

A meeting of the **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING)** will be held in **CIVIC SUITE 0.1A, PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON, CAMBS, PE29 3TN** on **TUESDAY, 10TH 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 - 8)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 8th September 2015.

**A Green  
388008**

**2. MEMBER'S INTERESTS**

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

**3. NOTICE OF KEY EXECUTIVE DECISIONS** (Pages 9 - 14)

A copy of the current Notice of Key Executive Decisions is attached. Members are invited to note the Plan and to comment as appropriate on any items contained therein.

**M Sage  
388007**

**4. WASTE POLICY DEVELOPMENTS AND HUNTINGDON NEEDS ANALYSIS OF OPEN SPACES AND PLAY FUNCTIONS** (Pages 15 - 30)

The Waste Policy Developments and Huntingdon Needs Analysis of Open Spaces and Play Functions is to be presented to the Panel.

**A Merrick  
388635**

**5. LOCAL PLAN TO 2036 - UPDATE** (Pages 31 - 38)

To receive an update on the Huntingdonshire Local Plan To 2036.

**P Bland  
388430**

**6. (a) NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS** (Pages 39 - 52)

The Panel is to receive a report in response to an Examiner's report into a neighbourhood plan.

**P Bland  
388430**

**6. (b) ST NEOTS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN** (Pages 53 - 224)

To receive a report on the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan.

**P Bland  
388430**

**7. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL STRUCTURE** (Pages 225 - 234)

Daniel Buckridge, Policy, Performance & Transformation Manager is to update the Panel on the new scrutiny panel structure.

**D Buckridge  
388065**

**8. WORKPLAN STUDIES** (Pages 235 - 236)

To consider the work programmes of the Social and Economic Well-Being Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

**A Green  
388008**

**9. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROGRESS** (Pages 237 - 246)

To consider a report on the Panel's activities and scrutinise decisions taken since the last meeting as set out in the Decision Digest.

**A Green  
388008**

Dated this 2nd 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.

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**Please contact Mr Adam Green, Democratic Services Officer, Tel No. 01480 388008/e-mail Adam.Green@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 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING) held in Civic Suite 0.1A, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, Cambs, PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 8th September 2015.

PRESENT: Councillor T D Sanderson – Chairman.

Councillors I C Bates, Mrs B E Boddington, Mrs S Conboy, J W Davies, Mrs A Dickinson, Mrs L A Duffy, I D Gardener, P Kadewere and R J West.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors D A Giles and K D Wainwright.

### **24. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 14th July 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **25. MEMBER'S INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest received from those Members that were present.

### **26. NOTICE OF KEY EXECUTIVE DECISIONS**

The Panel received and noted the current Notice of Key Executive Decisions (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which has been prepared by the Executive Leader for the period 1st September to 31st December 2015.

### **27. CPE (CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT)**

The Executive Member for Commercial Activities introduced the Civil Parking Enforcement report to the Panel. It was explained to the Panel that the report revisits the parking enforcement issue, and makes the case for a more lenient view in the interests of economic development; a stricter regime could be seen to penalise local business owners for example. The Panel were informed that in practical terms, the cost of Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) far outweighs the benefits; therefore the recommendation is that it is not taken forward at this stage.

The Interim Head of Operations added that following a lengthy consultancy report, it became clear that although the powers of enforcement and the revenue that it can generate are desirable, a whole new regime of regulations and extensive set up costs would be required. With no solid business case to support CPE, it is advised that the Council do not adopt it and that it instead works with Cambridgeshire County Council on a broader traffic management plan which has the potential to positively affect parking issues locally.

Members of the Panel questioned whether issues faced locally for residential parking have been taken into account. The Panel were told that although residential parking is a separate issue at this stage, there are alternative ways of dealing with these issues than heavy enforcement, and working with CCC and the Planning Department to ensure residents are provided with parking can be more effective in the long term.

A Panel Member asserted that with a lack of Police statistics on unlawful parking, that the issues of local parking had not been considered in full. In response, the Executive Member for Commercial Activities informed the Members that they acknowledge that further information from the Police would have been useful but the cost justification of CPE remains inadequate with the annual overheads unbearable by the Council in the current economic position.

Members suggested that a report to follow with further, more comprehensive information so that the issue can be seen with further clarity would be advantageous, and also that the CPE decision be reviewed in the future. This was agreed and will be added to the recommendations to Cabinet.

The Panel agreed that the report be endorsed by Cabinet, with one abstention.

## **28. OPERATIONS REVIEW QUARTERLY UPDATE**

The Operations Review Quarterly Update was presented to the Panel by the Interim Head of Operations and the Executive Councillor for Operations and Environment. The Panel were informed that the report provides the opportunity for Members to scrutinise the St Ives green spaces and play needs analysis and the new garden waste contamination policy before they are adopted by the Council.

Members of the Panel began discussions on graffiti removal and issues surrounding bin collections. The Panel were informed that particular area problems with graffiti are monitored by the Police, and that the Council are working with the Police to identify offenders. A Panel member suggested that reporting of incidents at particular geographical areas would assist in these investigations; the Interim Head of Operations directed the Members to the Members Contact Form (Appendix 5) which will help to gain some control over the issue with this kind of feedback from Members providing trackable progress.

Regarding the problems associated with residents leaving bins out extended periods of time after collection, Members were informed that the restructure of the Operations Department has meant that there are now resources available to work with residents to prevent this. Progress is also shown in the report concerning weed control and fly posting. The Executive Councillor for Operations and Environment extended his thanks to those Councillors who provided focused, local information which will inform plans for the year ahead.

The Panel were then directed to the Scrutiny section of the report,

first considering Greenspaces and Play Needs Analysis for St Ives (Appendix two). The Overview section of the report dealt with town and parish councils; the second section moves on to more detailed work starting with the three market towns in Huntingdonshire and greenspaces therein. The Council are working to be more specific on the needs of local areas and projects that will help that need. The report also details what green spaces there are, what they need, and any gaps in provision.

When considering the information on Play Provision in the area, Members were informed that the needs analysis showed that there is a good level of provision and that these provisions need to be maintained and expanded to other sites. A targeted investment approach is favoured, which allows for affordable future proofing of these sites.

Members of the Panel discussed the council's Garden Waste Policy which has been altered to include a more customer focused approach, which will include solid answers to residents regarding why their bin may have not been collected. This will take the form of digital photography evidence, reasoning and education for those residents who may be repeat offenders.

The report was supported and endorsed by the Panel.

## **29. INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE MONITORING (QUARTER 1)**

The Panel's discussions centred on the planning application performance indicators set out in Appendix B. The Head of Development informed Members that staffing issues have had an impact on the team's ability to meet targets. Vacancies have now been filled, with a permanent Planning Services Manager (Development Management) recently recruited, and new processes have been put in place to improve performance and resilience. These measures are expected to rapidly improve over the coming months.

The Panel noted the report and commended the honest reporting of issues and the steps being made to deliver improvements.

## **30. WORKPLAN STUDIES**

The Panel received and noted a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which contained details of studies being undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels for Social Well-Being and Environmental Well-Being.

## **31. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROGRESS**

With the aid of a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel reviewed the progress of its activities since the last meeting.

## **32. SCRUTINY**

The 157th Edition of the Decision Digest was received and noted.

Chairman





**NOTICE OF KEY EXECUTIVE DECISIONS INCLUDING THOSE TO BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE**

**Prepared by** Councillor J D Ablewhite  
**Date of Publication:** 21 October 2015  
**For Period:** 1 November 2015 to 29 February 2016

Membership of the Cabinet is as follows:-

|                          |  |  |
|--------------------------|--|--|
| Councillor J D Ablewhite | - Executive Leader of the Council                              | 3 Pettis Road<br>St. Ives<br>Huntingdon PE27 6SR<br><br>Tel: 01480 466941 E-mail: <a href="mailto:Jason.Ablewhite@huntingdonshire.gov.uk">Jason.Ablewhite@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</a> |
| Councillor R C Carter    | - Executive Councillor for Operations & Environment            | 5 The Paddock<br>Bluntisham<br>Huntingdon PE28 3NR<br><br>Tel: 07986 325637 E-mail: <a href="mailto:Robin.Carter@huntingdonshire.gov.uk">Robin.Carter@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</a>     |
| Councillor S Cawley      | - Executive Councillor for Organisational Change & Development | 6 Levers Water<br>Huntingdon PE29 6TH<br><br>Tel: 01480 435188 E-mail: <a href="mailto:Stephen.Cawley@huntingdonshire.gov.uk">Stephen.Cawley@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</a>              |
| Councillor D B Dew       | - Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning & Housing        | 4 Weir Road<br>Hemingford Grey<br>Huntingdon PE28 9EH<br><br>Tel: 01480 469814 E-mail: <a href="mailto:Douglas.Dew@huntingdonshire.gov.uk">Douglas.Dew@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</a>    |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Councillor J A Gray - Executive Councillor for Resources   | Vine Cottage<br>2 Station Row<br>Catworth<br>Huntingdon PE28 0PE<br><br>Tel: 01480 861941 E-mail: <a href="mailto:Jonathan.Gray@huntingdonshire.gov.uk">Jonathan.Gray@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</a> |
| Councillor R Harrison - Executive Councillor for Strategic Economic Development & Legal                  | 55 Bushmead Road<br>Eaton Socon<br>St Neots<br>PE19 8GC<br><br>Tel: 01480 406664 Email: <a href="mailto:Roger.Harrison@huntingdonshire.gov.uk">Roger.Harrison@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</a>         |
| Councillor R Howe - Deputy Executive Leader of the Council with responsibility for Commercial Activities | The Old Barn<br>High Street<br>Upwood<br>Huntingdon PE26 2QE<br><br>Tel: 01487 814393 E-mail: <a href="mailto:Robin.Howe@huntingdonshire.gov.uk">Robin.Howe@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</a>           |
| Councillor D M Tysoe - Executive Councillor for Customer Services  | Grove Cottage<br>Maltings Lane<br>Ellington<br>Huntingdon PE28 OAA<br><br>Tel: 01480 388310 E-mail: <a href="mailto:Darren.Tysoe@huntingdonshire.gov.uk">Darren.Tysoe@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</a> |

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Notice is hereby given of:

- Key decisions that will be taken by the Cabinet (or other decision maker)
- Confidential or exempt executive decisions that will be taken in a meeting from which the public will be excluded (for whole or part).

A notice/agenda together with reports and supporting documents for each meeting will be published at least five working days before the date of the meeting. In order to enquire about the availability of documents and subject to any restrictions on their disclosure, copies may be requested by contacting the Democratic Services Team on 01480 388169 or E-mail [Democratic.Services@huntingdonshire.gov.uk](mailto:Democratic.Services@huntingdonshire.gov.uk). Agendas may be accessed electronically at [www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk](http://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk).

Formal notice is hereby given under The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 that, where indicated part of the meetings listed in this notice will be held in private because the agenda and reports for the meeting will contain confidential or exempt information under Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended) and that the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing it. See the relevant paragraphs below.

Any person who wishes to make representations to the decision maker about a decision which is to be made or wishes to object to an item being considered in private may do so by emailing [Democratic.Services@huntingdonshire.gov.uk](mailto:Democratic.Services@huntingdonshire.gov.uk) or by contacting the Democratic Services Team. If representations are received at least eight working days before the date of the meeting, they will be published with the agenda together with a statement of the District Council's response. Any representations received after this time will be verbally reported and considered at the meeting.

**Paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended) (Reason for the report to be considered in private)**

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the Financial and Business Affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information)
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations or contemplated consultations or negotiations in connection with any labour relations that are arising between the Authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of or office holders under the Authority
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings
6. Information which reveals that the Authority proposes:-
  - (a) To give under any announcement a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
  - (b) To make an Order or Direction under any enactment
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

Huntingdonshire District Council  
 Pathfinder House  
 St Mary's Street  
 Huntingdon PE29 3TN.

