Update – Q2 2015/16
G	Provide a responsive Disabled Facility Grants programme	Ongoing	Cllr Dew	Andy Moffat	<u>Housing Strategy</u> Q2-37 DFGs completed in Q2 bringing the cumulative total to 72. Q1- 35 DFGs completed in Q1.
G	Enable a new extra care scheme to be built to meet needs in St Ives and Ramsey	Ongoing	Cllr Dew	Andy Moffat	<u>Housing Strategy</u> Q2-St Ives – construction underway. Ramsey – trying to secure another delivery partner since the housing association concerned has withdrawn from the project following the Government's reforms to the national rent regime. Q1- Langley Court, St Ives – a revised planning application has been approved and the potential loan from the Council to Luminus to support the cost of the building is progressing through due diligence. Luminus have let a contract for construction of the new building. Ramsey – negotiations with land owner / developer / Luminus / Cambridgeshire County Council are ongoing.
G	Reduce fuel poverty and improve health by maximising the number of residents taking up the grant funded Action on Energy scheme	30 September 2015	Cllr Carter	Head of Operations	<u>Environment Team</u> Q2- 226 Home Energy assessments undertaken in Huntingdonshire to the end of Q2 Q1-Target – 200 Home Energy assessments to be undertaken in homes in Huntingdonshire by 30th September 2015. Progress – 106 Home Energy Assessments undertaken in Huntingdonshire, Quarter 1 2015/16.

### WE WANT TO: Empower local communities

Status	Key Actions for 2015/16	Target date	Portfolio Holder	Head of Service	Progress Update – Q2 2015/16
G	Set out our 'community planning' offer and support community planning including working with parishes to complete neighbourhood and parish plans	December 2015 (for report on 'community planning' offer)	Cllr Dew	Andy Moffat	<u>Planning Policy</u> Q2- Report setting out the Council's 'community planning' offer to the prepared for December cycle of meetings. <u>Neighbourhood Planning Activity in Q2:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Bury Neighbourhood Area was approved on Bury Parish Council's application for the designation of a Neighbourhood Area relating to the whole of the parish was approved on 7 October 2015. The proposed</li> </ul>

Status	Key Actions for 2015/16	Target date	Portfolio Holder	Head of Service	Progress Update – Q2 2015/16
					<p><i>Neighbourhood Area was subject to public consultation for four weeks from Friday 21 August to Friday 18 September 2015.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Abbots Ripton &amp; Wennington Parish Plan was launched on Sunday 6th September.</i></li> <li><i>Houghton and Wyton Parish Council have prepared and submitted a Neighbourhood Plan. Consulted on the submitted plan took place between 19 June and 31 July 2015. The examination commenced on 14 September 2015.</i></li> </ul> <p><u>Community</u>  <i>Q1-Work is to be undertaken to develop the 'community planning offer'. However, in the last quarter no requests for assistance in the production of neighbourhood and parish plans have been received.</i></p>
<b>G</b>	Review control and management of Council assets	TBC	Cllr Gray	Clive Mason	<p><u>Estates</u>  Q2 -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The Uniform database has been deemed 'fit for purpose' for the current service needs (subject to review after conclusions of the CIS project). The data upload from the estates database to Uniform is 80% complete and to conclude before the 31st October. The system can then be deemed in operation (as Estates already use Uniform for other purposes)</i></li> <li><i>The 5 year Repair &amp; Maintenance programme is to be completed before the 31st October, capital bids have been submitted for 2014 – 2017 for a rolling roof replacement programme on the industrial estates. Roof replacements will reduce the non-recoverable (by service charge) R &amp; M expenditure by up to 60%, greatly simplifying the 5 year programme.</i></li> </ol> <p><i>Q1- Property &amp; Estate Management: - two main priorities –</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Establish a reliable/efficient asset database, which can provide accessible information to multi-disciplinary teams and assist good asset management.</i></li> </ol> <p><i>Audited action: Estates are in discussion with IMD with regards to the current licenced Uniform database – testing to establish 'fit</i></p>

Status	Key Actions for 2015/16	Target date	Portfolio Holder	Head of Service	Progress Update – Q2 2015/16
					<p><i>for purpose' and reporting use – and then populate with data from the estates excel database (resource to be employed to upload data).</i></p> <p><i>2) Review current practice on repairs and maintenance (R&amp;M) commitments on the estates and develop 5 year planned maintenance schemes – to reduce the total cost of R&amp;M.</i></p> <p><i>Audited action: this is under review and Mouchel reports being reviewed to produce base property data (costs split into categories) required to develop simplified R&amp;M plans in consultation with service teams (FM, Projects and Operations) – this has commenced with outcome to instigate planned maintenance programmes and demonstrate move to pro-active response (from reactive works).</i></p>

## Corporate Performance and Contextual Indicators

### Key to status

<b>G</b>	Progress is on track	<b>A</b>	Progress is within acceptable variance	<b>R</b>	Progress is behind schedule	?	Awaiting progress update	n/a	Not applicable to state progress
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Performance Indicator	Full Year 2014/15 Performance	Q2 2014/15 Performance	Q2 2015/16 Target	Q2 2015/16 Performance	Q2 2015/16 Status	Annual 2015/16 Target	Forecast Outturn 2015/16 Performance	Predicted Outturn 2015/16 Status
Number of missed bins per 100,000 households Aim to minimise	36	34.4	35	33.4	<b>G</b>	35	35	<b>G</b>
Comments: (Operations) Second quarter performance exceeded target for the quarter, on track to achieve full year performance target.								
Percentage of household waste recycled or composted Aim to maximise	56.66%	61.86%	57.66%	56.74%	<b>A</b>	57.66%	57.5%	<b>A</b>
Comments: (Operations) The percentage shown for Q2 is the cumulative figure for April to July 2015. No figures currently are available for August or September 2015. Second quarter performance marginally below target – Householders will be receiving a waste information pack in December providing up to date information on what materials are collected. It is anticipated that this will assist in improving public participation and knowledge of materials and have an impact on our percentage recycled or composted.								
% of food establishments in the district that are 'broadly compliant with food hygiene law' Aim to maximise	96.11%	95.29%	97%	96.83%	<b>G</b>	95%	97%	<b>G</b>
Comments: (Community) The Performance Indicator is based on the results of the routine inspection of food businesses in Huntingdonshire. The Quarter 2 data is based on 1,387 registered food businesses at 30 <sup>th</sup> September 2015. Of these, 44 are considered to be not broadly compliant and further work is being undertaken with these businesses to improve their compliance levels.  The Food Standards Agency Annual Report on UK Local Authority Food Law Enforcement 2013/14, states that on the 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2014 the national average for broadly compliant was 91.7%, in England only the average was 92.1% and for English district councils the average was 94.6%. The average for Cambridgeshire is 94.5%. The Huntingdonshire District Council target has been set against the County average.								
Number of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) completed	207	80	50	37	<b>A</b>	200	200	<b>G</b>



Performance Indicator	Full Year 2014/15 Performance	Q2 2014/15 Performance	Q2 2015/16 Target	Q2 2015/16 Performance	Q2 2015/16 Status	Annual 2015/16 Target	Forecast Outturn 2015/16 Performance	Predicted Outturn 2015/16 Status
Aim to maximise								
Comments: (Development) Q1 and Q2 completions are always low following the peak in Q4 of the preceding year. Budget commitments indicate that the annual target will be achieved.								
Disabled Facilities Grants – Average time (in weeks) between date of referral to practical completion for minor jobs up to £10k  Aim to minimise	25.75 weeks	21 weeks	26 weeks	33 weeks	R	26 weeks	30 weeks	R
Comments: (Development) The Cambs Home Improvement Agency (HIA) Shared Service which oversees the front line delivery of the DFG programme is managed by Cambridge City Council. HDC has been informed that the performance has slipped as a result of a vacancy in the surveying team, coupled with the adoption of new working practices to ensure compliance with new CDM regulations. There has also been an increase in Occupational Therapy referrals during this period adding to the demand on the team. Performance is monitored through the HIA shared service Management Board.								
Percentage of all reported dangerous structures inspected within 24 hours  Aim to maximise	100%	100%	100%	100%	G	100%	100%	G
Comments: (Development) Of the 4 structures inspected, 0 had to be removed.								

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## Financial Performance Monitoring Suite September 2015

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3. 2015/16 Head of Service Corporate Budget Monitoring.....	2
4. Financial Dashboard.....	3

Clive Mason, Head of Resources

#### Prepared By:

Rebecca Maxwell, Accountancy Manager

#### Headlines – Financial Performance

The 2015/16 financial performance of the Council, based on September 2015 actuals, is as follows:

Page 3 The forecast net spend is £18.524m at the end of September.

The forecast “service” underspend at the end of September is £0.619m; this is made-up as follows:

	£m	
<b>Total forecast contribution to reserve:</b>	<b>1.814</b>	
Less budgeted contribution to reserve	(0.797)	Approved by Council February 2015
Less S.31 grant funding	(0.660)	See below
Plus 2014/15 carry forward adjustments	0.262	Unused budget from 2014/15
<b>Net underspend from services</b>	<b>0.619</b>	

I propose to allocate the £1.814m as follows:

- General fund: £0.535m (effectively the £0.797m less the £0.262m)
- Capital Investment Earmarked Reserve: £0.979m
- S.31 Reserve: £0.300m.

## Forecast Outturn and General Fund Reserve as at September 2015

Revenue Forecast Outturn September 2015	2014/15 Provisional Outturn £'000	Original Budget £'000	2015/16 Updated Budget £'000	Forecast £'000	Forecast Variation Compared to :-				
					Original Budget £'000	%	Updated Budget £'000	%	
<b>Revenue by Service:</b>									
Community	2,487	2,130	2,136	2,033	(97)	-4.6	(103)	-4.8	1
Customer Services	4,160	4,488	4,719	4,377	(111)	-2.5	(342)	-7.2	2
Development	1,268	1,691	1,700	1,388	(303)	-17.9	(312)	-18.4	3
Leisure & Health	320	58	60	(27)	(85)	-146.6	(87)	-145	4
Operations	4,546	4,593	4,593	4,587	(6)	-0.1	(6)	-0.1	5
Resources	2,997	3,930	3,929	3,901	(29)	-0.7	(28)	-0.7	
Directors and Corporate	2,845	2,377	2,392	2,265	(112)	-4.7	(127)	-5.3	6
Technical Adjustments	(452)	(386)	(386)	0	386	-100	386	-100	
<b>Net Revenue Expenditure</b>	<b>18,171</b>	<b>18,881</b>	<b>19,143</b>	<b>18,524</b>	<b>(357)</b>	<b>-1.9</b>	<b>(619)</b>	<b>-3.2</b>	
Contribution to Reserves	1,693	797	535	1,154	357	44.8	619	115.7	
<b>Budget Requirement (Services)</b>	<b>19,864</b>	<b>19,678</b>	<b>19,678</b>	<b>19,678</b>					
<b>Financing:-</b>									
NDR & Council Tax surplus	(6,222)	(4,242)	(4,242)	(4,902)	(660)	15.6	(660)	15.6	7
Government Grant (Non-specific)	(8,022)	(7,668)	(7,668)	(7,668)	0	0	0	0	
Contribution to Reserves (additional Funding)	2,018	0	0	660					
<b>Council Tax for Huntingdonshire DC</b>	<b>7,638</b>	<b>7,768</b>	<b>7,768</b>	<b>7,768</b>					
<b>General Fund Reserve</b>									
<b>Balance as at 1st April</b>	<b>8,684</b>	<b>8,537</b>	<b>8,537</b>	<b>9,287 A</b>	750	8.8	750	8.8	
Contribution to Service Expenditure	603	797	535	535	(262)	-32.9	0	0	
<b>Outturn forecast as at 31 March</b>	<b>9,287</b>	<b>9,334</b>	<b>9,072</b>	<b>9,822</b>	488	5.2	750	8.3	
<b>Earmarked Reserves</b>					<b>Movement in Earmarked Reserves</b>				
S106 agreements	1,141			1,141					
Commuted S106 payments	1,762			1,762					
Repairs and Renewals Funds	1,300			1,300					
Delayed Projects	262			262					
Collection Fund	2,768			2,768					
Capital Investment	4,737			5,716					
					979		Additional saving in excess of the contribution to General Fund Reserves		
NDR Reliefs				300			300 S31 New Burdens grant - Forecast repayment to DCLG		
Special Reserve	2,500			2,500					
Other Reserves	1,227			1,227					
<b>Total Earmarked Reserves</b>	<b>15,697</b>			<b>16,976</b>	<b>1,279</b>				

### Definitions

Original Budget  
Updated Budget  
Provisional Outturn  
(A)

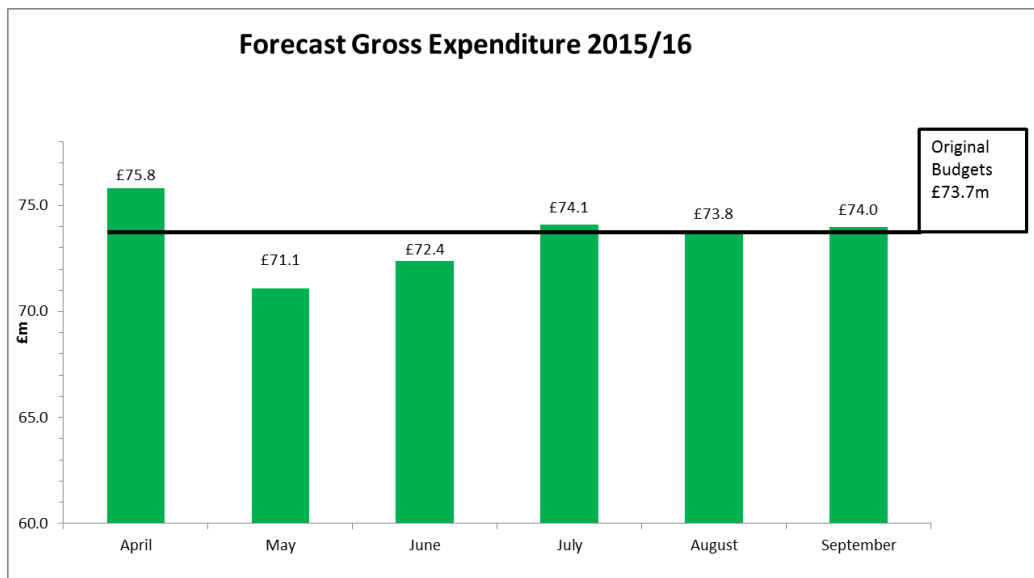
As approved by Council, February 2015  
The Original Budget including approved carry forwards from 2014/15  
Provisional Outturn reported to Cabinet in June 2015.  
Actual General Fund Balance as at 31st March 2015

**Forecast Outturn commentary for variances over £75,000 against Updated Budget**

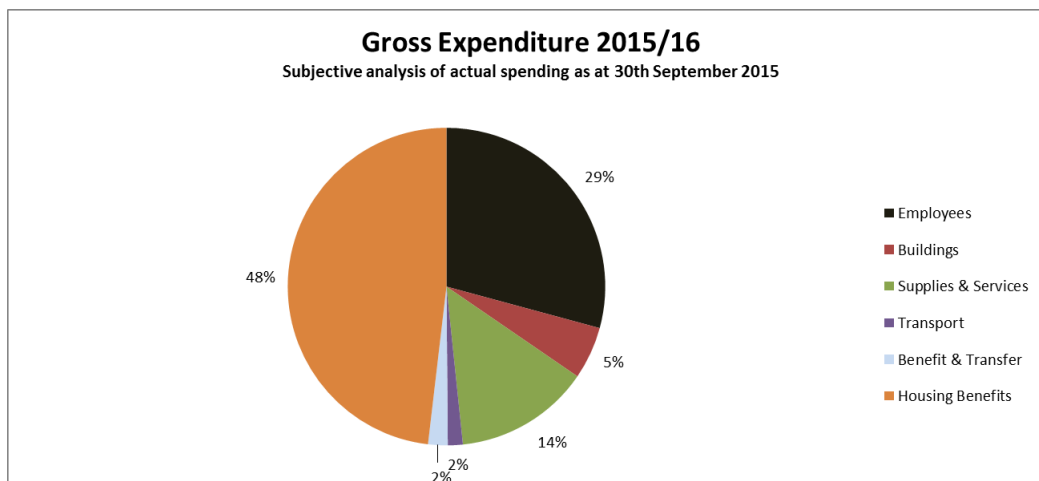
<b>Revenue by Service:</b>	<b>No.as above</b>	<b>Commentary:</b>
Community	1	£140,000 savings from 4 vacant posts partially off-set by £26,000 additional CCTV staff costs where 24 hour cover has had to be maintained.
Customer Services	2	£50,000 lower net Housing Benefits expenditure mainly due to lower use of temporary accommodation that doesn't attract full subsidy. £290,000 savings from 10 vacant posts mainly in Customer Services. Additional rent of £40,000 incurred on the call centre due to the delayed relocation. Additional £25,000 income from the recovery of old CTB overpayments.
Development	3	£304,000 savings from 5 vacant posts.
Leisure & Health	4	One Leisure is forecast to meet its budgeted surplus. The Sport & Active Lifestyles Team is expected to be £100,000 under budget, the main contributor to this is an error in the original budget. This will be corrected in this years ZBB exercise.
Operations	5	Recycling contract additional cost £167,000. Savings from 4 FTE vacancies £129,000. Consultants costs £90,000. General savings on Waste, Street Cleaning and Green Spaces transport costs £119,000.
Directors and Corporate	6	£77,000 staff savings (part year vacancies), £46,000 Electoral Registration Grant received.
Financing	7	Section 31 grant (NDR reliefs) additional funding known after Budget prepared, potential repayment once actuals are known in April 2016.

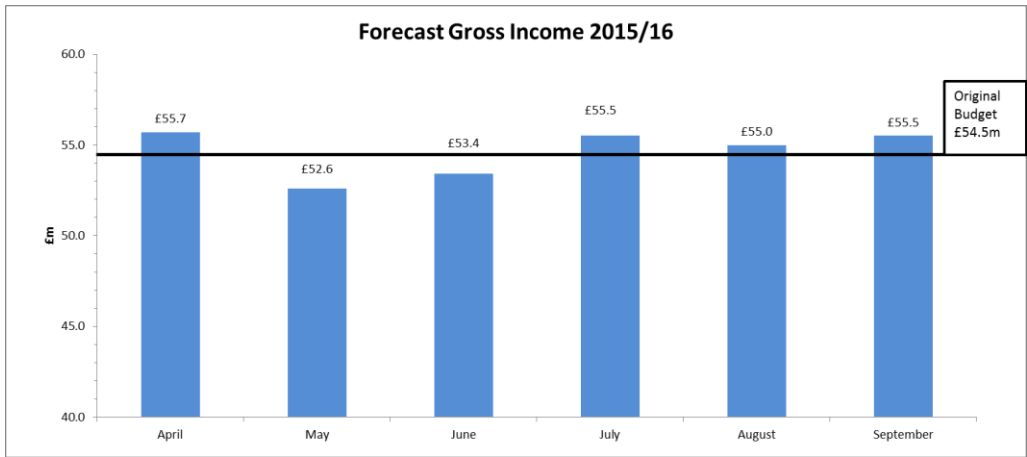
## Financial Dashboard - September 2015

### Revenue Income & Expenditure

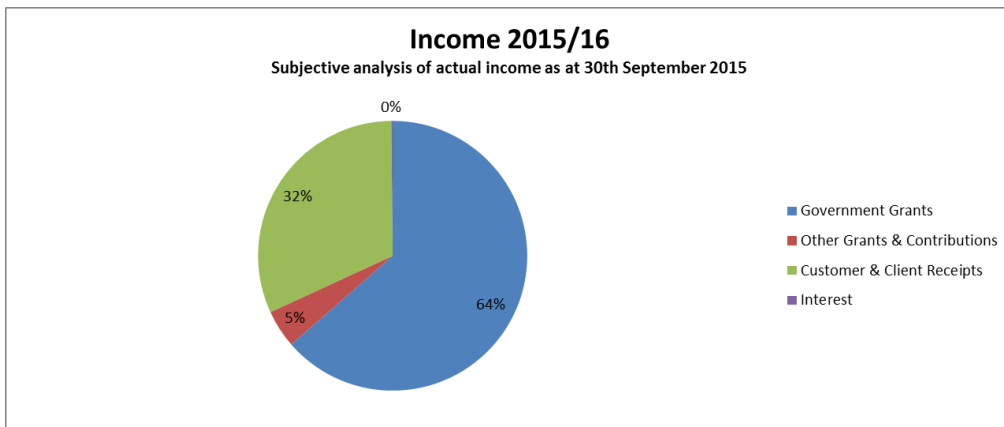


The 2015/16 original gross revenue expenditure budget of £73.7m is combined with the approved carry forwards from 2014/15 to give an updated budget of £74.0m. As shown below the main area of expenditure is Housing Benefits and employees.

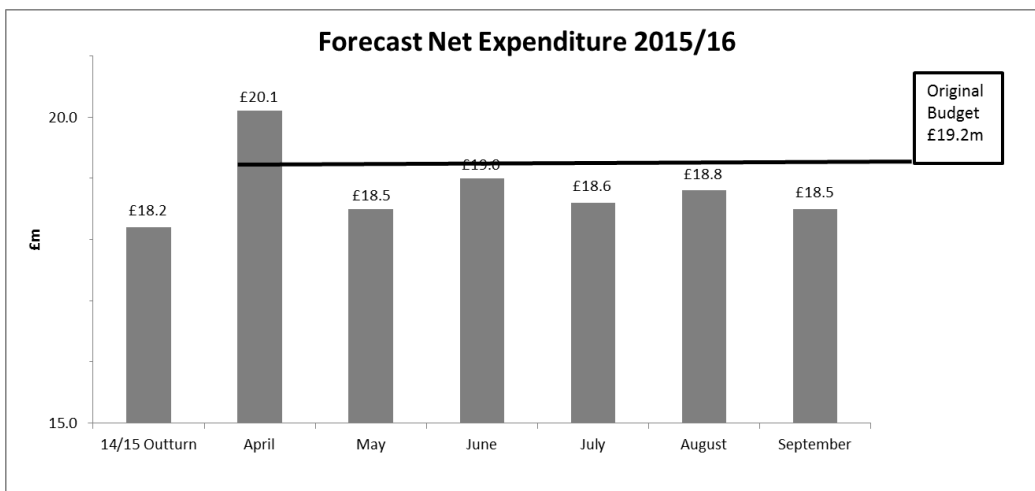




The gross revenue income budget as approved in February 2015 has not been affected by the approved carry forward budgets from 2014/15.



At the end of September 2015 net revenue expenditure is forecast to be at £18.524m, £0.619m below the updated net budget of £19.143m. Taking into account the budgeted contribution to reserves as well as the 2014/15 brought forward adjustment, the overall service related surplus is £1.154m by the year end.



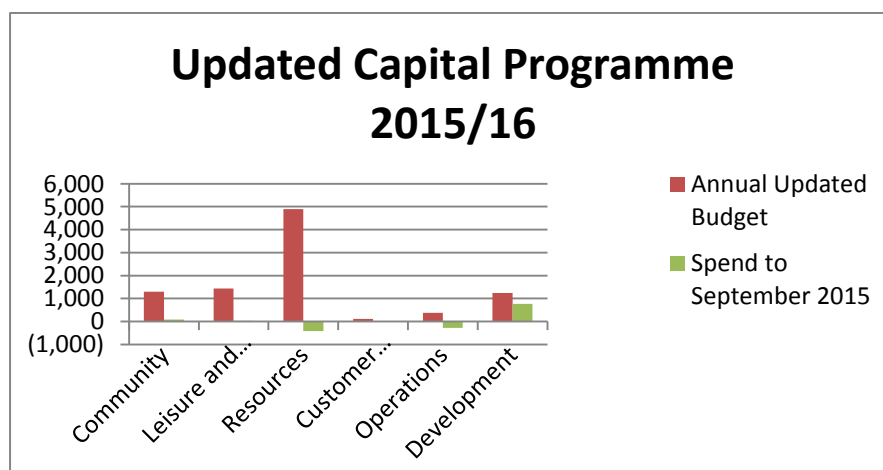
## Capital Programme

The Council approved the 2015/16 capital programme of £11.065m in February 2015. This was following the February 2015 Cabinet that approved the Finance Governance Board's (FGB) recommendations that the capital programme be reduced by £1.428m. Together with the approved carry forwards of £0.274m the updated capital budget for 2015/16 is £9.363m as detailed in the table below.

<b><u>Summary</u></b>	<b><u>£'000</u></b>
<b>Original Approved Budget</b>	<b>11,065</b>
<b>Approved reductions by FGB</b>	<b>(1,428)</b>
<b>Approved carry forwards from 2014/15</b>	<b>(274)</b>
<b>Updated Capital Programme</b>	<b>9,363</b>

As at the end of September 2015, the capital programme showed a net spend of £188,000, this is low as a consequence of the receipt of government funding in respect of disabled facilities grant, sale of land, and a number of the planned projects not yet starting. The revised approval process requires business plans to be submitted to the finance governance board before funds are released, this has slightly delayed the programme whilst these are prepared and reviewed.

The significant items of expenditure are Disabled Facilities Grants £34,000, Housing Private Sector Grants £29,000, Loves Farm Community Centre £78,000, One Leisure Site Improvements £25,000, Pathfinder House Router £13,000. With receipts from Pathfinder House Site (£422,000), Green House Sale (£295,000).





## Capital Programme 2015/16 - Commentary on Actuals to September 2015

### Head of Community

The camera replacement budget (£87,000) is reactive, and will be spent if the cameras breakdown or need replacing. Expenditure on Loves Farm Community Centre, will be funded from S106 grants. Huntingdon West Development (£1.1m) once terms have been agreed, payment will be made, these are likely to be significant amounts.

### Head of Leisure and Health

The St Neots synthetic pitch replacement (£118,000) has been agreed by Cabinet, but has not yet commenced. The expansion at One Leisure Huntingdon (£795,000) is progressing and the full business case and project plan will be submitted to FGB for approval in December. The Replacement Fitness Equipment (£185,000) is subject to further review by the Finance Governance Board before commencement. The retention for development works at One Leisure St Ives (£60,000) is expected to be finalised in the next couple of months.

### Head of Resources

The sale of land at St Marys Street (£420,000), was received in July 2015, the first stage of the Housing Association loan is likely to be released in October, £2.25m of the loan has been rephased to 2016/17. The replacement roof at Phoenix Court has been approved by FGB and is now subject to approval by the Portfolio Holder before contracts are tendered.

### Head of Customer Services

The ICT Virtualisation budget (£75,000) and the server virtualisation and network budget (£20,000) will not be spent this year. £13,000 has been spent on a replacement router, the budget for this was rephased from 2014/15.

### Head of Operations

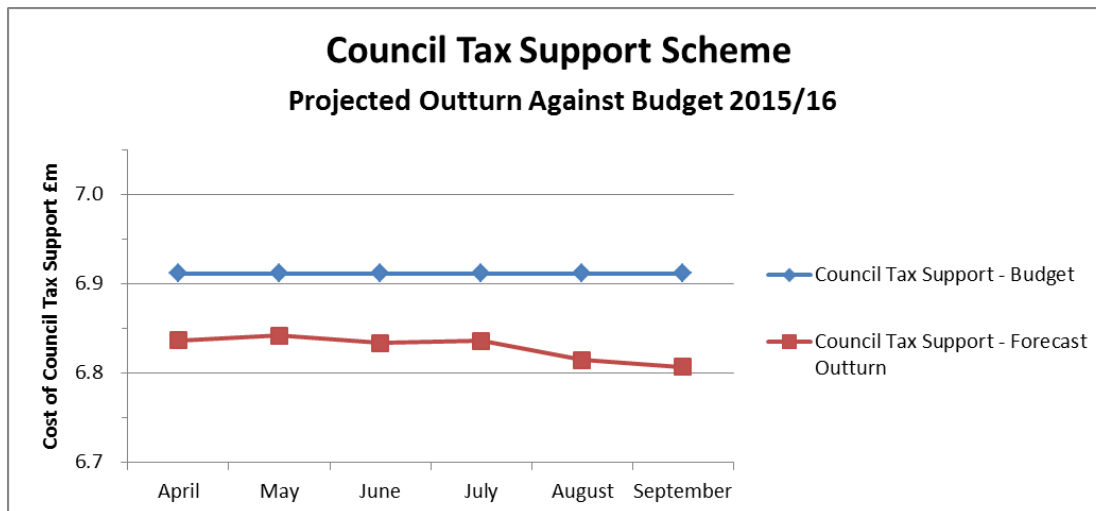
The sale of the GreenHouse at St Ives (£295,000) has now been completed. Vehicle Fleet Replacement, an increased forecast of £1,194,000 is subject to a long lead time and is anticipated to be spent later in the year, subject to a satisfactory business case to FGB. The Salix Building Efficiency budget will be used to replace the air handling unit at One Leisure Huntingdon. The Environment Strategy budget (£30,000) is planned to be spent on Loves Farm Community Centre for installing energy saving measures. The contribution (£500,000) towards the multi-storey car park is expected in January.

### Head of Development

Expenditure on Disabled Facilities Grants (£1.1m) has commenced, with grant from government received in advance of expenditure (£554,000). A payment of £700,000 has been paid to Cambridgeshire County Council relating to the Hunts West Link Road project.

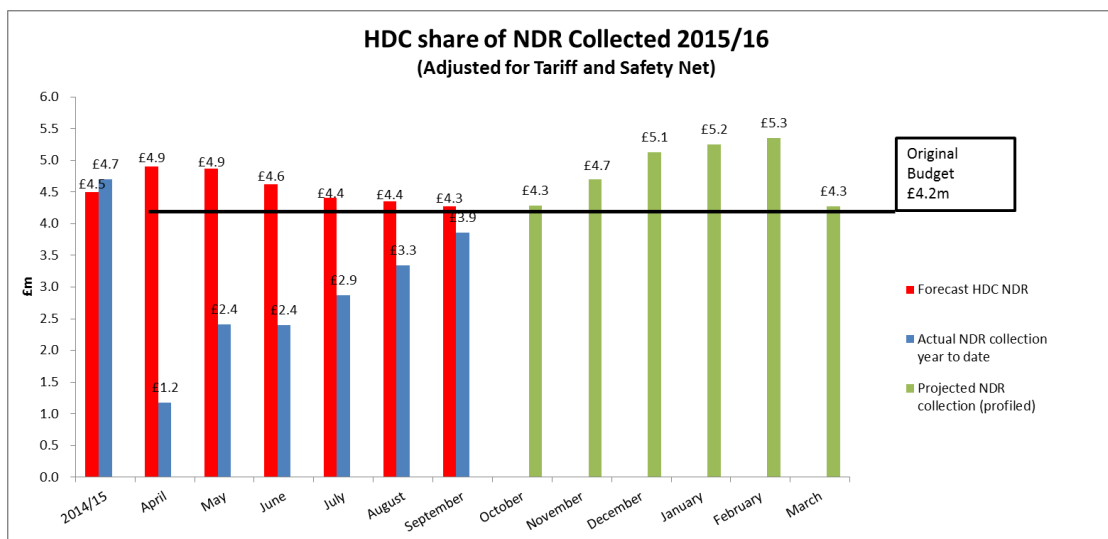
## Council Tax Support Scheme

Reflecting improvements in local employment, take-up of the Support Scheme is lower than originally planned. Any 2015/16 saving due to the Support Scheme will impact in 2016/17.



The benefit to HDC will be proportionate to all Council Tax precepts (13.8% for HDC including parishes).

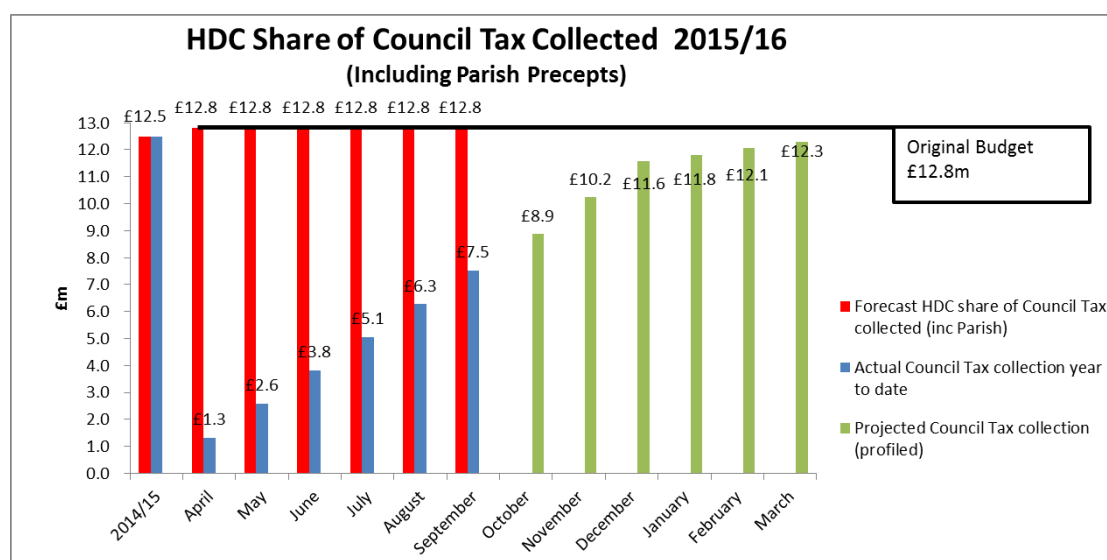
## Collection of NDR and Council Tax



Forecast variation to the original budget is £0.2m. This additional funding comes from the new burdens grant identified during the completion of the NNDR1 submission to DCLG.

It should be noted that:

- the localisation of NDR has made the modelling of collectable NDR problematic; this is due to the fact that the position in respect of appeals is extremely volatile and further appeals could result in a reduced forecast. In May 2015 an appeal of £1.3m was upheld and the Councils share will be £0.520m (40%) and a number of appeals were upheld during July in respect of Doctors Surgeries. A provision for outstanding NDR appeals is included in the NDR calculations. However, if the cost of the appeals is more than this provision which reduces HDC's NDR income, DCLG will compensate HDC through a safety net payment in 2016/17.
- the uncertainty as to when new premises will come into valuation further increases this volatility.



The forecast reflects the actual liability for tax at the time of annual billing compared to the assumptions made at the time the tax base was set. The projection assumes 1% of tax due for 2015/16 will be collected during 2016/17.

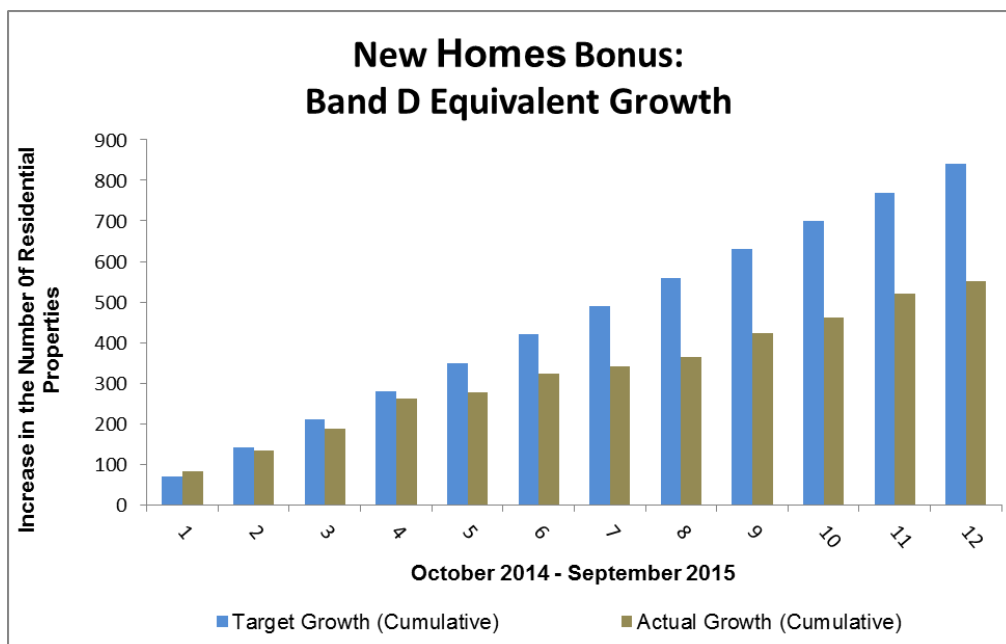
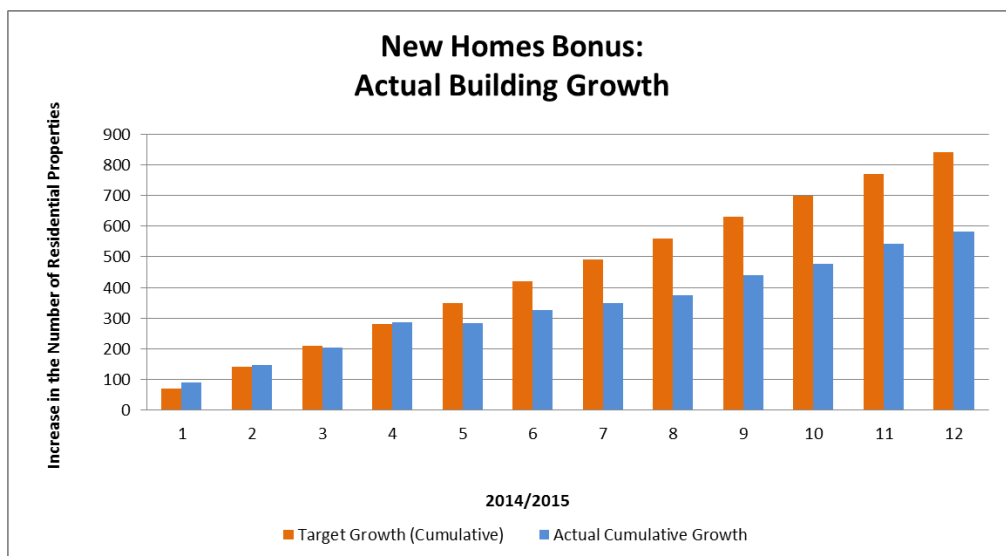
## New Homes Bonus

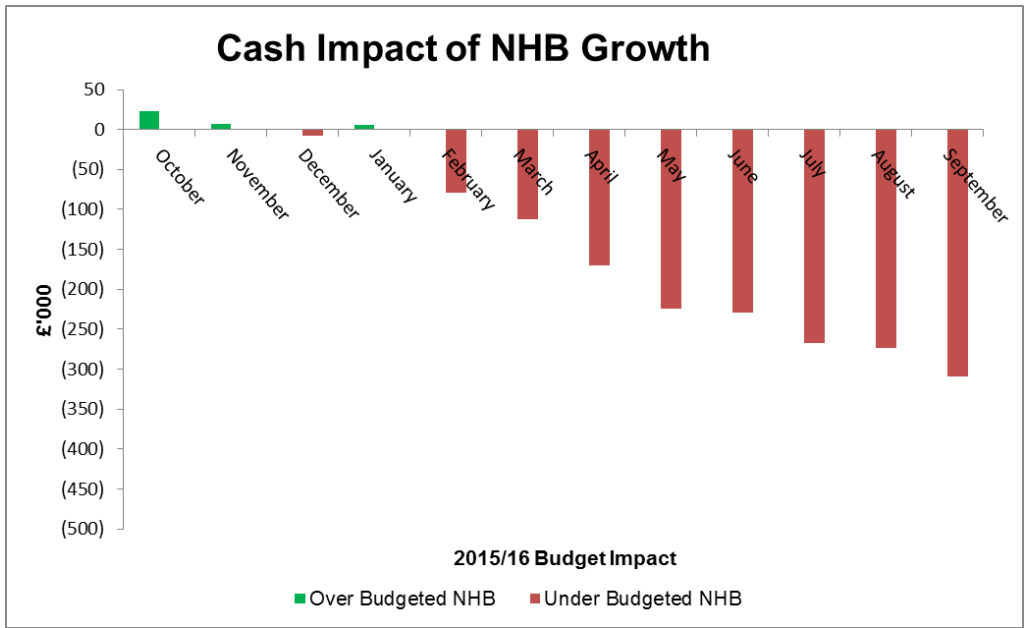
The New Homes Bonus reporting cycle is October to September; consequently any income will be attributable to 2016/17. The following forecasts exclude adjustments for long-term empty properties and affordable homes.

583 new homes were completed in the 12 months from October 2014 to the end of September 2015. The Planning Annual Monitoring Report (2014) estimated that completions of new homes would be approximately 550 for the New Homes Bonus calculation period (October 2014 to September 2015). The actual completions recorded slightly exceeded the projected completions. However, the anticipated New Homes Bonus was calculated on the annual average completion rate over the 25 year plan period. Thus, the completion rate achieved will result in a lower New Homes Bonus than originally anticipated for the year but will not impact until the next financial year (2016/17).

The draft Local Plan housing growth target is 840 new homes per year over 25 years (giving a total planned provision of 21,000 to 2036). On average this would equate to 70 new homes per month. However, the delivery of new homes is undertaken by private house builders and takes place within market conditions. A housing delivery trajectory is prepared annually in consultation with house builders and landowners to set out anticipated completions each year up to 2036. The housing delivery trajectory indicates the annual housing completions rate should rise significantly from 2018 onwards provided the three strategic expansion locations proposed in the draft Local Plan deliver as expected.

Work is progressing towards the estimate for the 2016/17 New Homes Bonus and should be available by December.





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# **Appendix E**

## **Supplementary capital bid to the 2015/16 capital programme for an upgrade to the Capita payments system**

### **Summary**

The Capita software enables the processing payments received by the Council (including Council Tax, NDR and all Council fees) through use of credit and debit cards using on-line payments (on the HDC website), automated phone payments, and payments at the call centre. The system also enables the use of Allpay cards through post offices and pay points for those people without access to bank accounts or credit cards. The minimal cheques received by the Council are also processed via this software. The back end of the software is fundamental to reconciling and balancing of income on a daily basis and ensuring the integrity of the General Ledger in the Financial Management System.

The Capita system is due for an upgrade due to software improvements. At the same time we are proposing that software is upgraded to the cloud based system with an additional interface to the Leisure Centre system. The upgrade is required to continue support from the Supplier.

The benefits of the cloud based system are:

- Improved service resilience as the software can be accessed at any approved HDC computer; at present the software is limited to one machine in the Finance office.
- More than one person can operate the system at one time, as the software is on one machine, only that person can process income receipts.
- All future upgrades are included and will automatically be implemented with no disturbance to the daily function of the system. Savings will be the ICT and Finance officer time not spent in the upgrade and testing process.
- Hosted externally, Council servers will not be needed or replaced.

Income received at the Leisure centres is manually processed once a week into the Finance system delaying the financial reporting timetable. It is proposed to establish an interface between the Leisure centre and financial systems to automate this process. Introducing this link now, before the implementation of the new financial system, will reduce the time taken to produce financial reporting information rather than in 18 months' time.

The capital costs are estimated to be £17,000 for the upgrade, cloud based system and interface. There is an additional £3,000 revenue cost per year from 2016/17. Officer time will be saved and this will be used to ease capacity issues within the team.

It is proposed to use the 2015/16 underspend capital programme to fund this project.

Rebecca Maxwell  
Accountancy Manager  
3 November 2015

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**Public**  
**Key Decision - Yes**

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Title/Subject Matter:** Review of the Council's Lettings Policy  
**Meeting/Date:** Cabinet - 19 November 2015  
**Executive Portfolio:** Customer Services – Councillor D Tysoe  
**Report by:** Head of Customer Services  
**Ward(s) affected:** All

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### **Executive Summary:**

The Council's Lettings Policy provides the legal allocations framework as to how the housing register is administered and how the majority of social rented housing in the district is let.

The Policy must be reviewed and amended where necessary in light of changes in legislation, new statutory guidance or precedents and rulings made in the Courts. Government has introduced a 'Right to Move' to enable certain households who may otherwise suffer hardship if they are unable to access or take up an offer of employment and the Council's Policy has been amended to reflect these statutory changes.

### **Recommendation(s):**

That Cabinet approve the amended Lettings Policy, as attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

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## **1. WHAT IS THIS REPORT ABOUT/PURPOSE?**

- 1.1 As the local Housing Authority, the Council is required by law to have an allocations scheme for determining priorities in the allocation of social rented housing. The Lettings Policy is the Council's allocations scheme.
- 1.2 Although the Council is no longer a stock holding authority it has a housing register of people wishing to be considered for the allocation of social rented housing and a choice based lettings scheme (the Home-Link scheme) which is the vehicle for letting the majority of these properties in the district. The Lettings Policy dictates how the housing register and the letting of properties operates and the six partner local authorities within the Home-Link scheme each operate a Lettings Policy that follows the same broad principles.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to advise of necessary changes to the Lettings Policy in light of new legislation and changes in government's statutory guidance relating to allocation schemes. The Policy has also been reviewed in light of recent caselaw relating to allocation schemes to ensure that it does not fall foul of precedents or rulings that have been set by the Courts.

## **2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY/BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Government published additional statutory guidance followed by a statutory instrument in April 2015 requiring Councils to review their allocation schemes and cater for social tenants who need to move to be closer to work, or take up an offer of work, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship to themselves or others. The Council's Policy already caters for those people that are in work within the district, providing them with a local connection to the area. It does not, however, specifically cater for those that have a genuine offer of employment in the district and may suffer hardship if they are unable to take up that offer. The Secretary of State has instructed that households that meet this criteria and need to move between local authorities should not be disadvantaged by local connection criteria within a local authority's allocations scheme. This is therefore being introduced as new local connection criteria within the Lettings Policy (see 3.4.1(h) in Appendix 1).
- 2.2 Councils are also being required to set aside a proportion of their lettings to households within this 'Right to Move' category, with the Secretary of State recommending that an appropriate quota being at least 1%. This would equate to four to six lettings per year in this district and it is suggested that this quota system and percentage be included within the Lettings Policy (see 7.2.2 in Appendix 1).
- 2.3 In July 2015 the High Court considered a case against the London Borough of Ealing which challenged the legality of their Lettings Policy and in particular the local connection element that was applied to applicants. Although our Lettings Policy does not fall foul of the rulings made within this particular case there is the potential for further challenge on related issues and officers will consider whether additional policy amendments should be brought forward in light of further legal rulings in this area.

## **3. OPTIONS CONSIDERED/ANALYSIS**

- 3.1 The introduction of additional statutory guidance and a statutory instrument in this policy area means that the Council is required to amend its Lettings Policy. The proposed changes to the Policy will introduce these changes.

#### **4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL**

- 4.1 There are no comments from the Overview and Scrutiny (Social Well-Being) Panel to consider as the Panel did not feel it necessary to consider these changes to the Lettings Policy as they implement a statutory requirement placed on the Council.

#### **5. KEY IMPACTS/RISKS? HOW WILL THEY BE ADDRESSED?**

- 5.1 The change to the Lettings Policy will lead to a small number of households, which may not have previously met the Lettings Policy local connection criteria being accepted onto the housing register if they meet the 'Right to Move' criteria. The 'Right to Move' quota will mean that at least 1% of lettings (approximately four to six lettings per year) will have to be made to this group. The impact of this will be minimal in terms of resources to administer although it may result in a small number of households receiving offers under the quota system that may not have been considered as having sufficient priority for housing under the previously adopted policy.

#### **6. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN/TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

- 6.1 Once the policy has been approved processes will be put in place to ensure that households meeting the criteria are identified and allocations considered in light of the quota system. Monitoring systems will be introduced in order to be able to report on the number of households meeting and receiving offers of accommodation under the 'Right to Move' criteria.

#### **7. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN**

- 7.1 Meeting the needs of those households in greatest housing need falls under the strategic theme of ensuring we are a customer focused and service led Council. By keeping our Lettings Policy up to date with both legal requirements and government policy this will enable us to provide the most appropriate advice and assistance to customers wishing to apply to the housing register and access social rented housing.

#### **8. CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 The Council, together with the wider Home-Link partner local authorities, has consulted the housing associations with stock within the sub region area about these changes, with no objections received to these policy changes. As the suggested changes do not affect a large proportion of applicants on the register, or constitute a significant alteration to procedure, this is not considered to be a major change of policy and a wider consultation exercise is therefore not required.

#### **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The Home-Link partners have sought legal opinion about the proposed Lettings Policy changes and have been advised that they will ensure the policy incorporates the necessary 'Right to Move' changes and remains legal.

#### **10. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 There are no resource implications associated with this report.

## **11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 The Home-Link partnership is currently in the process of moving to a new IT supplier for the software system that administers the housing register and the advertising and letting of properties. These policy changes will be incorporated into the new system as part of the change project.

## **12 REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS**

- 12.1 The Lettings Policy must be amended in light of new legislation and statutory guidance. This report recommends the necessary changes to ensure that the Lettings Policy remains legal and minimises the risk of legal challenge.

## **13. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED**

- 13.1 Appendix 1 – The Council's Lettings Policy

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Right to Move - Statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local housing authorities in England. [Right to Move Statutory Guidance](#)

The Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Right to Move) (England) Regulations 2015 - <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/967/made>

## **CONTACT OFFICER**

John Taylor – Head Of Customer Services  
Tel No. 01480 388119

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# **DRAFT**

## **Huntingdonshire District Council**

### **LETTINGS POLICY**

This document sets out how Huntingdonshire District Council, in partnership with Registered Providers with properties in the district, will allocate their properties through the “Home-Link scheme”

V.15 Draft document template produced 18 September 2015 (following Board sign off)

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## Chapter 1

### 1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This is the letting policy for Huntingdonshire District Council and should be considered in conjunction with the Home-Link Partnership Guide, which outlines how the Home-Link choice based lettings scheme will work in Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk. The partner organisations to the Home-Link scheme are:
- a) Cambridge City Council
  - b) East Cambridgeshire District Council
  - c) Fenland District Council
  - d) Forest Heath District Council
  - e) Huntingdonshire District Council
  - f) South Cambridgeshire District Council
  - g) St Edmundsbury Borough Council
- 1.1.2 The Home-Link scheme and this lettings policy were designed through collaboration between the partner organisations listed above, with the aim of having as much consistency in the letting of social housing as is possible in a very diverse area. The lettings policy aims to ensure that all people seeking social housing in Huntingdonshire are able to exercise choice in deciding where they wish to live and in the type of property they would prefer.
- 1.1.3 The policy enables the Council to consider the individual needs of its applicants whilst making best use of the scarce resource of housing stock. The policy sets out:
- a) How to apply for housing.
  - b) Who will qualify to be accepted onto the housing register.
  - c) How priority for housing applicants will be given.
  - d) What the decision-making processes are.
  - e) How homes will be let.
- 1.1.4 You may view the Home-Link Partnership Guide and this lettings policy, at [www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk](http://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk) or request a copy from any of the partner organisation's offices. (See Appendix 1 on p.31)

### 1.2 Objectives of the lettings policy

- a) To meet the legal requirements for the allocation of social housing as set out in the Housing Act 1996 (as amended)
- b) To assist applicants in the highest assessed need
- c) To let properties in a fair and transparent way and provide a consistent lettings process
- d) To make best use of housing stock
- e) To ensure that applicants are not unlawfully discriminated against, whether directly or indirectly
- f) To support vulnerable applicants
- g) To provide increased choice and information to applicants
- h) To provide information and feedback on homes that are let through the Home-Link scheme
- i) To improve mobility across the Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk
- j) To promote social inclusion and help achieve sustainable communities

### 1.3 Statement on choice

- 1.3.1 The Council is fully committed to enabling applicants to play a more active role in choosing where they live, whilst continuing to house those in the greatest need in Huntingdonshire.
- 1.3.2 The Home-Link scheme enables applicants from Huntingdonshire to have access to a percentage of available homes from all the partner organisations across Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk.

#### **1.4 Legal context**

- 1.4.1 All applicants for housing will be assessed to determine their eligibility to be placed on the housing register. This is to ensure homes are let to those in the highest assessed need and ensures that the council meets its legal obligations as set out in the Housing Act 1996 (as amended).

This policy has also had regard to:

- a) Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England (2012), and
  - b) Providing social housing for local people: Statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England (2013); and
  - c) Right to Move: statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local housing authorities in England (2015); and
  - d) Huntingdonshire District Council Homelessness Strategy, and
  - e) Huntingdonshire District Council Tenancy Strategy (containing details of the types of social rented tenancies that may be offered by housing association landlords).
- 1.4.2 The law states that there are five groups of applicants where reasonable preference must be considered:
    - a) People who are homeless (within the meaning of Part VII (7) of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended))
    - b) People who are owed a duty by any local housing authority under section 190(2), 193(2), or 195(2) of the 1996 Act (or under section 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any such authority under section 192(3)
    - c) People occupying unsanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions
    - d) People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including grounds relating to a disability); and
    - e) People who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or to others)
  - 1.4.3 The lettings policy has been designed to ensure applicants who fall into the above reasonable preference categories will be awarded reasonable preference.
  - 1.4.4 Every application received by the Council will be considered according to the facts unique to that application as the Council recognises that every applicant's situation is different. Applications will be considered on an individual basis and individual

circumstances will be taken into account. However, all lettings will be made in accordance with this lettings policy.

### **1.5 Equal opportunities and diversity**

- 1.5.1 The lettings policy will be responsive, accessible and sensitive to the needs of all. The Council is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and will ensure that all applicants are treated fairly and without unlawful discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation

### **1.6 The welfare of children**

- 1.6.1 The Council will ensure that decisions made under this lettings policy have regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

### **1.7 Monitoring and reviewing the lettings policy**

- 1.7.1 The Council will monitor the operation of the lettings policy by regularly reviewing the policy to ensure that the policy meets its stated objectives and complies with legislative changes.

## Chapter 2

### 2.1 How to apply for housing

- 2.1.1 To apply to go on the housing register, applicants are required to complete an on-line housing options pre-assessment form. This will allow the applicant's housing options to be assessed and determine which options are most appropriate. If this includes social housing, and the applicant is eligible, they will then be required to complete a more detailed housing register application form. Where applicants are unable to use these on-line facilities a paper form will be available on request.

The on-line forms can be completed at [www.home-link.org.uk](http://www.home-link.org.uk). A paper form, if required, can be requested from the Council or any of the partner organisation's offices as detailed in Appendix 1 on p.31.

- 2.1.2 An applicant may include anyone on their application who may reasonably be expected to live with them as part of their household.
- 2.1.3 Where two applicants wish to have a shared application they will be known as joint applicants. If an applicant lists a partner on his/her application it will be assumed that the partner is a joint applicant unless either party advises the council otherwise. Although adults who are not partners and need more than one bedroom may jointly apply to the register, due to the level of demand for family sized accommodation from family households (by "family" we mean households that have children (under 18) who are dependent on the adult(s)) they will not normally be prioritised for an offer of this size of accommodation ahead of families.
- 2.1.4 On receipt of the application the Council will assess this and may request additional information and supporting evidence so that the applicant's eligibility and housing need can be confirmed. The Council will verify the information provided which may include inviting the applicant for an interview or visiting them at home.
- 2.1.5 Applications will only be accepted onto the register where:
- a) The applicant is eligible for an allocation of social housing (see Chapter 3); and
  - b) The applicant qualifies for an allocation of social housing. (See sections 3.2 to 3.4).
- 2.1.6 After assessment the Council will write to applicants to inform them whether they have been accepted onto the housing register, or give reasons if they have not. Where accepted they will be informed of:
- a) Their unique reference number, which allows them to bid for homes through the Home-Link Scheme
  - b) The housing needs band in which the application has been placed
  - c) The date that the application was placed in the band (the "date in band")
  - d) The size of property for which the applicant is likely to be able to bid

If they have not been accepted onto the housing register the council will set out the reasons for this decision and will provide information about the review process (see Chapter 6).

## 2.2 Date of registration

2.2.1 The registration date of an application will be the date the on-line housing application form is received electronically, or if a paper application is submitted, the date it is received at the office of the Council, or any of the partner organisations.

## 2.3 Date in band

2.3.1 The principle of the policy is that normally no applicant should overtake existing applicants in a band. Therefore applicants will be placed within a band in date order.

a) **New applications:** the date in band will be the same as the applicant's date of registration.

b) **Change of circumstances which results in a higher band assessment:** the date in band will be the date the applicant provides evidence of the change of circumstances leading to the award of a higher priority band.

2.3.2 When applicants move down bands due to a change in their circumstances the following applies:

a) **Returning to a band that they were previously placed in:** the date in band reverts to the date that applied when the applicant was previously in that band.

b) **Moving into a lower band they have not previously been placed in:** the date in band will be the date that the application was first placed into a higher band. In most circumstances this is likely to be their date of registration.

## 2.4 Armed Forces<sup>1</sup> personnel – date in band.

2.4.1 Additional priority will be awarded to the following categories of people:

(a) former members of the Armed Forces<sup>1</sup>;

(b) serving members of the Armed Forces<sup>1</sup> who need to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service;

(c) bereaved spouses and civil partners of members of the Armed Forces<sup>1</sup> leaving Services Family Accommodation following the death of their spouse or partner;

(d) serving or former members of the Reserve Forces<sup>2</sup> who need to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service.

<sup>1</sup> Means the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines, Her Majesty's regular army or the Royal Air Force

<sup>2</sup> Means the Royal Fleet Reserve, the Royal Naval Reserve, the Royal Marines Reserve, the Army Reserve, the Territorial Army, the Royal Air Force Reserve or the Royal Auxiliary Air Force

- 2.4.2 Additional priority will be awarded to the above categories of people by awarding their application the appropriate priority band, as set out in this lettings policy, and backdating their date in band by the total cumulative period of their length of military service. This will have the effect of raising their priority above applicants in similar circumstances who have not undertaken military service.
- 2.4.3 Current members of the Armed Forces<sup>1</sup> may also request that this additional priority be applied to their housing application six months prior to the date when they are due to leave military service. Appropriate evidence of the end to military service will be required.

## **2.5 Multiple applications**

- 2.5.1 An applicant can have only one active application on the housing register at any time.

## **2.6 Change of circumstances**

- 2.6.1 Where an applicant registered with the Council has a change in their circumstances they must promptly inform the Council. Applicants can complete a change of circumstances on-line at [www.home-link.org.uk](http://www.home-link.org.uk) or obtain a change of circumstances form from any partner organisation, but this must then be sent to the partner organisation who is managing their application. Change of circumstances received by the Council will be assessed based on the new circumstances. Examples of change of circumstances are detailed below, although this list is not exhaustive.

- a) Change of address
- b) People joining or leaving the household
- c) Pregnancy/birth of a child
- d) Relationship breakdown
- e) Change to the medical circumstances of anyone included on the application
- f) Death of a household member
- g) Death of a joint applicant
- h) Change of income and/or capital

## **2.7 Applicant's consent and declaration**

- 2.7.1 When an applicant applies for housing, they will be required to confirm their understanding of, or sign a declaration to confirm that:
- a) The information they have provided is true, accurate and complete.
  - b) They will promptly inform the Council of any change in circumstances.
  - c) They understand that information will be shared with all the partner organisations.
  - d) They consent to the Council making enquiries of any relevant persons to confirm the information on the application form is correct.
  - e) They consent to the release of any relevant information either to the Council held by third parties, or by the Council to third parties.
  - f) The information provided may be used to help in the detection and prevention of fraud.

<sup>1</sup> Means the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines, Her Majesty's regular army or the Royal Air Force

<sup>2</sup> Means the Royal Fleet Reserve, the Royal Naval Reserve, the Royal Marines Reserve, the Army Reserve, the Territorial Army, the Royal Air Force Reserve or the Royal Auxiliary Air Force

2.7.2 The Council may take legal action against applicants who withhold or provide false information regarding their housing application. Where an applicant has been let a property as a result of providing false information, their landlord may take court action to obtain possession of the property.

## **2.8 Data protection**

2.8.1 The Council's policy on Data Protection is available on request. [\(Insert hyper-link to data protection info page on your website\).](#)

## **2.9 Application review**

2.9.1 Every year on the anniversary of an application being received, we will write to the applicant to see if they still wish to be on the housing register and ask them to update their application if there have been any change to their circumstances. If there is no response within the required time limit, (28 days from the letter/email being sent) the application will be cancelled. We will write to the applicant to notify them of this. If an applicant contacts the Council within 28 days of their application being cancelled and indicates that they still want to be considered for housing, the application will be reinstated from their last applicable date in band (see s.2.3 above).

## **2.10 Cancelling an application**

2.10.1 An application will be cancelled from the housing register in the following circumstances:

- a) At the applicant's request.
- b) If the applicant becomes ineligible for housing (see s.3.2).
- c) If the applicant no longer falls within a qualifying class of applicant (see s.3.3).
- d) When the applicant has been housed through the lettings policy.
- e) When a tenant completes a mutual exchange.
- f) Where an applicant does not maintain their application through the review process, or where they move and do not provide a contact address.
- g) Where the applicant has died.

2.10.2 When an application is cancelled, we will write to the applicant or their representative to notify them. Where an applicant has been highlighted as vulnerable, the Council will contact the applicant to check their circumstances before cancelling the application. Any applicant whose application has been cancelled has the right to ask for a review of the decision, (see Chapter 6).

2.10.3 Where an applicant wishes to re-join the housing register at a later date their new date of registration will be the date they re-apply.



## Chapter 3

### 3.1 Who can be accepted onto the housing register?

- 3.1.1 The Council can allocate housing to anyone who qualifies for an allocation provided that they are not ineligible under the Housing Act 1996 section 160ZA
- 3.1.2 The Council cannot allocate housing to two or more persons jointly if one of them is ineligible

### 3.2 Eligible applicants

- 3.2.1 The Council is required, by law, to decide that certain applicants are ineligible for an allocation of social housing. Eligibility can change with a change of immigration status and therefore the Council will keep an applicant's eligibility for housing under review. Applicants are responsible for informing the Council of any change in their immigration status.
- 3.2.2 Applicants whose immigration status makes them ineligible to be considered on the register will be notified in writing of the decision and the reason for the decision. If an applicant is accepted onto the register, but subsequently becomes ineligible, their housing application will be cancelled and the applicant notified. Applicants found to be ineligible have a right to ask for a review of the decision (see Chapter 6).
- 3.2.3 Where an eligible applicant includes people who are ineligible as part of his or her household the council can, in deciding who forms part of the applicant's household for the purposes of housing allocation:
  - (a) Have regard to the fact that members of a person's household would not be eligible for accommodation in their own right
  - (b) Have regard to the fact that an ineligible person is not permitted to have recourse to public funds.
  - (c) Conclude that an ineligible person does not form part of the household.

### 3.3 Qualifying categories of applicants

- 3.3.1 Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk are areas where the demand for social housing far exceeds the supply. For this reason only those applicants who meet the local connection criteria will qualify to join the housing register (see s.3.4).
- 3.3.2 Applicants will not qualify to join the housing register if they are considered to be unsuitable to be a tenant because of unacceptable behaviour (see s.3.5)

### 3.4 Local Connection

- 3.4.1 An applicant will be considered to have a local connection with Huntingdonshire and accepted onto the housing register if they meet one of the following criteria:
  - a. The applicant works in the local authority area for sixteen hours or more per week; or
  - b. The applicant has lived in the local authority area for at least 6 of the last 12 months, or 3 of the last 5 years; or
  - c. The applicant has family members who have been resident in the local authority area for a period of 5 years or longer and are currently resident in

the local authority area. Family members are defined as parents, sons and daughters or brothers or sisters. Other close family ties will be considered on a case by case basis; or

- d. The applicant is owed a full housing duty under the relevant homelessness legislation by the Council; or
- e. The applicant is a member of the Armed Forces<sup>1</sup> and former Service personnel, where their application is made within five years of discharge; or
- f. The applicant is a bereaved spouse or civil partner of a member of the Armed Forces<sup>1</sup> leaving Services Family Accommodation following the death of their spouse or partner; or
- g. The applicant is a serving or former member of the Reserve Forces<sup>2</sup> who needs to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service; or
- h. The applicant is a “relevant person” as defined by Regulation 4 of the Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Right to Move) (England) Regulations 2015; or
- i. The applicant or a member of the applicant’s household needs to move away from another area to escape violence or harm; or
- j. The applicant is a care leaver from Huntingdonshire who has been placed (by Children’s Services) outside the Huntingdonshire area; or
- k. There are special circumstances that the Council considers give rise to a local connection.

### **3.5 Applicants with a history of unacceptable behaviour**

3.5.1 Where an applicant or a member of their household has a history of behaviour which in the opinion of the Council is unacceptable and makes the applicant unsuitable to be a tenant the council may decide that the applicant does not qualify to be accepted onto the housing register. Unacceptable behaviour can include (but is not limited to) domestic or other abuse, harassment, anti-social behaviour, drug dealing or other criminal activity, failing to maintain or repair their home or associated garden or garage, noise nuisance or tenancy related debt

3.5.2 When considering whether an applicant with a history of unacceptable behaviour qualifies to be accepted on the housing register, the council will consider the nature of the behaviour, when it took place, the length of time that has elapsed since and whether there has been any change in circumstances which would show that the applicant or member of the applicant’s household had amended their behaviour so that they are considered suitable to become a tenant

<sup>1</sup> Means the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines, the regular army or the Royal Air Force

<sup>2</sup> Means the Royal Fleet Reserve, the Royal Naval Reserve, the Royal Marines Reserve, the Army Reserve, the Territorial Army, the Royal Air Force Reserve or the Royal Auxiliary Air Force

- 3.5.3 If the council decides that an applicant does not qualify to be accepted on the housing register because the applicant or a member of their household has a history of unacceptable behaviour that makes them unsuitable to be a tenant, the applicant will be informed in writing of this decision and the reasons for the decision. They will also be informed how they can become a qualifying person, for example, by agreeing an arrangement to make payments towards rent arrears and adhering to this, or by the applicant showing that the circumstances or behaviour that made them unsuitable to be a tenant, has changed
- 3.5.4 If an applicant is accepted onto the register but a change in their behaviour means that they are no longer a qualifying person, their housing application will be removed and the applicant will be notified in writing of this decision and the reasons for the decision
- 3.5.5 Applicants considered as not qualifying due to unacceptable behaviour have a right to ask for a review of the decision (see Chapter 6).

### **3.6 16 and 17 year olds**

- 3.6.1 Anyone aged 16 or over can apply for housing. However until the applicant reaches 18 years old any offer of accommodation will be subject to appropriate guarantor or trustee arrangements being in place. The guarantor could be a family member, adult friend, or a professional body. Applicants under 18 years old will be referred to a housing officer for advice regarding their housing rights and options.

## Chapter 4

### Assessment of housing need

#### 4.1 Legal background

- 4.1.1 All eligible and qualifying applicants will be placed in a housing needs band following an assessment of their household's needs. This is to ensure that the Council meets its legal obligations as set out in the Housing Act 1996 (as amended).

#### 4.2 Advice and information

- 4.2.1 The Council will ensure that advice and information on how to apply for housing in Huntingdonshire is available free of charge to everyone. If applicants are likely to have difficulty in making an application without assistance, then the council will make any necessary assistance they require available.

#### 4.3 Assessment of housing need

- 4.3.1 Assessments of housing needs are based on an applicant's current housing circumstances. Assessments will be completed by housing officers of the Council. Medical assessments will be made by a medical professional or appropriately trained officer.

#### 4.4 Local connection criteria

- 4.4.1 To ensure local housing needs are met, 90% of properties advertised through the Home-Link scheme will be labelled as available to applicants with a local connection to Huntingdonshire. 10% of advertised properties will be open to bidding from applicants with a local connection to any of the Home-Link partner organisations. 25% of new growth homes will be made available for cross boundary moves. The relevant local connection requirement will be clearly labelled on the property advert.
- 4.4.2 Where a property has local connection criteria attached to it through a local lettings plan or s.106 agreement, then these properties will be let in line with the criteria within the lettings plan or s. the 106 agreement. This may differ from the local connection criteria contained within this lettings policy and will be mentioned in the property advert.

#### 4.5 Housing needs bands

- 4.5.1 Eligible and qualifying applicants will be placed in one of the following four bands in date order. Applicants placed in Band A will have the highest assessed need, Band D the lowest. When an applicant is placed in a housing needs band the same level of priority will apply with all partner organisations in the Home-Link scheme.

#### 4.6 Band A: Urgent need

Applicants with the following circumstances will be placed into Band A:

##### a) Urgent transfer

Where an existing council or housing association tenant needs to move urgently because of circumstances that could include:

- a) Major repairs are required on the property in which they live and which cannot be undertaken with the tenant living in the property.
- b) The property is being demolished.
- c) Urgent social need to move.

**b) Current supported housing resident**

Applicants leaving Social Services care or other supported accommodation, and are ready to move to a permanent home of their own. This will be subject to the council, Social Services and the landlord of the supported accommodation agreeing that the applicant is ready to move to their own home. If the applicant needs an on-going support package to allow them to live independently, confirmation that this will be put in place will also be required from the proposed support provider. The date that this priority is awarded (date in Band A) will be the date that the resident is ready to move to independent living, as recommended by their support worker.

**c) Urgent health and safety risk**

The applicants current accommodation has been assessed by the Council or a partner organisation as posing an urgent health and safety risk. This will apply where the assessment has classified the accommodation as unsafe, or where there is a risk of imminent harm as identified in the assessment, which cannot be remedied in a reasonable time and where the health and safety risk has not been caused intentionally by the applicant or a member of the applicant's household.

**d) Urgent medical need**

An assessment of medical need will be made by a medical professional or appropriately trained officer, using sub-regionally agreed criteria for assessment.

Urgent medical need priority will be awarded when an applicant's current housing conditions have been assessed as having a major adverse effect on the medical condition or disability of the applicant or a member of their household and this will be improved by alternative accommodation.

**e) Lacking two or more bedrooms**

The household is assessed as lacking two or more bedrooms (see s.5.4).

**f) Under-occupancy by two or more bedrooms or release of adapted property**

Where an existing council or housing association tenant:

- a) Is assessed as having two or more bedrooms that are not required by the household (see s.5.4).
- b) Where a property has been adapted and the adaptations are no longer required. For example if the person requiring the adaptations has moved or died.

**g) Homeless households (Full homelessness duty owed under s.193 (2) of the Housing Act 1996 as amended)**

Where an applicant is not homeless intentionally or threatened with homelessness intentionally, is eligible for assistance and has a priority need for accommodation, and the Council or a partner organisation has accepted a duty under s193 (2) of the

Housing Act 1996 (as amended) (referred to as the full homelessness duty) and this duty has not been brought to an end.

#### **h) Urgent multiple needs**

This priority will be applied where an applicant is assessed as having two or more Band B needs. This may include an application where two household members have the same assessed need e.g. two high medical needs.

For multiple needs in Band A please see 'emergency housing status' (see Chapter 5)

### **4.7 Band B: High need**

Applicants with the following circumstances will be placed into Band B:

#### **a) High health and safety risk**

Applicants current accommodation has been assessed by the Council or a partner organisation as posing a high health and safety risk to them or members of their household. This will apply where the assessment has identified that the applicant is living in a property, the condition of which places them or members of their household at a high risk of harm as identified in the assessment, which cannot be remedied in a reasonable time and where the health and safety risk has not been caused intentionally by the applicant or a member of the applicant's household.

#### **b) High medical need**

An assessment of medical need will be made by a medical professional or appropriately trained officer, using sub-regionally agreed criteria for assessment.

High medical need priority will be awarded where an applicant's current housing conditions have been assessed as having a significant adverse effect on the medical condition or disability of the applicant or member of their household and this will be improved by alternative accommodation.

#### **c) Lacking one bedroom**

This priority will be applied where the household is assessed as lacking one bedroom based on the bedroom calculation in (see s.5.4).

#### **d) Under-occupancy by one bedroom.**

This priority will be applied where an existing council or housing association tenant is assessed as having one bedroom more than required by the household (see s.5.4).

#### **e) Victims of harassment, violence or abuse**

Where the Council or a partner organisation has investigated and identified that the applicant or a member of their household is being subjected to harassment or other conduct causing alarm and distress that will be improved by a move to alternative accommodation. Harassment might be, but is not limited to, harassment due to, race, sex, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, mental health, physical disability, learning disability, religion, domestic abuse or harassment by a former partner or associated persons.

The Council will offer advice and support to assist the applicant in identifying possible ways to resolve the situation.

#### **f) Potentially homeless (prior to homelessness decision being made)**

Where an applicant is threatened with homelessness within a period of more than 28 days, the Council will work with the applicant to try and prevent their homelessness. Those applicants, who appear likely to have a priority need in the event of a homelessness application, will be placed in Band B whilst the prevention measures are being pursued

Where homelessness prevention has not been possible and an applicant remains threatened with homelessness within the next 28 days, they may choose to make a homeless application which will be assessed under part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended).

#### **g) Sleeping rough**

This priority will be applied where it has been confirmed that an applicant is sleeping rough and has no other accommodation available to them. The council will verify that an applicant is sleeping rough before awarding this priority. Rough sleeping priority will not be awarded when accommodation is available to the applicant, including a placement at a direct access hostel, but the applicant chooses not to take up this offer of accommodation. Applicants assessed as 'Sleeping rough' will not be awarded additional priority on any other accommodation related factors.

#### **h) Multiple needs**

This priority will be applied where an applicant is assessed as having three or more Band C needs. This may include an application where more than two household members have the same assessed need e.g. three medical needs.

### **4.8 Band C: Medium need**

Applicants with the following circumstances will be placed into Band C:

#### **a) Medium medical need**

An assessment of medical need will be made by a medical professional or appropriately trained officer, using sub-regionally agreed criteria for assessment.

Medium medical need will be awarded where an applicant's current accommodation is having a minimal effect on the medical condition or disability of the applicant or member of their household, but a move to different accommodation would be likely to improve their quality of life.

#### **b) Need to move for social reasons**

Where the Council or a partner organisation has assessed the applicant's need to move for social reasons. An applicant will only be awarded this factor once irrespective of the number of social needs that may apply to their situation.

Examples where a social need to move may apply may include where an applicant:

- a) Needs to move to or within an area of the sub-region to give or receive support, and a proven level of support is required and can be given
- b) Has found employment in the Huntingdonshire area and needs to move closer to work, or will otherwise lose their employment, or suffer hardship

- c) Has staying contact with a child/children and is living in accommodation where the child/children are not allowed to stay overnight.
- d) Is living in a first floor or above property and has children less than 10 years of age as part of their household, or is more than 24 weeks pregnant.

### **c) Housing conditions**

This priority will be applied where the applicant/s either lack or share one or more of these facilities with persons, who are not members of their household. Facilities may include:

- a) A living room
- b) Kitchen
- c) Bathroom

### **d) Other homelessness**

Applicants who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and are:

- a) Intentionally homeless.
- b) Not in priority need.
- c) Owed a main homelessness duty by a local authority that is not a partner organisation in Home-Link scheme.

Applicants assessed as 'Other homelessness' will not be awarded additional priority on any other accommodation related factors.

Applicants given this priority will have their application reviewed on the anniversary of the decision, unless there is a change in their circumstances in the meantime.

## **4.9 Band D: Low housing need**

4.9.1 Any applicant who does not meet any of the criteria in Bands A, B and C will be assessed as having a low level of housing need and their application will be placed in Band D.

4.9.2 Anyone assessed as having sufficient financial resources to resolve their own housing need (see s.4.13) will be placed in band D. These applicants will only be considered for an offer of a property once all other bidding applicants who do not have sufficient financial resources to resolve their own housing need have been considered.

## **4.10 Low priority**

4.10.1 In certain circumstances, applicants will be accepted onto the housing register, but their application will be considered as low priority as a result of unacceptable behaviour or circumstances that affects their suitability to be a tenant. In these circumstances their application will be placed in a housing needs band but they will not be actively considered for an offer of a tenancy or be able to express interest in available properties. Their application will remain in low priority until the applicant has shown that the circumstances or behaviour has changed so that they are considered suitable to be a tenant.

4.10.2 The following categories will be considered as low priority:

- a. Applicants with recoverable rent arrears, former rent arrears or other housing-related charges or debts, where these are not sufficiently high to class them



as not qualifying to join the register (see s.3.5). Other than in exceptional circumstances, an applicant with outstanding recoverable rent arrears, former rent arrears or other housing-related debts will not be considered for an offer of a tenancy or eligible to bid for housing until they have shown a regular repayment record.

- b. Applicants with a history of unacceptable behaviour where this is not sufficiently severe to class them as not qualifying to join the register (see s.3.5).

- 4.10.3 All applicants who are considered low priority will be informed of this decision in writing, and how their application could be re-assessed, for example, by agreeing and keeping to an arrangement to make payments towards rent arrears, or by the applicant satisfying the council that the circumstances or unacceptable behaviour that made them unsuitable to be a tenant have changed.
- 4.10.4 The Council expects applicants to clear any recoverable housing related debts owed to any social housing landlord before an offer of a tenancy is made, where it is clearly within their means to do this (for example where the debt is relatively low and the applicant has a reasonable disposable income or has sufficient savings available).
- 4.10.5 When a financial assessment shows that the debt cannot be cleared immediately then a realistic and affordable repayment arrangement should be agreed to clear the debt. The applicant may become eligible to bid for property as long as they have made regular payments in line with the agreement they have made.
- 4.10.6 Applicants found to be low priority have a right to ask for a review of the decision (see Chapter 6).

#### **4.11 Intentionally worsening housing circumstances**

- 4.11.1 If an applicant is assessed as having intentionally worsened their circumstances, the effect of which would be to improve their housing irrespective of whether they had prior knowledge of the lettings policy, their level of housing need will be assessed on the basis of their previous accommodation, or previous circumstances at their current accommodation.
- 4.11.2 Applicants found to have intentionally worsened their circumstances have a right to ask for a review of the decision (see Chapter 6).
- 4.11.3 All applicants deemed to have intentionally worsened their circumstances will have their application reviewed on the anniversary of the decision, unless there is a change in their circumstances in the meantime.
- 4.11.4 If the Council has assessed and accepted the applicant is homeless or threatened with homelessness, has a priority need under the homeless legislation, but considers that they have become homeless intentionally; the applicant will be placed in Band C.

#### **4.12 Homeowners**

- 4.12.1 In line with the 'Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England', the Council will usually only allocate social housing to homeowners in exceptional circumstances. However, the council may allocate housing that is in low demand. Applicants who are homeowners will be allocated a Band D status. In exceptional circumstances the Council may consider a homeowner's status for example the council may allocate housing to applicants who require support and

whose age qualifies them for housing for older people but who have insufficient financial resources to access housing for older people in the private sector

#### **4.13 Financial resources**

4.13.1 All qualifying applicants are entitled to apply for housing regardless of income levels. However if an applicant is assessed as having income and/or capital, which will enable them to resolve their own housing need through other tenures they will not receive any preference for social housing and when bidding will appear on the shortlist after all other applicants that do not have the resources to resolve their own need.

This assessment will be based on the following

- a) The total income of the applicant/partner
- b) Any capital available to the applicant/partner
- c) Average property prices and rents in the area for the type of accommodation needed by the household
- d) The ability of the applicant/partner to rent a property in the private sector based on a realistic assessment of their financial position and commitments.
- e) The ability of the applicant/partner to acquire a mortgage and maintain required repayments based on a realistic assessment of their financial position and commitments.

4.13.2 Excluded from the above financial assessment will be any member of the Armed Forces<sup>1</sup> who may have received a lump sum as compensation for an injury or disability sustained on active service.

#### **4.13 Officer review for Band A applicants**

4.13.1 Where an applicant has held Band A status for three months or more from their applicable date in band or the applicant has refused more than three reasonable offers of accommodation or has made little or no attempt to bid for accommodation the Council may carry out a review of their circumstances. This will result in either:

- a) A direct let – usually for statutorily homeless applicants living in temporary accommodation.
- b) Priority being maintained.
- c) Moving into a lower priority band if the circumstances under which they were placed in Band A no longer apply.
- d) Making the applicant unable to bid for a specified period, not exceeding 6 months

<sup>1</sup> Means the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines, Her Majesty's regular army or the Royal Air Force

## Chapter 5

### Assessment information and criteria

#### 5.1 Transfer applicants

- 5.1.1 Transfer applicants are those applicants who are tenants of a council or housing association property in the UK who wish to move to alternative accommodation.

#### 5.2 Homeless applications

- 5.2.1 Applicants who are already on the housing register will remain in their existing housing needs band whilst a homeless assessment is carried out (unless the criterion in s.5.2.3 below applies).
- 5.2.2 When a decision has been made by the Council that an applicant is owed a full homelessness duty under s.193 (2) of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) their application will be placed and remain in Band A until that duty is brought to an end (See s.4.6 (g)).
- 5.2.3 Where a person is threatened with homelessness within a period of more than 28 days, the Council will work with the applicant to try and prevent their homelessness. Those persons, who appear likely to have a priority need in the event of a homelessness application being made, will be placed in Band B whilst the prevention measures are being pursued.
- 5.2.4 A person who is threatened with homelessness may have an existing housing register application. Applicants already in Band A will retain their existing Band A status whilst homelessness prevention measures are pursued.
- 5.2.5 An applicant who is statutorily homeless or threatened with homelessness but deemed not to have a priority need will be placed in Band C (unless other circumstances are such that they are eligible for placement within a different band).
- 5.2.6 Applicants who have been assessed as being in priority need but are intentionally homeless will be assessed as having Band C status in line with 4.8(d). If an applicant has intentionally worsened their circumstances the housing needs assessment will take this into account (see s.4.11).

#### 5.3 Split families

- 5.3.1 Where an application is made by family members who it would be reasonable to expect them to live together but they are unable to do so, the council will assess their particular circumstances to consider the best way of addressing their housing needs.

#### 5.4 Bedroom requirement guidelines

- 5.4.1 Bedroom requirements are generally determined in line with the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) regulations and these regulations will be applied when calculating bedroom requirements in overcrowding and under-occupancy assessments. They will also be used when calculating the size of property (number of bedrooms in the property) that an applicant will be able to bid on and eligible to be offered through the letting process.

Bedroom requirements are determined by the applicant's size of household. Ineligible household members may not be included (see paragraph 3.2.3). Generally, the LHA regulations allow one bedroom each for:

- a) Every adult couple
- b) Any other adult aged 16 or over
- c) Any two children (aged under 16) of the same sex
- d) Any two children, regardless of sex, under the age of 10
- e) Any other child aged under 16
- f) A non-resident carer (claimant/partner have disability and need overnight care)

Applicants requiring help in calculating their bedroom entitlement can use the Direct.gov online bedroom entitlement calculator at <https://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/BedRoomCalculator.aspx>.

If, in exceptional circumstances, the council considers that a room designated by a landlord as a bedroom is not capable of being used as a bedroom, they may re-assess overcrowding for the household.

- 5.4.2 Single and joint applicants of pensionable age may be eligible to be considered for one and two bedroom properties considered to be housing for older people.
- 5.4.3 A pregnant woman expecting her first child will be assessed as requiring two bedrooms from week 24 of her pregnancy.
- 5.4.4 An applicant may be assessed as requiring an additional bedroom where the Council considers there are special circumstances.

## **5.5 Staying contact with children**

- 5.5.1 A child, or children, living between parents at separate addresses will only be considered as having one main home unless there are exceptional circumstances that mean that both parents should provide a home. A Court Order allowing access to children, or confirming residence between separated parents does not mean that the council must consider that the child is part of an applicant's household for the purposes of a housing register application.
- 5.5.2 An assessment will be made by the council as to which parent's property is considered as the child's main home. If the council considers that an applicant does not provide the child with his or her main home then the child will not be considered as part of the housing register application. The child would then not be considered as part of the bedroom requirements when assessing overcrowding or under-occupation. They would also not be considered when assessing the size of property (number of bedrooms) that the application would be eligible to bid for and offered through the lettings process.

## **5.6 Medical assessments**

- 5.6.1 Medical assessments will be carried out for any applicants who believe that their medical condition or disability is affected by their current accommodation. The applicant will be required to fill in a self-assessment medical form, or provide information from a medical professional, detailing the effect that their current accommodation has on their medical condition or disability. These forms will be assessed and where appropriate referred to a medical professional or appropriately

trained officer for their opinion of how the medical condition is affected by the applicant's housing circumstances.

## **5.7 Harassment and domestic violence**

5.7.1 Where the applicant is a victim of harassment, domestic violence or anti-social behaviour, the Council will offer advice and support to assist applicants in identifying possible ways of resolving their situation.

## **5.8 Applicant subject to Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements, (MAPPA)**

5.8.1 Where an applicant is subject to Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), the Council will liaise with the panel to ensure an appropriate housing solution to meet the needs of the applicant and the community as a whole.

## **5.9 Emergency housing status**

5.9.1 An emergency housing status may be awarded to applicants in exceptional circumstances, where remaining in their current accommodation may cause risk of death or serious injury, where an applicant has been assessed as having multiple needs that fall within Band A, where an applicant is terminally ill, is already in Band A and, in the opinion of a qualified medical practitioner, is likely to have less than 12 months to live, or where the applicant's home is to be demolished under one of the council's or partner organisation's redevelopment schemes. An applicant with emergency housing status who bids for a home will be considered as a priority above all other applicants in any other band.

## **5.10 Direct Lets**

5.10.1 Most properties will be advertised through the Home-Link scheme. However in certain circumstances some properties may be let directly to applicants and these properties will be let outside of the allocation scheme. Where an applicant is identified as requiring a direct let the case will be referred to a senior officer for approval. The list below gives some examples of where this may happen.

- a) Where the council has accepted a full homelessness duty towards a household but the household has not found suitable accommodation during a period of choice through the Home-Link scheme.
- b) Where an applicant and their household require a specific size, type or adapted property and the applicant has not been able to find suitable accommodation through the Home-Link scheme
- c) Where an existing social housing tenant is required to move to make the best use of stock, including where their home is to be demolished, and they have not been successful in finding a suitable property through the Home-Link scheme
- d) Where the applicant has emergency housing status
- e) Use and occupation cases
- f) Where an applicant in Band A has refused 3 reasonable offers or made little or no effort to bid

5.10.2 Information as to which properties have been allocated though direct lets will be made available through the Home-Link feedback information.

5.10.3 Direct lets will be made on the basis of a suitable property becoming available. Where a property becomes available that is suitable for more than one applicant with

a direct let status, the date applicants were awarded a direct let status will be used as a deciding factor in deciding to whom the property will be let.

## **5.11 Direct lets to homeless applicants**

5.11.1 Homeless applicants who are owed a full homelessness duty by the Council (under s.193 (2) of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended)) will be placed in Band A and will be able to bid for properties through the Home-Link scheme. Their date in band will be the date they originally applied to the council as homeless.

5.11.2 Where homeless applicants in Band A have not been have not been offered a tenancy through the bidding process at the point at which the Council has accepted the full homelessness duty, the council reserves the right to make a direct let of a property, either in the social or private rented sector, under the council's policy on discharging homelessness duties.

5.11.3 The full homelessness duty will come to an end, and a homeless applicant loses their priority under this section, when any of the circumstances within s.193 (6) or (7) of the Housing Act 1996 Act (as amended) are met. This will include an applicant:

- a) Accepting an offer of accommodation made through the Home-Link scheme
- b) Accepting an offer made through the direct let process within the policy (see s.5.10 above), or
- c) Accepting a suitable offer of accommodation in the private rented sector in line with section 193 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) and the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012
- d) Having been informed of the possible consequences of refusal and the right to request a review of the suitability of the accommodation, refuses a reasonable offer of suitable accommodation made through the direct let process, or in the private rented sector as outlined in c) above

S. 193(6) of the Housing Act 1996 Act (as amended) gives the full circumstances under which the full homelessness duty comes to an end.

5.11.4 Where a homeless applicant is to be allocated a property through the direct let process the Council has responsibility for determining the suitability of any allocation. They will do this by assessing the household's particular needs and circumstances within the context of the general housing conditions in the area as a whole.

5.11.5 Where a homeless applicant is offered accommodation through a direct let, but does not feel that this offer is suitable; they have the right to request a review of the decision that the offer is suitable. For details of the review process (see Chapter 6).

5.11.6 As the property does not have to remain available during the review of the suitability and reasonableness of a direct let, homeless applicants are advised to accept and move in to the accommodation pending the decision on review. If the review outcome is unsuccessful for the applicant they will still have accommodation to live in whilst they consider their further options.

5.11.7 If a homeless applicant refuses a direct let and it is then deemed suitable at review, the full homelessness duty will come to an end. They will also have to vacate any temporary accommodation that is being provided.

5.11.8 If, on review reviewing an applicant's refusal of a direct let, the property offered is considered to be unreasonable or unsuitable, the duty under s.193 (2) will continue and the applicant will be made a further offer of suitable accommodation.

## **5.12 Applicants who require a specific size, type or adapted property.**

5.12.1 Where an applicant requires a specific size, type or adapted property, they will be placed in the appropriate housing needs band, but may be offered a direct let if the Council has a shortage of suitable properties. For example:

- a) An applicant requires a very large property to accommodate their household.
- b) An applicant requires a property of a specific type in a specific area of the district.
- c) An applicant requires a property with specific adaptations and such a property becomes available.
- d) Where an applicant is willing to move to release a property larger than required to meet their housing needs.

## **5.13 Housing for older people (also known as sheltered housing)**

5.13.1 Housing for older people will be advertised through the Home-Link scheme. Housing for older people is generally available to applicants over 60 years of age but the age limit can be lower on some properties and it will be clearly shown in the advert. Prior to an offer of a tenancy, applicants will be subject to an assessment by the landlord of the property to establish their support needs and suitability to living in housing for older people.

## **5.14 Extra care properties**

5.14.1 Extra care properties are for older people who need the additional support services that are provided. Extra care properties are not often advertised through Home-Link. Where they are advertised, applicants who bid will be assessed based on their care needs by a specialist panel.

## **5.15 Refusals of direct let**

5.15.1 Where an applicant (other than a person owed the full homelessness duty) refuses a reasonable offer of a direct let a senior officer will review the reasons for the refusal and the applicant may lose any housing priority they held, dependent on the reasons for the offer refusal. Applicants have the right to ask for a review of this decision (see Chapter 6).

## **5.16 Local lettings plans**

5.16.1 Local lettings plans are used across the Home-Link area to help create balanced and sustainable communities. Where a local lettings plan applies, it will be stated in the property details when advertised. Details of any local lettings plans will be available from the local authority in whose area the property is situated. Some local lettings plans may ask for an applicant to have a local connection to a specific parish or village. In those cases, the connection criteria will be stipulated in the legal agreement for that development.

## Chapter 6

### 6.1 Reviews of decisions

6.1.1 The Council will carry out reviews of assessment decisions as required.

6.1.2 Examples of circumstances that may be reviewed include:

- a) Multiple need in band
- b) Emergency housing status
- c) Moving people up a band or down a band
- d) Priority assessments, in complex cases.
- e) Housing people in different accommodation to designated need size
- f) Low priority decisions
- g) Direct lets
- h) Being restricted from bidding

The above list is not exhaustive.

### 6.2 Statutory reviews

6.2.1 An applicant has the right to request a review of certain decisions made under part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). These are:

- a) Decisions about the facts of the applicant's case which are likely to be, or have been, taken into account in considering whether to accept onto the housing register or to allocate housing accommodation to the applicant
- b) Lack of any reasonable preference based on previous behaviour s167 (2C) Housing Act 1996 (as amended)
- c) Ineligibility for an allocation based on immigration status s160A (9)
- d) Decisions that an applicant does not qualify for entry on to the housing register (see sections 3.3 to 3.5)

6.2.2 Decision letters issued in respect of housing applications will advise the applicant of their right to request a review and provide appropriate guidance on how to do this. An applicant can obtain further details of the review procedure from the Council.

6.2.3 A request for a review of a decision can be made in writing or verbally to a member of staff at the Council. The request should be made within 21 days following the notification of the decision. Reviews will be considered within 28 days of the request being received but this may take up to 8 weeks. The applicant will receive a written response outlining the result of the review.

6.2.4 An applicant will only be entitled to one internal review. If an applicant is still unhappy following the review of a decision, they can make a complaint through the council's complaints procedures. If they continue to be dissatisfied after the council complaints procedure is concluded, they can contact the Local Government Ombudsman (see s.6.4) or seek to challenge the decision through a judicial review.

6.2.5 Statutory reviews will be undertaken by a designated officer who was not involved in the original decision, and who is senior to the original decision making officer.



### **6.3 Homeless reviews**

- 6.3.1 Homeless applicants have the right to request a review of certain decisions made by the Council in respect of their homeless application. Within the context of the council's lettings policy this includes the decision to bring to an end the full homelessness duty by making a suitable offer of permanent accommodation through the housing register through the direct let process or in the private rented sector (see s.5.11).
- 6.3.2 If an applicant wishes to ask for the review of the Council's decision following a homeless application they must request this within 21 days of the date of the decision letter.
- 6.3.3 If an applicant wishes to request a review of the reasonableness of an offer or the suitability of the property, this must be made within 21 days of notification of a decision to make the offer. Late review requests can be considered under exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the council.
- 6.3.4 Applicants who request reviews of decisions about suitability of accommodation will be advised to accept and move into accommodation pending the outcome of their review request. If the review goes in their favour alternative accommodation will be provided as quickly as possible. However if the reasonableness and suitability of the offer is upheld the applicant will still have accommodation to live in whilst they consider their further options.
- 6.3.5 The applicant has the right of appeal to the county court if they are dissatisfied with the decision on a review.

### **6.4 The Local Government Ombudsman**

- 6.4.1 The Local Government Ombudsman investigates complaints of injustice arising from maladministration by local authorities and other bodies. They can be asked to investigate complaints about most council matters including housing.
- 6.4.2 If an applicant is not satisfied with the action the council has taken, and has exhausted the council's own complaints procedure, they can send a written complaint to the ombudsman.
- 6.4.3 The Local Government Ombudsman can be contacted at:  
Local Government Ombudsman  
The Oaks No 2  
Westwood Way  
Westwood Business Park  
Coventry CV4 8JB  
Tel: 024 7682 0000  
Website: [www.lgo.org.uk](http://www.lgo.org.uk)

If an applicant wishes to make a complaint against a housing association, they should contact:

The Housing Ombudsman Service  
Norman House  
105 -109 Strand  
London  
WC2R 0AA  
Tel: 08457 125 973  
Website: [www.ihos.org.uk](http://www.ihos.org.uk)

## Chapter 7

### 7.1 Letting of accommodation

- 7.1.1 Properties will be advertised through the Home-Link scheme. The advertising will be carried out on a regular basis and for specific periods of time, known as advertising cycles.

### 7.2 Labelling property adverts

- 7.2.1 All adverts will include a description of the property and any other relevant information, for example rent charge, property size, length and type of tenancy, local facilities, disabled adaptations or if the property is housing for older people. The property will be labelled to show who is able to express an interest in it (known as bidding), for example, where a local connection is required, or if there is an age restriction on the property.
- 7.2.2 At least 1% of adverts will offer preference to social housing tenants needing to move for employment reasons (who would otherwise suffer hardship) under the Right to Move scheme.
- 7.2.3 Applicants should check the information contained in the property advert labelling to see if they qualify to be considered for the property.

### 7.3 Bedroom requirements

- 7.3.1 Bedroom requirements will generally be determined in line with the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) regulations (see s.5.4).
- 7.3.2 Landlords may choose to allow the under-occupation of certain properties including those that they advertise. The property advert will explain this on those properties the landlord is willing to under-occupy. Where a landlord is willing to allow under-occupation this will generally be by allowing an applicant to be considered for one bedroom more than their assessed Local Housing Allowance (LHA) entitlement (for example allowing applicants with an assessed two bedroom LHA need to be considered for a 3 bedroom property). All households bidding for these properties and meeting the labelling criteria will be considered in line with the shortlisting criteria contained in 7.4.1 below.
- 7.3.3 Where a landlord is willing to allow under-occupation an affordability assessment will be completed to ensure that the applicant being considered for the property is able to meet rent payments. If the applicant is assessed as being unable to afford the rent payments the landlord may bypass them on the shortlist.