- Notes:- (i) Additions changes from the previous Forward Plan are annotated \*\*\*  
 (ii) Part II confidential items which will be considered in private are annotated ## and shown in italic.

| → Subject/Matter for Decision                | Decision/ recommendation to be made by | Date decision to be taken | Documents Available | How relevant Officer can be contacted  | Reasons for the report to be considered in private | Relevant Executive Councillor | Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel |
|--|--|---------------------------|---------------------|--|--|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Housing Register Lettings Policy Amendment   | Cabinet                                | 19 Nov 2015               |                     | Jon Collen, Housing Needs and Resources Manager Tel No. 01480 388220 or email: Jon.Collen@huntingdonshire.gov.uk |  | D Tysoe                       | Social Well-Being                  |
| Huntingdonshire Infrastructure Business Plan | Cabinet                                | 19 Nov 2015               |                     | Paul Bland, Planning Service Manager (Policy) Tel No. 01480 388430 email: Paul.Bland@huntingdonshire.gov.uk      |  | D Dew                         | Environmental Well-Being           |
| Customer Service Strategy ***                | Cabinet                                | 19 Nov 2015               |                     | John Taylor, Head of Customer Services Tel No. 01480 388119 email: John.Taylor@huntingdonshire.gov.uk            |  | D Tysoe                       | Economic Well-Being                |

| Subject/Matter for Decision                      | Decision/recommendation to be made by | Date decision to be taken | Documents Available | How relevant Officer can be contacted   | Reasons for the report to be considered in private | Relevant Executive Councillor | Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|---|--|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| One Leisure Negotiations*** ##                   | Cabinet                               | 19 Nov 2015               |                     | Brian Gray, Business Manager Development<br>Tel No. 01480 388058 email:<br>Brian.Gray@huntingdonshire.gov.uk        | Paragraphs 3 & 4                                   | R Howe                        | Social Well-Being                  |
| Neighbourhood Plans ***                          | Cabinet                               | 19 Nov 2015               |                     | Paul Bland, Planning Service Manager (Policy) Tel No. 01480 388430 email:<br>Paul.Bland@huntingdonshire.gov.uk      |  | D Dew                         | Environmental Well-Being           |
| St Neots Neighbourhood Plan ***                  | Cabinet                               | 19 Nov 2015               |                     | Paul Bland, Planning Service Manager (Policy) Tel No. 01480 388430 email:<br>Paul.Bland@huntingdonshire.gov.uk      |  | D Dew                         | Environmental Well-Being           |
| Approval of Council Tax Base 2016/2017           | Section 151 Officer                   | 1 Dec 2015                |                     | Ian Sims, Local Taxation Manager Tel No. 01480 388138 or email<br>Ian.Sims@huntingdonshire.gov.uk                   |  | J Gray                        | Economic Well-Being                |
| Home Improvement Agency - Annual Report          | Cabinet                               | 10 Dec 2015               |                     | Jo Emmerton, Housing Strategy Manager Tel No. 01480 388203 or email:<br>Jo.Emmerton@huntingdonshire.gov.uk          |  | D B Dew                       | Social Well-Being                  |
| Fraud Prosecution Policy                         | Cabinet                               | 10 Dec 2015               |                     | Amanda Burns, Benefits Manager Tel No. 01480 388122 email:<br>Amanda.Burns@huntingdonshire.gov.uk                   |  | D Tysoe                       | Economic Well-Being                |
| Commercial Investment Strategy Business Plan *** | Cabinet                               | 10 Dec 2015               |                     | Ms Julie Slatter, Corporate Director (Services) Tel No. 01480 388301 email:<br>Julie.Slatter@huntingdonshire.gov.uk |  | J Gray                        | Economic Well-Being                |
| Procurement Policy ***                           | Cabinet                               | 10 Dec 2015               |                     | Nigel Arkle, Procurement Manager Tel No. 01480 388104 email:<br>Nigel.Arkle@huntingdonshire.gov.uk                  |  | J Gray                        | Economic Well-Being                |

| Subject/Matter for Decision   | Decision/ recommendation to be made by | Date decision to be taken | Documents Available | How relevant Officer can be contacted   | Reasons for the report to be considered in private | Relevant Executive Councillor | Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel |
|---|--|---------------------------|---------------------|---|--|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Principles ***   | Council                                | 16 Dec 2015               |                     | Christine Allison, Licensing Manager Tel No. 01480 388010 email: Christine.Allison@huntingdonshire.gov.uk |  | R Harrison                    | Social Well-Being                  |
| Statement of Licensing Policy ***   | Council                                | 16 Dec 2015               |                     | Christine Allison, Licensing Manager Tel No. 01480 388010 email: Christine.Allison@huntingdonshire.gov.uk |  | R Harrison                    | Social Well-Being                  |
| Approval of Final 2016/17 Revenue and Capital Budgets and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2017/18 to 2020/21 *** | Cabinet                                | 11 Feb 2016               |                     | Clive Mason, Head of Resources Tel No. 01480 388157 email: Clive.Mason@huntingdonshire.gov.uk             |  | J Gray                        | Economic Well-Being                |
| →<br>Treasury Management Strategy 2016/17 ***   | Cabinet                                | 11 Feb 2016               |                     | Clive Mason, Head of Resources Tel No. 01480 388157 email: Clive.Mason@huntingdonshire.gov.uk             |  | J Gray                        | Economic Well-Being                |

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

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| <b>Title/Subject Matter:</b> | Waste Policy Developments & Huntingdon Needs Analysis of Open Space & Play Facilities. |
| <b>Meeting/Date:</b>         | Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-being) – 10 November 2015              |
| <b>Executive Portfolio:</b>  | Councillor Robin Carter – Executive Councillor for Operations & the Environment        |
| <b>Report by:</b>            | Alistair Merrick – Interim Head of Service (Operations)                                |
| <b>Ward(s) affected:</b>     | All Wards  |

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### **Executive Summary:**

1. The report provides the Panel with the opportunity to overview the progress made on the review work required to develop a new lane end collection policy for the Waste Service. This review work was dependent on the surveying of 87 separate locations and this work has taken longer time to complete than originally planned because it has also in certain instances required dialogue with local residents about their particularly circumstances.
2. The survey work is now completed to confirm the appropriate collection arrangement by location. This will now enable the route planning work to be undertaken and notification of residents of any changed collection arrangements by the end of January 2016 for the introduction of any changed collection arrangements. However, if specific problems existed at a location that required immediate attention then remedial action has been taken.
3. The report also provides the opportunity for the Panel to scrutinise the Huntingdon green spaces and play needs analysis and the new dry recyclates contamination policy before they are adopted.
  - a) The Greenspaces and Play Needs Analysis for Huntingdon is the needs analysis work completed for Huntingdon of current provision against the benchmarks for provision. The conclusions reached are as follows:
    - Overall the town is well provided for in terms of green space including parks, open spaces, natural and semi-natural spaces with no action being recommended to enhance existing provision.

- There is a shortage of allotment provision in the town, in the North and West Wards and there are proposals recommended to address this by creating community gardens at Mill Common (West Ward) and Sapley Playing Fields (North Ward).
- Play provision is largely fit for purpose in the Town but would benefit from enhancement of four existing play areas to create NEAP (Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play) facilities this investment can be funded through use of current Section 106 monies.
- b) Building on the garden waste contamination policy previously scrutinised by this Panel a complementary contamination policy has been developed for dry recyclates that focuses on customer needs. This operational policy involves the following:
  - Crews taking a photograph of contaminated recyclates in a bin to be able to evidence to the resident the reason for rejection.
  - If it is clear small items have been dropped into the bin overnight then the crews will now remove such items and tie them to the emptied bin in a small recycling sack that promotes recycling. This will request the resident to support us by correctly recycling the items.
  - Other small items that are not recyclable and that are not easy to remove will be left in the bin but the bin will be emptied. This has now been agreed with the waste processor.

**Recommendation(s):**

1. The Panel are invited to make comments that will be included in the future reports to Cabinet concerning the two matters submitted for scrutiny, the Huntingdon green spaces and play needs analysis and the new dry recyclates contamination policy.



## 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The report provides the Panel with the opportunity to overview the progress made on the review work required to develop a new lane end collection policy for the Waste Service; and the opportunity for the Panel to scrutinise the Huntingdon green spaces and play needs analysis and the new dry recycles contamination policy before they are adopted.

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 **Overview Matters:** The collection of waste from lane ends and unadopted roads has been an issue for a number of residents, specifically when the Council will collect from a point or the properties within the lane end or when the residents are required to pull the bins to the access point of a lane end. This report provides an update on the review work completed and outstanding to develop a lane end policy that ensures customer needs are consistently met within a safe working environment for the collection crews.

- 2.2 **Progress to date:** A survey of those properties that may be affected has been undertaken over the last four months using external resources to ensure progress was made during the restructure of Operations. This survey assessed the following:

- Road surface condition;
- Road width;
- Road length and the provision of passing places (if necessary);
- Height clearance;
- Turning area for the vehicle;
- Access – e.g. are there any locked gates;
- Any other resident issues that impact on collections.

- 2.3 In total 87 tracks, lanes or unadopted roads have been surveyed individually. This has proved more time consuming than planned because of the level of detail that has needed to be collated. In certain instances it has required dialogue with local residents about their particular circumstances, specifically asking them to warranty the Council in respect to any damage caused to an unadopted road by Council collection vehicles, if it is used to access properties for collections.

- 2.4 Some of these locations have one property; others have a number of properties, and we are now able to quantify the overall numbers of properties potentially affected. The information from the survey is now being reviewed on individual basis to see whether collections could continue in their current format (with an indemnity from the property owners on an unadopted road being put in place to allow collections from properties) or whether alternative arrangements need to be considered.

- 2.4 This next phase of review work will include route planning work to finalise the proposed lane end policy which it is targeted to bring back to Overview and Scrutiny in January 2016 for scrutiny and consideration in advance of submitting the policy to Cabinet for approval and prior to any information being sent to residents.

2.5 Members should note that where specific problems existed at a particular site that required immediate attention then remedial action has been taken as part of the drive to improve the customer orientation of the Waste Service.

2.6 **Scrutiny Matters:** The report also allows the Panel to scrutinise the following two matters before they are adopted:

- The Huntingdon green spaces and play needs analysis that has been developed to better target both capital and revenue resources of both the Town and District Councils going forward at a time of diminishing resources.
- The new dry recycles contamination policy that builds on the garden waste contamination policy previously scrutinised by this Panel as a complimentary contamination policy that focuses on customer needs.

### 3. ISSUES FOR SCRUTINY

3.1 The following are the matters for the Panel to review as part of the scrutiny function of the Panel.

3.2 **Greenspaces and Play Needs Analysis for Huntingdon: Appendix 1** contains the needs analysis work completed for Huntingdon. The conclusions reached are as follows:

- a) The green space provision for parks and gardens is only deficient in the West Ward. However the West Ward does have a high level of industrial development where the main area of deficiency is showing. The East and North Wards are within the policy requirement.
- b) Development through capital resources of some of the natural and semi-natural areas as parks and gardens in the south of the West Ward is a consideration. However, because the A14 divides the ward this would only benefit a small residential area as there is limited access across the A14, consequently there would be a low return on investment, and therefore no further action is recommended. There are no other suitable sites in the ward for development.
- c) The North Ward is deficient in natural and semi natural green space. The East and West Wards are both over provided for making the total provision for Huntingdon 117 hectares over the policy requirement as set out in Table 1 of Appendix 1.
- d) In the North Ward there are no potential sites that could be converted to natural and semi-natural green space, therefore no further action is being recommended because of the over provision within the town as a whole.
- e) Both the North and West Wards are lacking allotments and community gardens. However the allotment in the West Ward is closer to more houses in the North Ward than many of those in the West Ward. There is an overall deficiency in Huntingdon as a whole of three hectares.

- 3.3 To address the shortfall in allotment provision the following options exist for the Town Council subject to funding becoming available:
- In the West Ward the area south of the A14, Mill Common; currently natural and semi-natural green space, part of this site could be considered as a community garden.
  - In the North Ward part of the Sapley Playing Fields could also be considered as a community garden or allotments, this would also benefit many of the residents from the West Ward.
- 3.4 **Play:** Huntingdon is made up of three wards and when properly analysed it became clear that there was a need for a limited increase in play provision throughout the wards; which can be achieved using existing allocated Section 106 funding for Huntingdon.
- 3.5 After consultation with Huntingdon Town Council, 4 sites have been identified (shown in Appendix 1) as potential locations that could be increased to ensure adequate play coverage against the benchmark for provision. These areas are:
- *The Pits, Sapley Road Play Area* Locally Equipped Area for Play (LEAP) (Town Council owned) to increase the existing play area to a Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP) by installing a ball game element along with other facilities.
  - *Sallowbush Road, adjacent to Multi-use Games Area (MUGA)* (HDC owned) to increase existing site to include a play area and re-designating the site as a NEAP.
  - *Devoke Close, Stukeley Meadows Local Area for Play (LAP)* (Town Council owned) to increase the existing play area by installing a low key ball element with other facilities to make it a NEAP.
  - *Elsie's Way, field adjacent to Huntingdon Gym* (Town Council owned) to install ball game element and other facilities to increase to a NEAP.
- 3.6 The Panel are invited to scrutinise the conclusions reached and the proposed actions. It is planned to continue with the needs analysis work to St Neots and then other towns, including Sawtry and Godmanchester. This work will then be brought together to underpin the development of a new Parks, Open Spaces and Play Facilities Strategy as a key corporate plan issue. It will also mean the use of Section 106 monies will be targeted to refurbishment and redevelopment of current facilities rather than creating new facilities if this is the priority confirmed through the needs analysis work.
- 3.7 **Dry Recyclates Contamination Policy:** to build on the contamination policy for garden waste previously scrutinised by this Panel a complementary contamination policy has been developed for dry recyclates. There are generally three causes for rejections:

- a) The resident is unclear about what can be recycled. This will be resolved by an improved awareness campaign scheduled for December 2015 and then on into 2016.
- b) Individuals who choose deliberately to not comply with the Council's collection policies. This is a very small number of people.
- c) When passers-by drop items in the top of a bin after it has been put out for collection the next day. Rejection on these grounds particularly aggravates residents.

3.8 In response the current dry recyclates contamination policy has been fundamentally reviewed and the new proposed policy is attached as **Appendix 2** to this report. This operational policy involves the following:

- a) Crews taking a photograph of contaminated waste in a bin to be able to evidence to the resident the reason for rejection, in doing so reduce the levels of debate with residents initiated through the Call Centre that the bin has been missed rather than rejected as contaminated. The photograph will be made available if required to the resident.
- b) If it is clear small items have been dropped into the bin overnight then the crews will now remove such items and tie them to the emptied bin in a small recycling sack that promotes recycling. This will request the resident to support us by correctly recycling the items.
- c) Other small items that are not recyclable and that are not easy to remove will be left in the bin but the bin will be emptied. This has now been agreed with the waste processor.

3.9 The Panel are invited to scrutinise the draft policy and propose any amendments for consideration by the Portfolio Holder.

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

4.1 Comments of the Panel will be included in future reports to the Cabinet concerning the two matters submitted for scrutiny, the Huntingdon green spaces and play needs analysis and the new dry recyclates contamination policy. The collection from Lane ends policy will be brought back to Scrutiny for consideration once further developed.

## **5. KEY IMPACTS/RISKS AND HOW THESE WILL BE ADDRESSED**

- 5.1 The structured approach (involving full consultation with town and parish councils) being adopted for the needs analysis work is to ensure priorities are being identified through robust assessment to then ensure capital and revenue resources to be more accurately targeted to the priorities. This is critical at a time of diminishing resources. It will also help to ensure the maintenance costs of the provision are sustainable in the medium term.
- 5.2 The development of the operational policies in the Waste Service is to improve orientation on the customer and to ensure efficiencies are driven out of the service by getting service right first time.

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

- 6.1 Each of these projects is in the service improvement plan and each has a deadline set for completion. On a monthly basis a RAG report (red, amber, green traffic light status) is produced to confirm progress being made. If a project or action is flagged as red, in danger of not being delivered it is targeted for intervention by the Head of Service to ensure it is ultimately delivered. This approach is consistent with Council's policy for the management of major projects and programmes.

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

- 7.1 The outputs and outcomes from these projects will fundamentally contribute to the Corporate Plan as follows:
- a) Enhancing fundamentally the built and green environment of the District.
  - b) Empowering local communities to become involved in the design of services.
  - c) Operations becoming much more business-like and efficient in the way it delivers services.
  - d) Ensuring that service improvement planning (priority setting) and service delivery in Operations is driven by customer engagement.

## **8. CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 The bespoke consultation is being progressed with the stakeholders specific to each area of policy development. For example residents are being consulted to future collection arrangements for each lane end subject to review if change to arrangements is proposed.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There are no immediate legal implications concerning the two matters submitted for scrutiny, the Huntingdon green spaces and play needs analysis and the new dry recycles contamination policy.

## **10. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 There are no immediate resource implications concerning the two matters submitted for scrutiny, the Huntingdon green spaces and play needs analysis and the new dry recyclates contamination policy. The work has been done within existing resources. The finalised operational policy for dry recyclates contamination will also be delivered within the existing resources of the Waste Service. The needs analysis work for green spaces and play facilities will also help to target future S106 monies better to priorities that have been clearly quantified. Specifically the cost of upgrading the four play areas in Huntingdon identified by the needs analysis would be circa £136,000 and this can be funded from seven existing Section 106 monies.

## **11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 The needs analysis work seeks to ensure an appropriate and equitable balance in the provision of green space and play facilities across the District to militate against under provision so that no residents are unreasonably excluded from such provision.
- 11.2 The new operational policy for dry recyclates contamination seeks to better support residents to recycle waste as a positive step in better management of the environment of the District.

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

- 12.1 The matter for overview in Section 2 of this report gives the Panel the opportunity for oversight of the work being done in the Operations Service to improve the service delivered by the Waste Service focused around the customer but also to delivery efficiencies.
- 12.2 The two matters for scrutiny give the Panel the opportunity to influence the final decision making regarding the Huntingdon green spaces and play needs analysis (and the priorities for investment) and the new dry recyclates contamination policy before introduction.

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

Appendix 1 - Huntingdon Greenspaces & Play Needs Analysis  
Appendix 2 – Draft Dry Recyclates Contamination Policy

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None.

## **CONTACT OFFICER**

Name/Job Title: Alistair Merrick – Interim Head of Service (Operations)  
Tel No. 388635

## Appendix 1: Huntingdon Green Space and Play Needs Analysis

Huntingdon comprises of three wards, East, North and West which has a variety of open space that provides numerous benefits to the local community. This document outlines the importance of these sites and will help us to consider the value, quality and future of these areas whilst trying to help create a sense of ownership, and maximising their usage.

The table below illustrates those areas of deficiency when related to the Council's policy requirements.

**Table 1: Identified Areas of Deficiency**

|   | East        |              | North       |              | West        |              | Total       |              |
|---|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
|   | Policy      | Actual (ha)* | Policy      | Actual (ha)* | Policy      | Actual (ha)* | Policy      | Actual (ha)* |
| Green Space Provision (ha)                          |             |              |             |              |             |              |             |              |
| Parks and Gardens                                   | 4.67        | 8.19         | 3.26        | 4.88         | 3.73        | 1.30         | 11.66       | 14.37        |
| Natural & Semi Natural                              | 2.24        | 14.74        | 1.56        | 0.00         | 1.79        | 108.00       | 5.59        | 122.74       |
| Allotments & Community Gardens                      | 3.11        | 3.29         | 2.17        | 0.00         | 2.48        | 1.55         | 7.77        | 4.84         |
| Play Provision (ha)                                 |             |              |             |              |             |              |             |              |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>2.43</b> | <b>0.29</b>  | <b>1.70</b> | <b>0.34</b>  | <b>1.94</b> | <b>0.32</b>  | <b>6.07</b> | <b>0.95</b>  |
| * HDC, TC & PC and 3rd party ownership all included |             |              |             |              |             |              |             |              |

Whilst Table 2 overleaf outlines in detail the actual Green Space and play provision in Huntingdon.

**Parks and Gardens:** The green space provision for parks and gardens is only deficient in the West Ward. However the West Ward does have a high industrial development where the main area of deficiency is showing. The East and North Wards are within the policy requirement.

Development through capital resources of some of the natural and semi-natural areas as parks and gardens in the south of the West Ward is a consideration. However, because the A14 divides the ward and this would only benefit a small residential area as there is limited access across the A14, consequently there would be a low return on investment, and therefore no further action is recommended. There are no other suitable sites in the ward.

**Natural and Semi Natural Green Space (N&SN):** The North Ward is deficient in natural and semi-natural Green Space. The East and West Wards are both over provided for making the total provision for Huntingdon 117 hectares over the policy requirement.

In the North Ward there are no potential sites that could be converted to natural and semi-natural green space, therefore no further action is recommended because of the over provision within the town as a whole.

**Allotments and Community Gardens (A&CG):** Both the North and West Wards are lacking allotments and community gardens. However the allotment in the West Ward is closer to more houses in the North Ward than many of those in the West Ward. There is an overall deficiency in Huntingdon as a whole of three hectares.

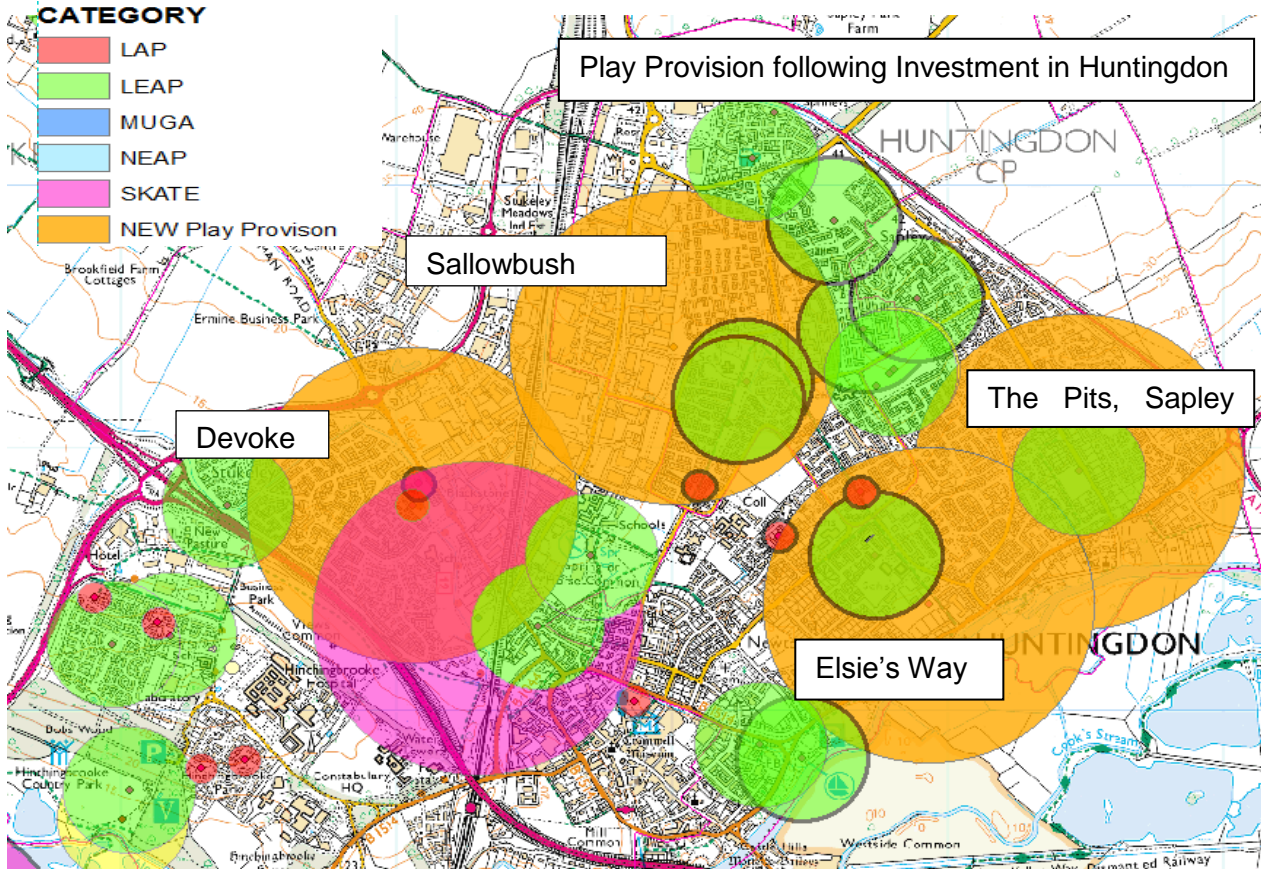
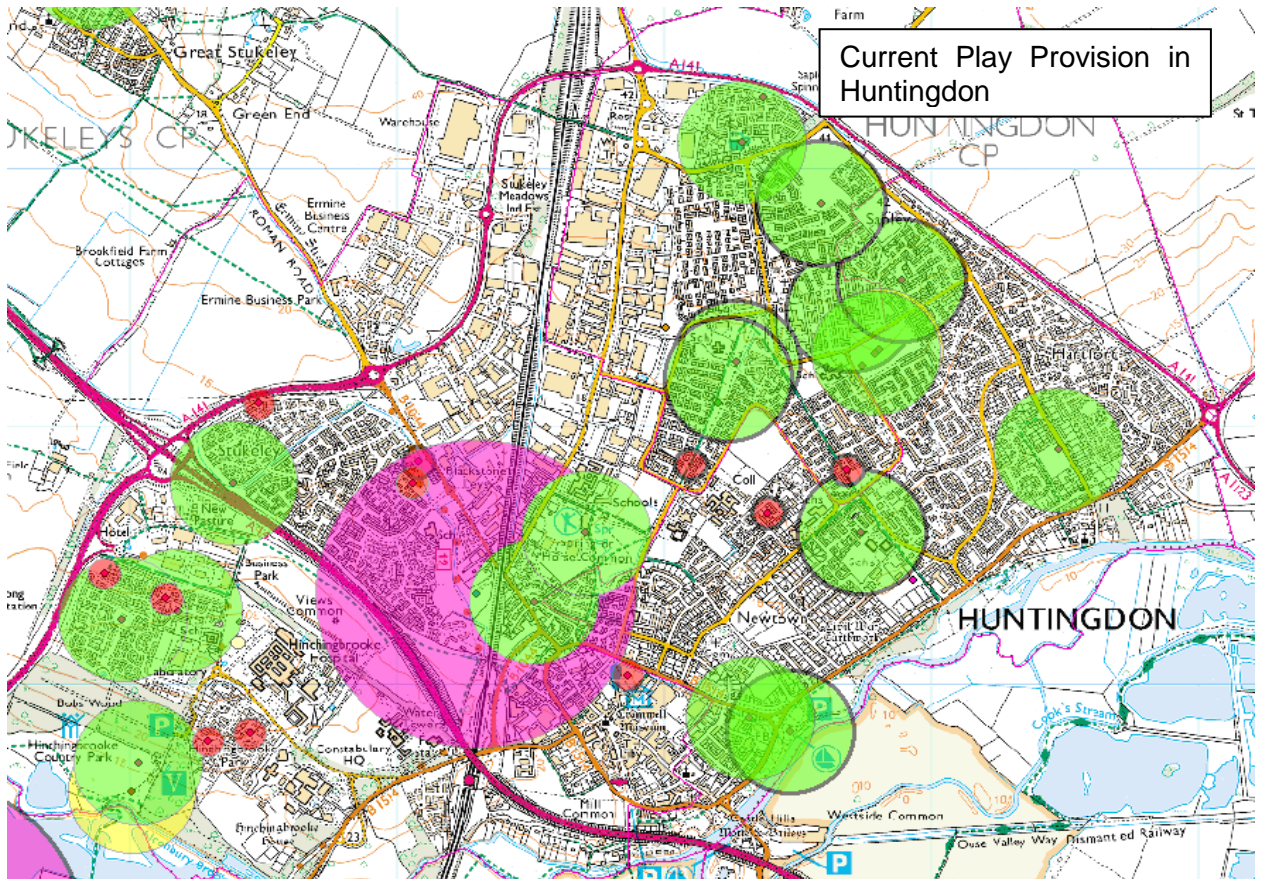
**Potential Action:** In the West Ward the area south of the A14, Mill Common; currently natural and semi-natural green space, part of this site could be considered as a community garden. In the North Ward part of the Sapley Playing Fields could also be considered as a community garden or allotments, this would also benefit many of the residents from the West Ward.