### 7.4 Shortlisting

- 7.4.1 After the end of an advertising cycle a shortlist of applicants bidding for the property and meeting the labelling criteria will be produced. Applicants will be ranked in order of their priority band with Band A above Band B, Band B above Band C, and Band C above Band D. Where more than one applicant in the same priority band appears on the shortlist they will be ranked in date order as determined by their date in band (see 2.3). In circumstances where there is more than one applicant in the same band with the same date in band, the applicant with the earliest registration date will appear higher on the shortlist. If there is more than one applicant with the same band, date in band and registration date an officer will make an allocation decision based on the best use of the housing stock and needs of the applicants.

- 7.4.2 When a shortlist of applicants is completed the landlord of the available property may offer an accompanied viewing of the property to a group of the highest priority applicants. This is to ensure that if the applicant who tops the shortlist decides not to take the tenancy, the property can be quickly offered to the next person on the shortlist.
- 7.4.3 After viewing the property the applicant at the top of the shortlist will be given 24 hours to accept or refuse the offer. If an applicant is offered a tenancy (verbally or in writing) and does not reply to accept that offer within the deadline given, the landlord will take this as a refusal of the offer. If the offer is refused the next person on the shortlist will be offered the property. The landlord will work down the shortlist in order.
- 7.4.4 In exceptional circumstances an officer may make a decision to bypass an applicant on a shortlist, for example, if, in doing so, the offer could put a vulnerable person at risk of any harm. Any such decisions will be explained fully to the applicant in writing by the landlord making the decision. This is known as a 'sensitive let'.

## **7.5 Formal offer of the property**

- 7.5.1 Once the applicant has confirmed their acceptance of the tenancy the landlord of the property will write to confirm the formal offer of the tenancy. The Home-Link system will then not allow that applicant to be considered for any further properties and once the tenancy starts their housing register application will be cancelled.
- 7.5.2 Once the property is ready to let the landlord of the property will complete the tenancy sign up.

## **7.6 Withdrawal of offers**

- 7.6.1 In exceptional circumstances an offer of a property may be withdrawn, for example:
- a) Where there has been a change in the applicants' circumstances
  - b) Where the successful applicant has rent arrears or other housing related debts that had previously not come to light
  - c) Following verification the applicant is not eligible for the property
  - d) Where an error has been made in the advertising criteria
  - e) Where an offer of accommodation could put a vulnerable person at risk of any harm
  - f) Where the property is no longer available to let

## **7.7 Refusing an offer of accommodation**

- 7.7.1 Usually, if an applicant refuses an offer of accommodation made through Home-Link, they will remain in their housing needs band. If an applicant unreasonably refuses three or more offers of a property made through Home-Link or has made little or no attempt to bid for accommodation, an officer may contact the applicant to offer support and assistance and verify their circumstances. The applicant may be moved into a lower priority band or be unable to bid for a specified period not exceeding 6 months

## **7.8 Allocations to staff, council members or their family members**

- 7.8.1 Members of staff, their close family and elected members who require housing with the Council may apply for housing in the same way as other applicants. Their status should be disclosed on the application form at the time of applying.
- 7.8.2 If an applicant who is a member of staff, elected member or a member of their direct family, makes a successful bid for a property the Council will be informed and must approve the letting prior to the formal offer being made.

## **7.9 Tenancy management outside the scope of the lettings policy**

- 7.9.1 The following tenancy management areas are not included as part of this lettings policy as they are not included within part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended):
- a) Mutual exchanges
  - b) Introductory/starter tenancies converted to secure/assured tenancies
  - c) Where a secure/assured tenancy of a property is assigned by way of succession to the same property
  - d) Where a secure/assured tenancy is assigned to someone who would be qualified to succeed to that tenancy if the secure/assured tenant died immediately before the assignment
  - e) Where court orders are made under one of the following:
    - i. Section 24 of the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973
    - ii. Section 17 (1) of the Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act 1984
    - iii. Paragraph 1 of schedule 1 to the Children Act 1989

## Chapter 8

### Confidentiality and access to information

#### 8.1 Applicants' rights to information

- 8.1.1 Applicants have the right to request such general information as will enable them to assess:
- a. How their application is likely to be treated under the lettings policy (including in particular whether they are likely to be regarded as a member of a group of people who are to be given preference by virtue of this policy, (see Chapter 3)
  - b. Whether housing accommodation appropriate to their needs is likely to be made available to them.
- 8.1.2 Applicants have the right to request information held about their application which is likely to be, or has been, taken into account when considering whether to allocate them housing.

#### 8.2 Data protection

- 8.2.1 When an applicant applies to the Home-Link scheme the partner organisations will only ask for information that they need to assess their eligibility and housing needs. The partner organisations will collect and keep data in accordance with the council's guidelines on handling personal data.
- 8.2.2 These guidelines are in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 which covers both electronic and manual records and the Act governs everything we do with the personal data, including collecting, storing, using and disposing of it.
- 8.2.3 Confidential information held about applicants will not be disclosed to third parties apart from:
- a) Where the individual who is the subject of the confidential information has consented to the disclosure
  - b) Where disclosure is made in accordance with an information sharing protocol
  - c) Where the council or a partner organisation is required by law to make such disclosures

#### 8.3 Requesting information

- 8.3.1 Applicants are able to request copies of the information held regarding their application. This information is held in line with Data Protection Act guidelines. Please note that we cannot provide you with personal information about other people if doing so will breach the Data Protection Act 1998.

## Appendix 1

### Home-Link partner organisation list

#### Local authority

#### LSVT landlord

##### **Cambridge City Council**

Mandela House  
4 Regent Street  
Cambridge  
CB2 1BY  
Email: [CBL@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:CBL@cambridge.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.cambridge.gov.uk](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk)

##### **South Cambridgeshire District Council**

South Cambridgeshire Hall  
Cambourne Business Park  
Cambourne  
Cambridge  
CB23 6EA  
Email: [cbl@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:cbl@scambs.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.scambs.gov.uk](http://www.scambs.gov.uk)

##### **East Cambridgeshire District Council,**

The Grange  
Nutholt Lane  
Ely  
Cambs.  
CB7 4PL  
Email: [customerservices@eastcambs.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@eastcambs.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.eastcambs.gov.uk](http://www.eastcambs.gov.uk)

##### **Sanctuary Housing**

Avro House  
49 Lancaster Way Business Park  
Ely  
Cambs  
CB6 3NW  
Email: [contactus@sanctuary-housing.co.uk](mailto:contactus@sanctuary-housing.co.uk)  
Website: [www.sanctuary-housing.co.uk](http://www.sanctuary-housing.co.uk)

##### **Huntingdonshire District Council**

Pathfinder House  
St Mary's Street  
Huntingdon  
Cambridgeshire  
PE29 3TN  
Email: [housingservices@huntsdc.gov.uk](mailto:housingservices@huntsdc.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.huntsdc.gov.uk](http://www.huntsdc.gov.uk)

##### **Luminus Group**

Brook House  
Ouse Walk  
Huntingdon  
Cambridgeshire  
PE29 3QW  
Email: [homes@luminus.org.uk](mailto:homes@luminus.org.uk)  
Website: [www.luminus.org.uk](http://www.luminus.org.uk)

##### **Fenland District Council**

Fenland Hall  
County Road  
March  
Cambridgeshire  
PE15 8NQ  
Email: [info@fenland.gov.uk](mailto:info@fenland.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.fenland.gov.uk](http://www.fenland.gov.uk)

##### **Circle Housing Roddons**

Beacon House  
23 Hostmoor Avenue  
March  
Cambridgeshire  
PE15 0AX  
Email: [roddensquiries@circle.org.uk](mailto:roddensquiries@circle.org.uk)  
Website: [www.circle.org.uk/roddons/](http://www.circle.org.uk/roddons/)

## Local authority

### **Forest Heath District Council**

College Heath Road  
Mildenhall  
Suffolk  
IP28 7EY

Email: [cbl@forest-heath.gov.uk](mailto:cbl@forest-heath.gov.uk)

Website: [www.forest-heath.gov.uk](http://www.forest-heath.gov.uk)

### **St Edmundsbury Borough Council**

West Suffolk House  
Western Way  
Bury St Edmunds  
Suffolk  
IP33 3YU

Email: [home-link@stedsbcc.gov.uk](mailto:home-link@stedsbcc.gov.uk)

Website: [www.stedmundsbury.gov.uk](http://www.stedmundsbury.gov.uk)

## LSVT landlord

### **Flagship Housing Group**

Keswick Hall  
Keswick  
Norwich  
Norfolk  
NR4 6TJ

Email: [info@flagship-housing.co.uk](mailto:info@flagship-housing.co.uk)

Website: [www.flagship-housing.co.uk](http://www.flagship-housing.co.uk)

### **Havebury Housing Partnership**

Havebury House  
Western Way  
Bury St. Edmunds  
Suffolk  
IP33 3SP

Email: [office@havebury.com](mailto:office@havebury.com)

Website: [www.havebury.com](http://www.havebury.com)

## Appendix 2

### GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Adapted properties** – a property that has been adapted for an applicant with disabilities.

**Advertising cycle** – how often properties are advertised and available to make a bid on.

**Advertised** - properties that are advertised and are available for applicants to bid for through Home-Link.

**Age restrictions** - where a property is labelled, as only being available to applicants of a certain age.

**Application number** - a unique housing register number generated by the computer system.

**Bedroom eligibility** - how many bedrooms a household is assessed as needing.

**Bid** – the process used by applicants in registering an interest in an available property.

**Choice based lettings (CBL)** - a method of allocating social and affordable homes which have become available for letting by openly advertising them, and allowing applicants to bid for these.

**Customer/applicant** - is either a tenant of a partner organisation (including those in temporary accommodation) or a housing applicant on the Home-Link housing register.

**Date of registration** - the date an application form is registered with a partner organisation.

**Date in band** - the date an application is placed in a housing needs band and used as the applicable date when shortlisting.

**Decision making organisation** - the organisation that made a particular decision with regard to a housing or homeless application.

**Direct let** - a property that is offered directly to an applicant, without them having to bid.

**Domestic violence/abuse** - is threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (physical, psychological, sexual, financial or emotional) by a partner, former partner or a family member.

**Housing options** - looking at the number of ways in which an applicant or customer might be assisted and supported to find a solution to their housing needs. Housing options may include private rented accommodation, mutual exchange, or even a help to buy product.

**Housing register** - a list of those requesting, eligible and qualifying for housing.

**Housing related debts** - are defined as recoverable current rent arrears, former tenant arrears, outstanding re-chargeable repairs, current and former housing related service charge arrears and court costs. They do not include Council Tax debts or Housing Benefit overpayments.



**Joint application** - where more than one applicant applies to join the housing register on one application form.

**Labelling properties** - describing who is eligible to bid for a property and if there will be a preference applied.

**Local Connection** - The connection an applicant has to a specific area.

**Local elected members** - each local authority is governed by a group of elected members also known as councillors.

**LSVT landlord** - Large Scale Voluntary Transfer, where a local authority has sold its housing stock to a Registered Provider

**Mutual exchange** - a scheme which allows two social housing tenants to swap their homes.

**Partner organisations** - all the councils that are partners to the Home-Link scheme.

**Registered Providers** - also known as housing associations. These are social landlords who also provide social and affordable rented homes for which applicants/customers can bid for through the Home-Link scheme.

**Transferring tenant** - an applicant who is currently a tenant of a local authority or registered provider and who wishes to move.

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**Public**  
**Key Decision - Yes**

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Title/Subject Matter:** Establishment of a process following the receipt of an Examiner's report into a neighbourhood plan

**Meeting/Date:** Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Wellbeing) - 10<sup>th</sup> November 2015  
Cabinet 19<sup>th</sup> November 2015

**Executive Portfolio:** Strategic Housing and Planning

**Report by:** Planning Policy Team Leader

**Ward(s) affected:** All

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### **Executive Summary:**

This report sets out the options upon receipt of an Examiner's report into a neighbourhood plan, proposes a process to determine whether a neighbourhood plan progresses to referendum, and sets out the procedures for conducting a referendum.

### **Recommendations:**

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

1. Agree the process for determining whether a Neighbourhood Plan progresses to referendum as set out in this report; and
2. Notes the requirements of the Regulation in relation to referendums (as summarised in this report and set out in the briefing note on the role of the local planning authority in arranging the referendum prepared by the Planning Advisory Service and Local Government Association in Appendix 1).

## **1. WHAT IS THIS REPORT ABOUT?**

- 1.1 This report sets out the options upon receipt of an Examiner's report into a neighbourhood plan, proposes a process to determine whether a neighbourhood plan progresses to referendum, and sets out the procedures for conducting a referendum.
- 1.2 A separate paper is being prepared to meet the key action in the 2015/16 Corporate Plan to set out our 'community planning' offer, which will include but will not be restricted to neighbourhood plans.

## **2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY**

- 2.1 The report is necessary to agree the process following receipt of an Examiner's report, progression to referendum and how that referendum is to be carried out.
- 2.2 Following examination the Examiner's report is sent to the local planning authority and the town/parish council preparing the neighbourhood plan. The examiner is required to set out one of three options:
- a) That the neighbourhood plan proceeds to referendum as submitted;
  - b) That the neighbourhood plan is modified by the local planning authority to meet the basic conditions and the modified version proceeds to referendum; or
  - c) That the neighbourhood plan does not proceed to referendum as it fails to meet the basic conditions or legislative requirements and cannot be modified to do so.
- 2.3 Following the examination and receipt of the Examiner's Report the local planning authority has limited options:
- 1. Act upon the Examiner's report and progress the neighbourhood plan to referendum – where the Examiner either recommends the plan meets the basic conditions without need for modifications or can meet the basic conditions subject to modifications;
  - 2. Propose to take a decision substantially different from the Examiner's recommendation which is wholly or partly as a result of new evidence or a different view taken by the local planning authority about a particular fact – in which case the local planning authority must notify all those identified in the consultation statement of the town/ parish council and invite representations on the alternative decision and where necessary as a result of these representations the local planning authority must reopen the examination
  - 3. Decide not to progress the neighbourhood plan in light of the Examiner's report – this is only permissible where c) in paragraph 2.2 above is the case.
- 2.4 As any Neighbourhood Plan which passes its referendum will form part of the statutory development plan for Huntingdonshire it is considered appropriate to prepare a report for Cabinet for any neighbourhood plan containing a recommendation on which of the above decisions is appropriate in the particular circumstances, and for Cabinet to resolve which of the options set out in paragraph 2.3 should be followed. The report to Cabinet would be supplemented with a draft Decision Statement setting out any modifications

considered by the Examiner as necessary to enable the submission neighbourhood plan to meet the required basic conditions.

### **3. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN**

- 3.1 The Cabinet report following receipt of the Examiner's report into any neighbourhood plan will recommend one of the three decisions set out above in paragraph 2.3.
- 3.2 Where the recommendation is 1) *Act upon the Examiner's report and progress the neighbourhood plan to referendum*, then arrangements will be made to conduct the referendum in accordance with Regulations and using the guidance set out in the PAS and Local Government Association: Briefing note on Referendums of Neighbourhood Development Plans reproduced as Appendix A.
- 3.3 Where the recommendation is 2) *Propose to take a decision substantially different from the Examiner's recommendation which is wholly or partly as a result of new evidence or a different view taken by the local planning authority about a particular fact*, then discussions will be held with the relevant town or parish council on the alternative decision proposed. Once appropriate modifications are agreed, consultation will be carried out with all parties identified in the neighbourhood plan's statement of consultation and representations invited. Where representations substantially support the alternative modification the neighbourhood plan will be taken forward to referendum. Where the representations indicate a substantial variation in opinion over the alternative modification, the examination will be reopened and the Examiner invited to consider the representations on the alternative modification and determine whether it would meet the basic conditions. After this, a further Cabinet report would be prepared indicating whether the recommendation had altered to that of 'Act upon the Examiner's Report' enabling progression to referendum.
- 3.4 Where the recommendation is 3) *Decide not to progress the neighbourhood plan in light of the Examiner's report as it fails to meet the basic conditions or legislative requirements and cannot be modified to do so*, further discussions will be held with the town/parish council to identify how the District Council can support them through the process of preparing a replacement neighbourhood plan should they wish to do so.
- 3.5 Once the decision is made to proceed to a referendum there are clear Regulations to be followed, the main stages of which are set out below.
- 3.6 The Regulations set out the information to be made available at least 28 working days before the date of the referendum which includes the draft Neighbourhood Plan and the Examiner's Report and where this should be displayed. The town/parish council will be expected to compile an updated version of the Plan incorporating the necessary modification(s) where there are any. The town/parish council will be expected to promote the referendum. Regulations set out the restrictions on publication of promotional material and advertisements and restrictions on referendum expenses.
- 3.7 The Regulations also require publication of a notice of the poll at least 7 days beforehand detailing the times and locations of polling stations and the description of those entitled to vote. They specify that provision must be made for postal ballot papers and official poll cards must be issued. A person is entitled to vote in the neighbourhood plan referendum if they meet the

eligibility criteria to vote in a local election for the area and if they live in the referendum area.

3.8 The Regulations set out the format of the Referendum Question as: 'Do you want Huntingdonshire District Council to use the neighbourhood plan for (XXX parish) to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?'

3.9 If the majority of those who vote in a referendum are in favour of the draft neighbourhood plan then the neighbourhood plan must be brought into legal force 'made' by the District Council as local planning authority. A report will be presented to Full Council at this stage. This should be done promptly following the announcement of the referendum result. The only circumstances where the District Council is not required to make the neighbourhood plan are where it considers that doing so would be incompatible with any EU or human rights obligations. When made, the plan will become part of the statutory development plan for the area.

#### **4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL**

4.1 Comments from the Overview & Scrutiny (Environmental Well-being) Panel have been included separately on the Cabinet's agenda at item 11, Comments from Overview and Scrutiny.

#### **5. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN**

5.1 Progressing any neighbourhood plan through to referendum links to the strategic objective 'To empower local communities'. It will help to achieve the action of working with parishes to complete neighbourhood and parish plans.

#### **6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 Neighbourhood planning is part of the government's initiative to empower local communities to take forward planning proposals at a local level. The Localism Act (2011) and subsequent regulations confer specific functions on local planning authorities in relation to neighbourhood planning.

6.2 As with any planning decision there is a risk of legal challenge to the plan and/or judicial review of the council's decision to proceed with the referendum. This risk is managed by ensuring that the regulations are followed and that the Council's decision making process is clear and transparent.

#### **7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 The neighbourhood planning duties imposed on local planning authorities by the Localism Act 2011 have considerable implications for resources both in terms of staff time and costs for providing assistance to a town/parish council undertaking a neighbourhood plan, examination and referendum. In recognition of this the Department for Communities and Local Government has made grants of up to £30,000 available to local planning authorities for each neighbourhood plan. The payment of this Extra Burdens Grant is phased so that £5,000 is available when the neighbourhood area is designated, a further £5,000 when the plan is submitted to the District Council and publicised for statutory consultation. The final £20,000 is subject to successful examination (ie. that the Examiner recommends the plan proceeds to referendum, with or without the need for modifications).

- 7.2 The Extra Burdens Grant of £30,000 is expected, by government, to cover the costs of the examination and referendum. Staff resources to support production and examination of neighbourhood plans will come from the existing Planning Policy team, and there will be costs to Democratic Services in carrying out the referendum.

## **8. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS**

- 8.1 The recommended decisions are intended to establish a clear process for responding to the Examiner's report on any neighbourhood plan and set out the procedures for conducting a referendum where this is recommended by the examiner.

## **9. RECOMMENDED DECISIONS**

- 9.1 It is recommended: that the Cabinet:

- 1 Agree the process for determining whether a Neighbourhood Plan progresses to referendum as set out in this report; and
- 2 Notes the requirements of the Regulation in relation to referendums (as summarised in this report and set out in the briefing note on the role of the local planning authority in arranging the referendum prepared by the Planning Advisory Service and Local Government Association in Appendix 1).

## **10. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED**

- 1) PAS and Local Government Association: Briefing note on Referendums of Neighbourhood Development Plans
- 2) Flowchart of Neighbourhood Plan process

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)  
Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004  
Localism Act 2011  
The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012 (as amended)

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## **Briefing note on Referendums of Neighbourhood Development Plans**

This briefing note seeks to set out the local planning authority's role in the process for holding residential and business referendum on whether a neighbourhood plan, neighbourhood development order or community right to build order should come into force. This briefing note takes account of:

- The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012 (which came into force on 3 August 2012) and the subsequent amendments as made by the Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 (which came into force on 6 April 2014 and copy electoral conduct provisions in the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 for the purposes of residential and (in most cases) business neighbourhood planning referendums);
- The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 (which came into force on 6 April 2013 and introduced the business referendum);
- Amendments introduced by the Localism Act 2011 to the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act (as amended) and 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act.

The Localism Act 2011 places a duty on local authorities to hold referendum(s) where a neighbourhood plan or order or a Community Right to Build Order has a successful examination and the local planning authority is satisfied that it meets the basic conditions set out in the legislation.

Participants should discuss the electoral arrangements with their colleagues in electoral services in advance of the workshops and encourage the attendance of electoral services colleagues so that issues and concerns can be discussed at the workshops.

### **Residential Referendums**

The key elements of the process are as follows:

1. The Localism Act requires that the independent examiner consider whether the area for any referendum should extend beyond the neighbourhood area to which the draft plan or order relates. If a recommendation is made to extend the area the independent examiner must make a recommendation as to what the extended area should be. The local planning authority is required to make a decision on the referendum area informed by the examiner's conclusions. If the authority decides to extend the referendum/s area they must publish a map of the area.

2. The relevant Council<sup>1</sup> is responsible for making arrangements for the referendum to take place for that part of their area that falls within the referendum area and meeting the costs of a neighbourhood plan referendum. The Regulations make provision for the situation where the local planning authority is not the relevant council. Regulation 16 requires the planning authority to cooperate and sets out the nature of that cooperation.
3. The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012 as amended cover all aspects of organising and conducting polls including the opening hours of polling stations and the content of ballot papers. These largely replicate the Local Authorities (Conduct of Referendums) (England) Regulations 2012. The plan or order should proceed to the referendum stage in a timely manner.
4. Regulation 4 of the Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012 as amended sets out the information that must be made available in relation to the referendum. Not less than 28 days before the date of the referendum the Council must publish on their website and make available an information statement and specified documents. These documents must also be made available during the referendum period for inspection at the main offices of the Council, and at least one other premise open to the public in the Councils control considered appropriate by the Council to achieve geographical distribution. The information statement and specified documents must remain available throughout the period of the referendum in the original form published as far as is reasonably practical.
5. The information statement prepared by the Council must include the following information:
  - a) that a referendum will be held
  - b) the date of the referendum
  - c) the question to be asked (the question is set out in legislation – see note below)
  - d) a map of the referendum area
  - e) where the referendum area and neighbourhood area are not identical a map of the neighbourhood area
  - f) a description of those entitled to vote in each referendum
  - g) the referendum expenses limit<sup>2</sup> applicable (to both referendums if there are to be a residential and business referendum) and the number of people identified as entitled to vote (in both referendums if there are two) on which the limit was calculated.

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<sup>1</sup> The relevant Council is defined as a district council, London borough council, metropolitan district council or a county council in relation to any area in England for which there is no district council.

<sup>2</sup> Note the Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 amend the method of calculating the campaign expenditure limit at neighbourhood planning referendums so that it will no-longer be calculated with reference to the register produced after the annual canvass in the preceding year. The 'relevant register' used to calculate the referendum expenses limit will be the register of local government electors as it exists at the time when the referendum period begins (so 28 working days before a residential poll, and 56 working days before a business and a residential poll that happen together).

- h) that the referendum(s) will be conducted in accordance with procedures similar to those for local government elections, and
  - i) the address and times at which a copy of the specified documents can be inspected.
6. Schedule 1 of the Regulations sets out the referendum questions. The question for a NDP is: Do you want (insert name of LPA) to use the neighbourhood plan for (insert name of neighbourhood area) to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area? The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 includes template forms for residential neighbourhood planning referendums when held alone or combined with other polls.
7. The specified documents to be published by the Council on the website (made available for inspection) are:
- a) Draft NDP
  - b) Examiners report
  - c) Summary of representations submitted to examiner
  - d) For a draft NDP a statement that the Council is satisfied that it meets the basic conditions and provisions as they apply
  - e) A statement that sets out general information as to town and country planning (and neighbourhood planning) and the referendum (prepared having regard to any guidance issued by SoS)
8. Anyone on the prescribed date can vote in a residential referendum if they:
- a) are entitled to vote in an election of any ward councillor of the relevant council whose ward is in the referendum area and whose qualifying address for the election is in the referendum area.
  - b) In the case of the City of London the person can vote if they are entitled to vote in an Authority election and the persons qualifying address is in the City of London.
9. When a relevant Council is not the LPA the relevant Council and LPA must co-operate in the holding of referendum as follows:
- a) The proper officer of the LPA must inform the proper officer of the Council as soon as they know a referendum is required, provide summary of written representations and information and copies of documents held by the LPA which the proper officer of the relevant Council requires to comply with 'what the Council has to do' namely the 'information statement' and the 'specified documents'.
  - b) Both must respond to each other as soon as possible in relation to requests for information relating to the holding of the referendum.
  - c) The proper officer of the relevant Council must as soon as possible inform the proper officer of the LPA of the results of the referendum.
10. Where a referendum results in a majority Yes vote (i.e. over 50% plus 1) the Council must make the neighbourhood plan or order as soon as reasonably practicable. The plan then becomes part of the statutory development plan for

the area. There are limited exceptions to this, the local planning authority can decline to make the Plan or Order if they consider that making the order would breach any EU obligations or any Convention rights. If there is a majority No vote or a tied vote then the Neighbourhood Plan will not come into legal force. If, in the case of a business area, one referendum returns a majority Yes vote but the other does not, the Council may, but is not obliged to, make the NDP.

11. As soon as possible the LPA should publish the plan, details of when and where it can be inspected and notify any person who has asked to be notified that it has been made and where and when it may be inspected. It should also publish the environmental report in cases where the plan has been subject to the SEA Directive, inform the consultation bodies of relevant matters including how significant effects will be monitored. Monitoring results should be published in the Councils monitoring report.
12. If the LPA decides to modify or revoke a plan after it has been made then it must undertake an appropriate assessment of the implications for any European site likely to be significantly affected in view of that sites conservation objectives.
13. The Council can be challenged on the making of the plan by way of judicial review (e.g. conduct of the referendum or result of the referendum).

### **Business Referendums**

1. Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 make provision for the conduct of additional “business referendums”. These additional referendums are required for a neighbourhood area which has been designated as a Business Area and are in addition to the residential referendum for the area.
2. The rules for these are contained in the Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012 (as amended by the Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 and 2014, and the Neighbourhood Planning (Prescribed Dates) Regulations 2012. The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 includes template forms for business neighbourhood planning referendums and invitations to register to vote at business referendums.
3. In Business Areas two separate referendums will be held in parallel. The first will be for residents and a second referendum will be held for businesses (or more specifically non-domestic rate payers). The two referendums must be held on the same day.
4. Anyone who is a non domestic ratepayer in the referendum area recorded on the business voting register compiled by the Council using the business rate billing information it holds is entitled to vote.

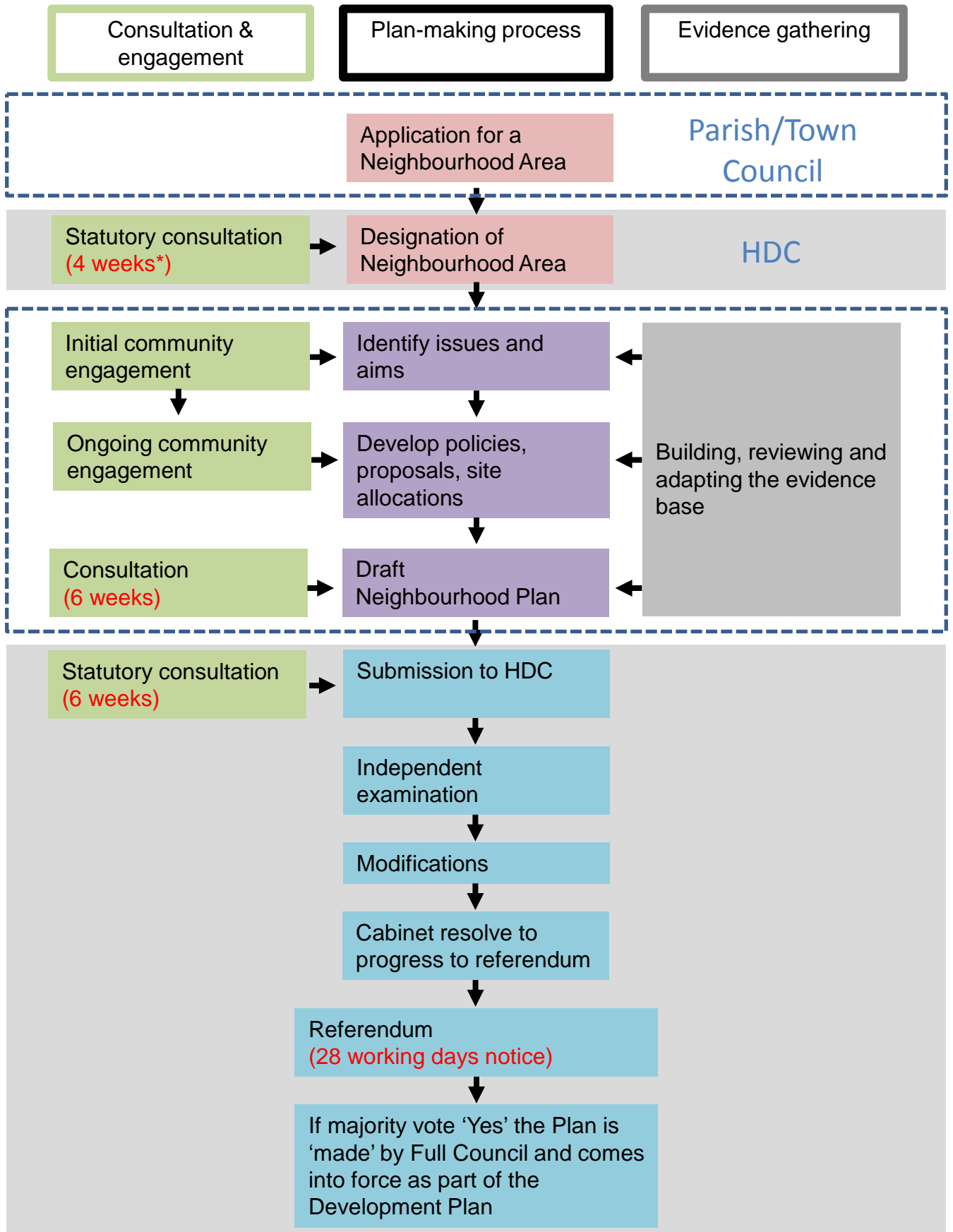
5. Schedule 6 of the Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums)(Amendment) Regulations 2013 sets out the rules for the business voting register. In particular the Schedule makes provision for obtaining data from the business rates records held by local authorities, sending out invitations to register, compilation, publication and supply of the business voting register, alteration of the business voting register and appeals.
6. The rules for the business referendum are set out in Schedule 7 of the Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 and are based closely on the rules for conduct of residential referendums as described above.
7. In this instance the outcome of the business and residents' referendums will be considered separately. If both are in favour of the Neighbourhood Plan it will be adopted. If both reject the Neighbourhood Plan it won't be adopted. Where the two outcomes conflict with each other the decision about whether or not to adopt the Neighbourhood Plan will rest with the local planning authority.

PAS has produced a checklist to help Local Planning Authorities ensure that they have undertaken all the necessary processes to comply with the different legislation and regulations. The checklist is available at the following link:

[http://www.pas.gov.uk/neighbourhood-planning/-/journal\\_content/56/332612/4113731/ARTICLE](http://www.pas.gov.uk/neighbourhood-planning/-/journal_content/56/332612/4113731/ARTICLE)

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# Neighbourhood Planning – process diagram



\*Depends on the area being applied for. 4 weeks is for the whole of a parish/town council area.

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**Public**  
**Key Decision - Yes**

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

<b>Title/Subject Matter:</b>	St Neots Neighbourhood Plan examination outcome and progression to referendum
<b>Meeting/Date:</b>	Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Wellbeing) - 10 <sup>th</sup> November 2015 Cabinet 19 <sup>th</sup> November 2015
<b>Executive Portfolio:</b>	Strategic Housing and Planning
<b>Report by:</b>	Planning Policy Team Leader
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	St Neots Eaton Ford, Eaton Socon, Priory Park and Eynesbury wards for the St Neots neighbourhood plan

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### **Executive Summary:**

An earlier report on this agenda sought agreement of the process for determining whether a Neighbourhood Plan progresses to referendum and set out the procedures for conducting a referendum. This report follows that proposed process.

Following the examination of the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan this report proposes acting upon the Examiner's report to accept the modifications proposed and progress to referendum.

### **Recommendations:**

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

Agree that the District Council should act upon the Examiner's report and recommended modifications, and progress the neighbourhood plan to referendum.

## **1. WHAT IS THIS REPORT ABOUT?**

- 1.1 The report seeks agreement to act upon the Examiner's report into the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan leading to a referendum on whether or not it should be brought into force as part of the statutory development plan.

## **2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY**

- 2.1 St Neots Neighbourhood Plan is the first in Huntingdonshire to progress through examination. The Examiner accepted that with appropriate modifications the neighbourhood plan would meet the basic conditions against which it is required to be tested and so should progress to referendum.

- 2.2 Following examination the Examiner's report is sent to the local planning authority and the town/parish council preparing the neighbourhood plan. The examiner is required to set out one of three options:

- a) That the neighbourhood plan proceeds to referendum as submitted
- b) That the neighbourhood plan is modified by the local planning authority to meet the basic conditions and the modified version proceeds to referendum; or
- c) That the neighbourhood plan does not proceed to referendum as it fails to meet the basic conditions or legislative requirements and cannot be modified to do so.

- 2.3 The local planning authority has limited options following the examination:

- 1. Act upon the Examiner's report and progress the neighbourhood plan to referendum – where the Examiner either recommends the plan meets the basic conditions without need for modifications or can meet the basic conditions subject to modifications;
- 2. Propose to take a decision substantially different from the Examiner's recommendation which is wholly or partly as a result of new evidence or a different view taken by the local planning authority about a particular fact – in which case the local planning authority must notify all those identified in the consultation statement of the town/ parish council and invite representations on the alternative decision and where necessary as a result of these representations the local planning authority must reopen the examination; or
- 3. Decide not to progress the neighbourhood plan in light of the Examiner's report - this is only permissible where c) above is the case.

- 2.4 The Examination on the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan took place during January-February 2015 with the final report being issued on 28 February 2015. The Examiner proposed a substantial number of modifications to the proposed submission neighbourhood plan. These have been discussed with representatives of St Neots Town Council. On several aspects the Examiner presented options for the Town Council to consider and agree their preferred modifications. These included deleting the chapter on Entertainment and Leisure in its entirety in order to designate Riverside Park and Regatta Meadow as local green spaces. Secondly, the Examiner recommended deletion of the proposed car parking policy and use of a design-led approach to provide greater certainty has been prepared. The Development and Growth Committee of St Neots Town Council met on 21 April 2015 to discuss these and the proposed modifications reflect their preferences. Before a referendum

could take place, the process for determining whether a plan progresses to referendum following the receipt of an Examiner's report needed to be approved, and the preceding report on this agenda seeks to do this.

2.5 The submitted Neighbourhood Plan, the examiner's report and draft Decision Statement setting out the modifications considered by the Examiner as necessary to enable the submission neighbourhood plan to meet the required basic conditions are all included as Appendices. Having regard to the options set out in paragraph 2.3:

- It is considered that the modifications as now proposed will enable the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan to meet the basic conditions required; and
- There is no new evidence or a different view taken by the local planning authority about a particular fact to indicate that option 2. in paragraph 2.3 should be followed.

### **3. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN**

3.1 Preparations will be made for a referendum to be held on the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan in accordance with the Regulations and using the guidance provided by the Planning Advisory Service and Local Government Association.

3.2 The Examiner is also required to recommend on the area to be covered by the referendum. In this instance she recommended that the referendum area be the same as the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan area, approved by the District Council on 17 October 2013. At the referendum residents will be able to vote on the question: 'Do you want Huntingdonshire District Council to use the neighbourhood plan for St Neots to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?' A date for the referendum will be arranged by Democratic Services in agreement with St Neots Town Council, with the aim that it takes place in January 2016.

3.3 If a majority of residents vote 'yes', Full Council will be asked to 'make' the neighbourhood plan at its next available meeting, which would be the 24<sup>th</sup> February 2016 meeting assuming the referendum is conducted in January 2016. The plan will then become part of the statutory development plan for the area. The only circumstances where the District council is not required to make the neighbourhood plan are where it considers that doing so would be incompatible with any EU or human rights obligations.

### **4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL**

4.1 Comments from the Overview & Scrutiny (Environmental Well-being) Panel have been included separately on the Cabinet's agenda at item 11, Comments from Overview and Scrutiny.

### **5. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN**

5.1 Progressing the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan through to referendum links to the strategic objective 'To empower local communities'. It will help to achieve the action of working with parishes to complete neighbourhood and parish plans.

## **6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 A Neighbourhood Plan must meet the basic conditions set out in paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The Examiner's report has confirmed that St Neots Neighbourhood Plan, as proposed to be modified, meets all the basic conditions. Confirmation has been sought from St Neots Town Council over modifications where the Examiner allowed alternative options and officers are satisfied that there are no conflicts with the basic conditions and legislative requirements.

## **7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 Payment has already been received under the Extra Burdens Grant of £20,000 following successful examination (ie. That the Examiner recommends the plan proceeds to referendum, with or without the need for modifications). This is intended to meet the costs of the referendum.

## **8. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS**

- 8.1 The recommended decision is necessary to enable the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan to proceed to referendum.

## **9. RECOMMENDED DECISIONS**

- 9.1 Cabinet is recommended to:
- 1) Agree that the District Council should act upon the Examiner's report and recommended modifications, and progress the neighbourhood plan to referendum

## **10. LIST OF APPENDICES**

- 1) The submitted Neighbourhood Plan
- 2) The examiner's report
- 3) The draft Decision Statement setting out the modifications considered by the Examiner as necessary to enable the submission neighbourhood plan to meet the required basic conditions.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)  
Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004  
Localism Act 2011  
The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012 (as amended)  
St Neots Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2029, July 2014  
St Neots Neighbourhood Plan Examiners Report, February 2015

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# Protect. Improve. Create.

**St Neots Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2029**  
*Prepared by the Development and Growth Committee*  
*Chairman Louie Ruck*

With thanks to the Development and Growth Committee  
at St Neots Town Council:

Cllr Andrea Louie Ruck (Chairman)  
Cllr Barry Chapman (Deputy Chair)  
Cllr Stephen Davison  
Cllr Ian Gardiner  
Cllr David Harty  
Cllr Catherine Hutton  
Cllr Colin Thompson  
Cllr David Wells



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# Foreword

For many years the residents of St Neots felt that decisions regarding development in and around the town have been outside of their control. This is why in 2010, when we were elected to the Town Council, we felt that the Neighbourhood Planning policy would give some much needed control back to the people of the town. The original idea of a Neighbourhood Plan was mooted in the summer of 2010, but with unclear guidance at the time on how Neighbourhood Plans would benefit residents and businesses locally, the idea was shelved until such time as that guidance became clearer.

In 2011 that guidance came, and with that, the Council and specifically the then Policy and Audit Committee of St Neots Town Council began to actively explore the possibility of developing a Neighbourhood Plan. In the eighteen months since the previous elections, there had been huge changes in the town. The Love's Farm development was nearing completion and proposals for Love's Farm 2 and Wintringham Park were now being placed on the table. Within the town, the Council had organised a series of highly successful events including the Jubilee Celebrations, the Christmas Lights switch-on (which attracted 4000 people to the town centre) and the SunFest festival. There had also been a Town Team established, comprising of local businesses and community groups, to help promote and improve the town centre. Part of their activity was the development of a Mary Portas Bid and they were successful in achieving £10,000 for the town centre improvements.

With all the activity to improve the town ongoing, a Neighbourhood Plan fit the ethos and the mood of the town's people and would provide some much needed control over how development would progress. In 2012, a clear direction was set and it was agreed that the Council would proceed to develop a Neighbourhood Plan. It has been an absolute honour to not only have been part of this process but to have been the Chair of the Committee leading this project. At the time the Council agreed to proceed, there were fewer than five Neighbourhood Plans being consulted on and only one which had been through examination. St Neots Town Council was taking part in a quiet revolution in planning and it was a privilege to be at the helm. I can only hope that the hard work of all those involved in producing the plan is able to fulfil the aspirations of the people who matter; the residents and business owners of St Neots.

With thanks from

**Councillor Louie Ruck**  
*Chairman of Development & Growth  
Committee*



**Councillor Andrew Hansard**  
*Mayor of St Neots*



# Acknowledgements

St Neots Town Council would like to extend their thanks to all those who have been involved with the formation of the Neighbourhood Plan.

In undergoing this process, we have seen first-hand the passion that our community has for St Neots and the belief there is in a brighter future for the town; with support coming from local residents, businesses and stakeholders alike.

Council Officers spent many late nights working through the plan and developing it in to the high-quality document you see here and we are very grateful for their time, commitment and valuable input.

We would especially like to thank the general public who have actively participated throughout the campaign. Without all their contributions, the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan would not exist and we would not have the opportunity to decide the town's future as we do now. As we say in the Plan, we are confident that St Neots has an exciting future and we look forward to seeing it come to life.

Additional thanks to:

About My Area PE19 ° Longsands Academy ° St Neots Library ° Shape Your Place ° St Neots Children's Centres ° St Neots Local History Society ° St Neots Museum ° ° The Likeminded Network ° U3A St Neots branch ° Waitrose, St Neots ° The Hillings Residential Home, St Neots ° Tesco, St Neots ° Longsands Academy °

# Introduction



The Localism Act 2011 introduced a new type of Community Led Plan. Communities now have the right to produce a Neighbourhood Plan, setting out policies on the development and use of land. Developing a Neighbourhood Plan is a way for communities to play a greater role in determining the future of their area.

Neighbourhood Plans form part of the statutory development plan once made. This means that Huntingdonshire District Council will have to determine planning applications within St Neots in accordance with this Neighbourhood Plan.

This Neighbourhood Plan is a true Community Led Plan. It has been prepared by the Town Council's Development and Growth Committee and has been informed by public consultation with the local community. The options for the Plan and the Plan itself have been shaped by the results of the Neighbourhood Plan survey and previous public consultations to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan accurately reflects the aspirations of the community.

## **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

Throughout this Neighbourhood Plan reference is made to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It was published on 27 March 2012 and immediately superseded the previous national planning policy guidance contained in Planning Policy Statements, Planning Policy Guidance notes and government Circular's.

The NPPF provides a framework to produce locally distinctive Neighbourhood Plans which reflect the needs and aspirations of the community. The NPPF is clear that the planning system remains plan led. As set out in paragraph 2 of the NPPF, Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 remains unchanged and requires that planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. One of the most widely used definitions of sustainable development comes from the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (the Bruntland Commission), 'Our Common Future' (1987), which defines it as *"development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"*. A more detailed definition is offered in the UK Sustainable Development Strategy, *Securing the Future*, which includes the following five guiding principles for sustainable development.

Ensuring A Strong, Healthy And Just Society - Meeting the diverse needs of all people in existing and future communities, promoting personal wellbeing, social cohesion and inclusion and creating equal opportunity for all.

Using Sound Science Responsibly - Ensuring policy is developed and implemented on the basis of strong scientific evidence, whilst taking into account scientific uncertainty (through the precautionary principle) as well as public attitudes and values.

Promoting Good Governance - Actively promoting effective participative systems of levels of society – engaging people's creativity and diversity.

Achieving a Sustainable Economy - Building a strong, stable and sustainable economy which provides prosperity and governance in all opportunities for all, and in which environmental and social costs fall on those who impose them (polluter pays) and efficient resource use is incentivised.

Living within Environmental Limits - Respecting the limits of the planet's environment, resources and biodiversity – to improve our environment and ensure that the natural resources needed for life are unimpaired and remain so for future generations.

The St Neots Neighbourhood Plan contributes towards the achievement of sustainable development.

### Challenges encountered

The main difficulty encountered in preparing this Neighbourhood Plan was understanding a new process. When the Town Council embarked on this Neighbourhood Plan, only a few Neighbourhood Plans around the country had gone through Examination. The Town Council therefore had few examples to learn from. Whilst this has been a challenge, it has also been an opportunity and the Town Council believe that it has prepared a Neighbourhood Plan which reflects the aspirations of the community and the process has been tailored to the Town Council's established way of working.

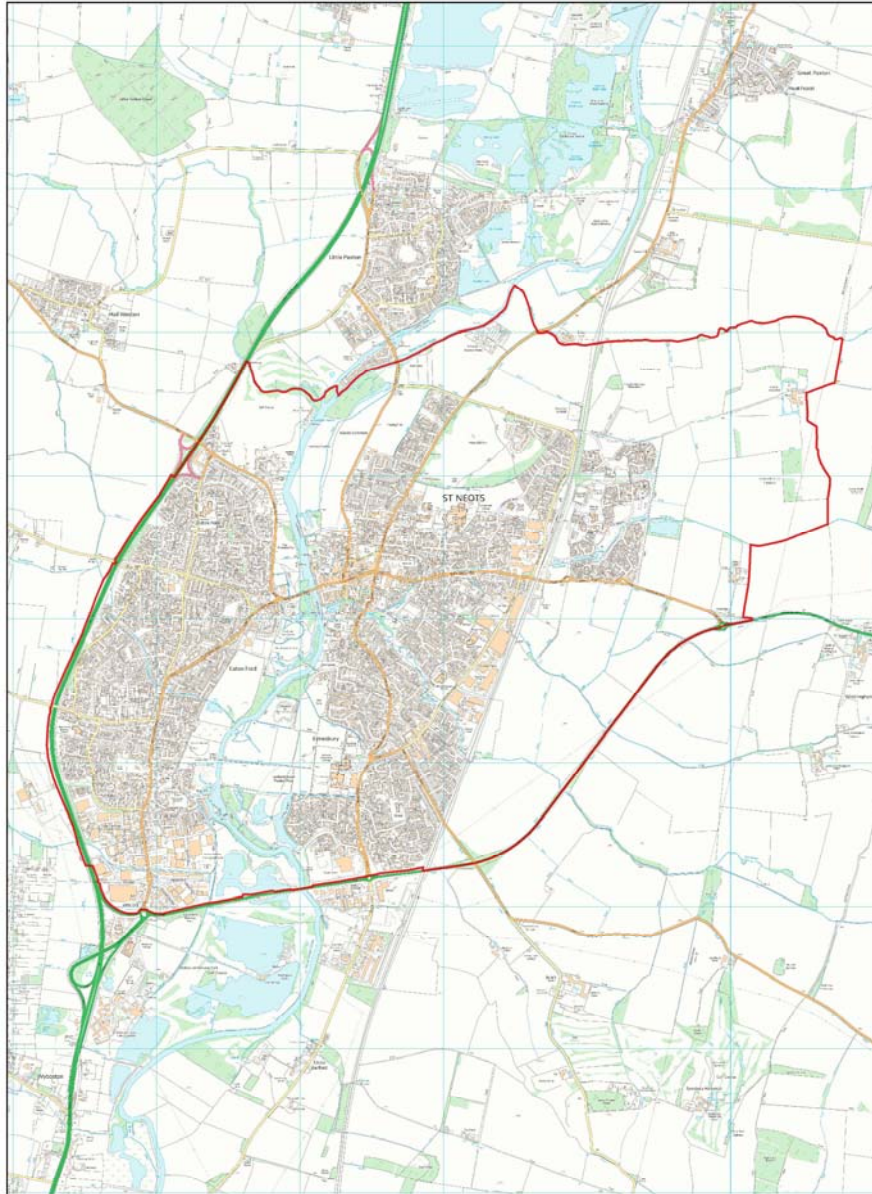
### Structure of Neighbourhood Plan

The Neighbourhood Plan includes six themed sections: Aesthetics, Entertainment and Leisure, Parking and Traffic, Parks and Open Spaces, Rejuvenation, and Shops and Services. These are all issues that are important to the community and within each section policies are included to guide the development and use of land.