**Play:** Huntingdon is made up of three wards and when properly analysed it became clear that there was a need for a limited increase in play provision throughout the wards; which can be achieved using existing allocated Section 106 funding for Huntingdon.

**Potential Action:** After consultation with Huntingdon Town Council, 4 sites have been identified as potential locations that could be increased to ensure adequate play coverage against the benchmark for provision. These areas are:

- *The Pits, Sapley Road Play Area* LEAP (Town Council owned) to increase the existing play area to a NEAP by installing a ball game element along with other facilities.
- *Sallowbush Road, adjacent to MUGA* (HDC owned) to increase existing site to include a play area and re-designating the site as a NEAP.
- *Devoke Close, Stukeley Meadows* LAP (Town Council owned) to increase the existing play area by installing a low key ball element with other facilities to make it a NEAP.
- *Elsie's Way, field adjacent to Huntingdon Gym* (Town Council owned) to install ball game element and other facilities to increase to a NEAP.





| Table 2: Detailed Needs Analysis Data |  | East         |              | North        |              | West         |               | Total        |               |
|---------------------------------------|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| Population                            | Population figures taken from Lower Super Output Areas - National Office of Statistics   | 9,734        |              | 6,789        |              | 7,765        |               | 24,288       |               |
| Green Space Provision (ha)            | Green Space Definitions from PPG17   | Policy       | Actual (ha)* | Policy       | Actual (ha)* | Policy       | Actual (ha)*  | Policy       | Actual (ha)*  |
| Parks & Gardens                       | Accessible, high quality opportunities for informal recreation and community events  | 4.67         | 8.19         | 3.26         | 4.88         | 3.73         | 1.30          | 11.66        | 14.37         |
| Green Corridors                       | Walking, cycling or horse riding, whether for leisure purposes or travel and opportunities for wildlife migration  | 0.00         | 3.69         | 0.00         | 0.00         | 0.00         | 2.80          | 0.00         | 6.49          |
| Natural & Semi Natural                | Wildlife conservation, biodiversity and environmental education and awareness  | 2.24         | 14.74        | 1.56         | 0.00         | 1.79         | 108.00        | 5.59         | 122.74        |
| Allotments & Community Gardens        | Opportunities for those people who wish to do so to grow their own produce as part of the long term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion | 3.11         | 3.29         | 2.17         | 0.00         | 2.48         | 1.55          | 7.77         | 4.84          |
| Amenity Green Space                   | Opportunities for informal activities close to home or work or enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas                                   | 10.61        | 25.95        | 7.40         | 32.37        | 8.46         | 18.28         | 26.47        | 76.60         |
| <b>Total Green Space</b>              |  | <b>20.64</b> | <b>55.86</b> | <b>14.39</b> | <b>37.25</b> | <b>16.46</b> | <b>131.93</b> | <b>51.49</b> | <b>225.04</b> |
| Play Provision (ha)                   | <b>Definition</b>  |              |              |              |              |              |               |              |               |
| LAP (0.01ha)                          | Small play space aimed at up to 6yrs children, not equipped  | n/a          | 0.05         | n/a          | 0.04         | n/a          | 0.08          | n/a          | 0.17          |

|              |   |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
|--------------|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| LEAP(0.04ha) | Equipped play area, 5 types of equipment, 4-8yr olds                                    | n/a         | 0.24        | n/a         | 0.20        | n/a         | 0.24        | n/a         | 0.68        |
| NEAP(0.1ha)  | Equipped play area, 8 types of equipment to include ball games, aimed at older children | n/a         | 0.00        | n/a         | 0.10        | n/a         | 0.00        | n/a         | 0.10        |
| <b>Total</b> |   | <b>2.43</b> | <b>0.29</b> | <b>1.70</b> | <b>0.34</b> | <b>1.94</b> | <b>0.32</b> | <b>6.07</b> | <b>0.95</b> |

## Appendix 2: Contamination Policy – Dry Recycling Bins

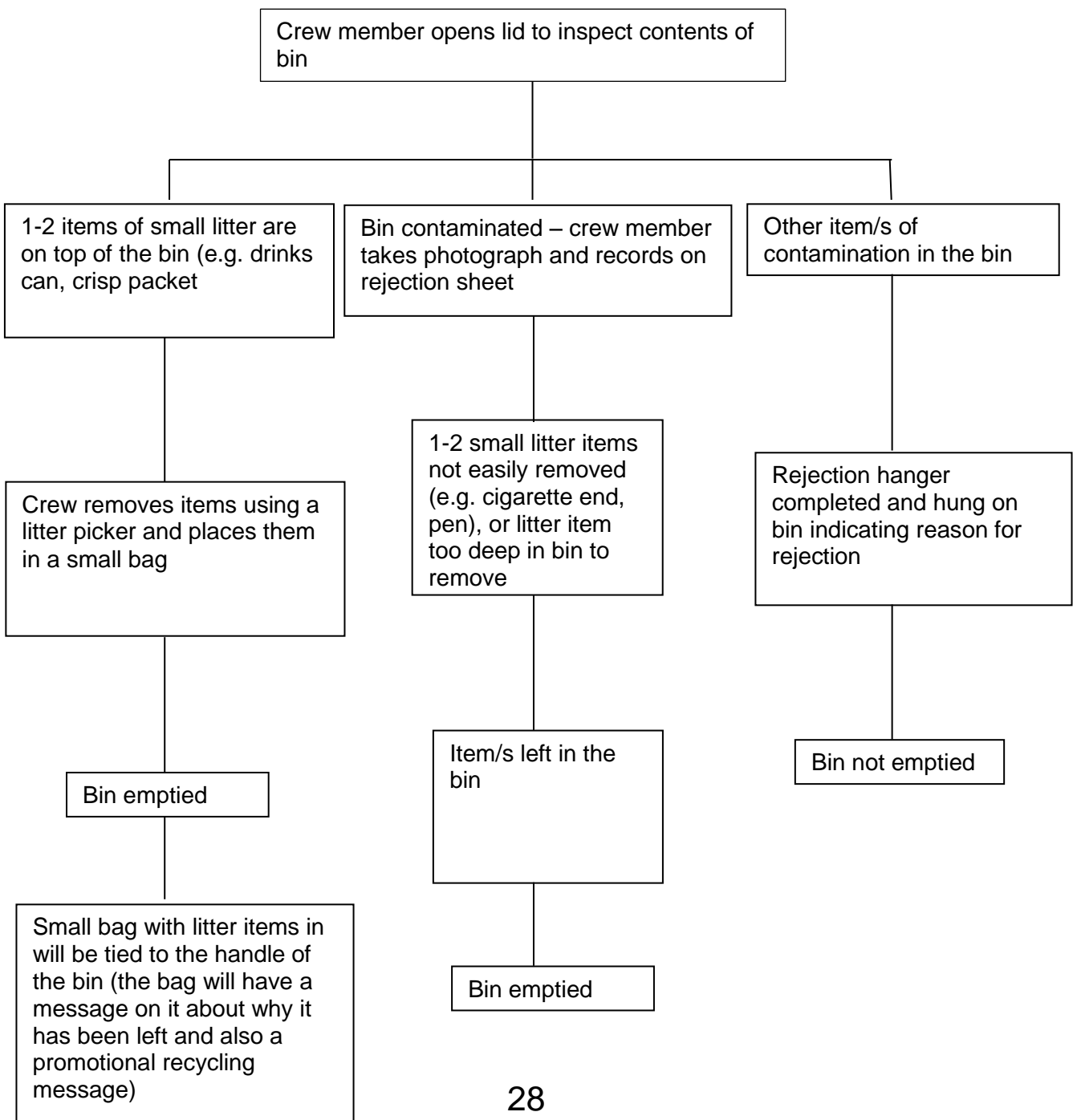
Following the trial undertaken earlier this year by one of the garden waste collection crews, a similar trial is being undertaken in the last two weeks of October by a dry recycling crew.

The crew will be photographing all contaminated bins that are rejected as well as recording them on their contamination sheet. This data will be used to assess whether the proposed operating procedure detailed below will work for this service in a similar way to the garden waste service.

The proposed operating procedure is as follows:

### Proposed Future Operating Procedure

For garden waste bins the following procedure will be followed:



Following completion of the trial the Waste Service will provide an update to the Panel in December 2015 on whether this procedure is recommended for implementation and a timescale for introducing it.



**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 Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Wellbeing):

Notes –

- The government's new timescales for the plan preparation process.
- Progress on the preparation of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036.

Comments on –

- The proposed way forward as outlined in paragraph 3.8 of the report.

Receives –

- Further quarterly update reports.

That 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 The matter is being considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Wellbeing) on the 10<sup>th</sup> November and its comments will be conveyed to Cabinet.

#### **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 Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Wellbeing):

Notes –

- The government's new timescales for the plan preparation process.
- Progress on the preparation of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036.

Comments on –

- The proposed way forward as outlined in paragraph 3.8 of the report.

Receives –

- Further quarterly update reports.

That 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 - Yes**

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| <b>Title/Subject Matter:</b> | Establishment of a process following the receipt of an Examiner's report into a neighbourhood plan                                  |
| <b>Meeting/Date:</b>         | Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Wellbeing) -<br>10 <sup>th</sup> November 2015<br>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>     | 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:

Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Wellbeing) makes comments to Cabinet on this report

and that 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 The matter is being considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Wellbeing) on the 10<sup>th</sup> November and its comments will be conveyed to Cabinet.