Following the themed sections, the Neighbourhood Plan contains an implementation and delivery section. It is important that Neighbourhood Plans are deliverable and this section includes the key projects arising from the Neighbourhood Plan and details of how they will be delivered.

The final section includes a list of non-planning issues that the community raised as being important. The Town Council has not ignored these important issues, but as this is a statutory planning document it cannot include non-planning issues. This section is included in the Neighbourhood Plan to demonstrate to the community that all of their concerns have been taken into account and will be addressed by the Town Council outside of the Neighbourhood Plan process.

St Neots Neighbourhood Area



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Figure 1: Map of St Neots. The Neighbourhood Plan covers the area delineated by the red line.



## St Neots and its Surrounding Area

### Population

St Neots is the largest Town in Cambridgeshire with, according to recent estimates, over 32,500 population living within the urban area. Adjoining and nearby settlements falling within the extra urban area contain a population considerably in excess of 40,000 residents; equivalent to the aggregate populations of Huntingdon and St Ives together. When feeder communities which rely on St Neots as a hub for services are considered, the catchment is estimated to be in excess of 80,000. Furthermore, Cambridgeshire has the highest County growth rate in the UK and St Neots has the fastest rate of population growth within our County.

### Historic Development

St Neots has a rich heritage and a large part of the town is included within the St Neots Conservation Area. The entire Town Centre lies within the Conservation Area; distinctive areas include the Market Square and riverfront, Island Common and Priory Park. There are 163 listed buildings within St Neots. Listed buildings are predominantly clustered around the Town Centre and along Great North Road in Eaton Socon.

St Neots has evolved through the expansion of several communities; Eaton Ford, Eaton Socon, Eynesbury and St Neots town as well as smaller settlements such as Crosshall, Sudbury and Eynesbury Hardwick. These population areas have progressively expanded until physically joining to form the urban area of St Neots. The town itself is divided through the centre by the River Great Ouse.

St Neots experienced a major population increase in the 1960s due to planned relocation of residents from north London. That relocation was achieved through building industrial facilities which attracted workers to new housing. Today there are a further 20,000 inhabitants planned for the town and its surrounding area but, as of yet, there are little or no planned improvements to the supporting infrastructure and no available land for employment, recreation or services infrastructure.

## Infrastructure

In the 1960s, St Neots was ideally located for commuters due to the proximity to Cambridge and Bedford and the rail link to London. Today, St Neots railway station is a primary station, used by residents of the town and the surrounding villages. However, the rising cost of commuting and the operation of services at capacity combined with the highest parking charges on the Great Northern Line (nearly £2,000 per annum for car parking alone) makes commuting to London unviable for many. The proposed new railway station for Alconbury is expected to further reduce capacity at St Neots.

The A428 is the main road between St Neots and Cambridge. With increases in commuting to the city, the road is now operating at and above capacity. The increase in population to the east of the town has raised concerns about the inadequacy of the road capacity. Dualling of the road has been a local aspiration for many years, but as of yet has not been a priority at national level.

Infrastructure within the town focuses on the town's High Street and the Town Bridge. The bridge was originally designed in the 1960s to serve a population of 8,000 with low car ownership. Today it is used by a population of 40,000 with considerably greater car ownership. The location of both secondary schools to the east of the town prompts thousands of daily school runs via the bottle-neck town bridge and town centre. This has presented a problem in recent years and has caused significant congestion problems in the town centre.

St Neots has a history of expansion and welcoming new residents. However, for expansion to work, measures to provide the necessary infrastructure must be taken if the town is to retain and build on its unique and vibrant heritage and culture.

## Vision

St Neots is a popular and vibrant town with a strong community ethos - and the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan provides us with a valuable opportunity to build on the town's successes and enhance its future. Our active community and St Neots Town Council together have a clear vision for the town over the next fifteen years (until 2029) - and these aspirations and strong expectations are at the very heart of the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan.

The St Neots community has been fully involved in the work to design the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan. Our Vision has been developed further to extensive consultation with our residents and the findings from "the evidence base"; from which we have created ambitious but achievable objectives.

As part of our plan, St Neots will enhance its position as the leading market town in Huntingdonshire with a strong local economy - with the creation of new opportunities and facilities benefiting the entire community; across all needs and interests. A focus on improving traffic and employment opportunities, protecting open spaces and creating better shopping and leisure environments are some of the fundamental components of our vision; which we believe are key to the future development of the town.

Our unique market town character will be protected and the Town Centre will flourish with new retail and leisure developments and an improved community environment. Existing partners in the Town Centre will be retained and valued; with the ability for new retail and leisure developments to prosper.

St Neots has the opportunity to benefit from the planned new developments in the area covered by the Neighbourhood Plan. Balancing growth for the benefit of both existing and new residents of our town is the overarching ethos of our plan.

The Eastern expansion will deliver a range of housing types, including affordable housing for local residents and their children - and will also maintain a balance of facilities by providing open spaces, community facilities, education and healthcare provision; as well as much needed employment opportunities within the designated employment land. Our focus is that the lifestyles of

every resident will benefit from the new developments and that an appropriate balance will be met between housing development and new or improved infrastructure.

St Neots Town Council will continue to work with our community, Huntingdonshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council to help shape the future of St Neots; to enable the town to grow and prosper. With a dedicated approach, improvements to infrastructure can be secured, with a better quality of life for all our residents, businesses and visitors.

The objectives that follow below identify in more detail the issues, opportunities and challenges that need addressing in order to reach this important vision for the town.

We are confident that St Neots has an exciting future - one where existing facilities and assets are protected, local infrastructure is improved and new opportunities are created – and we look forward to seeing it come to life.

# Objectives

## Promote the growth of high quality and sustainable employment

- Protect employment land allocations to maintain a prosperous economy and balanced community
- Bring underused commercial land and buildings into use
- Protect and promote the river setting to boost the economy
- Promote a vibrant Town Centre and wider St Neots economy
- Develop a distinctive St Neots brand to promote and improve visitor spending in the Town Centre
- Encourage investment from both inside and outside the town
- Protect land allocated for employment to improve local job opportunities
- Provide for a balance of new homes and jobs to support the economic prosperity of our growing community and reduce the need to travel

## Encourage the growth of retail, leisure and community facilities

- Enhance the appearance and historic character of the Town Centre
- Utilise the historic character of the Town Centre to showcase the town's heritage
- Promote the Town Centre as the destination of choice for retail leisure and community activities
- Enhance the leisure and entertainment offer throughout the town
- Encourage the development of gym facilities at key hubs (such as the station) and developing green gyms within public open space areas
- Promote the river as a low impact leisure resource
- Encourage the development of visitor accommodation in the town

## Protect and enhance St Neots' natural and historic environment, countryside and river setting

- Enhance the green infrastructure network through the creation of new open spaces and the protection and improvement of existing open spaces
- Improve attractive and accessible spaces for residents to live, work and play

- Ensure that new development does not increase the risk of flooding and takes every opportunity available to minimise the risk of fluvial and pluvial (surface) water flooding is taken
- Create attractive approaches to the town from every direction utilising a mixture of soft landscaping and wide boulevards
- Ensure that both new and existing communities are fully integrated

### **Improve Availability and Accessibility of Housing Stock and Improve Community Assets**

- Support the continued development of community spirit
- Continue to improve the facilities on offer to support the growth of the local population
- Ensure that the new developments are integrated into the existing community of St Neots
- Provide a balanced mix of housing style and size to reflect the needs of the local St Neots population with a maximum of 40% affordable housing in all new major developments
- Encourage high quality and accessible education, medical, youth and elderly provision for all our residents in line with growth in the town.
- Encourage pre-school, primary, secondary and post 16 education within the town
- Provide a site for a new cemetery
- Provide a site for allotments
- Ensure that leisure and community facilities are in place before new housing developments are completed

### **Improve Traffic Flow Into, Out Of and Within the Town and Improve Parking Availability and Suitability throughout the Town**

- Seek improvements and ensure that all new development has a "Nil Detriment" effect on existing traffic
- Provide major improvements to existing junctions and put any new junctions required by development in place prior to development commencing
- Work with partners at District and County level to raise the profile of the A428 to ensure that it is dualled as a priority in the National Roads Programme
- Secure improvements to local roads
- Promote the use of and develop infrastructure for electric vehicles

- Work with partners at District and County level to investigate a northern bypass between the A428 and the A1
- Work with partners to review and improve bus routes to ensure that St Neots is treated as a whole town and not separate communities
- Develop a safe and segregated cycle network within and around St Neots and between key communities and ensure all new junctions and road improvements cater for cyclists
- Work with railway providers to improve facilities including parking and traffic flow at St Neots railway station
- Work with partners to provide a minimum 30 minute free stay and continue the early evening free parking to encourage footfall in the town
- Work with partners to manage on street parking in the vicinity around the railway station
- Work with partners to encourage the development of the Cambridge to Oxford Line with a stop at St Neots
- Work with partners to provide a joined up transport provision linking bus and rail travel



# 1 Aesthetics



# Aesthetics

## 1.1 Introduction



1.1.1. St Neots is an attractive town with a rich historic and natural environment.

1.1.2. The close association of the town with the River Great Ouse, in terms of visual links, public open space and recreation, gives St Neots a strong sense of place and a highly distinctive landscape setting.

1.1.3. In terms of nature conservation, Paxton Pits and St Neots Common are of particular environmental significance and these are notified as Sites of Special Scientific Interest. There are two Scheduled Ancient Monuments and 163 listed buildings within the town. Listed buildings are predominantly clustered around the Town Centre and along Great North Road in Eaton Socon. The St Neots Conservation Area was amended in 2006 and amalgamates the three old Conservation Areas (St Neots, Eynesbury and the Eatons) into one larger one. Distinctive areas include the Market Square and riverfront, Island Common and Priory Park. It is essential that new development is designed to a high quality that reflects local distinctiveness and protects and enhances the natural and historic environment.

1.1.4. The key issues the community raised about the aesthetics of St Neots as part of the Neighbourhood Plan survey were the need to improve roads and paths, the need for more bins in the parks and Town Centre and the need for the High Street to have a good clean – all whilst preserving the history and character of the town.

## 1.2 Public Realm

1.2.1. The High Street is dominated by cars and is cluttered with signage. Consultation has shown that the community would like a reduction in signage and street furniture such as bollards. They would like to see as a priority more seating in the Town Centre. A café/bistro culture would encourage people to spend more time in the Town Centre. The attractive buildings and historic Market Square have the potential to create a unique focal point, attracting families and ensuring a diverse mix of users within the Town Centre area itself.

1.2.2. The term 'public realm' refers to the public spaces between buildings. It's the pavements, squares, seating, signage, materials and planting. Public Realm plays a key role in defining a town's wider image and in setting a welcoming or neglected feel. Investment in the public realm reaps both environmental and economic returns. A CABE Report on street design quality found that simply improving street design can make a major difference to market values. The study found that in London public realm improvements added an average of 4.9% to retail rents. Investment in public realm can also lead to social benefits by promoting social cohesion and reducing levels of crime.

1.2.3. The Town Council believe that enhancing the public realm of the Town Centre will enhance its vitality and viability and help to create a Town Centre that the community are proud of.

*"We want to preserve the characteristics of the town and ensure it remains attractive, therefore limit the amount of new buildings in our green areas."*

Comment from St Neots resident

1.2.4. An improved public realm benefits everyone; it benefits retailers, businesses, residents and visitors. Public realm enhancements can also contribute towards creating a distinctive St Neots brand.



1.2.5. Consultation has shown that pedestrianising the High Street and redeveloping the Market Square is a popular option for many in the town.

1.2.6. This is a key project that the Town Council will explore with the community and its partners over the lifetime of the Neighbourhood Plan.

### **Policy A1**

Proposals for new units or the expansion or alteration to existing units within St Neots Town Centre will be expected to contribute towards public realm improvements.

1.2.7. Every opportunity should be taken to improve the public realm of the Town Centre. An improved public realm will make the Town Centre more attractive and encourage more visitors, thus improving its vitality. As part of the Neighbourhood Plan survey, many people said that if they could change one thing about St Neots it would be to make the High Street more attractive.

1.2.8. A strategic approach to public realm improvements would be taken. These would include a consistent high quality shop signage and frontages. Seating and foliage will be an essential part of the St Neots brand.

1.2.9. Proposals for new units or the expansion or alteration of existing units could contribute towards public realm improvements. The Town Council may use CIL or other funding opportunities towards public realm improvements as part of a comprehensive public realm strategy.

## **1.3 Gateway into St Neots**

1.3.1. The Eastern expansion offers the opportunity to improve the gateway into St Neots from the East. It is essential that this gateway into the town, and indeed all development on the edge of the town, creates an attractive entry into St Neots.

1.3.2. Huntingdonshire District Council's St Neots Eastern Expansion Urban Design Framework recognises that the boundary between town and country should be a soft edge and that development should consider the urban-rural interface. The Town Council strongly agrees with this and through Policy A2 are seeking to ensure that all new development on the edge of St Neots creates a

## Policy A2

All development on the edge of St Neots must provide soft landscaping on the approach into the town. The following design principles must be taken into account:

- (a) The density of the development should reduce towards the countryside edge with a larger proportion of detached dwellings with front gardens set in the landscape; and
- (b) The landscape treatment should be designed to minimise but not obliterate views of the development except where required by a visual impact assessment; and
- (c) Stands of trees should be used to either restrict or focus views of the development and to break up the form of the buildings; and
- (d) Wide boulevards will be expected on the main approach into St Neots to create a high quality environment; and
- (e) Roundabouts should be attractive and must ensure that good vision is achieved for drivers; and
- (f) All soft landscaping should contribute to supporting native fauna where possible, using the latest research available to support choices, which may include non-native plant species, more tolerate to future climate change.

welcoming gateway into the town.

1.3.3. It is important that the first impression of St Neots is welcoming and attractive. The use of green gateways will help to achieve this. Green gateways also help to protect landscape character.

1.3.4. Whilst Policy A2 takes some of the design principles from the St Neots Eastern Expansion Urban Design Framework, these principles will be relevant and applied to all development proposals on the edge of St Neots.

## 1.4 Design

1.4.1. It is essential that development within St Neots is of high quality design that protects and enhances the character of the area.

1.4.2. St Neots can be split into four character areas: St Neots in the north-east, Eynesbury in the south-east, Eaton Ford in the north-west and Eaton Socon in the south-west.

1.4.3. St Neots retains historic architecture on the scale of other Huntingdonshire market towns and demonstrates its importance as a trading and commercial centre from the 17th century onwards. This area includes the Town Centre, commercial areas and mainly residential streets on the outskirts of the Town Centre.

1.4.4. Eynesbury retains its village identity with its village green and parish church, despite being surrounded by modern housing development. The original 12<sup>th</sup> century village had a very open texture and this has not been completely lost. However, the historic settlement is now isolated from the rural context. The area contains a wide variety of buildings from different ages and of varying styles, from small cottages and terraces, to larger houses as well as local authority housing.

1.4.5. Eaton Ford and Eaton Socon both retain a rural quality.

1.4.6. Eaton Ford is a district of St Neots. It lies on the west bank of the River Great Ouse, and was absorbed into St Neots in 1965. It is largely residential and retains the old village centre, which is still identified by the triangular village green and several old farmhouses amongst the newer houses.

1.4.7. Eaton Socon acts as a gateway to people heading into St Neots offering a gentle approach in to the town. Whilst the village is an integral part of the town, Eaton Socon still retains its identity with its own parish church and village green. Historic buildings and plenty of open spaces contribute to a rural feel in the village.

### Policy A3

All development must be designed to a high quality that reinforces local distinctiveness.

Design should be guided by the overall scale, density, massing, height, landscape, layout, materials, detailing, roof orientation, relationship to back of pavement, wall to window ratios, proportions of windows, plan depth, plot width and access of the site and its surroundings.

New buildings should be a maximum of 3 storeys high on the fringes of development sites; any higher than this is not representative of local vernacular. Large scale proposals should include multiple access points subject to the agreement of the Highways Authority.

Buildings on the fringes of major developments should have variations in height, style and position. They should reflect the town heritage design and characteristics with a variety of traditional and modern building materials. As a matter of good design, defensible space should be provided.

Careful consideration should be given to the servicing requirements of buildings to ensure that essential items such as car parking and space for the storage of waste and recycling bins are successfully integrated into the design, including access for service and emergency vehicles.

Early discussions should be held with the Town Council to ensure that the community's views help to shape the design of the proposal. Proposals that can demonstrate how the design has evolved with input and support from the Town Council will be favourably considered subject to compliance with other planning policies.

1.4.8. Design is much wider than just visual appearance. Good design addresses connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment.

1.4.9. Early discussions should be held with the Town Council to discuss design issues. Proposals that have evolved with the community will be favourably considered. The Town Council can provide valuable advice to applicants in terms of St Neots special character and local distinctiveness.

1.4.10. All development should reinforce local distinctiveness. Major applications will be expected to be accompanied by a Site Analysis and demonstrate how the surrounding development has influenced the design. A Site Analysis will also be helpful for some minor developments to demonstrate that local vernacular has been taken into account and how it has influenced the design of the proposal. Applicants should refer to the latest St Neots Conservation Area Character Appraisal.

1.4.11. High quality hard and soft landscaping can help to successfully integrate development into the wider environment. Major development proposals should consider landscaping from the outset. A Landscape Strategy will help to demonstrate how the proposal integrates into the wider environment and should be prepared at an early stage.

1.4.12. Good design should incorporate measures that maximise biodiversity benefits. Swifts are a distinctive feature of St Neots in the summer and have been declining in numbers due in part to their traditional nesting sites being demolished or refurbished. Proposals for change of use of existing buildings must protect biodiversity and new buildings should consider including biodiversity enhancement measures.

1.4.13. The use of local materials, building methods and details can be an important factor in enhancing local distinctiveness. Careful attention must be paid to detailing such as doors, windows, porches, lighting, flues and ventilation, gutters, pipes and other rain water details, ironmongery and decorative features.

1.4.14. It is essential that car parking, waste storage and cycle parking is considered from the outset to ensure that these important servicing requirements are not added on at a late stage but successfully integrated into the design of the development.

1.4.15. Good design should incorporate measures to design out crime; such as overlooking of parking areas and good lighting. Linked to this, proposals for non-residential development should consider whether CCTV is required and include this throughout the site where necessary. Consultation will be expected with Cambridgeshire Police as part of major proposals to identify the most sensible locations for CCTV within the site.

1.4.16. Whilst this policy requires development to reinforce local Distinctiveness, innovative and highly sustainable buildings will be supported by the Town Council.

## 1.5 Landscape backdrops

1.5.1. Landscape backdrops provide an opportunity to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments, which is supported by the NPPF. Net gains in biodiversity will contribute to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.

1.5.2. The Neighbourhood Plan survey has revealed that some residents believe the density of modern housing is far too high and opportunities to ensure modern developments are ecologically sustainable have been missed.

### Policy A4

Proposals for Love's Farm East and Wintringham Park, as well as other developments where appropriate, should include landscape backdrops around the development site for screening and wildlife.

Proposals must be supported by a plan clearly showing the extent of the landscape backdrops and form this will take. Proposals will also need to make it clear how the landscape backdrops will be managed in the future.

1.5.3. Landscape backdrops provide a multitude of uses and should be encouraged for all developments. They are particularly important for major developments of 50 or more dwellings to help ensure that the development integrates well with the surroundings.

1.5.4. Developers will need to consider the future management of landscape Backdrops and for large areas of land this could include transfer to and management by the Town Council.

1.5.5. For proposals on Greenfield sites on the edge of the town, landscape Backdrops will screen the new development which will help to protect landscape character and provide a green gateway into St Neots.







# 2 Entertainment and Leisure

# Entertainment and Leisure

## 2.1 Introduction

2.1.1. Whilst St Neots has a range of leisure facilities, including the Priory Centre, Priory Park, Riverside Park, footballs clubs and ten pin bowling; the Town Centre Benchmarking survey found that the leisure and cultural offer in the Town Centre was rated as poor by 51% of respondents and very poor by 11%. This compares to the national small towns average of 37% and 8% respectively. 40% of people said that the leisure facilities were a negative aspect of the Town Centre. The findings from the Neighbourhood Plan survey were more positive than this with 41% of respondents saying that the leisure offer was excellent, 29% saying it was good, 11% saying it was inadequate and 13% saying it was poor.

2.1.2. In 2011, planning permission was granted for the development of a cinema in the town. Work has been delayed but it is anticipated that it will be completed in 2014.

2.1.3. The Huntingdonshire District Local Investment Framework found that under a high growth scenario St Neots would require a range of new social infrastructure including a new multi-purpose leisure facility with sports hall and swimming pool. Many residents identified the need for a new swimming pool or improvements to the existing swimming pool as part of the Neighbourhood Plan survey.

2.1.4. An improved leisure offer in St Neots will have many benefits including reducing the need to travel to other towns for leisure, regeneration, improved economic activity and making the Town Centre more attractive to families.

*“Entertainment is limited within the town, we need to utilise our parks and offer better leisure facilities; Crazy golf, and another swimming pool.”*

Comment from St Neots resident

## 2.2 Outdoor Theatre



2.2.1. Riverside Park is 29 hectares (72 acres) in area and has a beautiful one mile long waterside frontage. It is close to the Town Centre and has a 250 space car park, making it very accessible to the whole community.

2.2.2. Riverside Park is an important recreation and community space. There are a range of uses and events within the Park, including band concerts during the summer weeks. The Neighbourhood Plan survey found that riverside events are thoroughly enjoyed by the majority of the community and the residents have asked for more events to increase community spirit.

2.2.3. The introduction of an outdoor theatre in Riverside Park would enhance the leisure and entertainment offer within St Neots and would not conflict with Riverside Park's Local Green Space designation.

*"Our town events are fantastic and attract people from all over. They are fantastic for the community."*

Comment from St Neots resident

2.2.4. Riverside Park would also benefit from further improvements to the current leisure and recreation activities on offer, such as the introduction of crazy golf and re-introduction of boats for hire. The Town Council will support and actively encourage proposals for new leisure and recreation facilities within Riverside Park subject to compliance with Policy P1.

## Policy EL1

Proposals for an outdoor theatre within Riverside Park will be supported.

Proposals for new and enhancement of existing leisure and recreation uses, such as the reinstatement of the crazy golf course and boats for hire within Riverside Park, will be supported providing that they are of an appropriate scale and design.

### 2.3 Bandstand

2.3.1. Regatta Meadow is located to the west of the River Great Ouse and to the north of Riverside Park. It provides an attractive area of open space within the town and is also important for community events. Many events take place on Regatta Meadow, such as the Dragon Boat Festival and the Regatta.

2.3.2. A bandstand in Regatta Meadow would result in an enhanced leisure and entertainment offer and help to enhance community spirit.

## Policy EL2

Proposals for a bandstand within Regatta Meadow will be supported. The design should ensure that it is appropriate to the local environment and setting.

Care will need to be taken with the siting of the bandstand to ensure that it does not affect key views across the park.

### 2.4 Swimming Pool

2.4.1. Between 1961 and 2003 an outdoor swimming pool was located on the land next to Priory Park. The pool was closed in 2003 due to financial issues and an inability to secure funding to make essential repairs. In 2005 the pool was demolished and infilled. Ever since, there has been a popular public demand for the return of a (preferably outdoor) swimming pool.

2.4.2. This demand was demonstrated through the Neighbourhood Plan survey. Many people said that they would like an improved or additional swimming pool partnered with the return of the outdoor pool.

### **Policy EL3**

Proposals for a swimming pool on the site of the previous swimming pool will be supported.

Additional further uses on this site to act as enabling development for the swimming pool will be supported, providing that it can be demonstrated that the benefits of allowing such development to secure the swimming pool outweigh the negative impacts of departing from other policies.





# **3** Parking and Traffic



# Parking and Traffic

## 3.1 Introduction



3.1.1. Parking and traffic is one of the biggest concerns of the community. The Neighbourhood Plan survey found that only 2% of respondents believe the traffic situation in St Neots is good. 38% consider it to be inadequate, 27% consider it to be poor and 14% consider it to be average.

3.1.2. The survey found that the lack of any free parking areas within the town and the almost doubling of parking prices in recent years are very prominent problems.

3.1.3. The overall quality of roads and paths within St Neots has been a recurring issue mentioned in the survey. In terms of specific traffic problems identified in the survey, many respondents commented on the need to address the traffic in the High Street, with comments about reducing the number of lights and pedestrianising the High Street.

3.1.4. Access into and out of the town along the A428 is of great concern to the residents of the town. Due to the town's location, many people travel to the Cambridge area to work.

*"The A428 needs immediate attention and roads need to cater for the mass amount of residents that are now in the town."*

Comment from St Neots resident

3.1.5. With a distinct lack of public transport, travel by car is by far the best option for many commuters. Therefore there is an urgent need to upgrade and

dual the A428. The Town Council will actively encourage this through raising the profile of the A428 on the National Roads Programme, as well as support applications to undertake the upgrade.

3.1.6. The Town Council believe that new development should not exacerbate existing parking and traffic problems across the town and this is the primary aim of the policies in this section.

### 3.2 Sustainable Travel

3.2.1. The availability of safe and well connected sustainable modes of travel will reduce congestion and greenhouse gas emissions and promote healthy lifestyles.

*“Better public transport within the town and to surrounding cities must be addressed to help reduce traffic.”*

Comment from St Neots resident

3.2.2. The Town Council will work with partners, including Cambridgeshire County Council, bus companies and Network Rail to promote sustainable modes of travel and help to ensure the creation of better connections throughout the town. The Town Council will also continue to work with Cambridgeshire County Council, Sustrans and other interest groups to improve and develop St Neots' cycle network.

## Policy PT1

Major development proposals must demonstrate how the scheme maximises opportunities for the use of sustainable modes of travel. This should be achieved through maximising the potential for cycling and walking throughout the site and through contributions towards the extension, linking, and/or improvement of existing routes throughout St Neots.

All major development proposals should be supported by a Travel Plan explaining the opportunities for sustainable modes of travel. The Travel Plan must make clear how any enhancements to sustainable transport modes will be delivered.

The Town Council will support proposals to improve facilities at the railway station.

3.2.3. All major development, i.e. over 10 dwellings or non-residential development over 1,000sqm, should be supported by a Travel Plan. The content and level of detail of the Travel Plan will depend upon the scale of the development proposed. For large scale proposals of over 100 dwellings a comprehensive Travel Plan will be expected clearly explaining how future residents will be able to access sustainable modes of transport. For developments of 10-20 dwellings, a short statement is likely to be acceptable.

3.2.4. The scale and nature of development will depend upon what enhancements are necessary to enhance opportunities for sustainable modes of travel. Enhancements may include, but are not limited to, contributing to improvements to existing roads, footpaths and cycle paths to make them safer and more likely to be used, secure cycle parking and incentives for people to use the bus.

3.2.5. The Town Council will support ventures to establish local bus routes and to improve existing routes. The Neighbourhood Plan survey showed that this is important to the community with residents saying that better bus services are desperately needed, including direct routes into the Town Centre, to Tesco and to the train station. Residents commented that Sunday services and regular shuttle buses from the villages surrounding St Neots are also needed, particularly as many people have issues with parking costs. A circular mini-bus/shuttle service serving the town and particularly the railway station would be supported.

3.2.6. Support will be given to car share schemes and electric vehicle charging points. Electric vehicle charging points should be considered comprehensively to create a viable network for existing and future users of electric cars.

3.2.7. The Town Council will seek to work with Network Rail to improve facilities at the railway station. Particular issues to address include making the railway station safer and enhancing the quantity and quality of cycle parking facilities.

3.2.8. The Town Council will support proposals to link St Neots within the proposed East West Rail scheme, between Oxford and Cambridge and/or a similar project such as a guided bus.

### 3.3 Vehicle parking standards for residential development

3.3.1. Levels of car ownership in the district are high compared with the national average, as Huntingdonshire is both a relatively prosperous and a predominantly rural area. It is therefore essential that development is designed to incorporate sufficient levels of car parking.

3.3.2. Road parking has been taken away from many residents in St Neots due to yellow lines or poor road markings. This has resulted in many problems such as inconvenience to residents and their visitors not being able to park close to home, a cluttered local environment and increased congestion.

3.3.3. Restricting the availability of parking at trip origin does not deter people from owning a car. Instead it creates the problems referred to above. To avoid this happening as part of new developments, the Town Council requires minimum car parking standards for new residential development, including proposals for change of use to residential.

#### **Policy PT2**

All new residential development, including change of use to residential, must provide a minimum of 1.5 car parking spaces or 0.5 spaces per bedroom, whichever is greater, for each dwelling. Parking provided at the rear of dwellings or on street will not be supported.

3.3.4. The design, appearance and the servicing of many recently completed residential areas has been compromised by lack of off street parking. Accordingly, it is necessary to introduce minimum car parking standards for residential development. These minimum standards will be supported by the requirement for developments to introduce Travel Plans encouraging and promoting the use of alternatives to the private car.

3.3.5. In setting this standard the Town Council has had regard to accessibility around the town and to other towns, the type of development this standard is appropriate for, the availability of public transport in St Neots and local car ownership levels.

3.3.6. Residents living near the railway station are frequently inconvenienced by commuters parking close to their homes; blocking their driveways and light. Whilst yellow lines have caused problems elsewhere in St Neots, the Town Council would support the introduction of parking restrictions along Longsands Road area.

### 3.4 Car Parks

3.4.1. The community considers that there is a lack of public car parking within the Town Centre. To ensure this problem does not worsen, the number of public car parking spaces in the Town Centre will be safeguarded. The two stage approach of improving sustainable travel linkages to the Town Centre and safeguarding existing public car parks will help to address the issue of lack of public car parking.

3.4.2. The NPPF supports improving the quality of parking in Town Centres so that it is convenient, safe and secure. The Neighbourhood Plan survey identified the need for better CCTV in every public car park.

#### Policy PT3

The number of spaces available for public parking within the Town Centre should be maintained as a minimum, but increased if possible by the development of a multi-storey car park.

The site for a multi storey car park will need to be carefully selected. The design, scale and massing will need to ensure that it does not adversely affect the character or appearance of the conservation area, or the setting of nearby listed buildings.

The Town Council will support proposals for improvements to car parks. All proposals for improvement should include the installation of CCTV.

3.4.3. Improvements to public car parks within the Town Centre should include new or improved CCTV. Where CCTV is already present, opportunities should be taken to introduce more cameras where necessary and include night-vision cameras.

3.4.4. The Town Council would like all public car parks within St Neots to be free of charge.

### **3.5 Major Road Improvements**

3.5.1. The Neighbourhood Plan survey findings show that the majority of the community strongly believe that existing infrastructure issues must be dealt with first before building any more houses. It also found that many people wish to see the A428 dualled and the traffic congestion along the High Street dealt with.

3.5.2. There has been concern in the community about the standard of roads within recent development throughout the town. Love's Farm and Eynesbury Manor are two cases in point. The roads are too narrow causing obstruction and parking difficulties. Whilst the planning system cannot require the Highways Authority to adopt roads as this is left to the developers' discretion, through policy PT4 the Town Council can require all roads to be completed to adoptable standards.

## Policy PT4

Roads on new developments must be completed to adoptable standards within a year of 90% of the properties being completed.

The Town Council will work with Huntingdonshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council to explore the following projects:

- (a) Opening up of Priory Lane and making this one way; and
- (b) Pedestrianisation of the High Street; and
- (c) Improving traffic flow through the High Street; and
- (d) Dualling the A428; and
- (e) Raising Mill Lane; and
- (f) Installation of a bridge/bypass north of the town.

The Town Council will not support any of these projects if they will result in road safety issues or adversely affect an environmentally sensitive site.

The impact of increased traffic should be accurately and holistically assessed regularly and action taken to improve if detrimental impact is shown to exist.



# 4 Parks and Open Spaces



# Parks and Open Spaces

## 4.1 Introduction



4.1.1. St Neots has many attractive green open spaces and the parks have received the most positive feedback as part of the Neighbourhood Plan survey. The parks are the most enjoyed and appreciated areas in St Neots. The community feel very strongly about the need to preserve the parks, green spaces and river, whilst also having more events to bring the community together.

## 4.2 Local Green Spaces

4.2.1. The NPPF provides local communities with the opportunity to designate Local Green Spaces as part of Neighbourhood Planning. Local Green Spaces are very important green spaces in which development will be ruled out in all but exceptional circumstances.

4.2.2. St Neots has a wealth of high quality open spaces and of particular importance to the community are Priory Park, Riverside Park, Sudbury Meadow, Regatta Meadow, The Coneygear and Barford Road Pocket Park. The Neighbourhood Plan survey showed that the public really value these parks and consider the parks to be the best thing about St Neots. All of these parks are designated as Local Green Spaces as shown on the map overleaf.

*"Our parks are wonderful. We must preserve them with better security, prevent damage and littering."*

Comment from St Neots resident

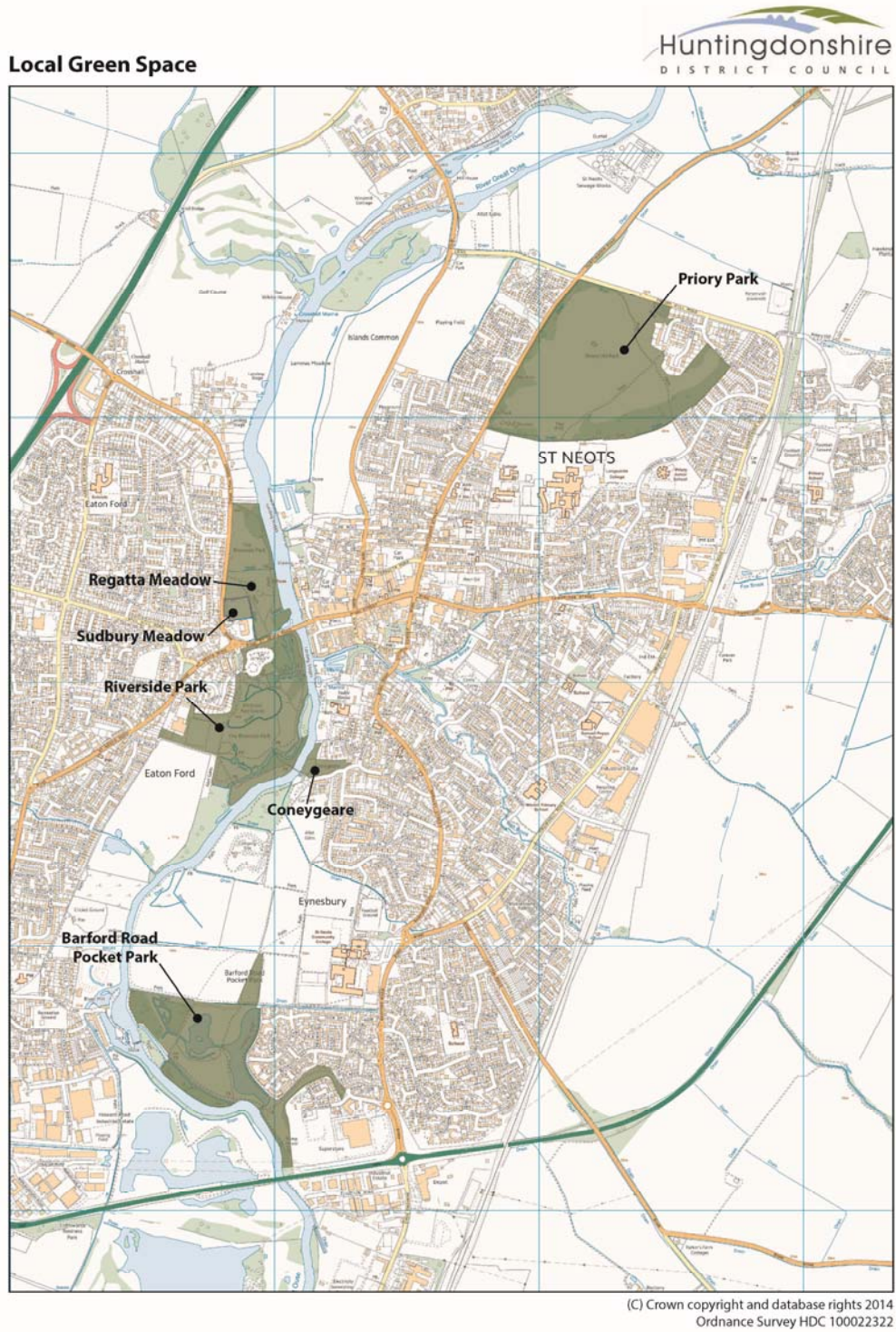


Figure 2: Map of local Green Spaces and Open Spaces

4.2.3. Being within the centre of St Neots, these parks are uniquely placed to serve all residents within the town. The volume of comments about the importance of the parks demonstrates their significance and how special the parks are to the local community. The parks have significant historic and recreational value and provide tranquil areas within an urban environment. The parks are visually attractive and contribute towards landscape character and provide a strong sense of place. The parks are bounded by existing communities and have clear boundaries; none are extensive tracts of land.

### Policy P1

Priory Park, Riverside Park, Sudbury Meadow, Regatta Meadow, The Coneygear and Barford Road Pocket Park, as shown in figure 2, are designated as Local Green Spaces.

Proposals for sustainable development within Priory Park, Riverside Park, Sudbury Meadow, Regatta Meadow, The Coneygear and Barford Road Pocket Park will only be permitted where it relates to leisure and recreation. All proposals must demonstrate that they have a genuine need to be located within the Park and will not adversely affect the tranquillity of the Park or existing users. All proposals must demonstrate that they are of an appropriate scale, layout and design.

Proposals adjacent to Priory Park, Riverside Park, Sudbury Meadow, Regatta Meadow, The Coneygear and Barford Road Pocket Park will need to demonstrate that they will not harm the setting of the Park and where possible enhance access to the park for people and wildlife.

4.2.4. Priory Park is a sub-urban public park of amenity grassland, containing several areas of mature woodland, mature trees, a children's play area, five football pitches, several mini soccer pitches, changing rooms and a pavilion. The pavilion contains four new changing rooms, referees changing rooms, a kitchen, a refreshment area/meeting room and CCTV equipment. Priory Park is regularly used by a range of people for various activities such as picnics, dog walking, bird watching, orienteering and sponsored runs as well as well as children's holiday activity clubs in the summer.

4.2.5. Riverside Park is close to the Town Centre and is bisected by the bridge over the River Great Ouse. It has a beautiful one mile long waterside frontage. Within the Park there is a small restaurant, a putting green, pitch and putt course, boating lake, skateboarding complex, basketball court and children's play areas. Eaton Socon Football Club also lease a pitch. Band concerts are a regular occurrence on Sundays during the summer weeks. The park is also regularly used for the Dragon Boat Racing and the Regatta.

4.2.6. Sudbury Meadow is a two acre site alongside the River Great Ouse. The site consists of a wildlife meadow & wildlife friendly garden area and has a wheelchair friendly path running through it.

4.2.7. Regatta Meadow is located to the west of the river and to the north of Riverside Park. It frequently floods and thus provides a habitat for moisture loving flora and fauna. In the past it was used as a wet meadow for grazing and hay.

4.2.8. The Coneygear is a small area of parkland in the heart of old Eynesbury to the east of the River. The park is joined to the rest of the Riverside paths by a footbridge over the river. The park is an essential community asset and is used regularly by the local village association for their festivals and events such as the St George's Day festival.

4.2.9 At the eastern edge of the park is a village square, surrounded by a mixture of residential and businesses including a day nursery and a restaurant. At the western extend, there is a free long stay car park. Here, there is also a small play park offering traditional play equipment including swing, slides and a roundabout.

4.2.10. Barford Road Pocket Park is a 45 acre site created in 2001 alongside the development of the Eynesbury Manor housing estate. The park has several types of habitat and is home to numerous bird species. A number of events are organised throughout the year.

4.2.11. The Huntingdonshire District Core Strategy and Draft Local Plan allocates a significant amount of new housing in St Neots and the Local Green Space designations for Priory Park, Riverside Park, Sudbury Meadow, Regatta Meadow The Coneygear and Barford Road Pocket Park will not undermine plan making.

4.2.12. More detailed information about each of the parks is included in the appendix.

### 4.3 Open Space

4.3.1. There is a shortfall in allotments and formal open space within St Neots. Improvements are needed to the existing open spaces within the town to meet the needs of a range of age groups and the needs of different members of the community.

4.3.2. The Neighbourhood Plan survey found that the community considers St Neots' open spaces to be the most important parts of the town. There is overwhelming support for the protection of existing open spaces and the creation of new open spaces.

4.3.3. Please refer to map shown in figure 1 on page 47.

## Policy P2

Existing open spaces within St Neots will be protected from encroachment and every opportunity should be taken to enhance open spaces throughout the town, whilst protecting existing wildlife and its habitats.

Proposals involving the loss of open space will only be supported providing that it can be demonstrated that the open space would be replaced by equivalent or enhanced provision at a location accessible to existing users or the proposal involves the development of a sports or recreation facility that clearly outweighs the loss.

All new major residential development of 10 or more dwellings must contribute to open space provision throughout St Neots. This will be through the provision of new areas of open space within the site as defined within the Huntingdonshire District Developer Contributions SPD or its successor(s).

Proposals for new areas of open space will be supported and should be designed to ensure that they provide a usable environment for people of all age groups and needs.

New areas of useable open space delivered as part of new development, should be provided within central locations within the development site to ensure good accessibility. Where appropriate new development should deliver a mix of open space typologies based on local need. Elsewhere new areas of open space should be located at sites which are accessible to the community in which it intends to serve.

As a minimum, the Eastern expansion will make provision for 2.944 hectares (7.272 acres) of allotments and formal open space to the standard required by the District Council. Allotments should be located at the edge of the site and formal space should be located centrally within the site.

Support will be given to the development of a site for a new cemetery. Possible locations for a new cemetery include Love's Farm and Wintringham Park.

4.3.4. The open spaces throughout St Neots are very important to residents and contribute to health and wellbeing. They provide green lungs within the town, areas for recreation and habitats for wildlife. Open spaces are important local amenities and offer opportunities for activities such as trim trails and green gyms.

4.3.5. It is essential that open spaces throughout St Neots are protected and where possible enhanced and that new areas of open space are created - particularly as part of new development to ensure that no residents suffer from a deficit of open space.

#### **4.4 River Setting**

4.4.1. St Neots stands proudly on the River Great Ouse. The River Great Ouse gives St Neots a strong sense of place and a highly distinctive landscape setting in terms of visual links, public open space and recreation. The development pattern of the town has been strongly influenced by the river.

4.4.2. The River Great Ouse will be promoted as a leisure resource to enhance the leisure and tourism offer within St Neots. The community considers that they are very fortunate to have an excellent riverfront and it has been proposed by many residents that there are more riverfront bars, restaurants, cafes or eateries along the river to showcase one of the town's best assets.

4.4.3. The community has identified the potential for The Old Falcon to be utilised owing to its riverfront setting. The following ideas have been suggested by the community: Riverside Café, Restaurant & Bar, Night Club and Cocktail Bar.

### Policy P3

The setting of the River Great Ouse will be promoted as a low impact leisure resource. An active frontage will be encouraged and proposals for residential use above lower and ground floors may be appropriate providing that proposals are in keeping with the area.

All proposals for development along the riverfront will be expected to demonstrate that consideration has been given to improving connections for people and wildlife, biodiversity enhancement and visual improvements. Proposals that improve the visual line of site to the river to improve the visual impact of the river and link it into the Town Centre will be favourably considered subject to compliance with other planning policies.

The Town Council will support leisure proposals for the redevelopment of The Old Falcon. Residential use may be appropriate above lower and ground floors.

The Town Council supports the St Neots Community Hydro scheme subject to compliance with other planning policies.

4.4.4. The community would like to see a variety of leisure and recreation uses along the riverfront. The Town Council will particularly encourage more food and drink outlets along the riverfront to create an active frontage. Proposals for flats and maisonettes above lower and ground floor level along the riverfront may be appropriate and will contribute to the mix of uses. It is important that proposals do not limit the potential for leisure and recreation uses and reduce the extent of the active frontage.

4.4.5. The extent to which proposals promote the River Great Ouse as a leisure resource will depend upon the nature and scale of the proposal. Every proposal has the potential to contribute towards the promotion of the river and so even small scale proposals will need to demonstrate that the setting of the river will be enhanced and access improved.

4.4.6. The Town Council will support leisure proposals for The Old Falcon such as a riverside café, restaurant and bar, night club or cocktail bar, as identified by the community. Proposals should ensure that the frontage reflects the



listed building status, and the approach to the Town Centre from across the river.

4.4.7. Proposals for riverside events will be supported and encouraged by the Town Council. Some events may require temporary planning consent and where this is the case the Town Council will support the application and encourage Huntingdonshire District Council to grant planning permission promptly.

## 4.5 Flooding

4.5.1. St Neots is at risk of fluvial flooding from the River Great Ouse and pluvial flooding, which will increase as more Greenfield land is developed. The Great Ouse Catchment Flood Management Plan states that the flood risk in the St Neots/Little Paxton, Bedford/Kempston and Leighton Buzzard sub-area is too high. To protect the community flood risk in St Neots must be reduced.

4.5.2. The Environment Agency will investigate options to reduce the probability of river flooding. One option identified in the Catchment Flood Management Plan is to consider storing water on the flood plains upstream of communities at risk.

4.5.3. The Town Council will support the Environment Agency in reducing flood risk and will expect developers to demonstrate that proposals will not increase the risk of flooding. Wherever possible proposals should incorporate measures to reduce the risk of flooding.

*"We must address how to prevent the risk of flooding, especially in residential areas."*

Comment from St Neots resident

## Policy P4

Development proposals must be directed to areas at low risk of flooding. Development proposals will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that proposals will not increase the risk of flooding.

All proposals should incorporate measures to reduce flood risk.

Development proposals will be expected to include sustainable drainage systems (SUDS). In addition to their principal role of flood risk management SUDS should offer additional benefits such as amenity value and biodiversity enhancement.

The Town Council will support the Environment Agency's proposals to reduce the risk of flooding. Proposals must demonstrate that any potential adverse impacts can be mitigated.

4.5.4. The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 was introduced to address the concerns and recommendations raised in the Pitt Report following the 2007 floods. The Act makes Cambridgeshire County Council the Lead Local Flood Authority. The Town Council will work with Cambridgeshire County Council and other partners to address flood risk issues.

4.5.5. Proposals that increase the risk of flooding will not be supported. Proposals within medium and high flood risk areas will need to pass the sequential test and exceptions test as set out in the NPPF. However, the Town Council strongly believes that flood risk areas should be completely avoided.

4.5.6. All proposals within areas of flood risk and on Greenfield land offer the opportunity to reduce the causes and impacts of flooding. Developers must demonstrate that every opportunity has been taken to reduce the causes and impacts of flooding in order to ensure that the existing flood risk in St Neots is not increased.

4.5.7. As part of its role as Lead Local Flood Authority, Cambridgeshire County Council will become the SuDS Approving Body (SAB). They will be responsible for approving all surface water drainage systems for new developments in line with a set of National Standards set out by government as well as any specific local standards. Approval from the SAB must be sought prior to construction

and the SAB will have a duty to adopt and maintain surface water drainage features serving more than one property or otherwise ensure there is an appropriate maintenance arrangement in place.

4.5.8. Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) and SUDS features in all new development should be provided on the surface wherever technically feasible. SUDS should seek to provide amenity, design and biodiversity benefits within the development site in addition to sustainably managing the quantity and quality of surface water run-off from the new development. The Town Council will welcome discussions with developers, the SAB, planning and highways authorities, and other agencies and bodies to ensure appropriate arrangements are in place for the sustainable operation and maintenance of SUDS in new development

4.5.9. The Town Council will discuss options for works to the River Great Ouse to reduce the risk of fluvial flooding with the Environment Agency. Proposals for flood risk mitigation will be strongly supported provided that potentially adverse effects can be mitigated. Where adverse effects cannot be mitigated, compensatory measures must be included.



# 5 Rejuvenation

# Rejuvenation

## 5.1 Economic Development



5.1.1. Employment in St Neots is largely dependent on manufacturing, retail and wholesale and the public sector. Just over half of residents work locally and there is significant out-commuting to the rest of Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire and London.