#### **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 Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Wellbeing) makes comments to Cabinet on this report; and that 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)

## **CONTACT OFFICER**

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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.



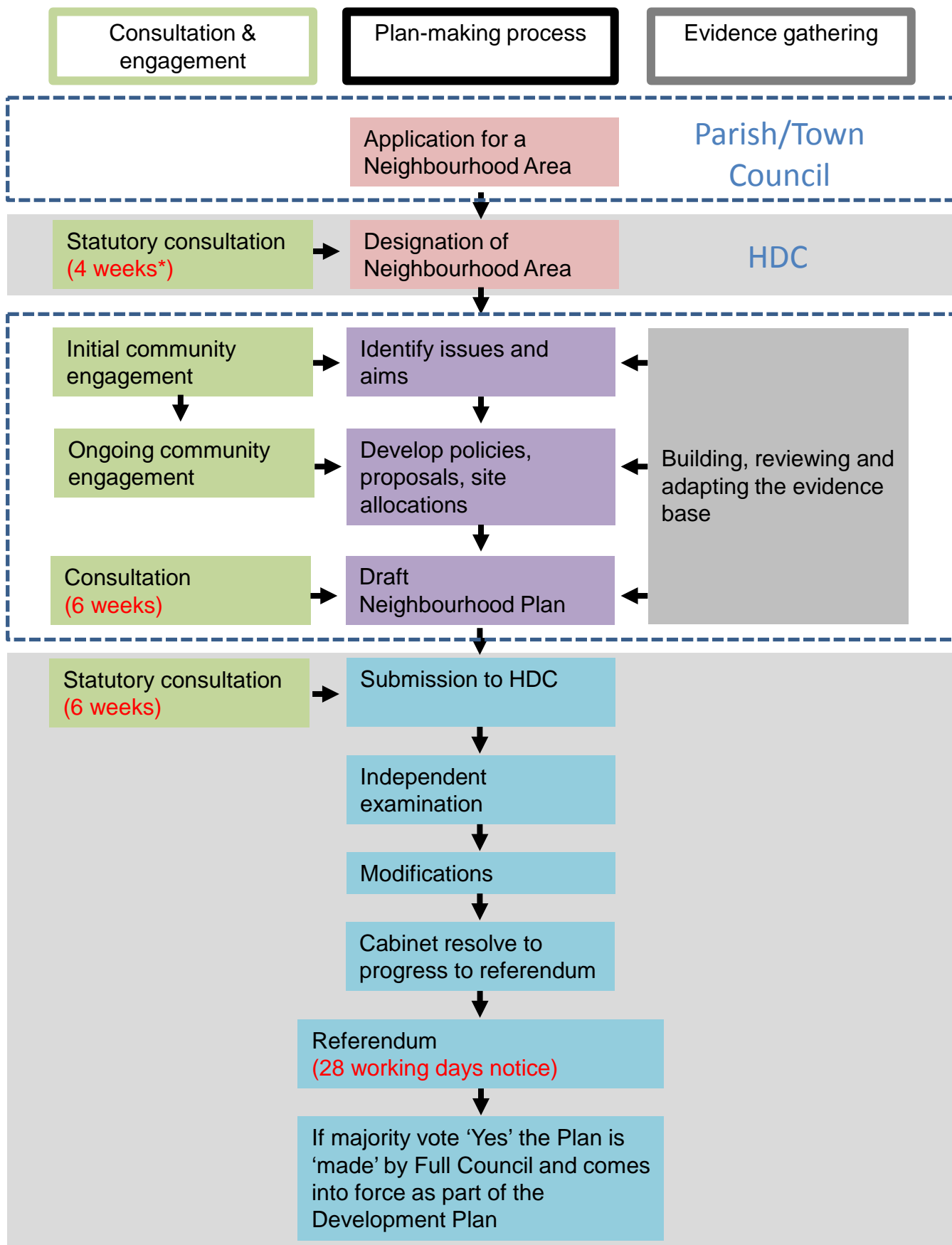
5. Schedule 6 of the Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums)(Amendment) Regulations 2013 sets out the rules for the business voting register. In particular the Schedule makes provision for obtaining data from the business rates records held by local authorities, sending out invitations to register, compilation, 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) -<br>10 <sup>th</sup> November 2015<br>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:

Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Wellbeing) makes comments to Cabinet on this report

and that Cabinet:

1. 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. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN**

4.1 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.

### **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 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.

## **6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 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.

## **7 REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS**

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

## **8. RECOMMENDED DECISIONS**

- 8.1 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

## **9. 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.

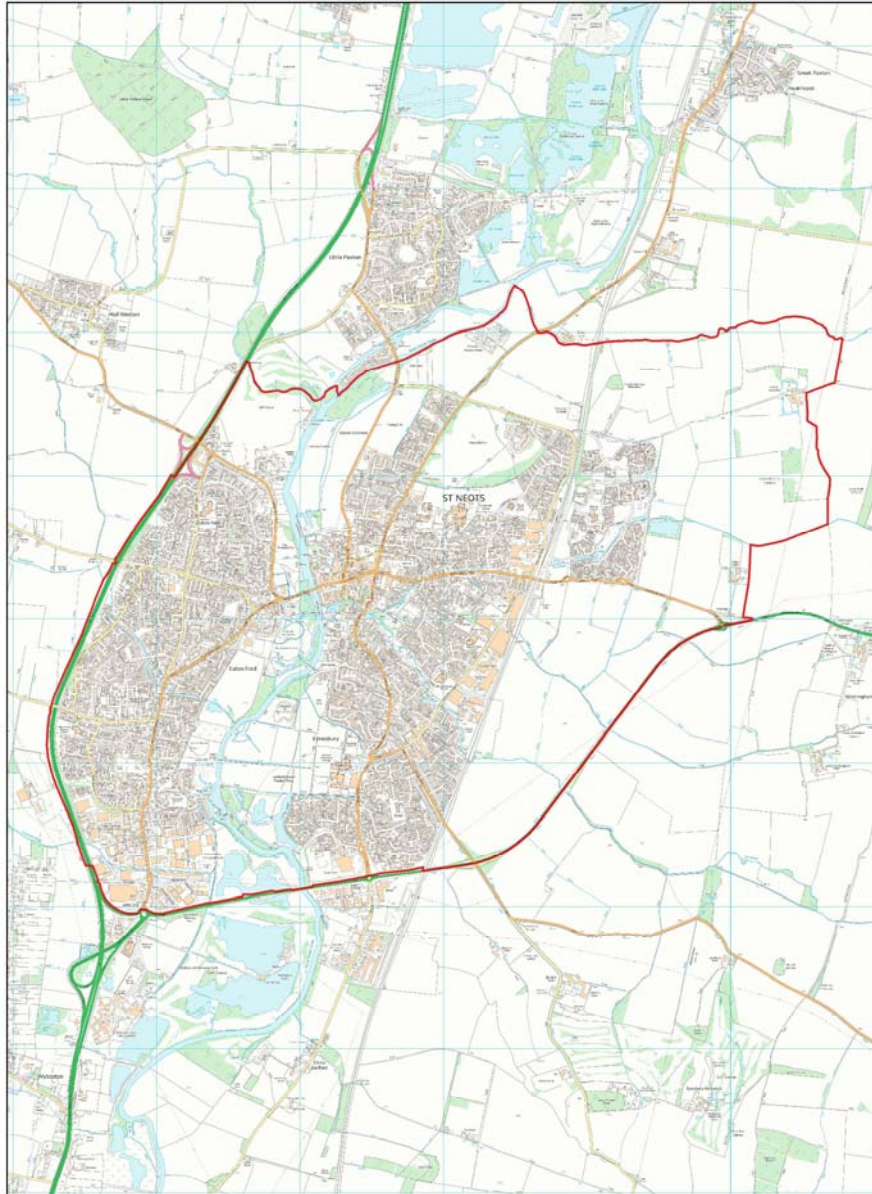
### Structure of Neighbourhood Plan

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

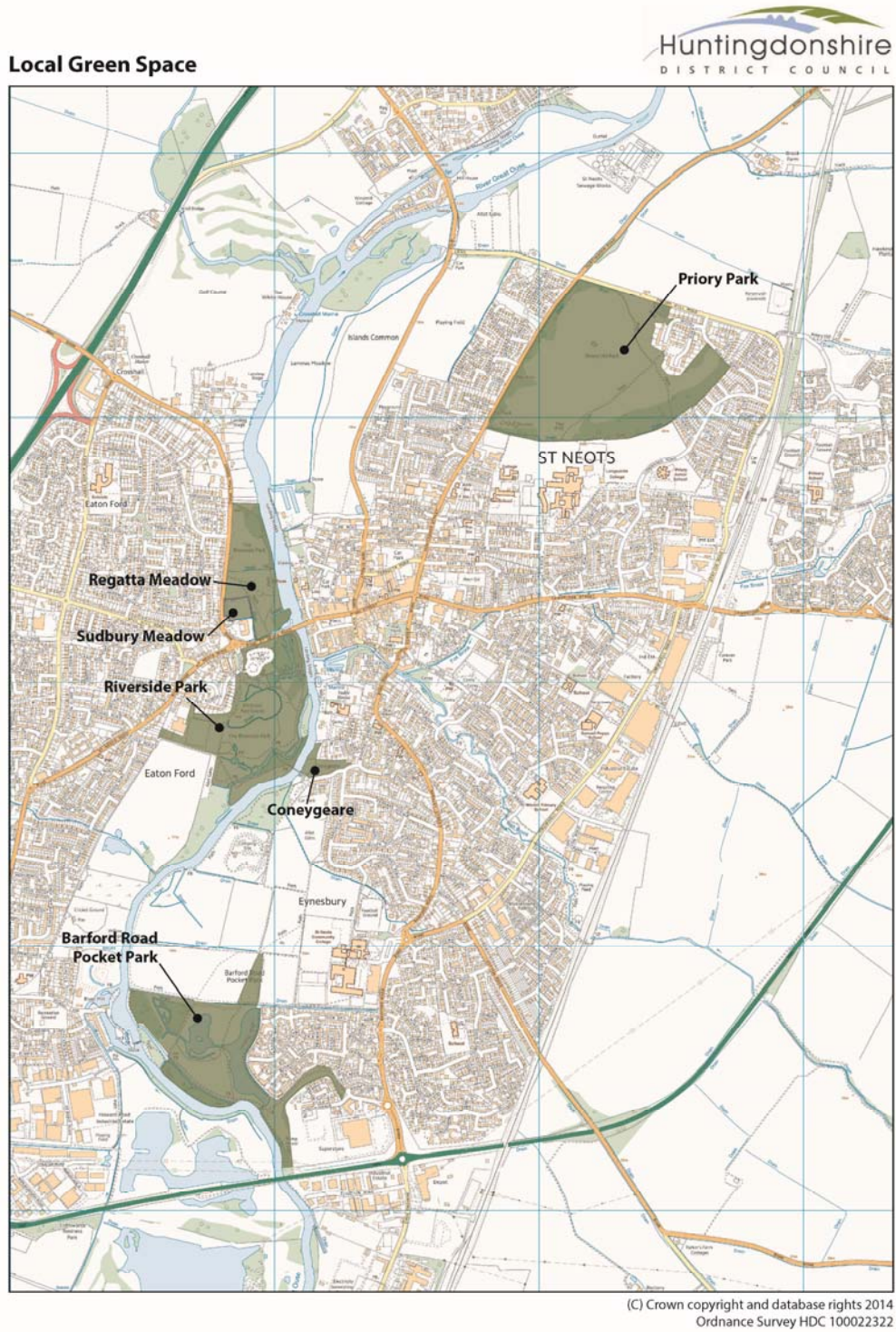


Figure 2: Map of local Green Spaces and Open Spaces

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.