5.1.2. 40% of the Neighbourhood Plan survey respondents said that the provision of jobs within St Neots was poor or inadequate. Only 5% said that the provision of jobs was good and no-one said that it was excellent.

5.1.3. The St Neots Healthcheck recognised the importance of redressing the balance between homes and employment and reducing the need for development on Greenfield land. Redressing the balance between homes and employment is reflected in the employment allocation of 25 hectares as part of the Eastern expansion. The Town Council welcomes this and will not support applications to change this allocation to residential.

### Policy RD1

Proposals for economic development throughout St Neots will be favourably considered subject to compliance with other relevant planning policies. The regeneration and proportionate intensification of previously developed land will be particularly supported.

## 5.2 Protection of Employment Land

5.2.1. The NPPF is clear that the planning system should do everything it can to support sustainable economic growth. The Town Council strongly support

this and recognise the importance of keeping the town's economy strong and prosperous. Through this policy the Town Council is planning positively for the development needs of existing businesses and supporting future businesses in the town.

5.2.2. The St Neots Healthcheck identified the need to maintain a balanced community and reduce levels of out-commuting. Maintaining a good supply of employment land is essential to this.

## Policy RD2

Existing employment sites and premises and allocated employment sites will be protected from change of use to alternative uses.

Change of use of existing or allocated employment sites or premises will only be supported where the applicant has demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Town Council and the District Council that there is no reasonable prospect of the site or premises being used for commercial uses. Applicants will be expected to demonstrate that the existing or allocated use is no longer viable and that the site has been marketed for a reasonable period of time for alternative commercial uses.

Where it has been successfully demonstrated that the site or premises is no longer suitable for commercial uses, preference will be given to the change of use to retail or leisure use.

5.2.3. The Town Council acknowledges that the long term protection of sites allocated for employment should be avoided. However, where there is a reasonable prospect of a site being used for employment use alternative uses should be avoided to ensure the retention of employment sites and premises at accessible locations.

5.2.4. Where a site is genuinely no longer suitable for employment use and there is no reasonable prospect of the site being used for employment purposes the Town Council will support change of use. Change of use to retail or leisure purposes will be preferred as this will result in the creation of jobs within the town.

5.2.5. Applicants will be expected to demonstrate that the site has been marketed for employment use for a continuous period of at least six months and at a fair market price reflecting the employment use.

5.2.6. There are no allocated employment sites in this Neighbourhood Plan as the Huntingdonshire District Local Plan allocates land for employment uses. The Draft Local Plan lists the following sites as Established Employment Areas: Station Road Industrial Area, Cromwell Road Industrial Estate, Colmworth Business Park, Howard Road Industrial Estate, Little End Industrial Estate and Alpha Drive Business Park.

### 5.3 Eastern Expansion Employment Allocation

5.3.1. 25 hectares of land is allocated in the Huntingdonshire District Local Plan for employment use as part of the Eastern expansion. The Town Council strongly supports this allocation, which helps to balance the new homes with new jobs and in accordance with Policy RD2 this employment allocation will be safeguarded.

5.3.2. The employment land allocation is higher than the requirement identified in the Employment Land Review and reflects the significant levels of residential growth proposed for St Neots. Locating the land within the urban extension is specifically intended to integrate the sites with the new housing developments.

5.3.3. To help meet a range of business needs and support an economy fit for the 21st century the Town Council will support a diverse range of employment uses as part of the Eastern expansion employment allocation.

#### Policy RD3

High quality employment, business start-ups and creative industries will be encouraged as part of the Eastern expansion employment allocation.

5.3.4. High quality employment, business start-ups and creative industries will help to diversify St Neots' employment base and support an economy fit for the 21st century. However, this is not a prescriptive requirement and the

Town Council will support employment needs not yet anticipated to allow a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.

## 5.4 Training Facilities

5.4.1. The St Neots Healthcheck found that a key challenge faced by employers in St Neots relates to the lack of practical and employment related skills held by school leavers, the locally aging population and the shortage of potential replacement labour. The Neighbourhood Plan survey found that the community is concerned about post-16 education in the town.

5.4.2. The provision of opportunities for lifelong learning and skills development within St Neots and the creation of better links between education and local employers will help to align the local skills base with existing and potential employers and address concerns about post-16 education.

*“We need better employment opportunities for those without experience and school leavers.”*

Comment from St Neots resident

### Policy RD4

Every opportunity will be taken to provide opportunities for lifelong learning and skills development. Proposals for new buildings and initiatives that will improve the local skills base will be favourably considered. The Town Council will work with schools within the town and colleges in Cambridgeshire to provide new and improved training facilities in St Neots.

New employment uses within the town should be encouraged to create links with education providers.

5.4.3. The Town Council will work with education providers within the town to help create links between them and existing and new employers. Proposals for new buildings or initiatives that will improve the skills base will be supported by the Town Council. New buildings should be accessible by a choice of means of transport.





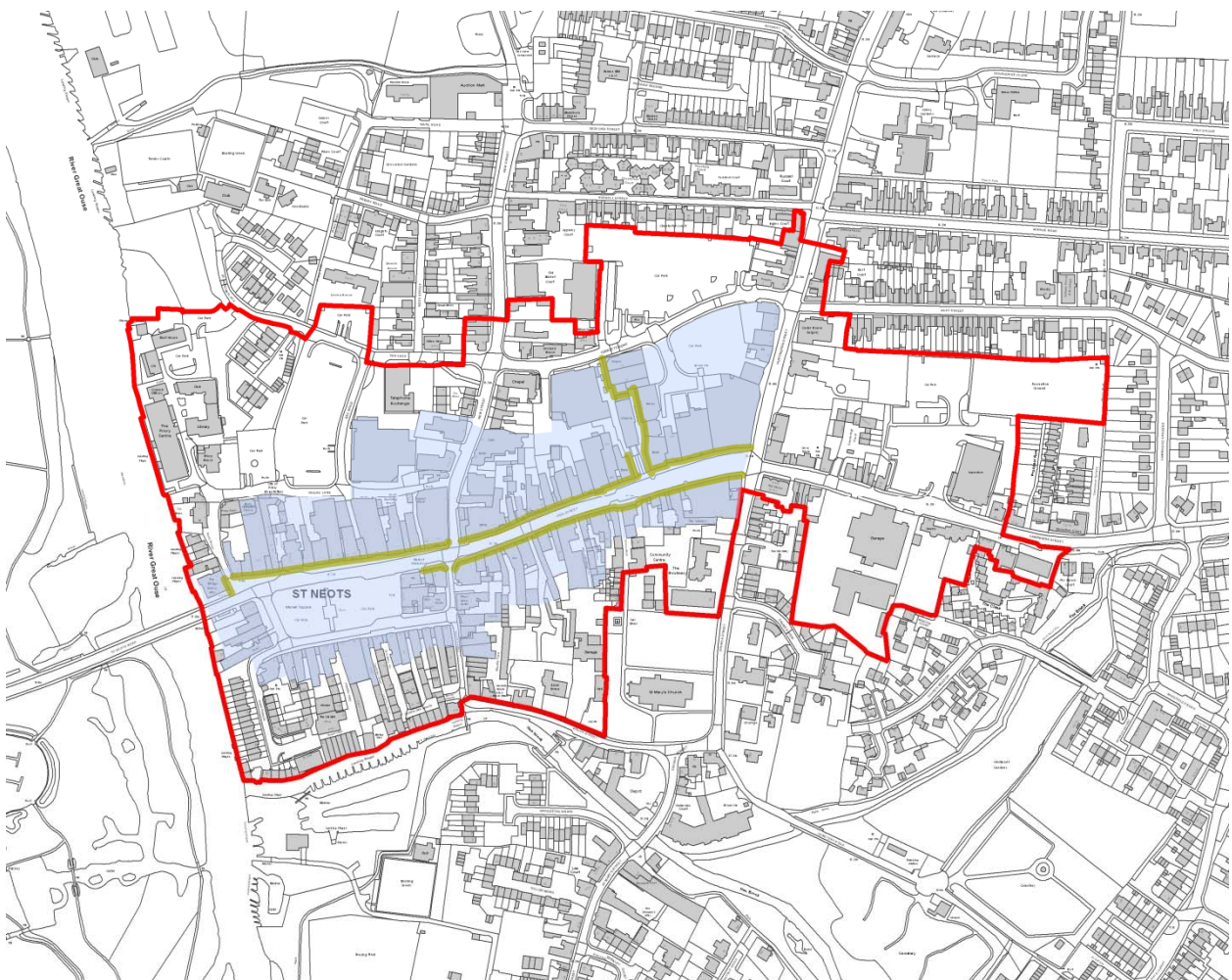


# 6 Shops and Services

# Shops and Services

## 6.1 Introduction

6.1.1. The vibrant Town Centre is the heart of the community. In 2012 there were 167 occupied units within the Town Centre and over half of these were in retail use. The Town Centre is defined in the Huntingdonshire District Local Plan and is shown on figure 2, below.



*Figure 3: Map of St Neots Town Centre. The red line shows the Town Centre boundary, the shaded area shows the Primary Shopping Area and the green line shows the Primary Shopping Frontage.*

6.1.2. There is a fairly even mix of views on shopping provision in St Neots with 37% of Neighbourhood Plan survey respondents saying that it is inadequate or poor and 28% of survey respondents saying that it is good or excellent. The Neighbourhood Plan survey findings show that the community want the history and character of the Town Centre preserved whilst updating the overall appearance of the High Street aesthetically. Policy A1 addresses the public realm of the Town Centre.



6.1.3. The Town Council would like to see the retail offer in the Town Centre increase and diversify. There is a need for more fashion, particularly men's and children's wear, supermarkets and food/drink uses within the Town Centre and proposals for these uses will be favourably considered.

6.1.4. Many residents have requested a greater variety of shops in the town. Shops have been a recurring issue in the Neighbourhood Plan survey responses with many people referring to the fact that Burtons has recently left. Menswear and children's wear shops have been requested by many residents. Many of the local community consider that independent traders appear to have higher prices than the majority of residents can afford. Therefore, franchises that can provide affordable clothing. Other convenience stores such as Wilkinson's or Poundland have been requested by the community to offer a greater variety on a smaller budget. Almost all those who completed the survey said that the main objective should be to attract residents to shop within the Town Centre rather than going elsewhere. This is reiterated by businesses within the Town Centre, who consider their local customers to be the most positive aspect of trading in the town.

6.1.5. Through Policy SS1 the Town Council is seeking to plan positively for the future of the Town Centre to encourage economic activity and attract residents to shop in the Town Centre rather than going elsewhere.

*“We do need a better variety and more affordable of shops in our town. Using two unit spaces could encourage a large business to move to the town, while maintaining the look of St Neots.”*

Comment from St Neots resident

## Policy SS1

The expansion of the Town Centre’s primary retail frontage and primary shopping area will be supported.

Proposals for new town centre uses within the Town Centre will be favourably considered. The Town Council would particularly favour fashion shops, food/ drink establishments, affordable franchises and supermarkets. The introduction of additional markets on Market Square will be supported.

Proposals for uses covering two or more existing units will be favourably considered. Where proposals involve alterations to listed buildings or buildings that contribute to the character or appearance of the conservation area the existing facades should be retained.

Proposals for residential use above ground floor level will be favourably considered providing that the proposal will not result in the loss of an existing town centre use.

6.1.6. The Town Council wish to see the Town Centre expanded to increase its retail offer. Where land becomes available within the town centre, priority will be given to retail use. There are less vacant units in the Town Centre than the national average and expanding the Town Centre will ensure that it can grow and prosper. Proposals that would constrain the Town Centre will not be supported.

6.1.7. The Town Council will support all proposals for town centre uses within the Town Centre limits. However, those which will result in an overall increase in the town’s retail sector will be preferred, in particular fashion, affordable franchises and supermarkets, which are much needed in St Neots.

6.1.8. Town Centre uses are defined as retail, leisure, commercial, office, tourism, cultural and community. The community has identified the need for a job centre, registry office and improved library and these uses will be supported by the Town Council.

6.1.9. Currently 62% of people travel to the Town Centre by car and, whilst sustainable modes of travel should be encouraged, the number of parking spaces in the town centre will be safeguarded to ensure that shoppers and visitors are not deterred from visiting due to lack of car parking. St Neots markets are important characteristics of the Town Centre and must be retained to preserve the Town Centre's offer. The market in St Neots has 26 traders on average, which is above the national figure.

6.1.10. Security is an important issue and the Town Council will support more CCTV in the Town Centre and indeed throughout the entire town.

## 6.2 Utilising Historic Buildings

6.2.1. There is a wealth of historic buildings within the Town Centre. There is a real opportunity to improve the shopping offer through bringing historic buildings back into use and sustaining the town's heritage. The NPPF recognises that heritage assets can make a positive contribution to economic vitality and this is something that the community has identified as important.

### Policy SS2

The Town Council will support the re-use of historic buildings within the Town Centre for appropriate town centre uses. Any alterations to historic buildings will need to be sympathetic to the historic and architectural significance and character of the building.

## 6.3 Service and Provision

6.3.1. As set out in the NPPF, the government attaches great importance to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Linked to this, the NPPF is clear that the planning system should plan positively for the provision and use of community facilities and local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments.

6.3.2. New schools, GP surgeries and dentists are needed in St Neots to accommodate growth. The Local Investment Framework identified a need for three two-form entry primary schools, two one-form entry primary school, one new six-form entry secondary school, an extension to the current secondary school and two new children's centres under a high growth scenario. The Neighbourhood Plan survey has found that many people believe that there is poor secondary school provision and a lack of choice and quality that will only worsen as more housing is built.

6.3.3. The Town Council will support new schools that are linked or run by industry and/or universities in partnership to make schooling innovative, high quality and fit for the future.

6.3.4. There are no GP surgeries within 1km south-west of the town and no GP surgeries within 1km of the Eastern expansion. The Local Investment Framework identified a need for two new four GP Primary and Social Care Facilities under a high growth scenario. The Neighbourhood Plan survey found that many people find it difficult to make an appointment with their GP and are often kept waiting up to an hour.

### Policy SS3

New residential development will be delivered alongside necessary improvements to existing schools, places of worship, GP surgeries and dentist surgeries and/or the provision of new schools, places of worship, GP surgeries and dentist surgeries within St Neots to ensure that the existing and new population have access to school places, places of worship, GPs and dentists.

6.3.5. Developers will need to discuss the impact proposals will have on school provision with Cambridgeshire County Council at an early stage.

6.3.6. Developers will need to discuss the impact proposals will have on GP services and dentists with the relevant Clinical Commissioning Group and Local Area Teams at an early stage. Proposals of over 100 dwellings will be expected to be submitted with a Health Impact Assessment to help assess their impact on GP and dentist surgeries.



# Implementation and delivery



# Implementation and delivery

The implementation and delivery section sets out what actions are required to turn this Neighbourhood Plan into reality on the ground.

The Town Council needs the help of public and private partners to create a sustainable community and deliver the policies set out in this Neighbourhood Plan. The Town Council will work with a number of partners, including the following, to implement the Plan (not exclusive):

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PARTNERS		
Local	County	National
Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC)	Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC)	Environment Agency (EA)
Chamber of Commerce (CC)	Cambridgeshire Police (CP)	English Heritage (EH)
Private Developers (PD)		Natural England (NE)
Local Bus Operators (LBO)		Highways Agency (HA)
Various Community Groups (VCG)		Network Rail (NR)
Local residents (LR)		

New development creates a need to provide new infrastructure and facilities and to mitigate the effect of development on the surrounding area. Financial contributions will be sought from developers to combine with public funding to deliver the necessary facilities in infrastructure. The table below sets out the necessary projects and delivery body. The majority of the projects are required through policies in the Huntingdonshire District Local Plan and this Neighbourhood Plan adds further detail to this. Therefore this Neighbourhood Plan will not place an undue burden on developers and will not prohibit development from coming forward. The Neighbourhood Plan provides a positive framework to ensure that development in St Neots will bring positive benefits to the town.

**Key for priority column shown in tables below: 1 = highest priority, 5 = lowest priority**

Necessary Project	Delivery Body	Priority	Source of Funding	Is this already required but NP adds more detail?
<b>Aesthetics</b>				
Develop and implement a public realm strategy	TC with support from local businesses & PD	3	To be linked to new development through planning obligations/ CIL	Partly
Explore the option of pedestrianisation of the High Street and redeveloping the Market Square	TC, CCC, HDC, PD and local businesses	3	Funding to be secured	No
Development > 50 dwellings to include buffer strips. Land may be transferred to SNTC to manage	PD to provide, St Neots Town Council may manage	1	To be linked to new development through planning obligations/ CIL	No
<b>Parking &amp; Traffic</b>				
Work with partners to improve sustainable travel links around St Neots	TC, LBO, NR, CCC	1	To be partly linked to new development through planning obligations/ CIL	Yes
Require proposals for improvements to car parks to include CCTV	St Neots Town Council HDC	3	HDC or other car park operator	No

Necessary Project	Delivery Body	Priority	Source of Funding	Is this already required but NP adds more detail?
<b>Explore the following projects:</b> Opening up of Priory lane and making this one way; and Pedestrianisation of the High Street; and Improving traffic flow throughout St Neots; and (d) Dualling the A428	St Neots Town Council, HDC & CCC	1	Funding to be secured	No
<b>Parks</b>				
New open space to be delivered as part of new development	Developer	1	To be linked to new development through on site provision	Yes
Eastern expansion to provide allotments & formal open space	Developer	2	To be linked to new development through on site provision	Yes
Support the development of a new cemetery	St Neots Town Council	1	To be linked to new development through planning obligations/ CIL	No
Promote the setting of the River Great Ouse as a leisure resource	St Neots Town Council	2	Funding to be secured	No

Necessary Project	Delivery Body	Priority	Source of Funding	Is this already required but NP adds more detail?
<b>Entertainment and Leisure</b>				
Delivery of an outdoor theatre in Riverside Park	St Neots Town Council	4	Funding to be secured	No
Delivery of improved recreation facilities including crazy golf and boats in Riverside Park	St Neots Town Council	4	Funding to be secured	No
Delivery of a bandstand in Regatta Meadow	St Neots Town Council	4	Funding to be secured	No
Delivery of a swimming pool on site of outdoor swimming pool	St Neots Town Council, Swimming Pool Trust and PD	2	To be linked to new development through planning obligations/ CIL	No
<b>Shops and Service</b>				
Ensure that there is sufficient school provision through expansion to existing schools or creation of new schools	PD and CCC	1	To be linked to new development through planning obligations/ CIL	Yes
Ensure that there is sufficient GP & dentist provision through expansion to existing surgeries or creation of new surgeries	PD & Clinical Commissioning Group & Local Area Teams	1	To be linked to new development through planning obligations/ CIL	Yes

Necessary Project	Delivery Body	Priority	Source of Funding	Is this already required but NP adds more detail?
<b>Rejuvenation and Development</b>				
Secure environmental improvements to business areas near the railway	PD and St Neots Town Council	4	To be linked to new development through planning obligations/ CIL	No
Encourage links between training providers & local employers	Town Council, local businesses, local training providers	2	n/a	n/a

### Monitoring

Continual plan review is a fundamental element of the planning system. It is important to check that the plan is being implemented correctly, ensure that outcomes match objectives and to change the plan if they are not. This Neighbourhood Plan will be carefully monitored and reviewed if it becomes apparent that the aim and objectives of the Plan are not being met.



# Non planning issues

## Non planning issues

The Neighbourhood Plan survey findings identified the issues that are important to the local community. Some of the issues identified were non-planning issues and so cannot be included in the main body of the Neighbourhood Plan. However, these issues are important to local people. To show the community that their comments have been taken into account and will be addressed by the Town Council, all non-planning issues are included in this section.

The table, below, identifies all non-planning issues from the Neighbourhood Plan survey and includes possible actions for addressing each of these issues.

Issue	Responsibility	Action
<b>Rejuvenation &amp; development</b>		
Cars parked on Monarch Road so close to bumps causes more damage than good. Remove bumps	CCC	St Neots Town Council (SNTC) to discuss removal of bumps on Monarch Road with CCC
Greater attention to graffiti, litter and dog fouling around residential areas. Beatty Wood in Eaton Socon is a through path from Tesco Express so many people are dropping a lot of litter and left over food. This isn't safe for the dogs that get walked there	SNTC	SNTC to take over role of litter picking from HDC. Discuss issue of littering around Tesco Express in Eaton Socon with store manager. Potential for Tesco to contribute towards more bins to reduce likelihood of littering. Regarding wider issue of graffiti, littering & dog fouling, discuss potential for multi-agency Days of Action around St Neots

Issue	Responsibility	Action
<b>Aesthetics</b>		
High Street needs a good clean	SNTC & Community Safety Partnership	Discuss idea of a multi-agency Day of Action with Community Safety Partnership to clean up High Street
Need more bins in parks and town centre	SNTC HDC	Provide more bins in parks & Town Centre
<b>Development</b>		
Road markings need improving	CCC	SNTC to discuss with CCC
Better secondary education and adult education	CCC & Adult education providers	SNTC to discuss this issue with CCC & adult education providers
Better street lights along main roads and in parks		SNTC to discuss with CCC
<b>Leisure</b>		
More health & fitness events	HDC & private gyms/fitness groups	SNTC to discuss how it can help HDC and private gyms/fitness groups hold more health & fitness events
More social groups; Mums & Children groups. Community groups need greater support		Town Councillors to work with existing local charities and agencies to provide more support
Add a roof onto the ramps at the park. This allows usage all year round. Better CCTV at the ramps so that children feel safer	HDC	Discuss the introduction of roofs on ramps & CCTV with HDC
Parking at the cinema has been a big concern. How much for a standard 2.5 hour film?	Car park operator	SNTC to discuss car parking prices with the car park operator prior to the completion of the cinema



Issue	Responsibility	Action
<b>Services</b>		
Pay council tax by cash	HDC	Discuss Council tax payment options with HDC.
Better policing on the street and in vehicles. Need to be actively seen along the High Street and in residential areas; especially on a Friday and Saturday night	Cambridgeshire Police	SNTC to discuss residents' concerns with Cambridgeshire Police's St Neots Neighbourhood Policing Team
Better bus service is desperately needed. Direct routes to town, Tesco and train station. Sunday services are also needed	Bus companies	SNTC to work with bus companies and interest groups with a view to achieving better linkages around the town, including to the railway station. If this is unsuccessful the Town Council will explore under local competence powers, the provision of a mini bus service around the town
Regular shuttle bus from villages to town could be very beneficial especially as many people have issues with parking costs	Bus companies	SNTC to discuss with bus companies
Better service in the doctors. People are arguing that they wait up to an hour after their appointment time to actually be seen. This is very poor service especially when people usually have to take time off work to get an appointment	GP Surgeries	SNTC to discuss residents' concerns with GP Surgeries

Issue	Responsibility	Action
<b>Parking</b>		
Parking costs are far too high. Many residents are asking for free parking or at least the first 30 minutes to an hour free	HDC & car park operators	SNTC to discuss parking prices with HDC & car park operators, including the potential for special promotions. SNTC to investigate taking over the management of car parks from Huntingdonshire District Council under the power of competence
Permit schemes for residents and visitors may be a positive solution	HDC	SNTC to discuss permit schemes with HDC
Better CCTV in every car park	HDC & car park operators	SNTC to discuss improved CCTV with HDC & car park operators.
<b>Traffic</b>		
Too many traffic lights. Many are requesting that the high street is pedestrianised	CCC	SNTC to discuss possibility of pedestrianizing High St & removal of traffic lights with CCC
A428 needs dualling	Department for Transport	SNTC to continue working with CCC & HDC to raise the profile of the dualling of this stretch of the A428
Priory Lane needs re opening	CCC	SNTC to discuss with CCC
<b>Parks</b>		
Litter especially around the skate park and kids play areas, we must invest in more bins	HDC	SNTC to discuss provision of more bins with HDC
Desperately need better street lighting, to clearly lights paths in and around the parks	CCC	SNTC to discuss provision of better street lighting with CCC
The cows on the common believed to be dangerous, preventing people walking dogs		

Issue	Responsibility	Action
Too much dog fouling in parks and on streets	HDC	SNTC to discuss provision of more dog waste bins with HDC. Also, a poster campaign to encourage people to clean up after dogs
Riverside events considered to be thoroughly enjoyed by majority of the residents and they have asked for more events to increase community spirit		SNTC to support riverside events
Provision of public toilets in Priory Park		



# Glossary

# Glossary

The majority of the glossary is copied from the NPPF to ensure consistency.

**Affordable housing:** Social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Affordable housing should include provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.

Social rented housing is owned by local authorities and private registered providers (as defined in section 80 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008), for which guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime. It may also be owned by other persons and provided under equivalent rental arrangements to the above, as agreed with the local authority or with the Homes and Communities Agency.

Affordable rented housing is let by local authorities or private registered providers of social housing to households who are eligible for social rented housing. Affordable Rent is subject to rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80% of the local market rent (including service charges, where applicable).

Intermediate housing is homes for sale and rent provided at a cost above social rent, but below market levels subject to the criteria in the Affordable Housing definition above. These can include shared equity (shared ownership and equity loans), other low cost homes for sale and intermediate rent, but not affordable rented housing.

Homes that do not meet the above definition of affordable housing, such as “low cost market” housing, may not be considered as affordable housing for planning purposes.

**Air Quality Management Areas:** Areas designated by local authorities because they are not likely to achieve national air quality objectives by the relevant deadlines.

**Archaeological interest:** There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially may hold, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point. Heritage assets with archaeological interest are the primary source of evidence about the substance and evolution of places, and of the people and cultures that made them.

**Best and most versatile agricultural land:** Land in grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification.

**Climate change adaptation:** Adjustments to natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic factors or their effects, including from changes in rainfall and rising temperatures, which moderate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities.

**Climate change mitigation:** Action to reduce the impact of human activity on the climate system, primarily through reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

**Conservation (for heritage policy):** The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.

**Community Infrastructure Levy:** A levy allowing local authorities to raise funds from owners or developers of land undertaking new building projects in their area.

**Community Right to Build Order:** An Order made by the local planning authority (under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) that grants planning permission for a site-specific development proposal or classes of development.

**Competent person (to prepare site investigation information):** A person with a recognised relevant qualification, sufficient experience in dealing with the type(s) of pollution or land instability, and membership of a relevant professional organisation.

**Development plan:** This includes adopted Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans and is defined in section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

**Economic development:** Development, including those within the B Use Classes, public and community uses and main town centre uses (but excluding housing development).

**Ecological networks:** These link sites of biodiversity importance.

**Ecosystem services:** The benefits people obtain from ecosystems such as, food, water, flood and disease control and recreation.

**Edge of centre:** For retail purposes, a location that is well connected and up to 300 metres of the primary shopping area. For all other main town centre uses, a location within 300 metres of a town centre boundary. For office development, this includes locations outside the town centre but within 500 metres of a public transport interchange. In determining whether a site falls within the definition of edge of centre, account should be taken of local circumstances.

**Green infrastructure:** A network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.

**Heritage asset:** A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

**Historic environment:** All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora.

**Inclusive design:** Designing the built environment, including buildings and their surrounding spaces, to ensure that they can be accessed and used by everyone.

**International, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity:** All international sites (Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, and Ramsar sites), national sites (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) and locally designated sites including Local Wildlife Sites.

**Local planning authority:** The public authority whose duty it is to carry out specific planning functions for a particular area. The local planning authority for St Neots is Huntingdonshire District Council.

**Local Plan:** The plan for the future development of the local area, drawn up by the local planning authority in consultation with the community. In law this is described as the development plan documents adopted under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Current core strategies or other planning policies, which under the regulations would be considered to be development plan documents, form part of the Local Plan. The term includes old policies which have been saved under the 2004 Act.

**Main town centre uses:** Retail development (including warehouse clubs and factory outlet centres); leisure, entertainment facilities the more intensive sport and recreation uses (including cinemas, restaurants, drive-through restaurants, bars and pubs, nightclubs, casinos, health and fitness centres, indoor bowling centres, and bingo halls); offices; and arts, culture and tourism development (including theatres, museums, galleries and concert halls, hotels and conference facilities).

**Neighbourhood Development Order:** An Order made by a local planning authority (under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) through which Parish Councils and neighbourhood forums can grant planning permission for a specific development proposal or classes of development.

**Neighbourhood plans:** A plan prepared by a Town or Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum for a particular neighbourhood area (made under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

**Older people:** People over retirement age, including the active, newly-retired through to the very frail elderly, whose housing needs can encompass accessible, adaptable general needs housing for those looking to downsize from family housing and the full range of retirement and specialised housing for those with support or care needs.

**Open space:** All open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water (such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs) which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity.



**Out of centre:** A location which is not in or on the edge of a centre but not necessarily outside the urban area.

**Out of town:** A location out of centre that is outside the existing urban area.

**People with disabilities:** People have a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment, and that impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. These persons include, but are not limited to, people with ambulatory difficulties, blindness, learning difficulties, autism and mental health needs.

**Planning condition:** A condition imposed on a grant of planning permission (in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) or a condition included in a Local Development Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.

**Planning obligation:** A legally enforceable obligation entered into under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to mitigate the impacts of a development proposal.

**Previously developed land:** Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or has been occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill purposes where provision for restoration has been made through development control procedures; land in built-up areas such as private residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously-developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape in the process of time.

**Primary shopping area:** Defined area where retail development is concentrated (generally comprising the primary and those secondary frontages which are adjoining and closely related to the primary shopping frontage).

**Primary and secondary frontages:** Primary frontages are likely to include a high proportion of retail uses which may include food, drinks, clothing and household goods. Secondary frontages provide greater opportunities for a diversity of uses such as restaurants, cinemas and businesses.

**Renewable and low carbon energy:** Includes energy for heating and cooling as well as generating electricity. Renewable energy covers those energy flows that occur naturally and repeatedly in the environment – from the wind, the fall of water, the movement of the oceans, from the sun and also from biomass and deep geothermal heat. Low carbon technologies are those that can help reduce emissions (compared to conventional use of fossil fuels).

**Significance (for heritage policy):** The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

**Site of Special Scientific Interest:** Sites designated by Natural England under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

**Stepping stones:** Pockets of habitat that, while not necessarily connected, facilitate the movement of species across otherwise inhospitable landscapes.

**Strategic Environmental Assessment:** A procedure (set out in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004) which requires the formal environmental assessment of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

**Supplementary planning documents:** Documents which add further detail to the policies in the Local Plan. They can be used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites, or on particular issues, such as design. Supplementary planning documents are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the development plan.

**Sustainable transport modes:** Any efficient, safe and accessible means of transport with overall low impact on the environment, including walking and cycling, low and ultra-low emission vehicles, car sharing and public transport.

**Town centre:** Area defined on the local authority's proposal map, including the primary shopping area and areas predominantly occupied by main town centre uses within or adjacent to the primary shopping area. References to town centres or centres apply to city centres, town centres, district centres and local centres but exclude small parades of shops of purely neighbourhood significance. Unless they are identified as centres in Local Plans, existing out-

of-centre developments, comprising or including main town centre uses, do not constitute town centres.

**Transport assessment:** A comprehensive and systematic process that sets out transport issues relating to a proposed development. It identifies what measures will be required to improve accessibility and safety for all modes of travel, particularly for alternatives to the car such as walking, cycling and public transport and what measures will need to be taken to deal with the anticipated transport impacts of the development.

**Transport statement:** A simplified version of a transport assessment where it is agreed the transport issues arising out of development proposals are limited and a full transport assessment is not required.

**Travel plan:** A long-term management strategy for an organisation or site that seeks to deliver sustainable transport objectives through action and is articulated in a document that is regularly reviewed.

**Wildlife corridor:** Areas of habitat connecting wildlife populations.

**Windfall sites:** Sites which have not been specifically identified as available in the Local Plan process. They normally comprise previously-developed sites that have unexpectedly become available.



# Appendix

# Appendix

## Local Green Spaces

### Priory Park

Priory Park is a sub-urban public park of amenity grassland, containing several areas of mature woodland, mature trees (including the native specimens of oak, chestnut, plane and lime), a children's play area, five football pitches, several mini soccer pitches, changing rooms and a pavilion. The pavilion contains four new changing rooms, referees changing rooms, a kitchen, a refreshment area/meeting room and CCTV equipment.

Priory Park is situated off Huntingdon Road and Priory Hill, St Neots, to the North-east of the Town Centre. It covers an area of 32 hectares (80 acres) and is owned by Huntingdonshire District Council. The site is accessible to the whole community and parking is available for approximately 40 cars.

Priory Park is demonstrably special to the people of St Neots and it is essential that it is protected from inappropriate development.

Priory Park is an important part of a green link, including the gardens and green spaces of two housing estates. It lies just outside the western edge of a proposed new green corridor (No 22) and every opportunity should be taken to enhance green links.

The park is regularly used by a range of people for various activities such as picnics, dog walking, bird watching, orienteering and sponsored runs as well as children's holiday activity clubs in the summer. St Neots Sunday League Football hire the pitches and use the changing room facilities contained within the Pavilion. The park is also available for events organised by outside groups and has been used as such, two-three times a year, in the last five years. For example, in 2007 the park was used for both the Schools, Police, cross country running championships and has recently been used for historical re-enactments.

## Riverside Park

Riverside Park is close to the Town Centre and is bisected by the bridge over the River Great Ouse. It is 29 hectares (72 acres) in area and has a beautiful one mile long waterside frontage. Most of the park lies within the floodplain. Access to the main park is via a pedestrian bridge over the river. The park has a 250 space car park and public toilets.

Within the Park there is a small restaurant, a putting green, pitch and putt course, boating lake, skateboarding complex, basketball court and children's play areas. Eaton Socon Football Club also lease a pitch. Band concerts are a regular occurrence on Sundays during the summer weeks. The park is also regularly used for the Dragon Boat Racing and the Regatta.

Riverside Park is close to the community it serves being within the centre of St Neots and close to the Town Centre. It is a contained site and is not an extensive tract of land.

Riverside Park is demonstrably special to the people of St Neots, this is proven by the overwhelming number of comments as part of the Neighbourhood Plan survey that the parks in St Neots are the most special things about the town. Riverside Park is a beautiful and tranquil area and provides a green lung so close to the Town Centre. It has high recreational value evidenced by the sheer number of activities that take place within the park, including whole town activities such as the Town Carnival and Regatta.

## Sudbury Meadow

Sudbury Meadow is a two acre site alongside the River Great Ouse. The site consists of a wildlife meadow & wildlife friendly garden area and has a wheelchair friendly path running through it.

Sudbury Meadow is close to the Town Centre and thus accessible to people from around the town. It is a contained site and is not an extensive tract of land.

Sudbury Meadow is demonstrably special to the people of St Neots, this is proven by the overwhelming number of comments as part of the Neighbourhood Plan survey that the parks in St Neots are the most special

things about the town. It is a wildlife rich area, offering beauty and tranquillity. It provides excellent access to people who are mobility impaired. Sudbury Meadow brings local people together in the enjoyment of the park and also the management of the habitats within the park.

Sudbury Meadow also has historical significance. Land between Crosshall Road and the River Great Ouse which belonged to the Manor of Sudbury was mentioned in the Domesday Book. In the seventeenth century Sudbury Meadow was enclosed and used for grazing until the late 1980s. Photos in St Neots Museum suggest that Sudbury Meadow was used for community events during the 1930s.

### **Regatta Meadow**

Regatta Meadow is located to the west of the river and to the north of Riverside Park. It frequently floods and thus provides a habitat for moisture loving flora and fauna. In the past it was used as a wet meadow for grazing and hay.

Like Sudbury Meadow, it has historical significance, once forming part of the medieval Manor of Sudbury and sharing the name Sudbury Meadow. Whilst it provides an attractive area of open space within the town, it is also important for community events. Many events take place on Regatta Meadow, such as the Regatta and Summer Fair.

Regatta Meadow is demonstrably special to the people of St Neots, this is proven by the overwhelming number of comments as part of the Neighbourhood Plan survey that the parks in St Neots are the most special things about the town. It is a contained site and is not an extensive tract of land. It provides a valuable and unique recreation resource for the community.

### **Barford Road Pocket Park**

Barford Road Pocket Park is a 45 acre site created in 2001 alongside the development of the Eynesbury Manor housing estate. The park has several types of habitat and is home to numerous bird species. A number of events are organised throughout the year.

Barford Road Pocket Park is adjacent to the Eynesbury Manor housing estate and provides a diverse area of open space for Eynesbury residents. It is a contained site and is not an extensive tract of land.

Barford Road Pocket Park is demonstrably special to the people of St Neots as evidenced by the overwhelming comments as part of the Neighbourhood Plan survey about the retention of St Neots Parks. It is particularly special to the Eynesbury community providing a rich variety of wildlife and offering tranquillity and recreation opportunities.





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St Neots Town Council

**Protect. Improve. Create.  
St Neots Neighbourhood Plan  
2014 - 2029**

**Submission Version**

**Independent Examiner's Report**

By Ann Skippers BSc (Hons) Dip Mgmt (Open) PGC(TLHE)(Open) MRTPI FHEA FRSA AoU

27 February 2015

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## Summary

I have been appointed as the independent examiner of the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan.

The St Neots Neighbourhood Plan is the first neighbourhood plan to reach examination stage in Huntingdonshire. It is clear that the Town Council has built on earlier work and research to develop the Plan. An interesting and far reaching marketing campaign has been used to engage the community.

St Neots is facing significant growth and has a rich heritage illustrated by a historic town centre, many listed buildings and a valued riverside setting. The Plan tries to ensure that this growth is successfully integrated into the town with the necessary infrastructure and service provision. It does so in a pragmatic and positive way.

I have concluded that the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan subject to modification

- Has regard to national policies and advice
- Contributes to the achievement of sustainable development
- Is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area
- Does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with EU obligations and the European Convention of Human Rights
- Meets all other requirements that I am obliged to examine.

I have recommended a number of modifications to policies in the Plan that are intended to ensure that the basic conditions are met satisfactorily and that the Plan is clear and consistent.

Subject to those modifications, I have no hesitation in recommending that the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan goes forward to a referendum. In considering whether the referendum area should be extended beyond the Neighbourhood Plan area I see no reason to alter or extend this area for the purpose of holding a referendum.

Ann Skippers  
Ann Skippers Planning  
27 February 2015

Ann Skippers Planning is an independent consultancy that provides professional support and training for local authorities, the private sector and community groups and specialises in troubleshooting, appeal work and neighbourhood planning.

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## 1.0 Introduction

This is the report of the independent examiner into the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan).

The Localism Act 2011 provides a welcome opportunity for communities to shape the future of the places where they live and work and to deliver the sustainable development they need. One way of achieving this is through the production of a neighbourhood plan.

The St Neots Neighbourhood Plan is the first neighbourhood plan in Huntingdonshire District to reach examination stage. St Neots has a rich heritage illustrated by a historic town centre and many listed buildings. The River Great Ouse forms a green corridor through the centre of the town. St Neots faces significant growth and the Plan tries to ensure that this growth is successfully integrated into the market town with the necessary infrastructure and service provision. It does so in a pragmatic and positive way.

## 2.0 Appointment of the independent examiner

I have been appointed by Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) with the agreement of St Neots Town Council, to undertake this independent examination. I have been appointed through the Neighbourhood Plan Independent Examiners Referral Service (NPIERS).

I am independent of the qualifying body and the local authority. I have no interest in any land that may be affected by the Plan. I am a chartered town planner with over twenty years experience in planning and have worked in the public, private and academic sectors. I therefore have the appropriate qualifications and experience to carry out this independent examination.

## 3.0 The role of the independent examiner

The examiner is required to check<sup>1</sup> whether the neighbourhood plan:

- Has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body
- Has been prepared for an area that has been properly designated for such plan preparation
- Meets the requirements to i) specify the period to which it has effect; ii) not include provision about excluded development; and iii) not relate to more than one neighbourhood area and that
- Its policies relate to the development and use of land for a designated neighbourhood area.

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<sup>1</sup> Set out in paragraph 8 (1) of Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)

The examiner must assess whether a neighbourhood plan meets the basic conditions and other matters set out in paragraph 8 of Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

The basic conditions<sup>2</sup> are:

- Having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State, it is appropriate to make the neighbourhood plan
- The making of the neighbourhood plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development
- The making of the neighbourhood plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority
- The making of the neighbourhood plan does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, European Union (EU) obligations and
- Prescribed conditions are met in relation to the neighbourhood plan and prescribed matters have been complied with in connection with the proposal for the neighbourhood plan.

Regulations 32 and 33 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) set out two basic conditions in addition to those set out in primary legislation and referred to in the paragraph above. These are:

- The making of the neighbourhood plan is not likely to have a significant effect on a European site<sup>3</sup> or a European offshore marine site<sup>4</sup> either alone or in combination with other plans or projects
- Having regard to all material considerations, it is appropriate that the neighbourhood development order is made where the development described in an order proposal is Environmental Impact Assessment development (this is not applicable to this examination as it refers to orders).

The examiner must then make one of the following recommendations:

- The neighbourhood plan can proceed to a referendum on the basis it meets all the necessary legal requirements
- The neighbourhood plan can proceed to a referendum subject to modifications or
- The neighbourhood plan should not proceed to a referendum on the basis it does not meet the necessary legal requirements.

If the plan can proceed to a referendum with or without modifications, the examiner must also consider whether the referendum area should be extended beyond the neighbourhood plan area to which it relates.

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<sup>2</sup> Set out in paragraph 8 (2) of Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)

<sup>3</sup> As defined in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2012

<sup>4</sup> As defined in the Offshore Marine Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 2007

If the plan goes forward to referendum and more than 50% of those voting vote in favour of the plan then it is made by the relevant local authority, in this case Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC). The plan then becomes part of the 'development plan' for the area and a statutory consideration in guiding future development and in the determination of planning applications within the plan area.

## **4.0 Compliance with matters other than the basic conditions**

I now check the various matters set out above in section 3.0 of this report.

### **Qualifying body**

St Neots Town Council is the qualifying body able to lead preparation of a neighbourhood plan. This complies with this requirement.

### **Plan area**

The Plan covers the town of St Neots which is contiguous with the Town Council administrative boundary. HDC approved the designation of the area on 17 October 2013. The Plan relates to this area and does not relate to more than one neighbourhood area and therefore complies with these requirements. Figure 1 on page 13 of the Plan clearly shows the area.

### **Plan period**

The Plan covers a period of 15 years from 2014 – 2029. This time period appears on the front cover of the Plan, is mentioned in the Vision section of the Plan and is confirmed in the Basic Conditions Statement.

### **Excluded development**

The Plan does not include policies that relate to any of the categories of excluded development and therefore meets this requirement.

### **Development and use of land**

Policies in neighbourhood plans must relate to the development and use of land. Sometimes neighbourhood plans contain aspirational policies or projects that signal the community's priorities for the future of their local area, but are not related to the development and use of land. Where I consider a policy or proposal to fall within this category, I have recommended it be moved to a clearly differentiated and separate section or annex of the Plan or contained in a separate document. This is because wider community aspirations than those relating to development and use of land can be included in a neighbourhood plan, but non-land use matters should be clearly



identifiable.<sup>5</sup> Subject to any such recommendations, this requirement can be satisfactorily met.

## 5.0 The examination process

It is useful to bear in mind that the examination of a neighbourhood plan is very different to the examination of a local plan.

The general rule of thumb is that the examination will take the form of written representations.<sup>6</sup> However, there are two circumstances when an examiner may consider it necessary to hold a hearing. These are where the examiner considers that it is necessary to ensure adequate examination of the issue or to ensure a person has a fair chance to put a case.

After consideration of the documentation and representations, I decided it was not necessary to hold a hearing.

I did however seek on two occasions further written factual clarification of two issues. In my 'set up' letter of 21 December 2014 I noted that the St Neots Town Council website contained two 'Neighbourhood Plan Map Amendments' relating to the Neighbourhood Area and Local Green Spaces. I asked for clarification on what these amendments related to and for confirmation that any necessary consultation had been carried out in accordance with the statutory requirements. HDC confirmed that minor amendments had been made following discussion and that the amended maps had been subject to the necessary consultation.

I undertook an unaccompanied site visit to St Neots and its environs on 2 February 2015.

After my visit, it was necessary to request some further factual information from the local authority and the qualifying body. I sent an email to both bodies on 3 February asking for i) plan(s) that clearly identified the boundaries of the six proposed Local Green Spaces and ii) a list of adopted development plan policies that the bodies feel are relevant to the proposed Local Green Spaces. A very prompt response was given that satisfied both requests for clarification.

I am grateful to the exemplary support and quick responses that the officer at HDC has given me during the course of the examination.

I have also specifically referred to some representations and sometimes identified the person or organisation making that representation. However, I have not referred to each and every representation in my report. Nevertheless each one has been considered carefully and I reassure everyone that I have taken all the representations received into account during the examination.

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<sup>5</sup> Paragraph 004 of Planning Practice Guidance

<sup>6</sup> Schedule 4B (9) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990

## 6.0 Consultation

The Town Council has submitted a Consultation Statement in accordance with the requirements set out in the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. This provides details of who was consulted and how, together with the outcome of consultation on the earlier pre-submission version of the Plan.

It is clear there is a strong track record in involving the community in initiatives with the aim of enhancing St Neots and its environs.

The neighbourhood planning process built on earlier work including a Healthcheck published in 2009, but began in earnest with a survey in Autumn 2013. A copy of the survey is appended to the Consultation Statement. The Consultation Statement sets out the key findings from the survey. A number of useful tables outline how these issues have been taken forward into the Plan recognising that some of the issues raised were non-planning related and needed to be dealt with in a different way.

A focus group was then held to test options together with a meeting with HDC Officers as Plan policies began to emerge.

There has been an organised and thorough marketing campaign to raise awareness and encourage participation which included banners, posters and leaflets.

As part of this campaign, an official media partnership was established with the local newspaper launching with a full cover advertising wrap. Together with a dedicated webpage and use of social media including Facebook and Twitter, this meant that a combination of ways were used to publicise the Plan and to raise awareness.

The pre-submission draft of the Plan was published for six weeks from 7 February – 21 March 2014. Over 20 events and focus groups being held during this consultation period. The roadshows and focus groups covered a variety of sectors of the community in a variety of locations including a residential home, mum and toddler groups, local supermarket, farmers markets, the museum and library.

The Consultation Statement explains that those consultation bodies referred to in Schedule 1 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 and whose interests were considered to be affected were given to 3 April 2014 to allow all the relevant bodies to be identified and be given the full time period to respond as part of this consultation stage.

The Consultation Statement then sets out a summary of the representations received and how they were addressed. It details three meetings of the Town Council's Development and Growth Committee that considered the comments received and amendments to the Plan before finalising it and submitting it to HDC.

Numerous attempts and a variety of methods have been employed to encourage participation, and to provide opportunities to comment on the issues important to the community and the emerging Plan primarily at the pre-submission stage.

Following on from the pre-submission period, the submission Plan was approved by the Town Council on the 10 April 2014 and submitted to HDC later that month. Further changes were made following meetings between the Town Council and HDC. This resulted in a six-week consultation period from 29 July to 9 September 2014.

This attracted a number of representations which I have taken into account in preparing this report.

As one representation points out there are one or two places in the Consultation Statement that seem to require completion. Another states that no mention has been made of the online Planning Practice Guidance. However, there is sufficient content and information in the document to enable me to undertake the examination. I would however, urge the Town Council to remedy these small deficiencies for the sake of completeness.

A number of representations sought various things to be addressed such as traffic management or the provision of street bins or rents in the Town Centre for example. Some of these matters will not be related to development and use of land and I am sure will be captured for future action in different ways by the Town Council.

Others pointed out that the Plan does not refer to some other documents such as the Local Transport Plan or that issues such as water efficiency, public rights of way, health and wellbeing or arts provision should be covered in the Plan. Some wanted other sites to be designated. Whilst these are good points well made in the representations, the Plan does not have to deal with all issues comprehensively and it is not my role to add items in, but rather to examine what is in front of me.

Not everyone is supportive of particular policies in the Plan. Should the Plan go forward to referendum, people will have their say at the referendum.

Others offered support. I also note that English Heritage considers that earlier issues raised have been “taken on board”. Natural England generally welcomes the Plan considering “it provides a useful framework for the future of the community”.

The evidence demonstrates that the Plan has emerged as a result of seeking, and taking into account, the views of the community and other bodies. The Plan therefore satisfies the Regulations in this respect.

## 7.0 Compliance with the basic conditions

### National policy and advice

The main document that sets out national planning policy is the National Planning Policy Framework (the NPPF) published in 2012. In particular it explains that the application of the presumption in favour of sustainable development will mean that neighbourhood plans should support the strategic development needs set out in Local Plans, plan positively to support local development, shaping and directing development that is outside the strategic elements of the Local Plan and identify opportunities to use Neighbourhood Development Orders to enable developments that are consistent with the neighbourhood plan to proceed.<sup>7</sup>

The NPPF also makes it clear that neighbourhood plans should be aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider local area. In other words neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan. They cannot promote less development than that set out in the Local Plan or undermine its strategic policies.<sup>8</sup>

On 6 March 2014, the Government published a suite of planning practice guidance. This is an online resource available at [www.planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk](http://www.planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk). The planning guidance contains a wealth of information relating to neighbourhood planning and I have had regard to this in preparing this report. This is referred to as Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

The NPPF indicates that plans should provide a practical framework within which decisions on planning applications can be made with a high degree of predictability and efficiency.<sup>9</sup>

Planning Practice Guidance indicates that a policy should be clear and unambiguous<sup>10</sup> to enable a decision maker to apply it consistently and with confidence when determining planning applications. The guidance advises that it should be concise, precise and supported by appropriate evidence, reflecting and responding to both the context and the characteristics of the area.

The Basic Conditions Statement takes each of the 12 core planning principles in the NPPF and sets out how the Plan has responded to national guidance.

### Sustainable development

A qualifying body must demonstrate how a neighbourhood plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. The NPPF as a whole<sup>11</sup> constitutes the

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<sup>7</sup> National Planning Policy Framework (2012) paras 14, 16

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid* para 184

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid* para 17

<sup>10</sup> Planning Practice Guidance para 041

<sup>11</sup> National Planning Policy Framework (2012) para 6 which indicates paras 18 – 219 of the Framework constitute the Government's view of what sustainable development means in practice

Government's view of what sustainable development means in practice for planning. The Framework explains that there are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.<sup>12</sup>

The Basic Conditions Statement and the Sustainability Assessment, which I discuss later, offer an explanation of how the Plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development.

### **The development plan**

The local planning authority for the area is Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC). The current development plan for the area consists of:

- The Core Strategy (adopted September 2009) which sets the spatial vision, objectives and strategic directions of growth to 2026 and
- Saved policies from the Local Plan 1995 and the Local Plan Alteration 2002.

The Core Strategy indicates that Huntingdonshire lies within the designated London/Stansted/Cambridge/Peterborough Growth Area, but is still predominantly rural in character. As St Neots lies within the Cambridge sub-region there is a great deal of development pressure. St Neots has the largest population of all the settlements in the District.

The town is also identified as a 'Market Town' in which development schemes of all scales maybe appropriate within the built-up area. Consequently as a main location for growth in the District, the town will also take a larger proportion of retail and other town centre uses. Easy access to shops and services by sustainable modes will be vital to promoting this as a sustainable community. The town centre should benefit from increased consumer demand and expenditure and opportunities should be maximised to provide additional retail floorspace within the town centre to reduce residents' need to travel elsewhere to shop. To promote social cohesion the proposed eastern urban extension will include a new district centre incorporating shops and other services that residents will require on a day-to-day basis. This should complement the town centre, not compete with it.

The Basic Conditions Statement<sup>13</sup> explains that it has been assumed that the strategic policies of the development plan will be contained in the Core Strategy. This assumption has been based on words on the Council's website that says the Core Strategy sets the strategic framework for the area and contains strategic policies.

This is a dangerous, and in my view, wrong assumption. Whilst it might well be the case that most of the strategic policies could be found in the Core Strategy this does not necessarily mean that there will be no strategic policies in the earlier Local Plan documents. This is confirmed in the advice on the Planning Practice Guidance website which confirms that not every policy will be strategic or that the only policies that are

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<sup>12</sup> National Planning Policy Framework para 7

<sup>13</sup> Basic Conditions Statement page 12

strategic will be labeled as such.<sup>14</sup> The guidance also suggests that the local planning authority should set out its strategic policies providing details of these to the qualifying body and the examiner.

However, the Basic Conditions Statement whilst being factually wrong in places, includes a helpful table showing each Plan policy assessed against the NPPF, the Core Strategy, Local Plan policies where no Core Strategy policies apply in the view of the qualifying body as well as taking into account emerging policies, other documents and a summary of the consultation results. I am therefore reassured that the evolution of the Plan has been in line with what I would have expected.

For the avoidance of any doubt, I have taken all three documents that comprise the development plan into account in this examination.

In addition the Basic Conditions Statement explains that the Plan must meet the basic conditions in the opinion of the examiner and “they do not need to be agreed with the local planning authority”.<sup>15</sup> For clarity, it is the local planning authority that decides whether the Plan meets the basic conditions – and it does so formally after the examination has taken place. The examiner’s suggested modifications are just that – recommendations.

### **Emerging Local Plan**

The District Council is currently producing a new Local Plan for the area. The Local Plan will cover the period up to 2036 and, once adopted, will replace all current parts of the development plan including the Core Strategy 2009 and the saved policies of the Local Plan 1995 and the Local Plan Alteration 2002.

The Council is about to conduct further stakeholder consultation as part of the preparation for the pre-submission Local Plan 2036, publication of which is currently targeted for June 2015.

The Plan has usefully taken account of the emerging Local Plan, but this does not form part of the examination.

### **European Union Obligations**

A neighbourhood plan must be compatible with European Union (EU) obligations, as incorporated into United Kingdom law, in order to be legally compliant.

### **Strategic Environmental Assessment**

Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment is relevant. Its purpose is to provide a high level of protection of the environment by incorporating environmental considerations into the process of

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<sup>14</sup> Planning Practice Guidance para 075

<sup>15</sup> Basic Conditions Statement page 12

preparing plans and programmes. This Directive is commonly referred to as the Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) Directive. The Directive is transposed into UK law through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

The Town Council carried out their own SEA screening exercise<sup>16</sup> in February 2013. This concluded that there are unlikely to be any significant environmental effects arising from the Plan and that consequently a full SEA did not need to be undertaken.

A screening exercise has been carried out by Huntingdonshire District Council as the responsible authority. This screening determination dated 19 June 2014 confirms that the Plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects and that an environmental assessment is not required.

The screening assessment has been considered by Natural England, English Heritage and the Environment Agency. None of these three statutory consultees disagree with the Council's conclusion.

I am therefore satisfied that the Plan does not require a SEA to be carried out.

### **Sustainability Assessment**

A neighbourhood plan does not have to have a sustainability appraisal. However, as one of the basic conditions is that such a plan must show how it contributes to the achievement of sustainable development a Sustainability Appraisal is often a very useful way of demonstrating this.

The Town Council has produced a Sustainability Assessment (SA) which takes its lead from the District Council's Draft Local Plan Draft Sustainability Appraisal Report. As the SA is not a legal requirement I have simply regarded the SA as part of the evidence base for the Plan. Although there are some policies without alternatives or the alternatives assessed are similar in nature and whilst I disagree with some of the assessments made, the document demonstrates that the policies have been analysed against the background of the sustainability objectives. Overall it does help to show that consideration has been given to how the Plan will help to achieve sustainable development.

### **European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)**

The Plan has regard to fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed under the ECHR and complies with the Human Rights Act 1998. There is nothing in the Plan that leads me to conclude there is any breach of the Convention or that the Plan is otherwise incompatible with it.

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<sup>16</sup> Included as Appendix 3 in the Basic Conditions Statement

## Habitats Regulations Assessment/other Directives

There are no European sites within the Plan area. HDC have confirmed that a Habitats Regulations Assessment is not required.

I am not aware of any other European Directives which apply to this particular neighbourhood plan and in the absence of any substantive evidence to the contrary, I am satisfied that the Plan is compatible with EU obligations.

## 8.0 General comments on the Plan

The Plan is an attractive and colourful document. It is laid out clearly with a helpful table of contents. The Plan is divided into six topic themed sections. An implementation and delivery section is included. Non-planning issues arising from community engagement are recognised, but generally clearly differentiated from those relating to development and the use of land.

It is apparent that a vast number of people and organisations have been actively involved over a significant period of time. Their commitment and passion for St Neots and the Plan's evolution shines through.

An Evidence Base document summarises information from a variety of sources to provide a useful context for the Plan as well as setting out the concerns relating to the emerging Local Plan.

In the next section I consider the Plan against the basic conditions. Where modifications are recommended they appear in **bold text**. Where I have suggested specific changes to the wording of the policies they appear in ***bold italics***.

## 9.0 Detailed comments on the Plan and its policies

### Introduction

This section sets the scene for the Plan. For additional clarity, accuracy and factual correctness I recommend:

- Add "*alongside other development plan documents*" to the end of the second paragraph "which begins "Neighbourhood Plans form part of the statutory development plan..." (page 10) and
- Insert "*much of*" in between "...immediately superseded" and "...the previous national planning policy guidance..." in the first paragraph under the subheading National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) on page 10 of the Plan.



## St Neots and its Surrounding Area

This is a useful section which provides interesting context on St Neots and highlights some of the key issues facing the community.

A representation is concerned that the figure of 20,000 inhabitants planned for the town and the comment that “...no available land for employment, recreation or services infrastructure.” on page 14 of the Plan are incorrect and misleading. I urge the Town Council to reconsider this to see whether it can be reworded.

## Vision and Objectives

Whilst the vision section is quite long, and moves away from more commonly found visions that comprise an overarching short statement, it explains what the aspirations and ethos of the Plan are. In addition developing a vision is rarely an easy task and the vision has been developed as a result of consultation with residents.

Five ‘overarching’ objectives, highlighted in yellow, follow on from the vision covering employment; retail, leisure and community facilities; natural and historic environment, countryside and river setting; housing and community assets; and transport related issues.

**I recommend that the final ‘overarching’ objective “Improve Traffic Flow Into, Out Of and Within the Town and Improve Parking Availability and Suitability throughout the Town” is reworded to read “*Improve the provision of sustainable transport throughout the town*” as suggested in a representation made by Cambridgeshire County Council as this better reflects the thrust of national and strategic policy.**

Under each of these headings are succinct bullet points which are many and varied in nature, but try to set out the action needed in order to achieve the aspirations of the community and the Plan’s ambitious drive.

However, some of the bullet points do not have regard to national planning policy or guidance. Others do not relate to development and the use of land. Others do not seem to have follow through in the Plan. This all might create confusion with regard to the status of the objectives and potentially detract from the development and land use planning role of the Plan.

The NPPF is clear that Neighbourhood Plans should provide a practical framework for decision-making.<sup>17</sup> The objectives and more specifically their bullet points as currently presented do not achieve that.

**As a result I recommend that the five ‘overarching’ objectives, highlighted in yellow in the Plan, are retained as the Plan’s objectives, but that the bullet points beneath each one that I identify below are either reworded, deleted or moved to a separate non-planning section of the Plan.**

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<sup>17</sup> National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 17

The bullet points to be reworded, deleted or moved are:

- **“Protect employment land allocations to maintain a prosperous economy and balanced community”** should be reworded to read ***“Employment land allocations will be supported and regularly reviewed to maintain a prosperous economy and balanced community to improve local job opportunities.”*** This better reflects national policy and also takes account of a representation about this bullet point
- **“Develop a distinctive St Neots brand to promote and improve visitor spending in the Town Centre”** should either be deleted or moved to the non-planning section
- **“Encourage investment from both inside and outside the town”** should either be deleted or moved to the non-planning section
- **“Protect land allocated for employment to improve local job opportunities”** should be deleted as it overlaps with the first bullet point (now reworded) and does not have sufficient regard to national policy
- **“Encourage the development of gym facilities at key hubs (such as the station) and developing green gyms within public open space areas”** should either be deleted or moved to the non-planning section and is in any case covered by an earlier bullet point
- **“Encourage the development of visitor accommodation in the town”** should be deleted as it does not appear to have any follow through in the Plan
- **“Support the continued development of community spirit”** should either be deleted or moved to the non-planning section
- **“Provide a balanced mix of housing style and size to reflect the needs of the local St Neots population with a maximum of 40% affordable housing in all new major developments”** should be deleted as it does not have regard to national policy or achieve sustainable development as it places a cap on affordable housing provision and is not, in any case, followed through in the Plan
- **“Provide a site for allotments”** should be deleted as there is no site allocation policy to support this in the Plan
- **“Ensure that leisure and community facilities are in place before new housing developments are completed”** should be deleted as there is no follow through and arguably this would be a strategic matter
- **The first seven bullet points under the heading “Improve Traffic Flow Into, Out Of and Within the Town and Improve Parking Availability and Suitability throughout the Town”** (itself recommended for modification) should be

**deleted** as they either do not reflect the NPPF and / or go beyond the remit of the Plan and /or are non land use matters

- **“Develop a safe and segregated cycle network within and around St Neots and between key communities and ensure that all new junctions and road improvements cater for cyclists” should be reworded to read “Sustainable transport modes including safe cycling provision will be supported”** to better reflect the NPPF
- **The last five bullet points under the heading “Improve Traffic Flow Into, Out Of and Within the Town and Improve Parking Availability and Suitability throughout the Town” (itself recommended for modification) should be moved to the non-planning section.**

## Aesthetics

Paragraph 1.1.4 on page 22 of the Plan refers to non-planning issues, but ones that have arisen as part of the consultation process. This is also true of paragraphs 1.2.5 and 1.2.6.

**I recommend that paragraphs 1.1.4, 1.2.5 and 1.2.6 be moved to the non-planning section of the Plan.**

## Policy A1

This policy seeks public realm enhancement and its aim accords with national policy and guidance in recognising the contribution that public realm makes to high quality design and making places better for people. The policy would support findings outlined in the Evidence Base document that improving the attractiveness of the Town Centre would improve its vitality and viability. However, the policy as currently worded does not address any viability considerations. Therefore to meet the basic conditions I **recommend that Policy A1 be reworded to read:**

***“Proposals in the Town Centre that create new or enlarged units will be expected to contribute to the improvement of the Town Centre’s public realm where viable.”***

A representation from Cambridgeshire County Council suggests that pedestrianisation of the High Street is included within Policy A1. Whilst this proposal is not in the policy itself this is referred to in the text in this section of the Plan and takes the form of reporting the results of the consultation. The pedestrianisation is not included as a policy or proposal in the Plan and clearly such a scheme would need more feasibility work to be carried out as well as widespread support. I have recommended that the paragraphs referring to this aspiration are moved to a non-planning section.

## Policy A2

The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment and this policy sets out a number of principles designed to help ensure that new development on the edges of St Neots satisfactorily integrates with the existing town through design and landscaping. This ties in with the objectives of the Core Strategy and saved Local Plan policies support this. I note that Natural England has lent support to this policy.

As it currently is worded the policy applies to all development. Yet criterion (a) refers to dwellings. In order to remove any possible uncertainty about what development the policy applies to, **I recommend that the first criterion is reworded as follows: “ (a) The density of residential development....”**.

A representation asks that the policy should be made more flexible with regard to commercial development bearing in mind operational and viability considerations. The policy whilst requiring soft landscaping, does not prescribe its amount or form and therefore the policy is flexible enough for these considerations to be taken on a case-by-case basis.

The policy is clear on what it applies to and what its expectations are. Subject to the modifications above, it meets the basic conditions.

## Policy A3

Policy A3 seeks high quality design that reinforces local distinctiveness. This aim reflects national policy and guidance. The NPPF states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and this policy helps to achieve that aim by setting out a number of requirements that set out what will be expected from new development in this neighbourhood context.

The Great Ouse Catchment Flood Management Plan states that the location, layout and design of development can help to manage flood risk and given the concerns over flood risk, there is an opportunity in this policy to address both issues.

There is little evidence for the maximum three storeys for buildings on the fringes of sites and this is usually a design led matter. There is a possibility that such an unevidenced requirement may also adversely affect viability and stifle creative design solutions and innovation. The latter part of this paragraph seeks multiple access points that again will depend on many factors. Similar points are also made by representations.

The final paragraph of the policy refers to discussion with the Town Council. This would more appropriately be found in the supporting text to the policy as a representation has indicated and indeed paragraph 1.4.9 on page 27 of the Plan says a similar thing.

If the modifications suggested below are made, there will be sufficient flexibility within the policy itself and the supporting text offers further flexibility by indicating that innovative and sustainable buildings will be supported.

**In order for the policy to comply with the basic conditions the following changes to the policy should be made:**

- Paragraph 2 of the policy which begins “Design should be guided..” should be reworded to read as follows:
- *“Design should be guided by the overall scale, density, massing, height, landscape, layout, materials, detailing, roof orientation, relationship to back of pavement, wall to window ratios, proportions of windows, plan depth, plot width and access, the site and its surroundings including considerations of flood risk management.”* and
- Paragraph 3 of the policy which begins “ New buildings should be...” should be deleted and
- Paragraph 6 of the policy which begins “Early discussion...” should be deleted.

Paragraphs 1.4.10 and 1.4.11 on page 28 of the Plan expect a Site Analysis and Landscape Strategy to accompany major applications. Both these would usually form part of the District Council’s validation requirements. However, given the wording used, and subject to agreement by HDC, these paragraphs can be retained subject to the following modifications:

- In paragraph 1.4.10 Insert the word “*usually*” so it reads “Major applications will usually be expected to be accompanied by a Site Analysis...” and
- In paragraph 1.4.11 insert the word “*often*” so it reads “A Landscape Strategy will often help to demonstrate...”.

Cambridgeshire Constabulary has asked for a change of wording to paragraph 1.4.15 on page 28 of the Plan. I agree the suggested wording makes the paragraph clearer and more robust and to make it align better with national policy and to provide more options, **I recommend that paragraph 1.4.15 should be replaced in its entirety with the following:**

***“Good design should incorporate measures to design out crime in line with the principles set out in the NPPF. Consultation will be expected, at the initial design stage of any major proposals, with Cambridgeshire Police to identify crime prevention and community safety measures to be incorporated in developments.”***

## Policy A4

Landscape backdrops are required by this policy for Love's Farm East and Wintringham Park and other developments where appropriate. In principle landscape backdrops can, as the policy and supporting text indicate, provide opportunities for biodiversity and act as screening helping to integrate development into its surroundings. These are both matters which reflect national planning policy. I note the policy is supported by Cambridgeshire County Council.

Although a representation makes the point that this policy might well be out of date before finalisation as there are planning applications relating to the Eastern Expansion area, the policy also refers to "other developments where appropriate" and therefore does not only relate to Love's Farm East and Wintringham Park.

However, this phrase "where appropriate" does beg the question as to when the policy might apply and is therefore ambiguous. However, the supporting text indicates that this requirement is particularly important for major developments of 50 or more dwellings. Given the current planning applications on the two areas specifically mentioned in the policy, specific references to Love's Farm East and Wintringham Park should be deleted and the 'major developments' requirement of 50 or more dwellings referred to in paragraph 1.5.3 on page 29 of the Plan should be incorporated into the policy for greater clarity. This will 'catch' any future major proposals.

Another representation argues that it is not clear where or what is required by the policy. The modification suggested will ensure there is clarity as to what the policy will apply to. In relation to what is required, the policy is clear and further explanation is given in the supporting text.

**I recommend that Policy A4 should be modified by the deletion of "Proposals for Love's Farm East and Wintringham Park, as well as other developments where appropriate...". Insert at the start of the policy "*Developments for 50 or more dwellings....*" before "should include landscape backdrops...".**

**In the Table of Contents section 1.5's heading is "buffer strips". This should be modified to "Landscape Backdrops".**

## Entertainment and Leisure

For improved accuracy, **paragraph 2.1.2 on page 32 of the Plan should be updated.**

## Policy EL1

This policy supports new and enhanced leisure and recreation uses in Riverside Park in general subject to satisfactory scale and design, and specifically an outdoor theatre. This is an example of a policy that seeks to plan positively for the use of shared space

and cultural and other facilities. This in turn will enhance opportunities for meeting and encourage a healthy and inclusive community. Whether or not some proposals might be 'permitted development' as pointed out in a representation, this is a general as well as a specific policy and therefore issues of this nature can be resolved on a case-by-case basis.

A representation expressing concern about the impact on living conditions and amenities including biodiversity and a reduction in open space would be matters considered at a more detailed application stage. A point is also made about flooding and the Environment Agency has requested that a modification is made to this policy as flood risk will be a significant factor.

Accordingly, in order for the policy to meet the basic conditions **it is recommended that a new third paragraph reading “All proposals will need to be supported by a flood risk assessment.” be added at the end of the policy.**

### Policy EL2

Policy EL2 supports the provision of a bandstand in Regatta Meadow. Like Policy EL1 this is a positive policy that accords with the basic conditions subject to flooding considerations being acknowledged. **It is recommended that a new third paragraph reading “All proposals will need to be supported by a flood risk assessment.” be added at the end of the policy.**

### Policy EL3

This policy supports a swimming pool. Although the supporting text identifies the site more, the policy refers to the site of the “previous swimming pool”. Whilst this might well be obvious to members of the community, the site needs to be clearly identified in order for the policy to provide a practical framework. There is little doubt that the principle of support for a pool would enhance facilities and encourage healthy lifestyles as well as supporting social and community cohesion. But the policy is imprecisely worded. If the site is identified accurately, HDC rightly make the point that this becomes a site allocation and that the policy has not been assessed as such for the purposes of SEA. As a result there is little option open to me and **I must recommend that Policy EL3 and its accompanying text is deleted. The aspiration can however be moved to the non-planning section of the Plan** as I am mindful that this is an important aspiration for the community. Consequential amendments will need to be made to the supporting text.

## Parking and Traffic

Representations variously make the points that this section is too car orientated and arguably quite emotive. Whilst I appreciate that in policy documents we are often used to seeing more objective language used, the Plan has been developed as a result of consultation by the community. My role is to check whether it meets the basic conditions and not to alter its tenor unnecessarily.

## Policy PT1

National planning policy is broadly reflected in this policy as it seeks to promote sustainable transport.

The policy refers to “major development proposals” and defines this in the supporting text as over 10 dwellings or non-residential development over 1,000 square metres. Then the size of development is further broken down in relation to over 100 dwellings and 10 – 20 dwellings. Whilst I found this to be quite confusing and incomplete, and it seems to be at odds with the NPPF, the requirements relate to the submission of a Travel Plan. I think it is more likely that a Transport Assessment or Transport Statement would better serve the purposes of the policy. All three though would tend to be matters for HDC as local planning authority as they would be part of the validation process.

The last paragraph of the policy gives support for improved facilities at the railway station. Whilst in itself this is welcomed, the policy offers no hints as to what might be required or sought. There is no way of knowing whether a particular proposal might satisfy this part of the policy. There is therefore a need to reword this paragraph too.

So in order to make the policy clear and align better with the NPPF, **it is recommended that the policy be reworded as follows:**

- **Begin paragraph one of the policy “*Development proposals must demonstrate how opportunities for the use of sustainable modes of transport are maximised. This should be achieved...throughout St Neots.*” and**
- **Paragraph 2 which begins “All major development proposals...” should be deleted and**
- **Paragraph 3 which begins “The Town Council...” should be reworded to read “The Town Council will support proposals to improve facilities *that enhance safe and suitable access to the railway station or support sustainable and health objectives*”.**

A representation from South Cambridgeshire District Council suggests that sustainable travel links to the station e.g. cycle paths are also included. I note that the issues listed do not form a complete list, but this can be added to paragraph 3.2.7 on page 40 of the



Plan if the Town Council desire without any impact as to whether the Plan accords with the basic conditions or not.

A representation seeks greater clarity on the car share schemes and electric vehicle charging points referred to in paragraph 3.2.6 on page 40 of the Plan. I do understand that such matters can affect viability of development proposals and need early consideration. However, I am confident that given the wording of Policy PT1 and its supporting text that promoters of development will be aware of the Plan's content and be able to accommodate this consideration as part of their wider proposals. There is flexibility within the wording of the supporting text.

## Policy PT2

This policy sets out a minimum car parking standard for new residential development explaining that inadequate parking and congestion are particular problems in this area. In principle the setting of a local parking standard is supported by national policy and the evidence indicates that car ownership levels are high compared to the national average. In addition I recognise that in certain areas other means of transport cannot always be practical. However, this policy requires a minimum of 1.5 spaces to be provided for new residential development. There is little explanation of the rationale for setting the standard at 1.5 spaces which in itself seems to me to be rather illogical and impractical to provide. Therefore whilst the principle of such a policy would meet the basic conditions the details of this policy do not, as it is unclear and undeliverable and is insufficiently evidenced.

In addition the policy does not support parking at the rear of dwellings or onstreet parking. Onstreet parking is not usually used in calculations of parking provision. As a representation indicates a design-led approach to parking provision is usually preferred as this offers greater flexibility.

Therefore **I recommend Policy PT2 should be deleted in its entirety.** Consequential amendments will need to be made as the associated text to this policy, namely paragraphs 3.3.1 (page 41) to 3.3.5 (page 42), should be deleted. Consequential amendments to the numbering of the Plan will then also be required of course.

Whilst I anticipate that this recommendation will be a disappointment to the Town Council, I note that Policy A3 includes mention of car parking being successfully integrated into the design and that this goes partway towards the objectives of Policy PT2.

In addition, support for parking restrictions is given in paragraph 3.3.6 on page 42 of the Plan. This is not a development and use of land issue and therefore **paragraph 3.3.6 should be moved to the non-planning section of the Plan if desired or deleted in its entirety.**

### Policy PT3

The number of public car parking spaces in the Town Centre are retained by this policy which also seeks additional provision offering support for a new multi-storey car park as well as encouraging the improvement of car parks through, for example, the use of CCTV.

National policy recognises that different solutions will be needed in different areas and that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport options will vary. The policy's sentiment is broadly in line with national policy's aim of improving the quality of parking in town centres so that it is safe, secure and convenient. The retention of spaces is generally justified in the supporting evidence base. However, there is nothing in the Plan to indicate where those car parking spaces are or how many there might be. Therefore the policy should be modified to make it clear that it is the overall loss of spaces that should be resisted.

Representations make the point that the provision of additional parking should be considered as part of a wider strategy. I agree that it would be wise to ensure that there is a comprehensive approach and that no unintended consequences result.

Whilst the policy refers to car parks, the NPPF also seeks appropriate provision for motorcycles and therefore this should be added to the policy to ensure that it meets the basic conditions.

Therefore **I recommend that Policy PT3 is replaced in its entirety by the following wording:**

***“The loss of public car and motorcycle parking spaces in the Town Centre will be resisted unless it can be demonstrated that the proposal is accessible by other sustainable transport modes and that the loss of any such spaces would not adversely affect the vitality and viability of the Town Centre.***

***Support will be given to the development of a multi-storey car park provided that it is of an appropriate scale, mass and design and has appropriate regard to the Conservation Area and other heritage assets and is considered as part of a comprehensive transport and parking strategy for the Town Centre.***

***Support will be given to improving the quality of parking in the Town Centre so that it is convenient, safe and secure. Proposals for improvement are encouraged to include the installation of CCTV.”***

In addition, support for free of charge public car parks is given in paragraph 3.4.4 on page 43 of the Plan. Whilst appropriate charging is mentioned in the NPPF, this is not a development and use of land issue and therefore **paragraph 3.4.4 should be moved to the non-planning section of the Plan.**

## Policy PT4

This policy requires roads on new development to be completed to adoptable standards within a year of 90% of properties being occupied. Secondly, it sets out a number of schemes which the Town Council wishes to promote by working in partnership with various other bodies. Lastly, the policy requires regular assessment of the impact of increased traffic and unspecified action to be taken if harm is found.

Whilst I understand the aspirations of this policy, I consider it to be undeliverable and unviable.

It would be very hard to enforce a requirement that roads are completed to adoptable standards on the basis of 90% occupancy rates. Indeed representations also point out that this is not within the remit of the Plan as such matters fall within different jurisdictions and is, in any case, unworkable in practice. This would seem to put an onerous and inflexible requirement on the development industry without any robust evidence to say why it is desirable or what implications there might be.

The second strand of the policy focuses on aspirations that fall outside of the remit of the Plan as they are either strategic matters or outside the Plan area or involve other organisations. There is also concern in the representations that some of the projects are contradictory. Others refer to effects on Sites of Scientific Interest. It is apparent that much more work needs to be carried out before these projects can proceed.

The final sentence of the policy is undeliverable and lacks clarity.

For the reasons given above, this policy does not meet the basic conditions.

**Therefore it is recommended that Policy PT4 is deleted in its entirety, but that the second paragraph and the six projects it refers to can be moved to the non-planning section of the Plan. As a consequence paragraphs 3.5.1 and 3.5.2 on page 43 of the Plan should also be deleted.**

## Parks and Open Spaces

### Policy P1

Policy P1 seeks to designate six areas as Local Green Spaces. Helpfully Figure 2 on page 47 of the Plan clearly identifies and shows the proposed areas. However, I requested a larger scale plan of each proposed area to help me with the examination and this factual information was kindly supplied by HDC.

The Local Green Space designation has been introduced via the NPPF.<sup>18</sup> Identifying such areas should be consistent with local planning of sustainable development and

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<sup>18</sup> NPPF paragraphs 76 and 77

complement investment. The NPPF makes it clear that this designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space. Further guidance about Local Green Spaces is given in Planning Practice Guidance.

The NPPF explains that these are green areas of particular importance to local communities. The effect of such a designation is that new development will be ruled out other than in very special circumstances.

However, Policy P1 permits sustainable development in the Local Green Spaces for leisure and recreation. The NPPF states that local policy for managing development in a Local Green Space should be consistent with Green Belt policy.<sup>19</sup> Therefore the question is whether this part of the policy is consistent with Green Belt policy. Green Belt policy does plan positively for outdoor sport and recreation including the provision of appropriate facilities for such uses. Therefore Policy P1 has had regard to national policy.

The policy then considers development adjacent to the Local Green Spaces.

The supporting text details each of the six Local Green Spaces explaining why each is important to the local community. The importance of open and green space is a recurring theme. Further information about each area with the exception of The Coneygeare is also included in an Appendix to the Plan. I take each space in turn.

Priory Park is described as a sub-urban public park. It has a number of amenities and is valued for its recreational richness. Whilst it is physically a large site, it is local in character and is constrained on three sides by development and by a road on the fourth boundary. The site would not result in a blanket designation or thwart the achievement of sustainable development or undermine plan-making at a strategic level or the growth of St Neots. It is close to the community it serves and indeed is clearly much valued by the people of St Neots. It meets the criteria for designation as a Local Green Space.

Riverside Park is close to the Town Centre and connects two parts of the town separated by the River Great Ouse. It is clear that the space is in close proximity to the community it serves and is special because of its setting and recreational value. Although the site is a large area, it is readily identifiable. In addition it consists of an important green area running through the heart of St Neots.

Sudbury Meadow, about 0.8 hectare in size, is located alongside the River Great Ouse and is close to the Town Centre. Primarily valued for its flora and fauna, it provides an accessible path and wildlife garden as well as having historic significance.

Regatta Meadow is also valued primarily for its flora and fauna and like Sudbury Meadow has historic significance. Local events such as the Regatta and Summer Fair take place here and it is clear that it is special to the local community.

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<sup>19</sup> NPPF paragraph 78

The Coneygare is located in old Eynesbury, and described as a small area of parkland. It is used regularly for village events and valued for this and its other assets such as a play area.

Riverside Park, Sudbury Meadow, Regatta Meadow and The Coneygare are clearly special and of particular importance to the community. They provide a number of recreational opportunities, provide the opportunity to hold events, but are also important for wildlife and provide a tranquil oasis. Given the location and characteristics of these areas alongside the River Great Ouse they are local in character in the context of the setting of the River. The designation of these areas would not undermine plan-making and they meet the criteria for the designation.

However, as representations point out that there may be some potential inconsistency with Policy EL1 if Riverside Park was to be designated as Local Green Space and indeed with Policy EL2 which relates to a bandstand in Regatta Meadow as well. The areas to which Policies EL1 and EL2 relate are clearly identified and shown on Figure 2.

Policy EL1 supports opportunities for an outdoor theatre and more generally outdoor sport and recreation and Policy EL2 a bandstand. There is no reason why all these three policies would automatically be at odds with each other, but there is some conflict as the policies are currently worded. I am mindful that the Local Green Space designation does place additional special protection measures on areas and effectively rules out new development other than in very special circumstances. Therefore given the community's aspirations for improved and new facilities and indeed the outdoor theatre and bandstand I urge the community to consider whether there would be any additional local benefit to be gained by designating the four proposed areas alongside the River as Local Green Spaces as indeed to do so may have an unintended consequences and harm the community's aspirations for these areas.

There are therefore two options for the community. The first is that should the community reach the view that it would be wiser to not designate these four areas to allow for more flexibility with new and enhanced leisure and recreation uses and so on, this would mean that Policies EL1 and EL2 can be retained and the deletion of these areas from Policy P1 would not affect my overall conclusion that the Plan can proceed to referendum.

The alternative option is to retain the areas in this policy, Policy P1, but delete Policies EL1 and EL2. This is because if Riverside Park and Regatta Meadow are retained as Local Green Spaces this would potentially create internal conflict between different policies in the Plan. For the avoidance of any doubt this action would also not affect my overall conclusion that the Plan can proceed to referendum, but it would place what in my view are unnecessary restrictions given the character, context and nature of these four areas.

I have given the community two options because both actions would, in my view, meet the basic conditions and allow the Plan to proceed. But to be clear Policy P1 retaining Riverside Park and Regatta Meadow as Local Green Spaces and Policies EL1 and EL2 is not an option that would meet the basic conditions because there would potentially be

internal conflict within the Plan and this does not lead itself to the precision and clarity that is needed from planning policy.

I now move on to considering the final area put forward as a Local Green Space.

Barford Road Pocket Park appears to have developed alongside the Eynesbury Manor housing site. It provides an area close to Eynesbury residents spreading out along the River Great Ouse. Less information is given about this space and I do not consider there to be robust justifiable evidence to show that this area is demonstrably special to the local community or holds particular local significance. It does not therefore meet the criteria for designation.

The second paragraph of Policy P1 can be retained insofar as it relates to the retained Local Green Spaces. However, in the interests of precision, references to “Park” should be modified to “Local Green Spaces”.

The third paragraph of Policy P1 could still apply to all six identified areas whether or not they have been retained as Local Green Spaces. Therefore it would be possible to separate this paragraph into a new separate policy if so desired. I consider that such a new separate policy would in itself meet the basic conditions provided.

A representation asks that the natural environment and wildlife value of each area is recognised more in the policy. However, it is not necessary for me to amend the policy in this way in order for the policy to meet the basic conditions.

Therefore in order to meet the basic conditions **the following modifications should in either optional scenario be made:**

- **Delete Barford Road Pocket Park from the list of proposed Local Green Spaces**
- **Retain the second paragraph of Policy P1, but remove reference to the Barford Road Pocket Park and change the word “Park” in the second sentence in this paragraph to “Local Green Space” (this occurs twice) and**
- **Consider separating the third paragraph of Policy P1 into a new policy.**

**Then the community has an option:**

**Option 1) delete Riverside Park and Regatta Meadow from Policy P1 or**

**Option 2) retain Riverside Park and Regatta Meadow as Local Green Spaces in Policy P1, but delete Policies EL1 and EL2 (as proposed or modified).**

Consequential amendments may also need to be made to the supporting text here and elsewhere in the Plan depending on what the community decides to do. I also understand that ‘Coneygear’ is spelt ‘Coneygeare’ and this should be corrected throughout the Plan.

## Policy P2

This policy concerns open spaces. The policy seeks to protect and enhance existing open spaces and paragraph 4.3.3 on page 50 of the Plan directs the reader to Figure 1 on page 47. There is no Figure 1 on page 47, a map identified as Figure 2 is to be found there though and whilst it is headed “Local Green Spaces and Open Spaces”, it only labels the proposed Local Green Spaces and whilst some other areas are coloured in light green there is no key to suggest what these might be even if we suspect them to be the existing open spaces. However, in my view the policy would be stronger and clearer if it simply referred to ‘open space’; this would protect existing open spaces and also ones that are created as a result of new development throughout the Plan period. This modification also deals with points made by representations that seek other areas to be identified. Therefore Figure 2 should be amended to simply deal with the proposed Local Green Spaces.

National policy resists building on existing open space unless one of three criteria is met. As a representation points out only two of the three criteria are contained in this policy. The criterion missing, and which can be found in paragraph 74 of the NPPF, is that “an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space...to be surplus to requirements”.

As a result paragraph two of Policy P2 should be modified to read “Proposals involving the loss of open spaces will only be supported if, following an assessment, it is clearly demonstrated that the open space is surplus to requirements or the open space would be replaced by equivalent or enhanced provision in a suitable location or the proposal involves the development of a sports or recreation facility the need for which clearly outweighs the loss.”

Paragraph five seeks new open spaces to be provided centrally within development sites. This is a fairly onerous requirement that does not offer much flexibility and therefore may adversely affect the quality of development and also its viability. Therefore the words “Where possible” should be added at the start of this paragraph as one of the representations suggests.

New development at the Eastern Expansion is required to provide some 2.9 hectares of allotments together with open space to the standard required by the District Council and specifies where allotments and open space should be provided. Therefore paragraph six should be deleted because it refers to the Eastern Expansion and its requirements potentially affect the viability and deliverability. This part of the policy does not offer sufficient flexibility or any certainty.

Finally the policy lends support for a new cemetery. The Evidence Base document states that it is anticipated that the existing cemetery will have reached full capacity by 2021. HDC comment that a cemetery is not planned for the Eastern Expansion area. I note the policy supports a new cemetery and goes on to identify possible locations. I suggest that the sentence beginning “Possible locations for a new cemetery include

Love's Farm and Wintringham Park." is deleted. The word "suitable" should be inserted before site.

I note Natural England have lent support to this policy.

Therefore in order to meet the basic conditions **all of the following modifications need to be made:**

- **Amend Figure 2 on page 47 so that it only shows the (retained) Local Green Spaces and change the title accordingly and delete paragraph 4.4.3 on page 50**
- **Change the first paragraph to read *"Open spaces within St Neots will be protected from encroachment. Every opportunity should be taken to enhance open spaces throughout the town, including the protection and enhancement of wildlife and its habitats."***
- **Modify paragraph two to read *"Proposals involving the loss of open spaces will only be supported if, following an assessment, it is clearly demonstrated that the open space is surplus to requirements or the open space would be replaced by equivalent or enhanced provision in a suitable location or the proposal involves the development of a sports or recreation facility the need for which clearly outweighs the loss."***
- **Insert the words *"Where possible"* at the beginning of paragraph five which presently begins "New areas..."**
- **Delete paragraph six which begins "As a minimum, the Eastern expansion will..."**
- **insert the word "suitable" after "the development of a..." and before "site" in the final paragraph of the policy and**
- **Delete the sentence "Possible locations for a new cemetery include Love's Farm and Wintringham Park".**

### **Policy P3**

This is a positively worded policy that promotes the setting of the River Great Ouse. The policy promotes appropriate leisure uses and an active frontage including residential uses above lower and ground floors. Connections for people and wildlife are promoted and enhancement of, and access to, the riverside supported. This accords with the thrust of the NPPF of promoting biodiversity and local distinctiveness and creating a mix of uses and places for people to meet.



The Environment Agency suggests some additional words to the second paragraph. **Paragraph two of the policy should be modified to include “or which benefit from their proximity to the river” after “...along the riverfront...”.**

I am confident that the first two paragraphs of the policy as modified are clear as to where the policy applies and will enable a balance of leisure and tourism uses with the open setting and the desire to enhance biodiversity as well as be visually appropriate.

The policy then supports leisure uses for The Old Falcon, a listed building. The Plan does not indicate what the status of The Old Falcon is although it is clearly well known locally. Whilst the supporting text indicates community support for a café, restaurant or bar and a nightclub, the policy restricts redevelopment to leisure and residential use. I suspect this is a case of the way the policy is written, but as it stands at the moment café/cocktail bar uses might be prevented by the policy because of the Use Classes they fall within. I regard this as a technical writing glitch and given that the supporting text is clear on those uses the community would support, **this paragraph of the policy should be modified to read:**

***“Support will be given to redevelopment of The Old Falcon for uses that would contribute to an active river frontage, enhance river use or the functional relationship with the River Great Ouse and facilities that support this. Particular encouragement is given to food and drink and leisure and recreation uses as well as residential uses on upper floors if this is compatible with other planning policies.”***

The modification above also takes account of the suggested rewording offered by the Environment Agency.

The policy finally supports the Community Hydro scheme, but no further information or mention of this is given in this section of the Plan. **Therefore paragraph four of the policy should be moved to the non-planning section of the Plan.**

## **Policy P4**

Policy P4 deals with flooding. This issue is a key concern of the community. The policy requires that development is directed to areas at low risk of flooding and will only be supported where proposals will not increase the risk of flooding. The NPPF advocates a sequential, risk-based approach to the location of development. This policy then subtly differs from the wording of the NPPF. The policy should be modified to have regard to the NPPF. As this change in wording would in effect duplicate national policy, it is not necessary to include this part of the policy within the Plan.

However, the third paragraph of the policy regarding sustainable drainage systems (SUDs) can be retained if so desired. There is also support for this element of the policy in representations.

The last (fourth) paragraph of the policy should be moved to supporting text.

Therefore to summarise **the recommended modifications are to delete the first and second paragraphs and move the fourth paragraph to the supporting text.** Consequential amendments to the text will be needed.

I also note that paragraph 4.5.7 refers to Cambridgeshire County Council becoming the SUDs approval body. My understanding is that the approval process is still uncertain at this point in time and may in any case change in the future, **I recommend that the reference to Cambridgeshire County Council is deleted from the first sentence and that the paragraph simply refers to the SUDs Approving Body.** The remainder of the paragraph apart from the need to change the first sentence can be retained.

## Rejuvenation

### Policy RD1

Support for economic development is given by this policy in line with the general thrust of the NPPF. In addition the regeneration of previously developed land is supported. The policy meets the basic conditions and no modifications are recommended.

### Policy RD2

This policy protects employment uses. This appears to capture all employment sites, not just the ones that might be identified as established employment areas at District level and would also include allocated employment sites.

The Plan indicates that economic growth is important for St Neots and identifies a need to balance homes and jobs and reduce levels of out-commuting. Therefore the policy protects all employment sites and premises. It offers some flexibility by indicating the circumstances in which a change of use may be acceptable including reference to marketing. It states that preferred alternative uses will be to retail or leisure in order to try and retain or create jobs.

However, the policy is perhaps somewhat sloppily worded as the policy seems to equate “employment” with “commercial” use and yet I consider that retail and leisure uses are also commercial uses. Retail and leisure uses also provide employment as the Plan states.

The NPPF is clear that alternative uses on allocated employment land should be determined on their merits having regard to market signals and the relative need for different land uses to support sustainable local communities and the need to be able to respond to changes in economic circumstances. Given the evidence put forward, the policy’s wording has sufficient regard to the NPPF as its supporting text defines what evidence will be required in relation to market signals and it identifies a preference for other land uses that would generate employment supporting the local community’s aspirations. This offers sufficient flexibility in this particular area’s context. However,

the wording of the policy should be clarified to provide a practical framework for decision-taking in line with the NPPF.

The policy is more onerous than the NPPF and District level policies as it applies to non-allocated sites as well. As a result then in order to meet the basic conditions **the policy should be modified to:**

- **(only) refer to established employment areas and those areas allocated for employment uses**
- **the words “commercial” in paragraph two of the policy should be replaced with “employment” and**
- **the word “commercial” in the final (third) paragraph of Policy RD2 should be replaced by the word “employment”.**

### **Policy RD3**

The policy supports a variety of employment-related uses for the Eastern Expansion employment allocation. It is positively and flexibly worded and meets the basic conditions and no modifications are proposed.

A representation rightly points out that paragraph 5.3.1 on page 60 of the Plan is factually incorrect. Therefore **the words “Huntingdonshire District Local Plan” in this paragraph should be replaced by “the Core Strategy adopted in 2009”.**

### **Policy RD4**

The background to this policy is the recognition that there is a mismatch between employer need and skills. As a result this policy aims to support buildings that will improve the local skills base. However, the policy also supports initiatives and other opportunities as well as encouraging links between employers and education providers. These elements of the policy go beyond development and use of land and therefore would be more appropriately placed in the separate section of the Plan that relates to non-planning issues.

In order for this policy to meet the basic conditions **the policy should be reworded to read:**

***“Development proposals that include provision for lifelong learning and skills development or training facilities that will improve the local skills base will be favourably considered.” and***

**then add to the non-planning section:**

***“The Town Council wish to encourage and support initiatives that provide opportunities for lifelong learning and skills development. It is keen to foster links between employers and education providers. The Town Council will also work with schools within the town and colleges in Cambridgeshire to provide new and improved training facilities in St Neots.”***

Cambridgeshire County Council refers to the importance of apprenticeships in their representation and the Town Council can include such a reference if desired to the aspiration if so desired. This will have no bearing on whether the Plan meets the basic conditions or not.

## **Shops and Services**

### **Policy SS1**

Figure 3 shows the area defined as the Town Centre together with the extent of the Primary Shopping Area and the Primary Shopping Frontage. The map, on page 64 of the Plan, is clear. However, HDC point out that this map is taken from the emerging Local Plan and appropriate copyright information should be added. Of equal importance is that the extent of the Town Centre and the Primary Shopping Area and Primary Shopping Frontage shown on the map might change as the emerging Local Plan proceeds. Therefore this map cannot be relied on unless the Plan designates new boundaries itself and there is no evidence that the Plan seeks to do this.

Policy SS1 starts by supporting the expansion of the primary retail frontage and primary shopping area. The Core Strategy advocates further growth in the Town Centre and it is left to the emerging Local Plan to provide more detail. In these circumstances it would be inappropriate to include the map, but nevertheless given the policies in the Core Strategy, Policy SS1 can be modified to support the growth of the Town Centre. **Figure 3 on page 64 of the Plan should be deleted and the first sentence of the policy reworded to read “Support for the expansion of the Town Centre and Town Centre uses will be given.”** Consequential amendments to the text will be required following the deletion of Figure 3.

I do not see any particular issue with particular support for certain types of uses as detailed in paragraph two of the policy as the policy in itself does not preclude anything else and so is flexible and can respond to changing circumstances. Support for additional markets is also in line with the NPPF.

However, the supporting text at paragraph 6.1.8 defines town centre uses. This definition is at odds with the one for main town centre uses in the glossary that duplicates the NPPF. **Paragraph 6.1.8 should be modified to include all the main town centre uses in the glossary and NPPF. The second sentence can be retained with the insertion of the words “In addition” before “The community...”**

The policy also supports the amalgamation of two units into one. It sets a high bar in seeking to retain existing facades in this scenario. Therefore to ensure there is sufficient flexibility **I recommend the words “where appropriate” are added to the end of the existing third paragraph of the policy.**

Lastly, the policy supports upper floor residential use so long as town centre uses are not lost. As this effectively encourages vacant upper floors to be brought back into use it is in line with a vibrant town centre.

A representation on behalf of Sainsburys Supermarkets Ltd indicates there are unlikely to be any sites in Town Centre for supermarkets despite what the policy says and would like the policy to acknowledge that out of centre sites will be considered acceptable where they met national planning policy tests. Whilst this is a helpful comment, the policy would not preclude the development of out of centre supermarkets and as the relevant tests are already in national policy there is no need to revise this policy in this way in order to meet the basic conditions.

## Policy SS2

This policy supports the reuse of historic buildings in the Town Centre for town centre uses. Any changes also need to respect the character and appearance of the building. The policy meets the basic conditions and no modifications are recommended.

## Policy SS3

This policy tries to address concern about facilities and local services and the impact of new development on them. The principle is in line with the creation of sustainable communities. The policy requires new residential development to be delivered alongside sufficient education, health and places of worship provision. This broadly reflects infrastructure requirements identified in the Evidence Base document based on the Local Investment Framework. However, as a representation suggests the policy contains a fairly narrow list and there is a danger that other important infrastructure and services may be marginalised as a result of the policy.