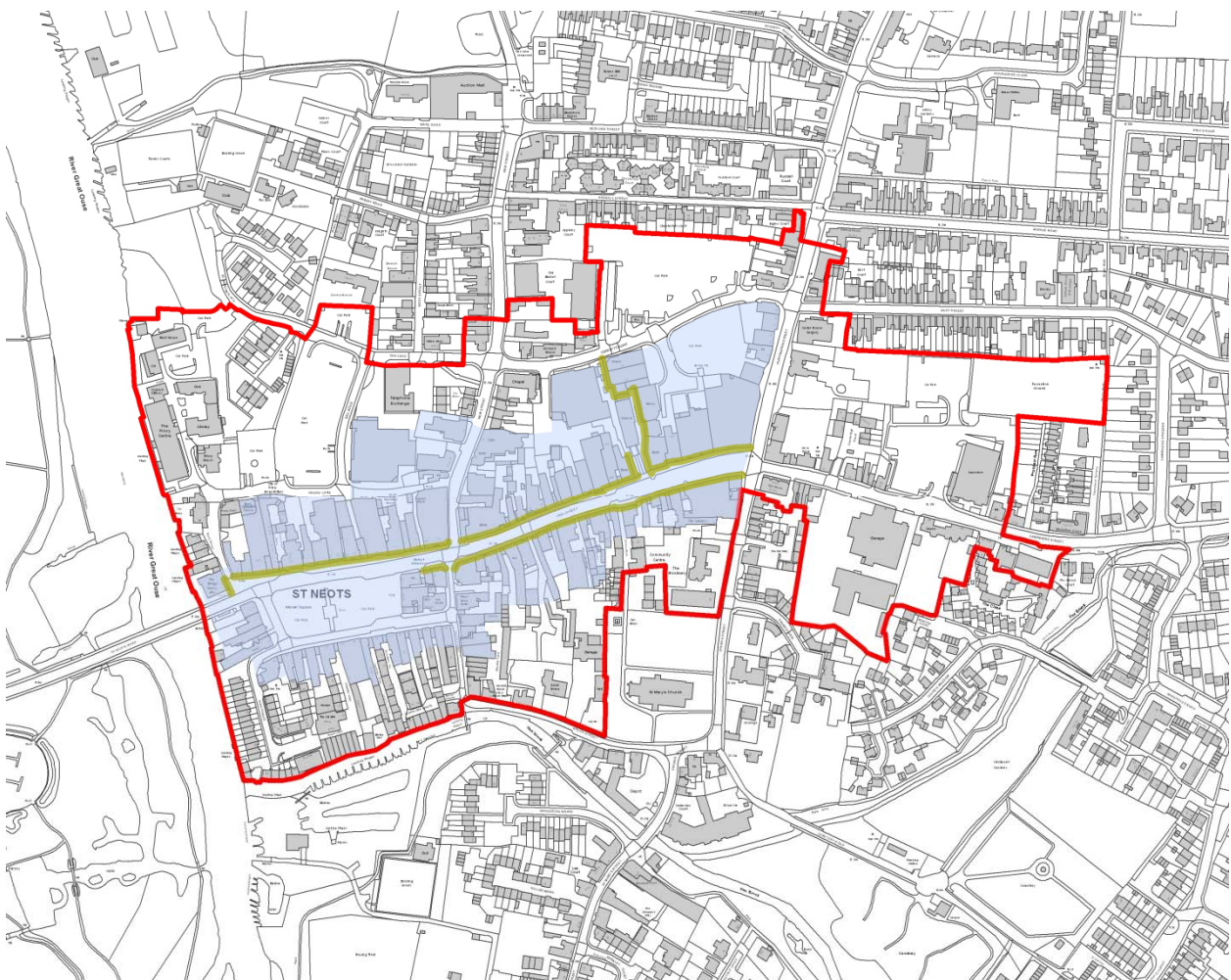


# 6 Shops and Services

# 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><br>Opening up of Priory lane and making this one way; and<br>Pedestrianisation of the High Street; and<br>Improving traffic flow throughout St Neots; and<br>(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.<br>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.<br>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:<br>' <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<br><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<br><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<br><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<br><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<br><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<br><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<br><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<br><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<br><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:<br><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  |
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| Objectives – traffic and transport | Page 20      | Reword the eighth bullet to say:<br><b>‘Sustainable transport modes including safe cycling provision will be supported.’</b><br><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>   | To better reflect the NPPF                              | Accept the modification |
| Objectives – traffic and transport | Page 20      | Move the last five bullets to the non-planning section:<br><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  |
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| Aesthetics - Introduction                    | Page 22      | Move paragraph 1.1.4 to the non-planning section:<br><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:<br><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><br><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:<br><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:<br><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  |
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| Aesthetics – Design Policy A3 | Page 27      | Reword paragraph 2 to say:<br>'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:<br><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:<br><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 |

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| Aesthetics – Design para 1.4.10 | Page 28      | Retain subject to agreement with HDC reworded to say:<br>'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:<br>...'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 |

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| Aesthetics – Design para 1.4.15            | Page 28      | <p>Replace paragraph 1.4.15 to say:<br/> <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:<br/> <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 |

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| Chapter 2<br>Entertainment<br>and Leisure | Page 32-<br>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:<br/> <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:<br/> <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 |



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| Parking and Traffic – Sustainable Travel Policy PT1                                    | Page 39      | <p>Reword Policy PT1 to say:<br/> <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:<br/> <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 |

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|   |              | <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 |

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|   |              | <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:<br/> <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 |

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| 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:<br/> <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         |

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|                                 |              | <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:<br><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 |

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| 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> |

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| 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 |

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|                    |              | <p>Priory Park, Riverside Park, Sudbury Meadow, Regatta Meadow, <del>and The Coneygare 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 Coneygare 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 Coneygare 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> |                        |



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| Parks and Open Spaces – Local Green Spaces Policy P1 | Page 48      | The Examiner presented two options for further modifications:<br>Option 1) delete Riverside Park and Regatta Meadow from Policy P1 or<br>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).<br>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:<br><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      |

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| Parks and Open Spaces – Open Space Policy P2 | Page 51      | Reword Policy P2 paragraph 2 to say:<br>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. | For clarity and to align better with the NPPF  | Accept the modification |
| Parks and Open Spaces – Open Space Policy P2 | Page 51      | Reword Policy P2 paragraph 5 to say:<br><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.   | 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      | Delete Policy P2 paragraph 6:<br><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>   | Does not offer flexibility or certainty and may affect viability and deliverability.                 | Accept the modification |

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| 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 |

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| Parks and Open Spaces – River Setting Policy P3 | Page 53      | Move Policy P3 paragraph 4 to the non-planning section:<br>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:<br><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><br><br><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:<br><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 |

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| Parks and Open Spaces – Flooding paragraph 4.5.7 | Page 55      | <p>Reword paragraph 4.5.7 to say:<br/> <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:<br/>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:<br/>           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:<br/> <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.<br/> <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><br/><br/> <del>New employment uses within the town should be encouraged to create links with education providers.</del><br/><br/>           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:<br>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:<br><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:<br>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:<br>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:<br>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:<br><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:<br>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:<br>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:<br><del>Opening up of Priory lane and making this one way;</del><br><del>and</del><br><del>Pedestrianisation of the High Street;</del><br><del>and</del><br>(d) Dualling the A428<br>(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:<br><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:<br><del>Delivery of an outdoor theatre in Riverside Park</del><br><del>Delivery of improved recreation facilities including crazy golf and boats in Riverside Park</del><br><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:<br><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:<br>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<br>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> | 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. | Accept the modification to delete policy and move the second paragraph and projects list to non-planning section |
| 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>   | No further mention is made of this scheme in the plan.   | Accept the modification  |
|                    | Page 68      | Move paragraph 6.3.3 to the non-planning section:   | Paragraph does 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 72      | Move the following projects from the list on pages 71-74 to the non-planning section:<br><del>Opening up of Priory lane and making this one way;</del><br><del>and</del><br><del>Pedestrianisation of the High Street;</del><br><del>and</del><br>(d) Dualling the A428<br>(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:<br><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:<br><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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Private  
Key Decision – No

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| <b>Title/Subject Matter:</b> | Overview and Scrutiny Panel Structure   |
| <b>Meeting/Date:</b>         | Overview and Scrutiny (Social Well-being) Panel,<br>3 November 2015<br>Overview and Scrutiny (Economic Well-being) Panel,<br>5 November 2015<br>Overview and Scrutiny (Environmental Well-being) Panel,<br>10 November 2015 |
| <b>Executive Portfolio:</b>  | Councillor Jason Ablewhite, Executive Leader  |
| <b>Report by:</b>            | Daniel Buckridge, Policy, Performance & Transformation<br>Manager (Scrutiny)  |
| <b>Ward(s) affected:</b>     | All   |

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### Executive Summary:

As proposed at the Scrutiny Away Day in February 2015, the structure of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny panels has been reviewed and alternative arrangements have been explored. The Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the current Overview and Scrutiny panels have considered a number of options, including the status quo, and have agreed on a preferred structure.

This option would create three new panels - 'Finance and Performance', 'Economy and Growth' and 'Communities and Customers' to replace the existing panels. This structure is seen as a better fit to the organisation's strategic priorities than the current structure as it is aligned to and consistent with the Corporate Plan and should help balance the workload of Members involved. Amendments to the Constitution to create the new structure would also introduce greater flexibility and encourage more joint working between panels.

While the Cabinet workplan would continue to be followed in general, the Chairmen/Vice-Chairmen propose that Cabinet items should be reviewed to determine whether there is benefit in having them on a panel's agenda. They intend to create sufficient capacity for each panel to support two Task and Finish Groups each year.

### Recommendation(s):

Members are invited to:

- endorse Option 2 as a new structure for Overview and Scrutiny panels, and
- request that amendments to the Constitution to allow the new structure to be adopted be referred to Corporate Governance Panel and full Council meetings in December.

## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 At the Scrutiny Away Day in February 2015, the current structure of Overview and Scrutiny panels was questioned. With recent changes to portfolio responsibilities of Cabinet Members, the remit and alignment of panels may not support the best possible opportunity for effective overview and scrutiny.
- 1.2 Members of Cabinet and the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny panels have considered a range of options for a new structure. With general consensus in support of a single option, the Chairmen and Vice-Chairman have met with senior officers to explore how this could work in practice and are in agreement that a proposal to implement their preferred new structure should be considered by all three panels. If supported, changes to the Constitution will be required and can be submitted to Corporate Governance Panel and Council in December for approval. The changes can then be incorporated into the Constitution Review which is currently being progressed and are set out at Appendix A of this report.

## 2. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Three different options were considered. Each of these proposed a total of three panels to include a 'Finance and Performance' panel. Option 1 proposed that this panel should be accompanied by 'Delivery' and 'Services' panels to reflect the Corporate Director responsibilities. Option 2 proposed 'Economy and Growth' and 'Communities and Customers' panels to align with the strategic priorities in the Corporate Plan and Option 3 proposed 'Internal' and 'External' panels.

## 3. VIEWS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY CHAIRMEN AND VICE-CHAIRMEN

- 3.1 The Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen are in unanimous agreement that Option 2 is their preferred option, as shown below:

| Economy and Growth   | Communities and Customers  | Finance and Performance  |
|--|--|--|
| Links to Corporate Plan Strategic Priorities:<br>'A strong local economy'<br>'Enabling sustainable growth' | Links to Corporate Plan Strategic Priorities:<br>'Working with our communities'<br>'Ensuring we are a customer focussed and service led Council' (the 'To ensure customer engagement drives service priorities and improvement' objective) | Links to Corporate Plan Strategic Priorities:<br>'Ensuring we are a customer focussed and service led Council' (the 'To become more business-like and efficient in the way we deliver services' objective) |

- 3.2 This option is considered to have the clearest links to the Corporate Plan's strategic priorities and objectives, as indicated above.
- 3.3 The balance of items to panels and the impact of this on workload and the frequency of meetings have been carefully considered when reviewing options for a new structure. It is expected that the preferred option would result in a more balanced workload for the panels and their Members than the current structure. It is expected that most of the reports to the Finance and Performance Panel would be submitted on a quarterly cycle in line with business reporting processes but the quarterly reports are likely to generate additional items as needs are identified for more in-depth reviews and there would be other items to be considered by this panel throughout the year.