In order for the policy to meet the basic conditions **it is recommended that the words “community facilities and services including” are added after “will be delivered alongside necessary” and the words “community facilities and services” are inserted after “access to” and before “school places...” towards the end of the policy.**

**Paragraph 6.3.3 on page 68 of the Plan** goes beyond development and use of land considerations and **should be moved to the non-planning section** of the document.

## Implementation and Delivery

This section of the Plan sets out the community's priorities for projects indicating partners and funding possibilities. The projects are generally well linked to the Plan's policies and will be a helpful resource.

The text on page 70 of the Plan should be modified to reflect a representation from Cambridgeshire County Council. **The modification, to ensure that the Plan is positively worded, is to replace the first sentence of the third paragraph with:**

***“New development creates a need to provide new infrastructure, facilities and services to successfully incorporate new development into the surrounding area to benefit existing, new and future residents. Financial contributions...”***

Some of the projects are not planning related. A list of these non-planning related projects is shown below. For clarity **the projects listed below should be removed from this section of the Plan and transferred into the non-planning section.** I also note that some representations are not supportive of some of the transport related measures. I have either identified some of these as non-planning issues or if they have remained in the Plan there will of course be an opportunity to vote on the contents of the Plan at any referendum.

- **Opening up of Priory Lane; pedestrian of the High Street, dualling the A428**
- **Eastern expansion to provide allotments and formal open space**
- **Delivery of a swimming pool on site of outdoor swimming pool**
- **Encourage links between training providers and local employers**

Some changes to the list may be required as a consequence of the recommended modifications and I draw the attention of both the Town and District Councils to this issue so that it might be actioned before the Plan proceeds. In addition some representations suggest additional projects. It is not my role to add these to the Plan, but I am sure that the Town Council will consider the representations carefully.

It is good to see recognition that monitoring will be required.

## Non-planning Issues

It is important that issues raised by the community as part of the neighbourhood planning process are captured even though they might not relate to development and use of land issues. This section of the Plan clearly does this in a useful table format. I have recommended a number of items be moved to this section. As a result there might be consequential amendments required to the document.

## **Glossary**

The Plan includes a glossary which replicates the definitions in the NPPF. There is therefore no reason to make any changes to this section of the Plan.

## **10.0 Conclusion**

The St Neots Neighbourhood Plan, subject to the modifications I have recommended, establishes a vision for the future of St Neots. I am satisfied subject to those modifications that the Plan meets the basic conditions and the other statutory requirements outlined earlier in this report.

I am delighted to recommend to Huntingdonshire District Council that the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan as modified by my recommendations should proceed to a referendum.

Following on from that, I am required to consider whether the referendum area should be extended beyond the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan area. I see no reason to alter or extend the Plan area for the purpose of holding a referendum and no representations have been made that would lead me to reach a different conclusion. I therefore consider that the Plan area is appropriate.

## **11.0 Formal recommendations**

I recommend to Huntingdonshire District Council that, subject to the modifications proposed in this report, the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan should proceed to a referendum.

I recommend that the Plan should proceed to a referendum based on the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan area as approved by Huntingdonshire District Council on 17 October 2013.

Ann Skippers  
Ann Skippers Planning  
27 February 2015

## Appendix List of Documents

Protect. Improve. Create. St Neots Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2029

St Neots Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Statement

St Neots Neighbourhood Plan Basic Conditions Statement

St Neots Neighbourhood Plan Evidence Base

St Neots NP Screening Determination dated 19 June 2014

St Neots NP Sustainability Assessment

St Neots Healthcheck September 2009 (EDAW/AECOM)

amt-I Market Town Benchmarking St Neots 2012 Report February 2013

Great Ouse Catchment Flood Management Plan Summary Report January 2011  
(Environment Agency)

LDF Core Strategy September 2009

Huntingdonshire Local Plan Part One adopted December 1995

Huntingdonshire Local Plan Alteration adopted December 2002

Huntingdonshire's Draft Local Plan to 2036 Stage 3 Consultation 31 May 2013

Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 Environmental Capacity Study: St Neots Spatial  
Planning Area

St Neots Town Council Response to the Draft District Plan

HDC Housing Strategy 2012 – 2015 September 2012

HDC Huntingdonshire Retail Study 2013 (Deloitte)

LDF Developer Contributions SPD December 2011

Parks Information Sheets

Extract from Local Plan Appropriate Assessment Screening



# St Neots Neighbourhood Plan Decision Statement

## 1. Summary

- 1.1. Following an independent examination Huntingdonshire District Council's Cabinet has confirmed that the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan will proceed to a Neighbourhood Planning Referendum.

## 2. Background

- 2.1. The St Neots neighbourhood area was designated on 17 October 2013 under the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations (2012). The Plan covers the town of St Neots which is contiguous with the Town Council's administrative boundary.
- 2.2. St Neots Town Council, as the qualifying body, initially submitted the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan and its supporting evidence to Huntingdonshire District Council in April 2014. Further changes were then made leading to a revised document being submitted on 4 July 2014. The statutory six week submission consultation was held from 29 July to 9 September 2014.
- 2.3. Huntingdonshire District Council, in discussion with St Neots Town Council, appointed an independent examiner, Ann Skippers MRTPI, to review whether the submitted Neighbourhood Plan met the Basic Conditions as required by legislation. Ms Skippers issued her report on 28 February 2015 which recommended that the Neighbourhood Plan, subject to the modifications proposed in her report, met the Basic Conditions and should proceed to referendum.
- 2.4. The Basic Conditions are:
  - Having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State, it is appropriate to make the neighbourhood plan
  - The making of the neighbourhood plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development
  - The making of the neighbourhood plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority
  - The making of the neighbourhood plan does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, European Union (EU) obligations and
  - Prescribed conditions are met in relation to the neighbourhood plan and prescribed matters have been complied with in connection with the proposal for the neighbourhood plan.

Regulations 32 and 33 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations (2012) (as amended) set out two basic conditions in addition to those set out in primary legislation and referred to above. These are:

- The making of the neighbourhood plan is not likely to have a significant effect on a European site or a European offshore marine site either alone or in combination with other plans or projects
- Having regard to all material considerations, it is appropriate that the neighbourhood development order is made where the development described in an order proposal is Environmental Impact Assessment development (this is not applicable to this examination).

### **3. Decision**

- 3.1. Huntingdonshire District Council's Cabinet considered the recommendations on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2015 and agreed to accept the Examiner's proposed modifications and approve the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan to proceed to referendum.
- 3.2. The modifications to the Neighbourhood Plan, as needed to ensure it meets the Basic Conditions and in accordance with the Examiner's recommendations are listed in the following table.

Table 1: Proposed modifications

Location of change	Page of plan	Proposed modification	Commentary on proposed change	Officer recommendation
Table of Contents		Reword the heading for section 1.5 to say: <b>'1.5 Landscape backdrops'</b> deleting <del>1.5 Buffer strips</del>	To correct this to match main document	
Introduction	Page 10, para 2	Add 'alongside other development plan documents' to the end of the second paragraph to say: 'Neighbourhood Plans form part of the statutory development plan once made. This means that Huntingdonshire District council will have to determine planning applications within St Neots in accordance with this Neighbourhood Plan <b>alongside other development plan documents.</b> '	For factual correctness	Accept the modification
Introduction – subheading National Planning Policy Framework	Page 10, para 3	Insert 'much of' in between 'immediately superseded' and '...the previous national planning policy guidance' to say: 'It was published on 27 March 2013 and immediately superseded <b>much of</b> the previous national planning policy guidance contained in Planning Policy Statements, Planning Policy guidance notes and government Circulars.'	For clarity and factual correctness	Accept the modification
Introduction – subheading St Neots and its Surrounding Area	Page 14, last para	Examiner urges the Town Council to reconsider the following sentence to see whether it could be reworded: 'Today there are a further <del>20,000</del> <b>10,000</b> inhabitants planned for the town and its surrounding area but, as of yet, there are <del>little or no</del> <b>limited</b> planned improvements to the supporting infrastructure, <del>and no available land for</del> employment, recreation or services infrastructure.'	For factual correctness and to encourage positive planning	Accept the modification

Location of change	Page of plan	Proposed modification	Commentary on proposed change	Officer recommendation
Objectives	Page 18	The five 'overarching' objectives, highlighted in yellow in the Plan, are retained as the Plan's objectives, but that the bullet points beneath each one identified below are either reworded, deleted or moved to a separate non-planning section of the Plan. The bullet points to be reworded, deleted or moved are listed below:	To provide a practical framework for decision-making	Accept the modification
Objectives - employment	Page 18	Reword the first bullet to say: ' <del>Protect</del> Employment land <b>allocations will be supported and regularly reviewed</b> to maintain a prosperous economy and balanced community <b>to improve local job opportunities.</b> '	To reflect national policy	Accept the modification
Objectives - employment	Page 18	Delete or move the fifth bullet to the non-planning section <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><del>Develop a distinctive St Neots brand to promote and improve visitor spending in the Town Centre</del></li> </ul>	Bullet does not relate to the development or use of land	Accept the modification to move
Objectives - employment	Page 18	Delete or move the sixth bullet to the non-planning section <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><del>Encourage investment from both inside and outside the town</del></li> </ul>	Bullet does not relate to the development or use of land	Accept the modification to move
Objectives - employment	Page 18	Delete the seventh bullet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><del>Protect land allocated for employment to improve local job opportunities</del></li> </ul>	Overlaps with first bullet as proposed to be modified and does not have sufficient regard to national policy	Accept the modification

Location of change	Page of plan	Proposed modification	Commentary on proposed change	Officer recommendation
Objectives – retail, leisure and community facilities	Page 18	Delete or move the fifth bullet to the non-planning section <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <del>Encourage the development of gym facilities at key hubs (such as the station) and developing green gyms within public open space areas</del></li> </ul>	Bullet does not relate to the development or use of land	Accept the modification to move
Objectives – retail, leisure and community facilities	Page 18	Delete the seventh bullet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <del>Encourage the development of visitor accommodation in the town</del></li> </ul>	This is not followed through in the plan	Accept the modification
Objectives – housing stock and community assets	Page 19	Delete or move the first bullet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <del>Support the continued development of community spirit</del></li> </ul>	Bullet does not relate to the development or use of land	Accept the modification to move
Objectives – housing stock and community assets	Page 19	Delete the fourth bullet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <del>Provide a balanced mix of housing style and size to reflect the needs of the local St Neots population with a maximum of 40% affordable housing in all new major developments</del></li> </ul>	Bullet does not have regard to national policy or achieve sustainable development and is not followed through in the plan	Accept the modification
Objectives – housing stock and community assets	Page 19	Delete the eighth bullet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <del>Provide a site for allotments</del></li> </ul>	There is no site allocation to support this in the plan	Accept the modification
Objectives – housing stock and community assets	Page 19	Delete the ninth bullet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <del>Ensure that leisure and community facilities are in place before new housing developments are completed</del></li> </ul>	This is not followed through in the plan and arguably would be a strategic matter	Accept the modification

Location of change	Page of plan	Proposed modification	Commentary on proposed change	Officer recommendation
Objectives – traffic and transport	Page 19	The final ‘overarching’ objective is reworded to say: <del>‘Improve Traffic Flow Into, Out of and Within the Town and Improve Parking Availability and Suitability</del> <b>the provision of sustainable transport</b> throughout the Town	To better reflect national and strategic policy	Accept the modification
Objectives – traffic and transport	Page 19/20	The first seven bullets should be deleted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <del>Seek improvements and ensure that all new development has a “Nil Detriment” effect on existing traffic</del></li> <li>• <del>Provide major improvements to existing junctions and put any new junctions required by development in place prior to development commencing</del></li> <li>• <del>Work with partners at District and County level to raise the profile of the A428 to ensure that it is dualled as a priority in the National Roads Programme</del></li> <li>• <del>Secure improvements to local roads</del></li> <li>• <del>Promote the use of and develop infrastructure for electric vehicles</del></li> <li>• <del>Work with partners at District and County level to investigate a northern bypass between the A428 and the A1</del></li> <li>• <del>Work with partners to review and improve bus routes to ensure that St Neots is treated as a whole town and not separate communities</del></li> </ul>	The bullets either do not reflect the NPPF and/or they go beyond the remit of the Plan and /or they are non-land use matters	Accept the modification

Location of change	Page of plan	Proposed modification	Commentary on proposed change	Officer recommendation
Objectives – traffic and transport	Page 20	<p>Reword the eighth bullet to say:  <b>‘Sustainable transport modes including safe cycling provision will be supported.’</b>  <del>‘Develop a safe and segregated cycle network within and around St Neots and between key communities and ensure all new junctions and road improvements cater for cyclists.’</del></p>	To better reflect the NPPF	Accept the modification
Objectives – traffic and transport	Page 20	<p>Move the last five bullets to the non-planning section:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><del>• Work with railway providers to improve facilities including parking and traffic flow at St Neots railway station</del></li> <li><del>• Work with partners to provide a minimum 30 minute free stay and continue the early evening free parking to encourage footfall in the town</del></li> <li><del>• Work with partners to manage on street parking in the vicinity around the railway station</del></li> <li><del>• Work with partners to encourage the development of the Cambridge to Oxford Line with a stop at St Neots</del></li> <li><del>• Work with partners to provide a joined up transport provision linking bus and rail travel</del></li> </ul>	Bullets do not relate to the development or use of land	Accept the modification

Location of change	Page of plan	Proposed modification	Commentary on proposed change	Officer recommendation
Aesthetics - Introduction	Page 22	Move paragraph 1.1.4 to the non-planning section: <del>1.1.4. The key issues the community raised about the aesthetics of St Neots as part of the Neighbourhood Plan survey were the need to improve roads and paths, the need for more bins in the parks and Town Centre and the need for the High Street to have a good clean – all whilst preserving the history and character of the town.</del>	Paragraph relates to non-planning issues, but ones that have arisen as part of the consultation process	Accept the modification
Aesthetics – Public realm	Page 23/24	Move paragraphs 1.2.5 and 1.2.6 to the non-planning section: <del>1.2.5. Consultation has shown that pedestrianising the High Street and redeveloping the Market Square is a popular option for many in the town.</del> <del>1.2.6. This is a key project that the Town Council will explore with the community and its partners over the lifetime of the Neighbourhood Plan.</del>	Paragraph relates to non-planning issues, but ones that have arisen as part of the consultation process	Accept the modification
Aesthetics – Public realm Policy A1	Page 24	Reword the policy to say: <del>‘Proposals for new units or the expansion or alteration to existing units within St Neots in the Town Centre that create new or enlarged units will be expected to contribute towards public realm improvements to the improvement of the Town Centre’s public realm where viable.’</del>	To address viability considerations	Accept the modification
Aesthetics – Gateway into St Neots Policy A2	Page 25	Reword criterion (a) to say: <del>‘The density of residential the development should reduce towards the countryside edge with a larger proportion of detached dwellings with front gardens set in the landscape; and’</del>	To remove uncertainty about what development the policy applies to	Accept the modification



Location of change	Page of plan	Proposed modification	Commentary on proposed change	Officer recommendation
Aesthetics – Design Policy A3	Page 27	Reword paragraph 2 to say: 'Design should be guided by the overall scale, density, massing, height, landscape, layout, materials, detailing, roof orientation, relationship to back of pavement, wall to window ratios, proportions of windows, plan depth, plot width and access, the site and its surroundings <b>including considerations of flood risk management.</b> '	To address concerns over flood risk	Accept the modification
Aesthetics – Design Policy A3	Page 27	Delete paragraph 3: <del>'New buildings should be a maximum of 3 storeys high on the fringes of development sites; any higher than this is not representative of local vernacular. Large scale proposals should include multiple access points subject to the agreement of the Highways Authority.'</del>	No evidence presented for the requirement which may adversely affect viability and stifle creative design solutions and innovation leading to insufficient flexibility	Accept the modification
Aesthetics – Design Policy A3	Page 27	Delete paragraph 6: <del>'Early discussions should be held with the Town Council to ensure that the community's views help to shape the design of the proposal. Proposals that can demonstrate how the design has evolved with input and support from the Town Council will be favourably considered subject to compliance with other planning policies.'</del>	More appropriate in supporting text; paragraph 1.4.9 says a similar thing.	Accept the modification

Location of change	Page of plan	Proposed modification	Commentary on proposed change	Officer recommendation
Aesthetics – Design para 1.4.10	Page 28	Retain subject to agreement with HDC reworded to say: 'All development should reinforce local distinctiveness. Major applications will <b>usually</b> be expected to be accompanied by a Site Analysis and demonstrate how the surrounding development has influenced the design.'	Would usually form part of HDC's validation requirements.	Accept the modification to retain with minor wording amendment
Aesthetics – Design para 1.4.11	Page 28	Retain subject to agreement with HDC reworded to say: ...'A Landscape Strategy will <b>often</b> help to demonstrate how the proposal integrates into the wider environment and should be prepared at an early stage.'	Would usually form part of HDC's validation requirements.	Accept the modification to retain with minor wording amendment

Location of change	Page of plan	Proposed modification	Commentary on proposed change	Officer recommendation
Aesthetics – Design para 1.4.15	Page 28	<p>Replace paragraph 1.4.15 to say:  <b>‘Good design should incorporate measures to design out crime in line with the principles set out in the NPPF. Consultation will be expected, at the initial design stage of any major proposals, with Cambridgeshire Police to identify crime prevention and community safety measures to be incorporated in developments.’</b></p> <p><del>‘Good design should incorporate measures to design out crime; such as overlooking of parking areas and good lighting. Linked to this, proposals for non-residential development should consider whether CCTV is required and include this throughout the site where necessary. Consultation will be expected with Cambridgeshire Police as part of major proposals to identify the most sensible locations for CCTV within the site.’</del></p>	To better align with national policy, be more robust and provide more options	Accept the modification
Aesthetics – Landscape backdrops Policy A4	Page 29	<p>Rewording of first paragraph to say:  <b>‘Developments for 50 or more dwellings Proposals for Love’s Farm East and Winteringham Park, as well as other developments where appropriate, should include landscape backdrops around the development site for screening and wildlife.’</b></p>	For clarity on application of the policy	Accept the modification

Location of change	Page of plan	Proposed modification	Commentary on proposed change	Officer recommendation
Chapter 2 Entertainment and Leisure	Page 32- 35	<p>The Examiner put forward several options for consideration by the Town Council on possible modifications to policies EL1 and EL2 dependent upon their preferred response to modifications to policy P1.</p> <p>The Town council's preferred response is to:  <b>Delete Chapter 2 Entertainment and Leisure in its entirety.</b></p> <p>In addition the Examiner recommended the deletion of policy EL3.</p> <p>For the sake of space the entire chapter is not replicated here but can be viewed at:  <a href="http://www.stneots-tc.gov.uk/stneotsplan/">http://www.stneots-tc.gov.uk/stneotsplan/</a></p>	<p>To reflect the priority accorded by St Neots Town Council to designation of local green spaces.</p> <p>Policy EL3 was considered to be a non-planning related matter.</p>	Accept the modification

Location of change	Page of plan	Proposed modification	Commentary on proposed change	Officer recommendation
Parking and Traffic – Sustainable Travel Policy PT1	Page 39	<p>Reword Policy PT1 to say:  <del>Major development proposals must demonstrate how the scheme maximises opportunities for the use of sustainable modes of transport are maximised travel.</del> This should be achieved through maximising the potential for cycling and walking throughout the site and through contributions towards the extension, linking, and/or improvement of existing routes throughout St Neots.</p> <p><del>All major development proposals should be supported by a Travel Plan explaining the opportunities for sustainable modes of travel. The Travel Plan must make clear how any enhancements to sustainable transport modes will be delivered.</del></p> <p>The Town Council will support proposals to improve facilities <b>that enhance safe and suitable access to at the railway station or support sustainable and health objectives.</b></p>	For clarity and to align better with the NPPF	Accept the modification
Parking and Traffic – Vehicle parking standards for residential development Policy PT2	Page 41	<p>Replace Policy PT2 with the following:  <b>All development proposals which include an element of residential development, including change of use to residential, must provide adequate space for vehicle parking to meet the expected needs of residents and visitors. A design-led approach should be taken to ensure parking is properly integrated into the layout of the scheme, minimises adverse impacts on surrounding uses,</b></p>	The policy is unclear, undeliverable and is insufficiently evidenced. A design-led approach is usually preferred as this offers greater flexibility. A replacement policy has been agreed with St Neots Town Council in accordance with	Accept the modification

Location of change	Page of plan	Proposed modification	Commentary on proposed change	Officer recommendation
		<p><b>and facilitates traffic flow and accessibility for service and emergency vehicles.</b></p> <p><del>All new residential development, including change of use to residential, must provide a minimum of 1.5 car parking spaces or 0.5 spaces per bedroom, whichever is greater, for each dwelling. Parking provided at the rear of dwellings or on street will not be supported.</del></p>	the Examiner's preference for a design-led approach.	
Parking and Traffic – Vehicle parking standards for residential development paras 3.3.3	Page 41/42	<p>Amend paragraph 3.3.3 to say:</p> <p>3.3.3. Restricting the availability of parking at trip origin does not deter people from owning a car. Instead it creates the problems referred to above. To avoid this happening <del>as part of new developments,</del> the Town Council requires <del>minimum</del> <b>provision of adequate</b> car parking <del>standards for new residential development, including proposals for change of use to residential.</del> <b>to meet the needs of both residents and visitors within any developments which will deliver new homes.</b></p>	Consequential change following amendment of Policy PT2	Accept the modification
Parking and Traffic – Vehicle parking standards for residential development paras 3.3.4		<p>Replace paragraph 3.3.4 with the following wording:</p> <p><b>3.3.4 Good design of access arrangements and parking facilities is fundamental to the success of a development. Insufficient parking can lead to inappropriate parking on streets and verges creating highway safety problems and have an adverse impact on the appearance of the local</b></p>	Consequential change following amendment of Policy PT2	Accept the modification

Location of change	Page of plan	Proposed modification	Commentary on proposed change	Officer recommendation
		<p>environment. In proposals for 10 or more dwellings, the Town Council will encourage provision of an average of at least 1.5 car parking spaces per dwelling for 1 and 2 bedroom properties and an average of at least 0.5 spaces per bedroom for properties with 3 or more bedrooms. Where provision includes garages these must be large enough to accommodate a modern family car.</p> <p><del>3.3.4. The design, appearance and the servicing of many recently completed residential areas has been compromised by lack of off street parking. Accordingly, it is necessary to introduce minimum car parking standards for residential development. These minimum standards will be supported by the requirement for developments to introduce Travel Plans encouraging and promoting the use of alternatives to the private car.</del></p>		
Parking and Traffic – Vehicle parking standards for residential development paras 3.3.1-3.3.5	Page 41/42	<p>Delete paragraph 3.3.5:  <del>3.3.5. In setting this standard the Town Council has had regard to accessibility around the town and to other towns, the type of development this standard is appropriate for, the availability of public transport in St Neots and local car ownership levels.</del></p>	Consequential change following amendment of Policy PT2	Accept the modification

Location of change	Page of plan	Proposed modification	Commentary on proposed change	Officer recommendation
Parking and Traffic – Vehicle parking standards for residential development paras 3.3.6	Page 42	<p>Move paragraph 3.3.6 to the non-planning section: <del>3.3.6. Residents living near the railway station are frequently inconvenienced by commuters parking close to their homes; blocking their driveways and light. Whilst yellow lines have caused problems elsewhere in St Neots, the Town Council would support the introduction of parking restrictions along Longsands Road area.</del></p>	Paragraph does not relate to the development or use of land	Accept the modification to move
Parking and Traffic – Car Parks Policy PT3	Page 42	<p>Replace Policy PT3 in its entirety with the following wording:  <b>‘The loss of public car and motorcycle parking spaces in the Town Centre will be resisted unless it can be demonstrated that the proposal is accessible by other sustainable transport modes and that the loss of any such spaces would not adversely affect the vitality and viability of the Town Centre.</b></p> <p><b>Support will be given to the development of a multi-storey car park provided that it is of an appropriate scale, mass and design and has appropriate regard to the Conservation Area and other heritage assets and is considered as part of a comprehensive transport and parking strategy for the Town Centre.</b></p> <p><b>Support will be given to improving the quality of parking in the Town Centre so that it is convenient, safe and secure. Proposals for improvement are encouraged to include the installation of CCTV.’</b></p>	Modifications to clarify that it is the overall loss of spaces that should be resisted and to incorporate reference to motorcycles in accordance with the NPPF	Accept the modification



Location of change	Page of plan	Proposed modification	Commentary on proposed change	Officer recommendation
		<p><del>The number of spaces available for public parking within the Town Centre should be maintained as a minimum, but increased if possible by the development of a multi storey car park.</del></p> <p><del>The site for a multi storey car park will need to be carefully selected. The design, scale and massing will need to ensure that it does not adversely affect the character or appearance of the conservation area, or the setting of nearby listed buildings.</del></p> <p><del>The Town Council will support proposals for improvements to car parks. All proposals for improvement should include the installation of CCTV.</del></p>		
Parking and Traffic – Car Parks	Page 43	Move paragraph 3.4.4 to the non-planning section: <del>3.4.4. The Town Council would like all public car parks within St Neots to be free of charge.</del>	Paragraph does not relate to a development and use of land issue	Accept the modification to move

Location of change	Page of plan	Proposed modification	Commentary on proposed change	Officer recommendation
Parking and Traffic – Major Road Improvements Policy PT4	Page 44	<p>Delete Policy PT4 in its entirety and move the second paragraph and the six projects it refers to into the non-planning section:</p> <p><del>Roads on new developments must be completed to adoptable standards within a year of 90% of the properties being completed.</del></p> <p><del>The Town Council will work with Huntingdonshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council to explore the following projects:</del></p> <p><del>(a) Opening up of Priory Lane and making this one way; and</del></p> <p><del>(b) Pedestrianisation of the High Street; and</del></p> <p><del>(c) Improving traffic flow through the High Street; and</del></p> <p><del>(d) Dualling the A428; and</del></p> <p><del>(e) Raising Mill Lane; and</del></p> <p><del>(f) Installation of a bridge/bypass north of the town.</del></p> <p><del>The Town Council will not support any of these projects if they will result in road safety issues or adversely affect an environmentally sensitive site. The impact of increased traffic should be accurately and holistically assessed regularly and action taken to improve if detrimental impact is shown to exist.</del></p>	<p>The first part of the policy is undeliverable and unviable. The second strand focuses on aspirations that fall outside the remit of the Plan as they are either strategic matters or are outside the Plan area or involve other organisations. The final sentence is undeliverable and lacks clarity.</p>	<p>Accept the modification to delete policy and move the second paragraph and projects list to non-planning section</p>

Location of change	Page of plan	Proposed modification	Commentary on proposed change	Officer recommendation
Parking and Traffic – Major Road Improvements	Page 43	<p>Consequential deletion of paragraphs 3.5.1 and 3.5.1:</p> <p><b>3.5 Major Road Improvements</b></p> <p><del>3.5.1. The Neighbourhood Plan survey findings show that the majority of the community strongly believe that existing infrastructure issues must be dealt with first before building any more houses. It also found that many people wish to see the A428 dualled and the traffic congestion along the High Street dealt with.</del></p> <p><del>3.5.2. There has been concern in the community about the standard of roads within recent development throughout the town. Love’s Farm and Eynesbury Manor are two cases in point. The roads are too narrow causing obstruction and parking difficulties. Whilst the planning system cannot require the Highways Authority to adopt roads as this is left to the developers’ discretion, through policy PT4 the Town Council can require all roads to be completed to adoptable standards.</del></p>	Consequential deletion following deletion of Policy PT4	Accept the modification
Parks and Open Spaces – Figure 2	Page 47	Amend Figure 2 on Page 47 so that it only shows the (retained) Local Green Spaces and change the title accordingly.	Consequential modification arising from modifications to Policy P1	Accept the modification
Parks and Open Spaces – Local Green Spaces Policy P1	Page 48	Delete Barford Road Pocket Park from the list of proposed Local Green Spaces. Retain the second paragraph of Policy P1 but remove reference to the Barford Road Pocket Park and replace Park with Local Green Space in the second sentence.	The Barford Road Pocket Park does not meet the criteria for designation due to lack of robust justifiable evidence to show that the	Accept the modification

Location of change	Page of plan	Proposed modification	Commentary on proposed change	Officer recommendation
		<p>Priory Park, Riverside Park, Sudbury Meadow, Regatta Meadow, <del>and The Coneygeare and Barford Road Pocket Park</del>, as shown in figure 2, are designated as Local Green Spaces.</p> <p>Proposals for sustainable development within Priory Park, Riverside Park, Sudbury Meadow, Regatta Meadow, <del>and The Coneygeare and Barford Road Pocket Park</del> will only be permitted where it relates to leisure and recreation. All proposals must demonstrate that they have a genuine need to be located within the <del>Park</del> <b>Local Green Space</b> and will not adversely affect the tranquillity of the <del>Park</del> <b>Local Green Space</b> or existing users. All proposals must demonstrate that they are of an appropriate scale, layout and design.</p> <p>Proposals adjacent to Priory Park, Riverside Park, Sudbury Meadow, Regatta Meadow <del>and The Coneygeare and Barford Road Pocket Park</del> will need to demonstrate that they will not harm the setting of the <del>Park</del> <b>Local Green Space</b> and where possible enhance access to the park for people and wildlife.</p>	<p>area is demonstrably special to the local community or holds particular local significance.</p> <p>Correction of Park by Local Green Space for precision</p>	

Location of change	Page of plan	Proposed modification	Commentary on proposed change	Officer recommendation
Parks and Open Spaces – Local Green Spaces Policy P1	Page 48	The Examiner presented two options for further modifications: Option 1) delete Riverside Park and Regatta Meadow from Policy P1 or Option 2) retain Riverside Park and Regatta meadow as Local Green Spaces in Policy P1, but delete Policies EL1 and EL2 (as proposed or modified). St Neots Town Council’s preferred response was to delete policies EL1 and EL2 and their supporting text.	Either would meet the basic conditions but retaining Riverside Park and Regatta Meadow as Local Green Spaces and retaining Policies EL1 and EL2 is not an option that would meet the basic conditions because there would potentially be internal conflict within the Plan and this does not lead itself to the precision and clarity that is needed from planning policy.	Accept modification option 2
Parks and Open Spaces – Open Space para 4.3.3	Page 50	Delete paragraph 4.3.3 (reference to figure 1 on page 47) (erroneously identified as para 4.4.3 in Examiner’s Report)	Actually Figure 2 on page 47 and only shows local green spaces, not other open spaces	Accept the modification
Parks and Open Spaces – Open Space Policy P2	Page 51	Reword Policy P2 paragraph 1 to say: <del>Existing</del> Open spaces within St Neots will be protected from encroachment. <del>and</del> Every opportunity should be taken to enhance open spaces throughout the town, <del>whilst protecting existing</del> <b>including the protection and enhancement of wildlife and its habitats.</b>	For clarity and to align better with the NPPF	Accept the modification

Location of change	Page of plan	Proposed modification	Commentary on proposed change	Officer recommendation
Parks and Open Spaces – Open Space Policy P2	Page 51	<p>Reword Policy P2 paragraph 2 to say:  Proposals involving the loss of open space will only be supported, <b>if following an assessment, it is clearly providing that it can be demonstrated that the open space is surplus to requirements or</b> the open space would be replaced by equivalent or enhanced provision <b>at in a suitable</b> location <del>accessible to existing users</del> or the proposal involves the development of a sports or recreation facility <del>that</del> <b>the need for which</b> clearly outweighs the loss.</p>	For clarity and to align better with the NPPF	Accept the modification
Parks and Open Spaces – Open Space Policy P2	Page 51	<p>Reword Policy P2 paragraph 5 to say:  <b>Where possible n</b>New areas of useable open space delivered as part of new development, should be provided within central locations within the development site to ensure good accessibility. Where appropriate new development should deliver a mix of open space typologies based on local need. Elsewhere new areas of open space should be located at sites which are accessible to the community in which it intends to serve.</p>	To provide greater flexibility and avoid adverse impacts on the quality and viability of development	Accept the modification
Parks and Open Spaces – Open Space Policy P2	Page 51	<p>Delete Policy P2 paragraph 6:  <del>As a minimum, the Eastern expansion will make provision for 2.944 hectares (7.272 acres) of allotments and formal open space to the standard required by the District Council. Allotments should be located at the edge of the site and formal space should be located centrally within the site.</del></p>	Does not offer flexibility or certainty and may affect viability and deliverability.	Accept the modification

Location of change	Page of plan	Proposed modification	Commentary on proposed change	Officer recommendation
Parks and Open Spaces – Open Space Policy P2	Page 51	Reword Policy P2 paragraph 7 to say: Support will be given to the development of a <b>suitable</b> site for a new cemetery. <del>Possible locations for a new cemetery include Love's Farm and Wintringham Park.</del>	No cemetery is proposed within the Eastern Expansion area. Modification allows for flexibility.	Accept the modification
Parks and Open Spaces – River Setting Policy P3	Page 53	Reword Policy P3 paragraph 2 to say: All proposals for development along the riverfront <b>or which benefit from their proximity to the river</b> will be expected to demonstrate that consideration has been given to improving connections for people and wildlife, biodiversity enhancement and visual improvements. Proposals that improve the visual line of site to the river to improve the visual impact of the river and link it into the Town Centre will be favourably considered subject to compliance with other planning policies.	To clarify where the policy applies	Accept the modification
Parks and Open Spaces – River Setting Policy P3	Page 53	Reword Policy P3 paragraph 3 to say: <b>Support will be given to redevelopment of The Old Falcon for uses that would contribute to an active river frontage, enhance river use or the functional relationship with the River Great Ouse and facilities that support this. Particular encouragement is given to food and drink and leisure and recreation uses as well as residential uses on upper floors if this is compatible with other planning policies.</b> <del>The Town Council will support leisure proposals for the redevelopment of The Old Falcon. Residential use may be appropriate above lower and ground floors.</del>	To correct technical writing issues relating to Use Classes to ensure the policy is consistent with the supporting text.	Accept the modification

Location of change	Page of plan	Proposed modification	Commentary on proposed change	Officer recommendation
Parks and Open Spaces – River Setting Policy P3	Page 53	Move Policy P3 paragraph 4 to the non-planning section: The Town Council supports the St Neots Community Hydro scheme subject to compliance with other planning policies.	No further mention is made of this scheme in the plan.	Accept the modification
Parks and Open Spaces – Flooding Policy P4	Page 55	Delete Policy P4 paragraphs 1 and 2: <del>Development proposals must be directed to areas at low risk of flooding. Development proposals will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that proposals will not increase the risk of flooding.</del>  <del>All proposals should incorporate measures to reduce flood risk.</del>	Subtly differs from NPPF; modifications to make it consistent would render these paragraphs an unnecessary duplication of national policy.	Accept the modification
Parks and Open Spaces – Flooding Policy P4	Page 55	Move Policy P4 paragraph 4 to the supporting text: <b>4.5.4a</b> The Town Council will support the Environment Agency’s proposals to reduce the risk of flooding. Proposals must demonstrate that any potential adverse impacts can be mitigated.	Consequential minor amendments to the text will be required.	Accept the modification



Location of change	Page of plan	Proposed modification	Commentary on proposed change	Officer recommendation
Parks and Open Spaces – Flooding paragraph 4.5.7	Page 55	<p>Reword paragraph 4.5.7 to say:  <del>As part of its role as Lead Local Flood Authority, Cambridgeshire County Council will become</del> The SuDS Approving Body (SAB). They will be responsible for approving all surface water drainage systems for new developments in line with a set of National Standards set out by government as well as any specific local standards. Approval from the SAB must be sought prior to construction and the SAB will have a duty to adopt and maintain surface water drainage features serving more than one property or otherwise ensure there is an appropriate maintenance arrangement in place.</p>	To allow flexibility in the light of current uncertainty over introduction of the SuDS approval system	Accept the modification

Location of change	Page of plan	Proposed modification	Commentary on proposed change	Officer recommendation
Rejuvenation – Policy DR2	Page 59	<p>Reword Policy RD2 to say: Existing <b>established</b> employment sites and premises and allocated employment sites will be protected from change of use to alternative uses.</p> <p>Change of use of existing or allocated employment sites or premises will only be supported where the applicant has demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Town Council and the District Council that there is no reasonable prospect of the site or premises being used for <del>commercial</del> <b>employment</b> uses. Applicants will be expected to demonstrate that the existing or allocated use is no longer viable and that the site has been marketed for a reasonable period of time for alternative <del>commercial</del> <b>employment</b> uses.</p> <p>Where it has been successfully demonstrated that the site or premises is no longer suitable for <del>commercial</del> <b>employment</b> uses, preference will be given to the change of use to retail or leisure use.</p>	To clarify which sites the policy applies to and for clarification of the distinction between commercial use that might include retail and leisure uses and strictly employment uses.	Accept the modification

Location of change	Page of plan	Proposed modification	Commentary on proposed change	Officer recommendation
Rejuvenation – paragraph 5.3.1	Page 60	<p>Reword paragraph 5.3.1 to say:            5.3.1. <b>The Core Strategy (2009), policy CS7, proposed</b> 25 hectares of land <del>allocated in the Huntingdonshire District Local Plan</del> for employment use as part of the Eastern expansion. The Town Council strongly supports this <del>allocation</del>, which helps to balance the new homes with new jobs and in accordance with Policy RD2 this employment allocation will be safeguarded.</p>	Factual correction and avoidance of confusion between the adopted Local Plan 19952002 and the draft Local Plan to 2036.	Accept the modification
Rejuvenation – Policy RD4	Page 61	<p>Reword Policy RD4 to say:  <del>Every opportunity will be taken to provide opportunities for lifelong learning and skills development. Proposals for new buildings and initiatives</del> <b>Development proposals that include provision for lifelong learning and skills development or training facilities</b> that will improve the local skills base will be favourably considered.  <del>The Town Council will work with schools within the town and colleges in Cambridgeshire to provide new and improved training facilities in St Neots.</del>   <del>New employment uses within the town should be encouraged to create links with education providers.</del>             Then, move a reworded latter part of the policy replacing that deleted above to the non-planning section.</p>	Elements of the policy do not relate to the development or use of land	Accept the modification

Location of change	Page of plan	Proposed modification	Commentary on proposed change	Officer recommendation
Shops and Services – Figure 3 and paragraph 6.1.1	Page 64	To delete Figure 3: Map of St Neots Town Centre and make consequential amendments to the text. Reword paragraph 6.1.1 to say: The vibrant Town Centre is the heart of the community. In 2012 there were 167 occupied units within the Town Centre and over half of these were in retail use. The Town Centre is defined in the Huntingdonshire District Local Plan <b>(1995) and will be updated through the next Local Plan. and is shown on figure 2, below.</b>	The map cannot be relied on as it is a draft from the consultation version of the Local Plan to 2036 and is subject to change	Accept the modification
Shops and Services – Policy SS1	Page 66	Reword the first paragraphs of Policy SS1 to say: <b>Support for the expansion of the Town Centre and Town Centre uses will be given. The expansion of the Town Centre’s primary retail frontage and primary shopping area will be supported.</b>	Support for the town centre expansion can be expressed based on policies in the core Strategy.	Accept the modification
Shops and Services – Policy SS1	Page 66	Reword the third paragraph of Policy SS1 to say: Proposals for uses covering two or more existing units will be favourably considered. Where proposals involve alterations to listed buildings or buildings that contribute to the character or appearance of the conservation area the existing facades should be retained <b>where appropriate.</b>	To allow some flexibility over retention of existing facades.	Accept the modification
Shops and Services – paragraph 6.1.8	Page 67	Reword paragraph 6.1.8 to say: Town Centre uses are defined as retail, leisure, commercial, office, tourism, cultural, <del>and</del> <b>community and residential development. In addition t</b> The community has identified the need for a job centre, registry office and improved library and these uses will be supported by the Town Council.	For consistency with the NPPF	Accept the modification

Location of change	Page of plan	Proposed modification	Commentary on proposed change	Officer recommendation
Shops and Services – Policy SS3	Page 68	Reword Policy SS3 to say: New residential development will be delivered alongside <b>community facilities and services including</b> necessary improvements to existing schools, places of worship, GP surgeries and dentist surgeries and/or the provision of new schools, places of worship, GP surgeries and dentist surgeries within St Neots to ensure that the existing and new population have access to <b>community facilities and services</b> , school places, places of worship, GPs and dentists.	To ensure that other important infrastructure and services are not marginalised as a result of the policy	Accept the modification
Shops and Services – paragraph 6.3.3	Page 68	Move paragraph 6.3.3 to the non-planning section: <del>The Town Council will support new schools that are linked or run by industry and/or universities in partnership to make schooling innovative, high quality and fit for the future.</del>	Paragraph does not relate to the development or use of land	Accept the modification
Implementation and Delivery	Page 70	Amend first sentence of third paragraph to say: New development creates a need to provide new infrastructure, <del>and</del> facilities and <b>services to successfully incorporate new development into the surrounding area to benefit existing, new and future residents.</b> <del>to mitigate the effect of development on the surrounding area.</del>	For completeness	Accept the modification
Implementation and Delivery - Aesthetics	Page 71	Amend reference to buffer strips in third project to say: Development >50 dwellings to include <b>landscaped backdrops</b> <del>buffer strips</del> . Land may be transferred to SNTC to manage	For consistency with policy A4	Accept the modification

Location of change	Page of plan	Proposed modification	Commentary on proposed change	Officer recommendation
Implementation and Delivery – Parking & Traffic	Page 72	Move the following projects from the list on pages 71-74 to the non-planning section: <del>Opening up of Priory lane and making this one way;</del> <del>and</del> <del>Pedestrianisation of the High Street;</del> <del>and</del> (d) Dualling the A428 (Retains project for Improving traffic flow throughout St Neots)	Not planning related projects	Accept the modification
Implementation and Delivery – Parks	Page 72	Move the following project from the list on pages 71-74 to the non-planning section: <del>Eastern expansion to provide allotments &amp; formal open space</del>	Not planning related project	Accept the modification
Implementation and Delivery – Entertainment and Leisure	Page 73	Delete all projects identified under the Entertainment and Leisure heading: <del>Delivery of an outdoor theatre in Riverside Park</del> <del>Delivery of improved recreation facilities including crazy golf and boats in Riverside Park</del> <del>Delivery of a swimming pool on site of outdoor swimming pool</del>	Consequential deletion following deletion of policies E11, E12 and E13	Accept the modification
Implementation and Delivery – Rejuvenation and Development	Page 74	Move the following project from the list on pages 71-74 to the non-planning section: <del>Encourage links between training providers &amp; local employers</del>	Not planning related project	Accept the modification
Non Planning Issues	Page 76	A series of modifications proposed earlier involved moving sections from elsewhere in the Neighbourhood Plan to the non-planning section. Additions below are arranged under the 'Issue' headings used in the table on pages 76-80.		

Location of change	Page of plan	Proposed modification	Commentary on proposed change	Officer recommendation
Non planning issues - Rejuvenation and Development	Page 76	<p>Add under the Rejuvenation and Development heading:</p> <p><b>Develop a distinctive St Neots brand to promote and improve visitor spending in the Town Centre</b></p> <p><b>Encourage investment from both inside and outside the town</b></p> <p><b>The Town Council wish to encourage and support initiatives that provide opportunities for lifelong learning and skills development. It is keen to foster links between employers and education providers. The Town Council will also work with schools within the town and colleges in Cambridgeshire to provide new and improved training facilities in St Neots.</b></p>	Bullet does not relate to the development or use of land	Accept the modification to move
Non planning issues – Development and Community Assets	Page 77	Reword the Issue heading to say: Development <b>and Community Assets</b>		

Location of change	Page of plan	Proposed modification	Commentary on proposed change	Officer recommendation
Non planning issues – Development and Community Assets	Page 77	<p>Add under the Development and Community assets heading:</p> <p><b>Support the continued development of community spirit</b></p> <p><b>Support new schools that are linked or run by industry and/or universities in partnership to make schooling innovative, high quality and fit for the future.</b></p>		
leisure	Page 18	<p>Delete or move the fifth bullet to the non-planning section</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <del>Encourage the development of gym facilities at key hubs (such as the station) and developing green gyms within public open space areas</del></li> </ul>	Bullet does not relate to the development or use of land	Accept the modification to move
1&2 parking 3&4 Services	Page 20	<p>Move the last five bullets to the non-planning section:</p> <p>Work with railway providers to improve facilities including parking and traffic flow at St Neots railway station</p> <p>Work with partners to manage on street parking in the vicinity around the railway station</p> <p>Work with partners to encourage the development of the Cambridge to Oxford Line with a stop at St Neots</p> <p>Work with partners to provide a joined up transport provision linking bus and rail travel</p>	Bullets do not relate to the development or use of land	Accept the modification



Location of change	Page of plan	Proposed modification	Commentary on proposed change	Officer recommendation
Traffic	Page 23/24	<p>Move paragraphs 1.2.5 and 1.2.6 to the non-planning section:</p> <p><del>1.2.5. Consultation has shown that pedestrianising the High Street and redeveloping the Market Square is a popular option for many in the town.</del></p> <p><del>1.2.6. This is a key project that the Town Council will explore with the community and its partners over the lifetime of the Neighbourhood Plan.</del></p>	Paragraph relates to non-planning issues, but ones that have arisen as part of the consultation process	Accept the modification
Parking	Page 42	<p>Delete paragraph 3.3.6 or move it to the non-planning section:</p> <p><del>3.3.6. Residents living near the railway station are frequently inconvenienced by commuters parking close to their homes; blocking their driveways and light. Whilst yellow lines have caused problems elsewhere in St Neots, the Town Council would support the introduction of parking restrictions along Longsands Road area.</del></p>	Paragraph does not relate to the development or use of land	Accept the modification to move
Parking	Page 43	<p>Move paragraph 3.4.4 to the non-planning section:</p> <p><del>3.4.4. The Town Council would like all public car parks within St Neots to be free of charge.</del></p>	Paragraph does not relate to a development and use of land issue	Accept the modification to move

Location of change	Page of plan	Proposed modification	Commentary on proposed change	Officer recommendation
Traffic	Page 44	<p>Move the second paragraph of Policy PT4 and the six projects it refers to into the non-planning section:</p> <p><b>The Town Council will work with Huntingdonshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council to explore the following projects:</b></p> <p><b>(a) Opening up of Priory Lane and making this one way; and</b></p> <p><b>(b) Pedestrianisation of the High Street; and</b></p> <p><b>(c) Improving traffic flow through the High Street; and</b></p> <p><b>(d) Dualling the A428; and</b></p> <p><b>(e) Raising Mill Lane; and</b></p> <p><b>(f) Installation of a bridge/bypass north of the town.</b></p>	<p>The second strand focuses on aspirations that fall outside the remit of the Plan as they are either strategic matters or are outside the Plan area or involve other organisations.</p>	<p>Accept the modification to delete policy and move the second paragraph and projects list to non-planning section</p>
Parks	Page 53	<p>Move Policy P3 paragraph 4 to the non-planning section:</p> <p>The Town Council supports the St Neots Community Hydro scheme subject to compliance with other planning policies.</p>	<p>No further mention is made of this scheme in the plan.</p>	<p>Accept the modification</p>
	Page 68	<p>Move paragraph 6.3.3 to the non-planning section:</p>	<p>Paragraph does not relate to the development or use of land</p>	<p>Accept the modification</p>

Location of change	Page of plan	Proposed modification	Commentary on proposed change	Officer recommendation
Traffic	Page 72	Move the following projects from the list on pages 71-74 to the non-planning section: <del>Opening up of Priory lane and making this one way;</del> <del>and</del> <del>Pedestrianisation of the High Street;</del> <del>and</del> (d) Dualling the A428 (Retains project for Improving traffic flow throughout St Neots)	Not planning related projects	Accept the modification
Parks	Page 72	Move the following project from the list on pages 71-74 to the non-planning section: <del>Eastern expansion to provide allotments &amp; formal open space</del>	Not planning related project	Accept the modification
Development and community assets	Page 74	Move the following project from the list on pages 71-74 to the non-planning section: <del>Encourage links between training providers &amp; local employers</del>	Not planning related project	Accept the modification

- 3.3. The Examiner is also required to consider whether the referendum area should be extended beyond the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan area. She has concluded that the Plan area is appropriate for the purpose of holding the referendum.

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**Public  
Key Decision - No**

## **HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

<b>Title/Subject Matter:</b>	Findings and Recommendations of Affordable Housing Working Group
<b>Meeting/Date:</b>	Cabinet – 19 November 2015
<b>Executive Portfolio:</b>	Councillor D B Dew (Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Housing) and Councillor D M Tysoe (Executive Member for Customer Services)
<b>Report by:</b>	Policy, Performance & Transformation Manager (Scrutiny)
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	All

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### **Executive Summary:**

The Affordable Housing Working Group has reviewed an extensive amount of information in considering how to deliver affordable housing and exploring ways to encourage more affordable housing in rural areas. The Group has examined opportunities to deliver more affordable housing and reduce the number of families waiting for affordable housing. Current viability issues which impact on the number of affordable units that developers are able to provide have also been discussed.

Analysis of the Housing Register by band and dwelling size has been presented to the Group and this has formed the background to discussion on steps that could be taken to manage demand for affordable housing and reduce the size of the Register. The Group has concluded that options for addressing demand for affordable housing through management of the Housing Register are limited. Current initiatives to prevent homelessness are working but are likely to be affected by increasing difficulty in securing private tenancies. The Group therefore seeks to encourage efforts to meet demand by increasing supply of affordable housing, with actions proposed to achieve this listed in section 6.2. Their findings and recommendations have been endorsed by the Overview & Scrutiny (Social Well-being) Panel.

### **Recommendations:**

It is recommended that the Cabinet consider and respond to the following recommendations made by the Affordable Housing Working Group:

That during the development of the Housing Strategy for 2016-19 and the Local Plan to 2036:

- **The Council should actively promote the provision of affordable housing on exceptions sites to town and parish councils.**
- **Where a parish council does not support an exceptions site, the Council should continue to fulfil its duty to meet identified affordable housing need.**
- **A systematic assessment should be carried out of all land to identify potential sites for affordable housing to then be matched to needs (strategic housing land availability assessment).**
- **The threshold for developments on which on-site affordable housing can be sought should be lowered from 15 to 10.**

## **1. WHAT IS THIS REPORT ABOUT/PURPOSE?**

- 1.1 At the request of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-being), the Cabinet is asked to consider and respond to the findings and final recommendations of the Affordable Housing Working Group.

## **2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY/BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Working Group was originally established in March 2014 by the Overview & Scrutiny (Social Well-being) Panel to investigate the policies and procedures of Registered Providers. The Group's remit was amended to undertaking a study on affordable housing in July/August 2014 when the following Terms of Reference were agreed:

The Working Group will make recommendations for the next Housing Strategy 2016-19 by:

- considering and making recommendations on ways to deliver affordable housing; and
- exploring ways to encourage more affordable housing in rural villages including through the rural and enabled exceptions policy of the Local Plan, through the Community Land Trust model and through analysis of best practice nationally and assessment of which of these are suitable for adoption in Huntingdonshire.

To inform this work, the Working Group will:

- receive briefing notes on the objectives,
- undertake a thorough assessment of national best practice,
- consult the Executive Councillor on the terms on the study, and
- consult other Councillors on the terms on the study.

- 2.2 The Group has met on five occasions and updated the Overview & Scrutiny (Social Well-being) Panel regularly, with a written report submitted to the November 2014 meeting. The Group's membership was extended in April 2015, when Councillors P Bucknell and B Farrer joined from the Economic Well-Being and Environmental Well-Being Overview and Scrutiny Panels respectively at the Group's request.
- 2.3 It was agreed at the Group's last meeting that a final report and recommendations would be submitted formally to the Social Well-being Panel. The Panel has subsequently endorsed the Group's findings and recommendations and asks Cabinet to consider and respond to these.

## **3. OPTIONS CONSIDERED/ANALYSIS**

- 3.1 The Group's original remit was to investigate the policies and procedures of Registered Providers but after discussion of the options they agreed that their study should instead focus on affordable housing supply, which linked clearly to the development of the next Housing Strategy 2016-19 and the emerging Local Plan. Terms of Reference agreed by the Group are listed in section 2.1.
- 3.2 Detailed information has been shared with the Group on identified affordable housing need and the delivery of affordable housing in the past, as well as plans for future delivery and how this will be funded.

#### 4. DELIVERY OF NEW AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- 4.1 The Group has examined draft policies for inclusion in the new Local Plan to 2036, which are relevant to affordable housing. In particular, Members have been acquainted with the terms of draft policies on Neighbourhood and Community Planning, Affordable Housing Provision and Rural Exceptions Housing. They are satisfied that these policies will create a framework which will encourage and enable innovative approaches to the provision of affordable housing to be adopted.
- 4.2 Consideration has been given to a report on rural affordable housing development. Members were informed that new homes are funded by Homes and Communities Agency grants and private loans obtained by housing associations, with the latter repaid through rent. There is not considered to be an issue with organisational capacity or the willingness of Registered Providers in building affordable housing to meet local needs.
- 4.3 The Strategic Housing Needs assessment has identified a need for a further 8,000 affordable houses in Huntingdonshire over the Local Plan period. Current proposals for the distribution of housing growth in Huntingdonshire mean that the majority of all additional homes will be provided on three large development sites, namely Alconbury Weald, RAF Wyton and the St Neots expansion. There are no allocated sites in rural areas which will deliver affordable housing and so, currently, rural exceptions sites are the only way that affordable houses will be built in rural areas. The main challenge is to find appropriate sites.
- 4.4 **The Group has suggested that the Council should actively promote the provision of affordable housing on exceptions sites to town and parish councils as they may have land holdings that could be used for this purpose.** The Group has paid particular attention to the Council's approach when parishes do not support rural exceptions sites. It has been concluded that the Council should take decisions that are in the best interests of the area. **This means that even where a parish council does not support a site, the District Council should fulfil its duty to meet identified affordable housing need.**
- 4.5 To promote this role, it is also suggested that a comprehensive approach in a wider community planning policy document should be developed. The Planning Policy team are intending to produce a document which will give guidance on the various tools available, from larger scale neighbourhood planning through to Community Land Trusts or rural exceptions sites. **The Group has also recommended that a systematic assessment be carried out of all land to identify potential sites for affordable housing that can then be matched to needs (strategic housing land availability assessment).**
- 4.6 The Group has received a presentation on Community Land Trusts, which are local organisations set up and run to develop and manage homes or other assets important to their local communities. Community Land Trusts are usually needs driven or created in response to a particular community issue and the support of the local town or parish council is not always necessary. Developing a Community Land Trust involves a considerable amount of work.
- 4.7 The Group has been acquainted with examples of Community Land Trusts in various areas, including in East Cambridgeshire where considerable emphasis is placed on them through a community led planning policy approach and

grants of up to £5k are made available from East Cambridgeshire District Council. **The Group does not consider that Huntingdonshire should devote this level of resources to encouraging Community Land Trusts but considers that they should be recognised among the potential tools for delivering affordable housing that are available to local communities.**

- 4.8 Government initiatives and their impact on the supply of new affordable housing have been discussed. These include changes to rules on Section 106 Agreements. Developers were previously required to wait five years before they could challenge affordable housing Section 106 contributions but are no able to challenge these if they can demonstrate that circumstances have changed since negotiations took place (e.g. if contamination identified has resulted in 40% affordable housing provision becoming unviable). The Working Group were informed that a policy target of 40% affordable housing still applies to all developments but there is negotiation as this would not be viable for all sites and some developers make other contributions such as provision of schools.
- 4.9 Another impact to the provision of affordable homes is the Government's 'starter homes initiative', which aims to enable people under 40 years to buy their own home with a 20% discount. This was introduced in the Housing and Planning Bill 2015 but is yet to be introduced.
- 4.10 Another significant change is the vacant buildings credit, which offsets vacant buildings against the total development thereby meaning that the affordable housing requirement only relates to additional floor space. Huntingdonshire is affected greatly on the RAF Brampton and RAF Upwood sites but much less so on Alconbury Weald and Wyton Airfield and, because there are no existing buildings on the site, not at all on St Neots East. The vacant building credit was quashed in the Courts in September but Government have appealed and the outcome of the appeal should be known in spring next year.
- 4.11 Current thresholds for affordable housing in Huntingdonshire are 15 homes for sites in towns and Key Service Centres and 3 homes on sites in villages. Government policy stating that no affordable housing can be sought on sites below 6 homes and that only financial contributions could be sought for sites of under 10 homes was quashed by a High Court ruling in July. The Government is appealing against this decision. The Group was told that the Council can seek affordable housing contributions where there is a clear case of disaggregation of the site where a developer intends to build on separate parts of a larger site over a long period. The Council's current threshold is 15 homes on urban sites due to previous Government policy. **The Group has recommended that the threshold for developments on which on-site affordable housing can be sought should be lowered from 15 to 10.**

## 5. DEMAND FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- 5.1 Having considered options for increasing the supply of affordable housing, the Group has reviewed information about the current level of demand for this within Huntingdonshire. Analysis of the Housing Register by area, band and dwelling size has prompted discussion around ways of reducing the number of households on the Register.
- 5.2 The Group was informed that the 2008 introduction of the Homelink Scheme and amendments to our Lettings Policy (including changes required to comply with new legislation) have contributed to a reduction of the number of people on the register. Changes to the Policy have led to a review of the Register,



requiring people to re-register. A significant number of households do not respond and are therefore no longer included. The number on the Register fell from a peak of almost 4,000 households in 2011 to just below 1,500 households after the April 2013 revision to the Policy but have since crept back up to a current level of around 2,000-2,300.

- 5.3 Almost two thirds of those on the Housing Register are in bands C and D/D\*, which indicate low level housing need. Every application is assessed to establish housing need, including provisions relating to local connections and financial situations as well as other factors such as a history of anti-social behaviour and immigration status.
- 5.4 The Members have discussed the inclusion of a Band D on the system given that those in that band have relatively little chance of ever being offered a home through the Register. The Group was informed that Band D also includes pensioners waiting for sheltered accommodation and any change to the Band system would depend on Government guidelines being amended. The link between demand and supply was discussed, with a clear relationship between the number of affordable homes built (e.g. on larger sites) and the number of lettings through the Register. However, an increase in demand as significant developments are given planning permission has also been noted.
- 5.5 The Council has several schemes which can help to prevent homelessness, such as the Rent Deposit Scheme to assist households in securing private tenancies. It was noted that prevention of homelessness is most successful at earlier stages. The total number of successful homelessness preventions has fallen recently. This is not due to fewer people approaching the Council for help but a combination of more early interventions helping people into private renting, the impact of welfare reform on Housing Benefit available and increased difficulty in finding housing at market rent. Housing costs in Huntingdonshire are increasingly expensive with the Local Housing Allowance not keeping track with private rents and landlords are more reluctant to house those claiming Housing Benefits. Some who would previously have received help through our homelessness prevention schemes have been added to the Housing Register instead but others have made homelessness applications.
- 5.6 Where necessary, the Council is required to use temporary accommodation for those who have become homeless but aims to minimise this. However, there has been rising demand in recent years, with 220 households accepted as homeless in 2014/15 compared to 167 in the previous year. As a result, the Council has worked with partners to build up a larger stock of temporary accommodation available to use, with several new schemes such as building 13 new bungalows in King Ripton Road introduced. The Working Group was informed of other planned developments to increase this stock. These additional units and greater use of shared housing have reduced the number of households being placed in Bed and Breakfast accommodation.
- 5.7 The need for temporary accommodation would be reduced by an increase in affordable homes built and/or private sector rents becoming more affordable. The Group was informed that an analysis of the cost of the Council providing its own temporary accommodation against the cost of paying private landlords and bed and breakfast establishments for housing tenants was underway. The possibility of the Council reducing housing demand by building its own affordable homes was discussed however Members were informed that the Council has limited land which could potentially be developed and that this would only be considered if it was done with a partner organisation.

## **6. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN/TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

- 6.1 Options for addressing demand for affordable housing through management of the Housing Register are limited due to the need for our Lettings Policy to comply with legislation. Initiatives to prevent homelessness will continue but are likely to be affected by increasing difficulty in securing private tenancies.
- 6.2 The Group therefore seeks to encourage efforts to meet demand by increasing supply of affordable housing. Their recommended actions are:
- **The Council should actively promote the provision of affordable housing on exceptions sites to town and parish councils.**
  - **Where a parish council does not support an exceptions site, the Council should continue to fulfil its duty to meet identified affordable housing need.**
  - **A systematic assessment should be carried out of all land to identify potential sites for affordable housing to then be matched to needs (strategic housing land availability assessment).**
  - **The threshold for developments on which affordable housing can be sought should be lowered from 15 to 10.**

## **7. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN**

- 7.1 Affordable housing contributes to the strategic priority of “Enabling sustainable growth” by improving the supply of new and affordable housing to meet future needs and to the strategic priority of “Working with our communities”. The Group asks that its recommended actions be considered during the development of the Housing Strategy for 2016-19 and the Local Plan to 2036.

## **8. CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 Officers and Members with responsibility for relevant services have attended the Group’s meetings to discuss issues, options and examples of good practice from elsewhere. Representatives of the other Overview & Scrutiny Panels were invited to join the Group due to the wider remit of the study.
- 8.2 The Overview & Scrutiny (Social Well-being) Panel has considered the Group’s findings and queried section 4.11 on thresholds for affordable housing provision, which has since been updated to reflect current Government policy. There was some debate on the second recommendation but this has been endorsed by the Panel. Members suggested better education on affordable housing could help them to get involved in finding and securing suitable sites.

## **9. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS**

- 9.1 The Group has considered options relating to both demand for and supply of affordable housing. Four actions have been recommended to encourage efforts to build more affordable homes throughout the district. The Group’s findings and recommendations have been endorsed by the Overview & Scrutiny (Social Well-being) Panel.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

### **CONTACT OFFICER**

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**Public**  
**Key Decision - No**

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Title/Subject Matter:** Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036

**Meeting/Date:** Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Wellbeing) -  
10<sup>th</sup> November 2015  
Cabinet 19<sup>th</sup> November 2015

**Executive Portfolio:** Planning and Housing Strategy (DD)

**Report by:** Head of Development (AM)

**Ward(s) affected:** All Wards

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### **Executive Summary:**

This report outlines recent government announcements relating to a timescale for the production of Local Plans, provides an update on progress with preparing the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 (HLP2036), identifies the supporting evidence that still needs to be completed, and (at paragraph 3.8 of the report) outlines the proposed way forward.

### **Recommendations:**

That the Cabinet:

Notes –

- The government's new timescales for the plan preparation process.
- Progress on the preparation of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036.

Endorses –

- The proposed way forward as outlined in paragraph 3.8 of the report.

Receives –

- Further quarterly update reports.

## 1. WHAT IS THIS REPORT ABOUT / PURPOSE?

- 1.1 The preparation of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 (HLP2036) is a corporate priority. Recent government announcements have set a timescale for the production of Local Plans, and the purpose of this report is to make practical, pragmatic and positive recommendations on how those timescales should be met.
- 1.2 The government has announced that it expects new Local Plans “... to be written ...” by early 2017. The strong implication, because to date there has not been a full clarification, is that by the end of March 2017 Local Plans need to be at least at the second statutory stage of the Local Plan Examination process – known as the Submission stage. This is the point at which the Local Plan can be deemed to have been ‘written’ by the local planning authority, though it will still be subject to an Examination in Public by an independent Planning Inspector.
- 1.3 The next stage of the plan preparation process for the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 (HLP2036) is the Proposed Submission stage which, following a 6 week public consultation period and consideration of comments received, will then be followed by the Submission stage.
- 1.4 It is clear that the government is serious in its intent to ensure that Local Plan coverage is maximised as soon as possible. The Prime Minister’s announcements in October 2015 reiterated and reinforced previous government announcements on the importance of Local Plans being in place to provide certainty for local communities on the locations for significant housing growth to support economic development.
- 1.5 A Written Statement on Local Plans made by Brandon Lewis (Minister of State for Housing and Planning) in July 2015 stated that the government will use sanctions if required to intervene where local planning authorities are not making sufficient progress in preparing new Local Plans, as follows:
- “As stated in the Productivity Plan we will publish league tables setting out local authorities’ progress on their Local Plans. In cases where no Local Plan has been produced by early 2017 – five years after the publication of the NPPF – we will intervene to arrange for the Plan to be written, in consultation with local people, to accelerate production of a Local Plan.”*
- 1.6 The imperative, then, is for local planning authorities to take practical and pragmatic steps to ensure that their Local Plan is delivered to the required stage by the deadline of March 2017.
- 1.7 The government’s timetable for producing Local Plans also offers some flexibility in the content and scope of the Local Plan. Local planning authorities are encouraged to make progress with Local Plans that meet the key criteria of the National Planning Policy Framework, but can commit to an early review of a consequently adopted Local Plan to enable, for example, further site allocations that contribute to meeting the objectively assessed needs for the area over a longer time period to be considered and tested through the plan-led process. To this effect, the Minister of State for Housing and Planning’s Written Statement also included the following paragraph:

*“As we have made clear in planning guidance a commitment to an early review of a Local Plan may be appropriate as a way of ensuring that a*

*Local Plan is not unnecessarily delayed by seeking to resolve matters which are not critical to the plan's soundness or legal competence as a whole. The Planning Advisory Service has published a note on where Local Plans have been found sound, subject to early review, which local authorities should consider."*

- 1.8 The government's view was further expressed by the Right Honourable Greg Clark MP (Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government) in a letter to the Chief Executive of the Planning Inspectorate in July 2015, which included the following paragraphs:

*"Each local planning authority should produce a Local Plan for its area, and in doing so should proactively engage a wide section of the community so that Local Plans, as far as possible, reflect a collective vision for areas. The Government accords great importance to authorities getting up-to-date Local Plans in place and to supporting them in doing so as a priority."*

*"We have recently seen significant positive plan-making progress: 82% of authorities have now published Local Plans and 64% adopted Plans compared with 32% and 17% in May 2010 respectively. It is imperative that this positive progress is maintained, and the Government is open to taking further measures to achieve this if needed."*

*"As inevitably a plan cannot exactly account for future circumstances there is a real value in getting a Local Plan in place at the soonest opportunity, even if it has some shortcomings which are not critical to the whole plan. We have acknowledged this in planning guidance by setting out that Local Plans may be found sound conditional upon a review in whole or in part within five years of adoption."*

- 1.9 The Planning Inspectorate's (PINS) own analysis of up to date Local Plans indicates that Huntingdonshire is in a good position, in that it is one of the 82% of authorities that have published Local Plans (PINS refers to the Huntingdonshire Core Strategy 2009 in this respect). In the absence of further clarity, it may well be that the adoption of the Core Strategy has already ensured that the District Council has produced a Local Plan by early 2017. However, in any event, the Core Strategy, along with the other components of the current Huntingdonshire Development Plan is not considered to be fully NPPF compliant and its replacement by the HLP2036 continues to be necessary.

- 1.10 The purpose of the report is to:

- Confirm the current position with the preparation of the HLP2036
- Identify the work necessary for making progress towards and through the formal stages of the Local Plan Examination process
- Recommend a way forward to meet the government's new requirement for Local Plans to be written by early 2017.

## **2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY / BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 It is important to maintain progress with the preparation of the HLP2036 and, given the government's recent announcements, to follow a process that ensures that it is either within the formal process of being examined by an

independent Planning Inspector, or has been through this process and is adopted by March 2017. This report set out recommendations that will allow the HLP2036 plan preparation process to comply with the government's stated timescales.

### 3. OPTIONS CONSIDERED / ANALYSIS

#### Current position with the preparation of the HLP2036

- 3.1 The HLP2036 is being prepared in the format of a single Local Plan document, containing Huntingdonshire's planning strategy, development management policies and site allocations. When it is adopted, the HLP2036 will be the District Council's most up to date statement of planning policy and will form the statutory Development Plan for Huntingdonshire, along with any Neighbourhood Plans that are formally 'made' following a local referendum, and Cambridgeshire County Council's Minerals and Waste Core Strategy (2011) and Site Specific Proposals Plan (2012). It will be compliant with national planning policy, and it will replace the existing Huntingdonshire Development Plan Documents which are the Huntingdonshire Local Plan 1995, the Huntingdonshire Local Plan Alteration 2002, the Huntingdonshire Core Strategy (2009) and the Huntingdon West Area Action Plan (2011).
- 3.2 A series of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) have also been prepared over the years to complement and provide relevant detail on the current Development Plan policies. It is permissible under the current plan-making process to maintain a suite of SPDs to complement Local Plan policies, and there will need to be a process and programme for considering which SPDs should be deleted or updated, and whether new SPDs are required.
- 3.3 The current position with the HLP2036 is that it has been through all of its non-statutory stages, which have involved extensive consultation and engagement. These are as follows:

Stage 1	Issues and Options Consultation	May 2012
Stage 2	Draft Local Plan Consultation, including potential site development allocations	September 2012
Stage 3	Draft Local Plan Consultation, including detailed strategy, policies and site development allocations	May 2013
Stage 4	Targeted Draft Local Plan Consultation, a further iteration of Stage 3 targeted to key stakeholders	January 2015

- 3.4 The next stages in the process are the formal statutory stages, known as the Proposed Submission, Submission, Examination, and Adoption stages. The Examination stage is where the finalised and detailed HLP2036 and its supporting evidence base is tested by an independent Planning Inspector. If it is found to be 'sound' it can then be adopted as part of the Development Plan for Huntingdonshire.

## **Supporting Evidence that still needs to be completed for making progress towards and through the formal stages of the Local Plan Examination process**

- 3.5 The key pieces of supporting evidence for the Local Plan that still need to be completed are the traffic modelling and an updated Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA):
- Traffic modelling – Officers are liaising with CCC on the scope of this work and its delivery is dependent upon commitment from the County and District Councils; and
  - SFRA – The SFRA needs to be updated following receipt of the Environment Agency's new modelling, which was expected in August and is still awaited.
- 3.6 In addition, the following evidence needs to be refreshed to ensure that they are up-to-date/considered:
- An update to the retail study;
  - With the other Cambridge sub-region Strategic Housing Market Assessment authorities (plus Kings Lynn and West Norfolk and Peterborough) we are in the process of getting a new needs assessment for Gypsies and Travellers commissioned;
  - A refresh of our Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (Environmental Capacity Study) to ensure that it is as up to date and fully compliant with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance; and
  - A review of recent and proposed changes to planning policy (Fixing the Foundations, Affordable Housing Threshold court decision, Onshore Wind turbine developments policy changes, Housing and Planning Bill 2015 etc) that will impact on production or content of the Local Plan.
- 3.7 The NPPF requires local planning authorities to:
- “use their evidence base to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area, as far as is consistent with the policies set out in this Framework, including identifying key sites which are critical to the delivery of the housing strategy over the plan period;
  - identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years worth of housing against their housing requirements with an additional buffer of 5% (moved forward from later in the plan period) to ensure choice and competition in the market for land. Where there has been a record of persistent under delivery of housing, local planning authorities should increase the buffer to 20% (moved forward from later in the plan period) to provide a realistic prospect of achieving the planned supply and to ensure choice and competition in the market for land;
  - identify a supply of specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth, for years 6-10 and, where possible, for years 11-15; ...”
- 3.8 The NPPF requirement is to identify a supply of sites for years 1-10 and, where possible, for years 11-15. The District Council has been progressing the Local Plan with the intention of identifying a supply of specific, developable sites for years 1-15. The traffic modelling work still to be completed is in part

required to consider whether and how the proposed allocation at Wyton Airfield could be delivered. The NPPF states that “Development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe”. It is still to be demonstrated that Wyton Airfield can be developed without “severe” residual cumulative transport impacts. It is therefore proposed that, alongside the evidence referred to in paragraphs 3.5 and 3.6, the District Council explores the identification of a supply of sites for years 1-10 from the date of adoption only if it appears that identifying sites for years 11-15 will unduly delay the submission of the Local Plan. This will ensure that a new Local Plan is produced by early 2017 and, as the Government intends, the certainty that a Local Plan provides is not unduly delayed. A similar approach was recently taken, with the agreement of the independent Planning Inspector, by Dacorum Borough Council at the Examination of its Local Plan. The commitment to an early review of the Local Plan following its adoption, which is likely to be required if only sites for years 1-10 are identified, may also tie in with discussions about devolution, functional economic geography and potential shared planning/growth services.

#### **4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL**

4.1 Comments from the Overview & Scrutiny (Environmental Well-being) Panel have been included separately on the Cabinet’s agenda at item 11, Comments from Overview and Scrutiny.

#### **5. KEY IMPACTS / RISKS? HOW WILL THEY BE ADDRESSED?**

5.1 The key risks in relation to housing delivery and the requirement to produce a Local Plan by early 2017 are outlined below, and can be best addressed by following the approach set out in this report:

- That the District Council is unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites and that this results in developments that would not otherwise be approved having to be approved to provide a five-year supply of deliverable housing land; and
- That the District Council is deemed to not have met the requirement to produce a Local Plan by early 2017 and the Government intervenes to arrange for the Plan to be written.

#### **6. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN**

6.1 This production of the HLP2036 relates to the Corporate Priority of Enabling Sustainable Growth.

6.2 The objective under the Corporate Priority is as follows:

*“To improve the supply of new and affordable housing to meet future needs: Our work programme includes, ensuring an adequate supply of housing to meet objectively assessed needs and planning and delivering the provision of decent market and affordable housing for current and future needs.”*

6.3 The relevant key actions for 2015/16 related to the objective are:

- Implement a programme to adopt the Local Plan to 2036
- Facilitate delivery of new housing on the large strategic sites at Alconbury, St Neots, Wyton, Bearscroft - Godmanchester



## **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 Advice has been and will be sought as necessary throughout the preparation of the Local Plan.

## **8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The completion of the Supporting Evidence will require resources from the District Council and other duty to co-operate partners, including the County Council as Local Highway Authority. The Planning Policy budget includes budgets for Plan preparation and consultants to provide supporting evidence, but this will need to be kept under review as the scope of work required is clarified.

## **9. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS**

- 9.1 To ensure that Members are updated in relation to recent government announcements relating to a timescale for the production of Local Plans, the progress with preparing the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 (HLP2036) and the supporting evidence that still needs to be completed; and to seek endorsement of the proposed way forward to progress the preparation of the Plan.

- 9.2 That the Cabinet:

Notes –

- The government's new timescales for the plan preparation process.
- Progress on the preparation of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036.

Endorses –

- The proposed way forward as outlined in paragraph 3.8 of the report.

Receives –

- Further quarterly update reports.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Local Plans: House of Commons: Written Statement Department for Communities and Local Government Written Statement made by Minister of State for Housing and Planning (Brandon Lewis), July 2015

Letter from the Right Honourable Greg Clark MP (Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government) to the Chief Executive of the Planning Inspectorate, July 2015

Dacorum Borough Council's Local Plan (Inspector's report) 9 July 2013 (also referred to in Planning Advisory Service working note 'Early Reviews and Local Plans' undated)

Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 – Stage 3 May 2013 and Targeted Consultation January 2015

## **CONTACT OFFICER**

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Public  
Key Decision – No

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Title:** Treasury Management 6-month Performance Review

**Meeting/Date:** Overview & Scrutiny – 5th November 2015  
Cabinet – 19th November 2015

**Executive Portfolio:** Resources: Councillor J A Gray

**Report by:** Head of Resources

**Ward(s) affected:** All Wards

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### **Executive Summary:**

Best practice and prescribed treasury management guidance requires Members to be kept up to date in respect of treasury management activity for the first half of the year, including investment and borrowing activity and treasury performance.

### **Recommendation(s):**

The Cabinet are asked to:

- Note the treasury management performance for the first 6 months of 2015/16 and to recommend the report to Council for consideration.

## **1. WHAT IS THIS REPORT ABOUT/PURPOSE?**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the Council's treasury management activity for the first 6 months of the year, including investment and borrowing activity and treasury performance.

## **2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY/BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 It is regarded as best practice and prescribed treasury management guidance that Members are kept up to date in treasury management activity.
- 2.2 The Council approved the 2015/16 Treasury Management Strategy at its meeting on 12th February 2015.
- 2.3 All treasury management activity undertaken during the period complied with the CIPFA Code of Practice and relevant legislative provisions.
- 2.4 The investment strategy is to invest any surplus funds in a manner that balances low risk of default by the borrower with a fair rate of interest. The Council's borrowing strategy permits borrowing for cash flow purposes and funding current and future capital expenditure over whatever periods are in the Council's best interests.

## **3. OPTIONS CONSIDERED/ANALYSIS**

### **Cash Flow Management**

- 3.1 The vast majority of activity over the past 6 months has been in managing short term fluctuations in cash flow by borrowing or investing for periods that ensure sustainable cash liquidity and at cost that is the most economically advantageous for the Council.
- 3.2 Much of the investment activity has been in call accounts and Money Market Funds. These accounts offer two clear advantages considering the current investment market:
- One of the primary Treasury Management objectives is the security of funds invested; because these accounts allow immediate access to funds this reduces the risk of default.
  - These accounts provide a fair return on amounts invested.
- 3.3 There has been no temporary borrowing during the period.

### **Long Term Borrowing and Investments**

- 3.4 At present the Council has the following investments with external organisations:
- £1.239m to Huntingdon Regional College, which has been back-to-back funded by long-term borrowing for the same amount from the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB).
  - £61,000 to Huntingdon Gym.
  - £4,000 to Alconbury Parish Council.

With regard to the investments in Huntingdon Gym and Alconbury Parish Council, these are currently being financed from within the Councils own working capital.

- 3.5 As at the 30th September the Council had short and long term external investments of £14.6m and borrowing of £11.2m. The following table summarises the transactions during the period and further detailed analysis is shown in Appendix 1.

2014/15 £m			2015/16 £m
3.5	<b>Investments</b>	- as at 31 <sup>st</sup> March	3.9
(100.8)		- matured in period	(100.3)
106.5		- arranged in period	111.0
<b>9.2</b>		- as at 30 <sup>th</sup> September	<b>14.6</b>
(17.4)	<b>Borrowing</b>	- as at 31 <sup>st</sup> March	(11.3)
20.0		- matured/repaid in period	0.1
(19.0)		- arranged in period	0.0
<b>(16.4)</b>		- as at 30 <sup>th</sup> September	<b>(11.2)</b>
<b>(13.9)</b>	<b>Net investments at 31<sup>st</sup> March</b>		<b>(7.4)</b>
<b>(7.2)</b>	<b>Net investments at 30<sup>th</sup> September</b>		<b>3.4</b>

#### Performance – Interest Return

- 3.6 To give an indication of net investment performance, the summary below excludes the above long-term investments and borrowing to give a fairer comparison with the current benchmark of the 7 day rate.

<b>SHORT-TERM PERFORMANCE FOR THE 6 MONTHS APRIL 2015 – SEPTEMBER 2015</b>					
<b>Net investments</b>	<b>Performance</b>	<b>Benchmark</b>	<b>Variation from benchmark</b>	<b>Managed Funds</b>	
				<b>1 April £m</b>	<b>30 Sept £m</b>
Excluding Huntingdon Regional College, Huntingdon Gym and Alconbury Parish Council	<b>0.20%</b>	<b>0.18%</b>	<b>+0.02%</b>	<b>(2.5)</b>	<b>(13.3)</b>
Note: The Benchmark performance is based on the 7 day LIBID rate provided by the Council's advisors Arlingclose.					

#### Performance – against budget in 2015/16

- 3.7 The latest forecast outturn is for the net cost of interest to be under budget by £105,000 (net cost of £0.372m against a budget of £0.477m). The small saving is attributable to a combination of low borrowing interest rates (especially between local authorities), reduction in revenue spending, delays in capital expenditure and higher than expected revenue reserves.

## Treasury Management Indicators

3.8 The Council measures its exposures to certain treasury management risks with the following indicators which generally relate to the position as at 30th September.

### 3.9 Interest rate exposures

It is therefore proposed to replace it with the following indicators which better illustrate the position:

		Limits		Actual Sept 2015
		Max.	Min.	
Borrowing: longer than 1 year	Fixed	100%	75%	100%
	Variable	25%	0%	
Investments: longer than 1 year	Fixed	100%	100%	100%
	Variable	0%	0%	

All borrowing and investing for less than one year is variable by definition. Control over the Council's exposure to interest rates will be achieved as follows:

### 3.10 Maturity structure of borrowing

This indicator prescribes the limits within which the Council can borrow to either maintain effective cash flow or to cover capital expenditure.

Borrowing	Upper	Lower	Actual
Under 12 months	90%	0%	1%
12 months and within 24 months	90%	0%	1%
24 months and within five years	90%	0%	4%
Five years and within 10 years	91%	1%	5%
10 years and above	100%	9%	89%

### 3.11 Investment repayment profile – limit on the value of investments that cannot be redeemed within 364 days

The purpose of this indicator is to control the Council's exposure to the risk of incurring losses by seeking early repayment of its investments. The total principal sums invested to final maturities beyond the period end were:

	2015-16 £m	2016/17 £m	2017/18 £m
Limit on investments over 364 days as at 31 March each year.	33.8	37.2	37.6
Actual principal invested beyond year end as at 30 September 2015	1.2	1.0	0.9

#### **4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL**

4.1 Comments from the Overview & Scrutiny (Economic Well-being) Panel have been included separately on the Cabinet's agenda at item 11, Comments from Overview and Scrutiny.

#### **5. KEY IMPACTS/RISKS? HOW WILL THEY BE ADDRESSED?**

5.1 Key impacts and risks are noted in the report above.

#### **6. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN/TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

6.1 Actions will be taken as necessary on the borrowing and investing requirement of the Council within agreed policies and approval.

#### **7. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN**

7.1 The treasury management function enables the required funds to be available for all Council expenditure and as such linked to all of the Councils strategic theme and outcomes. It is especially linked in with "become more business-like and efficient in the way we deliver services".

#### **8. CONSULTATION**

8.1 No consultation has been undertaken.

#### **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no legal implications

#### **10. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 Resource implications are noted within the report above.

#### **11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 There are no known other implications at the present time.

#### **12 REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS**

12.1 Best practice and prescribed treasury management guidance requires that Members be informed in respect of treasury management activity and therefore the Cabinet is requested to note the report and recommend it to Council for consideration.

#### **13. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED**


13.1 Appendix 1 – Investments and Borrowing as at 30th September 2015.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**


Working papers in Resources.

## **CONTACT OFFICER**

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Rebecca Maxwell, Accountancy Manager

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## APPENDIX 1

### Investments as at 30 September 2015

	£m	Investment date	Rate %	Repayment date
<b>Term Deposits</b>				
Alconbury Parish Council	0.004	08/07/13	0.50	08/07/16
Huntingdonshire Regional College	1.239	05/08/13	3.34	05/08/23
Huntingdon Gym	0.061	2/10/13	5.13	30/09/23
Coventry Building Society	1.500	14/09/15	0.41	14/10/15
Nationwide Building Society	1.000	10/09/15	0.43	12/10/15
Nationwide Building Society	1.000	15/09/15	0.43	15/10/15
	<b>4.804</b>			
<b>Liquidity Accounts</b>				
NatWest	0.706	28/09/15	0.25	Call
Cambridge Building Society	0.100	09/10/13	0.50	Call
Blackrock MMF	1.000	21/09/15	0.47	Call
Santander	0.900	29/09/15	0.25	Call
Handelsbanken	1.000	22/09/15	0.30	Call
Barclays	2.175	21/09/15	0.45	Call
Legal & General MMF	1.280	30/09/15	0.47	Call
Standard Life Liquidity MMF	1.600	28/09/15	0.44	Call
PSDF MMF	1.000	15/09/15	0.45	Call
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9.761</b>			

### Borrowing as at 30 September 2015

	£m	Borrowing date	Rate %	Repayment date
<b>Long Term</b>				
PWLB	1.226	07/08/13	2.44	07/08/23
PWLB	5.000	19/12/08	3.91	19/12/57
PWLB	5.000	19/12/08	3.90	19/12/58
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11.226</b>			

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## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

NOTES of the meeting of the HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP held in the Countryside Centre, Hinchingsbrooke Countryside Park on Friday, 16th October 2015.

PRESENT: Councillors T Hayward and R J West

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors B Hyland, T D Sanderson and County Councillor Sir P Brown.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs J Arnold, Mr A Green, Mrs S Martin, Mr A Merrick and Mr C Moss

### 1. QUORUM

Arising from the meeting being inquorate, Members noted the following matters:-

#### (a) Operations Review Update

It was noted that according to the Medium Term Financial Strategy the Operations Division had a target to reduce its budget by £2.3million over the next five years. As a result of this a fundamental service review was currently taking place within the Division. Part of the review had involved a restructure and Mr Merrick, Interim Head of Operations explained further details of the restructure. The main points were as follows:

- The number of senior managers had been reduced from five to three.
- The Division would be structured around three distinct business units: Commercial, Environmental and Business Development.
- The Street Cleansing and Grounds Maintenance functions were being integrated as a new Street Scene Service within Environmental Services that would be deployed in two area teams, (North and South). The current Greenspaces Team were being re-shaped as a development team to support the Street Scene Service.
- The Countryside Service sits within Environmental Services and would continue to be managed as a separate team but would work closely with the Development Team to ensure the optimisation of resources.

Other areas discussed included the following:

- It was noted the income stream from recycling fluctuated dependent upon the demands of the market. This reflected in the net costs of the Waste Service for

the Council as the Council gets an income share from the sale of the recyclates. Mr Merrick reported that the Council gets paid for plastics by weight and not volume.

- Huntingdon Town Council had responsibility for 20 play areas in addition to those maintained by the Council and Mr Merrick believed that this was too many to be sustainable. However following a further analysis it was discovered that the north of the town was underprovided. This was currently being reviewed through a shared needs analysis with the Town Council to determine future priorities.
- As part of needs analysis for St Ives, it was found that apart from the need to upgrade two play areas the Town is well provided for in terms of open spaces and allotments.
- Mr Merrick stated that there would be a new Management Plan for the Country Park to determine the future development priorities and maintenance regimes. This would be subject to consultation with the Joint Group. In respect of the remainder of the District, there was not currently a robust database of all the sites owned by the Council. In response to a question from Councillor Hayward, Mr Merrick explained that Parish Councils could assist by sharing information on sites owned by them with the Council; and
- Members noted that the Council does not have the technology to carry out live checks on waste bin enquiries. Currently customers who had phoned the Call Centre regarding a missed bin collection are advised to ring back at 2.30pm. Mr Merrick informed Members that the refuse collection rounds would be reconfigured to re-balance the rounds and to deliver efficiencies by reducing the number of rounds. In addition Members were advised that a waste collection shared service would not realise many benefits.

Discussion ensued in relation to Hinchingsbrooke Country Park matters. The key points were as follows:

- The post of Countryside Co-ordinator had been redefined as Countryside Manager to place a stronger emphasis on the overall management of the service; and
- The Countryside Centre and Café was identified to become more commercial. There was also a Plan to let out meeting rooms to organisations that do not normally utilise the Country Park to encourage a broader use and enable a sustainable income stream.

#### **(b) Staffing**

Members noted that Jim Milligan had been appointed as Senior Ranger at the end of July 2015 and Sam James as Ranger at the beginning of September 2015. As a result there was now enough Ranger capacity to take on work experience

staff for the ensuing year. Lesley Cann had left her post of Countryside Centre Cleaner to take up a Caretaker position at Pathfinder House. This had left the Countryside Centre Cleaner post vacant. A project looking to combine the role of Café Supervisor and Countryside Centre Supervisor was currently being investigated

**(c) Volunteers**

The service had lost several long term volunteers recently as they have moved from the area. However it was reported that three new volunteers had started work at the Park. A handbook for tool use was being developed for training with the trainees receiving a certificate once training was complete.

**(d) Wider District**

There was currently no capacity to undertake additional work around the District as LEAN was affecting staff cover particularly as staff, had taken leave or had been absent through sickness.

**(e) Park Management**

The Country Park had been nominated for the 'Best Biodiversity' category within Anglia in Bloom this year.

**(f) Café**

Members noted that income received at the Café had increased by £9k on this period last year. In response to a query on the increase the Countryside Manager reported that this had been attribute to an enthusiastic Team with good personalities, good homemade food as well as the weather conditions.

**(g) Events and Activities**

In referencing the Terms of Reference Members asked what the service had been doing in terms of adults with disabilities. In response, it was noted that there had been 40 new users of the wheelchairs. In addition, the specially adapted bicycles had been serviced twice a year by volunteers of the Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park funding the parts. Members were reminded that Hinchingsbrooke was funded by Cambridgeshire County Council to provide 10 volunteer placements per week for people with additional needs.

**(h) Finance**

Members' attention was drawn to the current positive financial position of the Country Park.

Chairman

DRAFT

CABINET

19TH NOVEMBER 2015

## COMMENTS ON CABINET AGENDA ITEMS FROM:

- **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SOCIAL WELL-BEING),  
3RD NOVEMBER 2015**
- **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ECONOMIC WELL-BEING),  
5TH NOVEMBER 2015**
- **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING),  
10TH NOVEMBER 2015**

### 3. INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE REPORT, 2015/16 QUARTER 2

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) considered the Integrated Performance Report for Quarter 2. This was the first time the complete set of integrated performance information had been submitted to the Panel. At the suggestion of the Chairman, it was decided that key areas would be allocated Members of the Panel who would then focus on them. This task would be completed at the next meeting. The Panel proceeded to examine in detail the information presented. Members were informed that 83% of the key actions were on target and of the reasons why some measures had not been achieved.

A comment was made that the Council appeared not to be achieving some Development Management targets but, at the same time, it had made savings by holding open a number of posts in that section. In response, Councillor D Dew, Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning and Housing, accepted that the service had experienced problems but he stated that the vacant posts had not necessarily caused them. The Development Management section was subject to review and practices had been changed, which had resulted in more effective recruitment. The appointment of a new Planning Services Manager (Development Management) was the first step and he had been given a number of key additional roles. Improvements in performance had already been achieved. With particular reference to fast track pre-application advice, Councillor Dew stated that although the target had been missed, he was most disappointed that only one such enquiry had been received. An Officer recently had been appointed who would be solely responsible for this service.

Members commented generally on the need to improve communications between Development Management and other sections within the Council and with developers. Having been advised that measures had been taken in these areas and that ambitious targets had been adopted, which were achievable, assurances were received that it was highly unlikely the Council would be put into special measures as it did not have a history of failing to meet its targets. It was suggested that future performance monitoring might include the length of time it took to issue decisions once planning permission had been approved.

Members were informed that the Building Control shared service would achieve the expected savings because the budget allocated was net of the savings. It was reported that there was not a correlation between the Council's collection of business rates and the collection of rent.

The view was expressed that the Budget Consultation should be more effective. The aim was to obtain feedback that would enable the Council to take decisions informed by public opinion. It was suggested that preparation for consulting businesses in the New Year should begin urgently.

It was suggested that the Panel should receive a report on the Council's overall financial position. However, it was expected that the Budget report to the next meeting would provide this information. With regards to One Leisure's financial targets, Councillor R B Howe indicated that the service aimed to achieve commercial rates of return on the capital employed within five years.

Councillor Dew responded to a question on affordable housing by stating that the viability test and Government changes to the thresholds meant it was unlikely that targets linked to need identified through the Strategic Housing Market Assessment would be achieved. On a related matter, the Council currently was examining the implications of government changes on Registered Providers.

The uptake of activities for young people was discussed, with the Head of Leisure and Health reporting that this had been affected by cuts to Youth Service funding. It was suggested that the Police and Crime Commissioner might provide funding for youth services.

During discussion on the projects being undertaken, a Member drew attention to the fact that some projects did not have any documents on the SharePoint site. It was agreed that this would be pursued through the Project Management Select Committee.

Through the Financial Performance Monitoring Suite for September 2015, Members gave consideration to a proposal to use an underspend in the current year to bring forward the procurement of an upgrade to the Capita payments system. On the grounds that it would improve resilience and the disaster recovery arrangements, the proposal was supported.

The Panel resolved:

- a) that the Cabinet be recommended to note the Panel's comments on progress against the Key Activities and Corporate Indicators and current projects and on the Financial Performance Monitoring Suite, and
- b) that the Cabinet be recommended to include a supplementary capital bid in the 2015/16 Capital Programme for an upgrade to the Capita payments system.

## **5. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS**

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) was informed of the process for the progression of a Neighbourhood Plan in response to the receipt of an Examiner's report into a Neighbourhood Plan. A Member raised the concern that the Cabinet can reject a Neighbourhood Plan after it has been through the process and would like to know the circumstances in which a Neighbourhood Plan would be rejected.

A suggestion of holding Neighbourhood Plan referendums at only two points a year was rejected by the Panel as they believe that as soon as the Neighbourhood Plan is ready there is no reason to hold up a referendum in the hope of a greater turnout.

The Panel agreed with the recommendations of the report and emphasised that it is important for Town and Parish Councils developing a Neighbourhood Plan to have a project plan in place. However, the Panel has suggested that time limits should be set for windows within which the Council is required to take actions, particularly for the periods between submission of a draft Neighbourhood Plan and the independent examination and between modifications being made following the examination and the referendum taking place.



## **6. ST NEOTS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) was informed of the proposed modifications to the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan and the progress towards a referendum. The Panel endorsed the Examiner's report and recommended modifications and agreed that Cabinet should progress the Neighbourhood Plan to a referendum. Members added that any changes the Cabinet wishes to make to the Neighbourhood Plan should be made clearly and conveyed to the Town Council swiftly so that a clean copy can be produced to take to referendum. It was suggested that a message should be communicated to those currently involved in other Neighbourhood Plans to ensure that responsibilities and timescales were clear.

## **7. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING WORKING GROUP**

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) was informed of the Affordable Housing Working Group's findings and recommendations. A Member of the Panel was concerned with the wording of the recommendation that "Where a parish council does not support an exceptions site, the Council should continue to fulfil its duty to meet identified affordable housing need". The Panel was told that such affordable housing need would be identified through needs assessment tests that would only allow an exceptions site to come forward where there were clear local requirements.

The Panel raised a query regarding the affordable housing threshold that the Working Group proposed and how this related to current Government policy. This has been clarified in the report to Cabinet and it has been confirmed that recent changes do not affect the Working Group's recommendation that on-site affordable housing provision should be lowered from 15 to 10 homes.

Members suggested that education amongst Members on the topic of affordable housing was important in helping Members to assist in finding and securing affordable housing sites.

The Panel endorsed the Working Group's findings and requested that the Cabinet consider and respond to the recommendations in 6.2 of the report.

## **8. LOCAL PLAN TO 2036 UPDATE**

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) was updated with the latest position of the Local Plan To 2036. Following discussions over the possibility of producing a 10 year plan instead of a full 15 year plan, Members felt that Officers should continue to work on providing a 15 year Local Plan. However, Members recognised that due to practicalities this may not be possible so accepted that there may be a need for a 10 year Local Plan for contingency purposes. Members agreed that resources should be focussed on determining whether development at Wyton can be proved deliverable or not. Should there be any need to explore the inclusion of any new sites, Members were assured that the Council would be required to undertake further consultation.

The Panel thought it was an improvement that the Local Plan insists that infrastructure to major developments is now planned in advance. Members believe that this would prevent infrastructure from becoming an afterthought.

The Panel noted the deadlines set out by Government, particularly the requirement for the Local Plan to be written by early 2017 but felt there needs to be a greater steer from Government on what it means by 'to be written' and 'early 2017' as these phrases are open to different interpretations.

## **9. TREASURY MANAGEMENT 6-MONTH PERFORMANCE REVIEW**

Having commented on a loan by the Council and on the spread of the Council's investments, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) received additional detailed information on the terms of those investments. The Panel noted the contents of the report and recommended that the Cabinet endorse the report for submission to the Council.

## **13. ONE LEISURE NEGOTIATIONS**

In considering the report the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) discussed whether the Council should accept a degree of risk in order to secure the expected benefits of an agreement. However, it was concluded that One Leisure's financial position should not be jeopardised. The Panel have supported the recommendations to the Cabinet with the additional recommendation that:

- reports on the progress of negotiations and on the terms of any agreement reached are submitted to Overview and Scrutiny.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3, 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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