- 3.4 In order to assess the expected workload of each panel, the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen have analysed the work programmes of the current panels and a list of proposed new items drawn up at the Scrutiny Away Day. Key items have been allocated to the panels in Option 2 as shown in the table at 4.1.
- 3.5 It should be noted that the current Notice of Key Executive Decisions only lists items scheduled up to January so there will be other items for Cabinet which will need to be considered by Scrutiny panels that aren't listed here.
- 3.6 Different items will require different levels of input from the panels (e.g. some may require working groups to be set up or a Select Committee approach) so the number of items does not necessarily indicate the scale of the workload for each panel.
- 3.7 To help manage the workload, it is proposed that the Chairmen/Vice-Chairmen consider each item on the Notice of Key Executive Decisions individually and then determine whether reports to Cabinet need to be agenda items for their panels. For example, where panels have already been involved in developing a policy they may not need to discuss it again prior to Cabinet provided that they are confident that their views have been taken into account. The Chairmen/Vice-Chairmen would also like the capacity to allow them to aim to undertake two Task and Finish Groups per panel each year.
- 3.8 In amending the Constitution to introduce the new Scrutiny panel structure, it will be recommended that this should be less prescriptive than it currently is. This will help ensure that capacity, links to existing work programmes and the need for cross-panel working are taken into account when allocating new items to panels. Appendix 1 sets out proposed changes to the Constitution.

#### 4. POSSIBLE ALLOCATION OF ITEMS TO NEW PANEL STRUCTURE

- 4.1 Agenda items will continue to go to the existing panels until the new structure is approved. As an example of how items would be distributed if the new structure is agreed, items due to go to the existing panels in November are listed against the most relevant new panel below:

| <b>Communities and Customers</b>   | <b>Finance and Performance</b>   | <b>Economy and Growth</b>  |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordable Housing Working Group report</li> <li>• Hinchingsbrooke Health Campus Presentation</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrated Performance Report (Quarter 2) – includes financial, project and Corporate Plan performance</li> <li>• Treasury Management 2015/16 Six Monthly Review</li> <li>• One Leisure Negotiations</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Huntingdonshire Infrastructure Business Plan</li> <li>• Local Plan to 2036 update</li> <li>• Neighbourhood Plans &amp; St Neots Neighbourhood Plan</li> </ul> |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Joint items:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sport and Active Lifestyles Annual Report 2014-15 – this could be considered jointly as the report indicates the benefits of the service to its users as well as performance</li> <li>• Customer Service Strategy – this may impact on services provided but should also deliver improved value for money</li> </ul> |  |  |

- 4.2 Some of the key items expected to still be in progress in the new year, 'business as usual' subjects and new items proposed at the Scrutiny Away Day in February 2015 are likely to be allocated to the new panels as follows:

| <b>Communities and Customers</b>   | <b>Finance and Performance</b>  | <b>Economy and Growth</b>  |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Safety Partnership</li> <li>• Health agenda, including mental health, GP and hospital services (e.g. CCG and Hinchingsbrooke Financial and Operational Performance Reports)</li> <li>• Voluntary and community sector</li> <li>• Community empowerment</li> <li>• Welfare Reform</li> <li>• Fraud Prosecution Policy</li> <li>• Customer Services Monitoring Report</li> <li>• Service standards</li> <li>• Policing and crime</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commercial Investment Strategy Business Plan</li> <li>• Project Management Select Committee 12month review</li> <li>• Draft Budget/MTFS</li> <li>• Final Budget/MTFS</li> <li>• Outturn financial reports</li> <li>• Shared services overview</li> <li>• Procurement Policy</li> <li>• Disposals and Acquisitions Policy</li> <li>• Energy Management</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building Control shared service</li> <li>• Growth-related shared service (if proposed)</li> <li>• Flooding and flood risk</li> <li>• Planning Enforcement Review</li> <li>• Marketing Strategy and Branding for Huntingdonshire</li> <li>• Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership Growth and Infrastructure Thematic Group annual update</li> <li>• Community Infrastructure Levy</li> <li>• Infrastructure issues, including major roads</li> <li>• Supplementary Planning Documents (e.g. Design Guide)</li> <li>• Local Enterprise Partnership</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Joint items:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review into car parking charges (a potential cross-panel item for all 3 panels)</li> <li>• Commercialisation agenda (a potential cross-panel item for all 3 panels)</li> <li>• Home Improvement Agency – Annual Report (Communities .../ Finance ...)</li> <li>• One Leisure Six Month update (Communities.../ Finance...)</li> <li>• Impacts of service restructures (Communities.../ Finance...)</li> <li>• Waste collection policies, litter policies and practices (Communities.../ Economy...)</li> <li>• Impact of growth on services (Communities.../ Economy)</li> </ul> |   |  |

- 4.3 It is likely that there will be a number of items where a cross-cutting approach involving two or more Overview and Scrutiny panels may be beneficial and the Chairmen/Vice-Chairmen are keen for them to work together where there are opportunities to do so.

- 4.4 It is expected that Cabinet's workplan will continue to be followed in general, with panels reviewing and commenting on recommendations prior to decisions being taken, although this won't necessarily happen in every case as explained in 3.7. Changes to the Constitution will allow items to be allocated to panels as appropriate, rather than having to follow the portfolio/service-based approach which is currently required.

## 5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The changes to the Overview and Scrutiny panel structure proposed will require relatively minor amendments to the Constitution as set out in Appendix 1. Setting up new panels will require some changes to our committee minutes system and website and work with the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen to establish agenda plans for the new panels.

## **6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The proposed change to the Constitution will need to be considered by the Corporate Governance Panel and then approved by full Council. Less prescriptive definitions of the panels and their remits would allow greater flexibility without further changes to the Constitution being required so the changes could be implemented in time for the new year.

## **7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 Amendments to the Overview and Scrutiny panel structure would need to be accompanied by clear communication with Members, officers, partners and residents in announcing the changes. This would present a good opportunity to raise awareness of the role of overview and scrutiny at the District Council.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1 Members are invited to:
- endorse Option 2 as a new structure for Overview and Scrutiny panels, and
  - request that amendments to the Constitution to allow the new structure to be adopted be tabled for Corporate Governance Panel and full Council meetings in December.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

### **CONTACT OFFICER**

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(01480) 388065

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## Appendix 1 – Proposed changes to Constitution

### **ARTICLE 6 - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

#### **1. TERMS OF REFERENCE OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANELS**

##### **Current wording:**

The Council will appoint the Overview and Scrutiny Panels set out in the left hand column of the table below to discharge the functions conferred by Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 in relation to the matters set out in the right hand column of the same table.

| <b>OVERVIEW &amp;<br/>SCRUTINY PANEL</b> | <b>SCOPE</b>   | <b>EXECUTIVE<br/>PORTFOLIO</b>   |
|--|--|--|
| <b>SOCIAL<br/>WELL-BEING</b>             | Private sector housing<br><br>Disabled facilities grants<br>Homelessness<br>Housing grants<br>Housing register/nominations<br><br>Home Improvement Agency<br><br>Housing providers/associations<br>Housing strategy/policies<br><br>Air quality/noise/pollution<br>Animal welfare/pest control<br>Caravan sites<br>Commercial: health and safety promotion/food safety<br>Community initiatives<br>Community safety<br>Corporate health and safety<br>Infectious diseases<br>Sport & Active Lifestyles<br>Smoke free initiatives<br>Diversity and Equalities<br>Safeguarding<br><br>CCTV<br><br>Huntingdon/St Neots/St Ives/Ramsey/Sawtry –<br>One Leisure Sport & Active Lifestyles<br><br>Licensing and Protection<br>Communities and Voluntary Groups | Strategic<br>Planning and<br>Housing<br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br>Strategic<br>Economic<br>Development,<br>Legal and<br>Healthy<br>Communities<br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br>Commercial<br>Activities<br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br>Strategic<br>Economic<br>Development,<br>Legal and<br>Healthy<br>Communities |







**CODE OF FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

**Current wording:**

**1.5 Overview and Scrutiny Panels**

Will contribute to the development of, and review the effectiveness of, the Council's Financial Strategy, MTP, Treasury Management and annual budget.

**Proposed new wording:**

**1.5 Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Finance and Performance)**

Will contribute to the development of, and review the effectiveness of, the Council's Financial Strategy, MTP, Treasury Management and annual budget.

**CURRENT ACTIVITIES OF THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC WELL-BEING PANELS**

| STUDY   | OBJECTIVES   | PANEL             | STATUS   |
|---|--|-------------------|--|
| Delivery of Advisory Services Across the District                                     | To monitor the performance of the voluntary/community organisations awarded grant aid by the Council in 2013 – 2015. To discuss funding arrangements for the final year of the Voluntary sector agreements.  | Social Well-Being | The Panel received presentations at its October 2015 meeting from the six organisations currently in receipt of three year funding awards (Strategic Grants) which are due to end in March 2016. Further reports from the Head of Community are due in advance of an application process for future grant funding being launched in early 2016.  |
| Housing and Council Tax Benefit Changes and the Potential Impact Upon Huntingdonshire | To monitor the effect of Government changes to the Housing Benefit System arising from the Welfare Reform Act.   | Social Well-Being | The Panel received a report on the effect of the Government's Welfare Reform programme and how it impacts on households in Huntingdonshire in December 2014. It was agreed that further updates will only to be provided as circumstances require.   |
| Affordable Housing  | To make recommendations for the next Housing Strategy 2016-19 by considering and making recommendations on ways to deliver affordable housing, including through the rural and enabled exceptions policy of the Local Plan and through the Community Land Trust. | Social Well-Being | A report on the Working Group's findings and recommendations is due to be submitted for the Panel's November 2015 meeting.   |
| The Health Economy  | To establish priorities for future work on the local health economy.   | Social Well-Being | Scoping paper considered. Further reports requested on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the current state of Neighbourhood Planning within the area and how it was likely to develop and how it might promote community resilience;</li> <li>• community engagement, including examples of good practice;</li> <li>• the impact of Welfare Reforms, including fuel poverty and how it was defined;</li> </ul> |

| STUDY                               | OBJECTIVES   | PANEL               | STATUS  |
|-------------------------------------|--|---------------------|---|
|                                     |  |                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reviewing the Council's Equalities Impact Assessment arrangements, and</li> <li>• the impact of growth on GP surgeries, school places and hospital capacity.</li> </ul>  |
| Project Management Select Committee | To review and test the robustness of the Council's project management arrangements.                            | Economic-Well Being | A report from the Projects and Programmes Manager on changes in Project Management was submitted to all three Overview and Scrutiny Panels in June 2015. The Panel received a six month update report on project delivery in October 2015 and a further review by the Project Management Select Committee is due in March 2016. |
| Facing the Future                   | Ongoing monitoring role of financial implications of Facing the Future for the Medium Term Financial Strategy. | Economic Well-Being | Panel members received a report from the Projects and Programmes Manager on changes in Project Management, including Facing the Future, in June 2015. Progress is now reported to the Panel and Cabinet through the quarterly Integrated Performance Monitoring report.   |

| Panel Date   | Decision   | Action | Response   | Date |
|--|--|--------|--|------|
| <p><b>17/06/14</b></p> <p><b>16/06/15</b></p> <p><b>16/06/15</b></p> | <p><b><u>Whole Waste System Approach/ Waste Collection Policies</u></b></p> <p>Agreed that the Waste Collection Working Group should reconvene to assist the Head of Operations and Executive Member for Operations &amp; Environment with reviewing waste collection policies in relation to the collection points for wheeled bins/sacks and remote properties (farms and lodges). Councillors G J Bull and D A Giles appointed on to the Working Group alongside Councillors M G Baker and G J Harlock.</p> <p>Members received a RECAP update</p> <p>Agreed that working groups scrutinising the operations policies at HDC stand down as an Operations Review is carried out and implemented.</p> |        | <p>Further meeting to be held in to consider the outcome of the survey work undertaken by the Head of Operations.</p> <p><b>Working Group currently on hold as Operations Review is implemented.</b></p> |      |
| <p><b>17/06/14</b></p>   | <p><b><u>Rural Transport</u></b></p> <p>Councillor Mrs L Kadić re-appointed as the Panel's representative on the Cambridgeshire Future Transport Initiative.</p>   |        | <p>Updates to be delivered in due course.</p>  |      |
| <p><b>11/2/14</b></p> <p><b>11/3/14</b></p>                          | <p><b><u>Flood Prevention</u></b></p> <p>Agreed to undertake a study on flood prevention arrangements in the District and the impact of flooding on associated local policy developments.</p> <p>Representatives from the Environment Agency delivered a presentation on flood risk management within Huntingdonshire.</p>   |        |  |      |

| Panel Date   | Decision  | Action  | Response   | Date                             |
|--|---|---|--|----------------------------------|
| <p><b>8/4/14 / 17/06/14</b></p> <p><b>17/06/14</b></p> <p><b>10/03/15</b></p> <p><b>25/03/15</b></p> | <p>Scoping Report submitted to meeting. Working Group appointed comprising Councillors Bull, West and Mrs Kadic to review the effectiveness of flood protection schemes in the District and to scrutinise environmental data including the outcome of the investigations currently being undertaken by the Local Resilience Forum into Flood Risk Management.</p> <p>Presentation delivered by Mr Ian Smith, Chief Executive and Clerk to the Middle Level Commissioners on the organisation's responsibilities for flooding within the District. Information presented will assist the Working Group with its investigations.</p> <p>The Working Group will investigate the role of Internal Drainage Boards.</p> <p>A meeting of the Working Group was held to review the draft Cambridgeshire Flood and Water Supplementary Planning Document.</p> | <p>Meeting to scrutinise role of Internal Drainage Boards to be arranged.</p>   |  | <p><b>Date to be agreed.</b></p> |
| <p><b>17/06/14</b></p> <p><b>11/11/14</b></p>  | <p><b><u>Litter Policies and Practices</u></b></p> <p>Chairman requested an item on litter policies and practices to be submitted to a future Panel meeting. Councillor D A Giles requested that consideration is also given to graffiti removal at this time.</p> <p>Scoping report considered. Working Group appointed to consider and make recommendations on future litter and graffiti service scope and standards and on public appetite for changes</p>  | <p>Request submitted to Head of Operations.</p> <p>Chairman to discuss this study with the Executive Councillor and report back to the Panel.</p> | <p>The Panel noted that a new work programme is expected soon.</p> |                                  |

| Panel Date | Decision   | Action   | Response   | Date   |
|------------|--|--|--|--|
| 16/06/15   | Agreed that working groups scrutinising the operations policies at HDC stand down as an Operations Review is carried out and implemented.  |  | <b>Working Group currently on hold as Operations Review is implemented.</b>  |  |
| 04/02/14   | <b><u>Planning Enforcement</u></b><br>In receiving the Quarter 3 Performance Monitoring report, the Panel asked for clarification of the actions which can be undertaken by the Authority in relation to listed buildings and current enforcement activities, the Panel has requested that a report on enforcement should be presented to a future meeting.  |  |  |  |
| 14/04/2014 | A report on planning enforcement was discussed at the Panel's meeting. The Panel was informed that a detailed review of planning enforcement would be completed for meetings in July or September.   |  | A report on the review of planning enforcement is scheduled for the Panel's December meeting.  | <b>08/12/15</b>                                |
|            | <b><u>Notice of Key Executive Decisions</u></b><br><br><b>Huntingdon West Masterplan</b> – Panel requested sight of the report prior to submission to Cabinet.<br><br><b>Local Plan to 2036</b> – Panel requested sight of the report prior to submission to Cabinet.<br><br><b>Huntingdonshire Infrastructure Business Plan</b> – Panel requested sight of the report prior to submission to Cabinet. | Request submitted to the Planning Services Manager (Policy).<br><br>Request submitted to the Planning Services Manager (Policy).<br><br>Request submitted to the Planning Services Manager (Policy). | Not currently on the Notice of Executive Decisions.<br><br><b>Update report expected November 2015.</b><br><br><b>Report expected November 2015.</b> | <br><br><b>10/11/15</b><br><br><b>10/11/15</b> |

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## Decision Digest

Edition 159

**Monthly summary of the decisions taken at meetings of the Council, Cabinet, Overview & Scrutiny and other Panels for the period 1st to 23rd October 2015.**

### LICENSING ACT 2003 – STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY

Following a period of public consultation the Licensing Committee has reviewed the contents of a draft Statement of Licensing Policy for the District Council. The Policy which must be reviewed every 5 years, sets out how the Council will exercise its statutory duties relating to its licensing function. It has been re-drafted in its entirety to take into account substantial changes in legislation, updated Government Guidance, a new best practice framework for the review of licensing policy statements and the comments from the consultation.

Having acknowledged that the Council has a statutory duty to adopt and publish a Statement of Licensing Policy in order for the Council to fulfil its legal obligations, the Committee has recommended that the revised Statement should be approved by full Council for a period of five years from 7th January 2015.

In reviewing the responses which had been received to the public consultation, Members expressed their disappointment at the limited number of responses received from Town and Parish Councils. It was suggested that further consideration could be given to the methods for engagement with these organisations in the future.

### GAMBLING ACT 2005 – STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

The Licensing Committee has reviewed the contents of a revised Statement of Principles for the District Council under the Gambling Act 2005. The current Statement is due to expire on 30th January 2016 and a new version must be placed to set out how the Council will exercise its functions under the Act in advance of this date.

The new Statement has been drafted to take into account the relevant provisions of the draft fifth edition of the Gambling Commission's Guidance to Local Authorities and the comments received from the public consultation which ran from 26th June to 4th September 2015. It must comply with the Gambling Act 2005, codes of practice and guidance issued by the Gambling Commission and be consistent with the licensing objectives.

As approval of the Statement is reserved to Full Council, the Committee has recommended that the new version be approved with effect from 31st January 2015 for a period of three years.

### CLASSIFICATION OF FILM

The public exhibition of film on licensed premises must either be classified by the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) or authorised by the Licensing Authority under the Licensing Act 2003.

For this purpose of fulfilling the Council's responsibilities and subject to an amendment to make clear that the determination of any requests must be undertaken by three individuals at all times, the Licensing Committee has approved a policy and procedure for determining matters relating to film classification under the Licensing Act.

### **SERVICE PLAN FOR FOOD LAW ENFORCEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY MONITORING 2015-16**

The Licensing and Protection Panel has received an update on progress being made against the Council's Food Safety and Health and Safety Service Plans for 2015/16 during the period 1st April to 30th September.

In reviewing the performance information provided, Members have expressed their concerns that the Service is behind target on the delivery of the Food Safety Service Plan. This is a direct result of a number of factors including staffing resources, two significant accident investigations, the impact of an unforeseen reactive workload, a higher than expected increase in the number of new food business and a higher than anticipated level of formal enforcement actions being undertaken.

Members have discussed the number of planned food hygiene inspections, which are significantly behind schedule. Having noted the reasons for this, the options which were available to address the situation and the actions which may be taken by the Food Standards Agency if the Authority failed to meet its statutory targets, the Panel has been informed that the matter will be discussed further by the Corporate Management Team. Members have been assured that the Executive Member for Strategic Economic Development and Legal is aware of the situation.

In recognition of Members concerns and in view of the time until the Panel's next meeting, the Head of Community has agreed to update the Chairman and Vice-Chairman on the position on a regular basis. He has also agreed that it would be useful to circulate further information to Panel Members when it became available.

With regard to Health and Safety premises inspections, Members have noted that whilst this is behind target, most of the preparatory work in connection with targeted health and safety interventions has been completed and the Head of Community is confident that the Authority would be back on target by the end of the year.

Overall, Members have welcomed the preparation of a monitoring report to enable the Panel to monitor the delivery of the Food Safety and Health and Safety Service Plans throughout the year. In terms of the format and content of the report, Members have made a number of suggestions for inclusion in future reports.

### **DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS**

The Development Management Panel has considered six applications for planning permission. Of these, four have been approved and one refused with one deferred. One of the decisions to approve an application was contrary to the Officer recommendation.

The application, which was deferred, relates to the proposed change of use of 8 Market Hill, St Ives to a public house. The purpose of the deferral is to enable Officers to hold further discussions with consultees and with the applicant on the frontage and the beer garden.

### **PRESENTATIONS BY VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS IN RECEIPT OF THREE YEAR FUNDING AWARDS**

Six voluntary and community sector organisations in receipt of three year funding awards (Strategic Grants) from the Council each gave ten minute presentations to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being), with a further ten minutes allocated for questions from Members to each organisation's representatives.

The Head of Community provided the Panel with a brief introduction to the process for awarding Strategic Grants, concentrating on the following key points:

- The current Strategic Grants were allocated for a three year period from 1st April 2013 to 30th March 2016.
- The Council's budget for voluntary and community sector funding should be considered in line with the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy to ensure the sector is not disproportionately affected.
- Further reports will be presented to the Panel in advance of the Council setting its budget for 2016/17 in February 2016.
- An application process for future grant funding will be opened once the budget available for this has been confirmed for 2016/17.

The presentations were intended to inform Members about what each of the organisations have delivered, how they consider they have assisted The Council in addressing its corporate objectives and what they consider their future challenges to be.

Following the presentations, the Head of Community re-iterated that the budget available for future voluntary and community sector grant funding will not be finalised until February 2016. Members stated that they would expect

an application process for this but expressed some concern about timescales for those organisations with funding arrangements due to finish in March 2016. The Head of Community will bring a further report to an upcoming meeting of the Panel.

### **PROJECT MANAGEMENT SELECT COMMITTEE – SIX MONTH REVIEW**

The Programme and Project Manager and the Executive Councillor for Resources presented a report on projects at the delivery stage to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being).

It was not possible to provide an update on progress with the In-Cab Technology project as this had been placed on hold until a review of the core processes and systems of the Waste Service has been completed.

Members were given an update on project activity over the last six months, including an overview of compliance with corporate project management guidance such as recording information on the Sharepoint projects site. A demonstration was given on how the site for the new website project has been used to manage the project and to share information.

Members were informed that anyone on the Council's network can access the site but that access to individual project sites, libraries and even individual documents can be restricted by amending permission settings. All information related to a specific project will generally be viewable and editable by members of the project team and there is also a clear audit trail which can be used to identify who has made changes and when.

The Panel were informed that staff have access to the network but Councillors do not due to public sector

network restrictions, which require the Council to follow a code of compliance which prevents this. Information for Members is included on the extranet site and performance reports also serve to provide information to Councillors. Officers can provide information on request.

### SHARED SERVICES UPDATE

The Corporate Director (Services) presented an update to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being). The timing was considered to be opportune following the completion of the TUPE consultation and the TUPE transfer of staff on 1 October 2015. The partnership with Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Councils is now branded as “3C Shared Services”.

The transition planning and next steps planned in integrating services were described and information on the Governance model, the role of Members and the sovereignty guarantee was also covered in the presentation.

The Panel questioned whether a March 2016 target for ICT was too ambitious. Members were informed that the transition target is March–May 2016, when a new structure to deliver ICT services should be in place but that delivery of items in the service catalogue would take longer. There are around 60 posts in the new ICT shared services.

The flexibility for withdrawing from or adding other local authorities into shared services arrangements was discussed. The Panel was informed that the partnership agreement was for five years with a review in year three and an exit strategy would be included. Flexibility already exists so the scope of shared services could be widened relatively easily. Others could be involved on either a partnership or a contractual basis, as appropriate. A disagreement resolution

process will be included in the partnership agreement.

Members queried whether the sovereignty guarantee would only run for the five year life of the partnership or if it could be extended to cover the whole life of the partnership, if longer. The Panel was told that this suggestion for the guarantee to last the entire term would be considered in setting governance arrangements, although changes need to be agreed by all authorities.

### REPLACEMENT FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The Cabinet has approved the Councils involvement in the procurement and implementation of a new Financial Management System (FMS) in partnership with its strategic partners, Cambridge City Council (CCC) and South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC).

The FMS that the Council currently uses has been in operation for a number of years with little improvements or modification to the system. Although the system continues to meet basic accounting requirements a new system will provide better financial reporting, improved financial management and support the sharing of finance resources.

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

Until the formal procurement has concluded the exact costs of a new FMS are unknown and the financial figures contained within the Officer’s report are indicative figures. However, CCC undertook some preliminary soft market testing earlier in 2015 and the

initial costing exercise has indicated a range of possible costs, which ultimately depend on the system eventually procured. As both CCC and SCDC are statutory landlords, and this service is financially resource intensive, it is assumed that the Councils implementation and subscription costs will be less as the Council does not operate a Housing Revenue Account.

The Cabinet has agreed to release 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.

The Cabinet has also delegated final approval to the Head of Resources in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Resources, subject to a 10% contingency, the release of the reserve to finance this project.

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

The Cabinet has considered a report and approved a capital allocation of £50,000 to repair and preserve the historic Octagon building in St Ives.

The Octagon building is owned by the Council and is located within the Cattle Market Car Park in St Ives. The building is not listed but does have protection against demolition as it is in the Conservation Area.

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

The repairs identified in the visible condition survey were estimated at £40,629. However, as the estimate does not include a contingent for others works that may be necessary a budget of £50,000 is considered more appropriate.

The budget of £50,000 is to be accommodated from underspend in the 2015/16 capital programme budget.

### **EMPLOYEE OPINION SURVEY RESULTS 2015**

The Cabinet has received a presentation and been acquainted with the outcome of the Employee Opinion Survey 2015.

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