



A meeting of the **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (PERFORMANCE AND GROWTH)** will be held in **CIVIC SUITE, PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON PE29 3TN** on **TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025** at **7:00 PM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

AGENDA

APOLOGIES

1. MINUTES (Pages 5 - 18)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth) meeting held on 10th June 2025.

Contact Officer: L Adams
01480 388234

2. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

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

Contact Officer: L Adams
01480 388234

3. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 19 - 36)

- a) The Panel are to receive the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme and Notice of Key Decisions for the period 1st July 2025 to 31st October 2025.
- b) Members to discuss future planning of items for the Work Programme

Contact Officer: L Adams
01480 388234

4. OUTSTANDING RESPONSES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS (Pages 37 - 38)

To note the responses outstanding from previous meetings.

Contact Officer: L Adams
01480 388234

5. LOCAL PLAN ENGAGEMENT REVIEW (Pages 39 - 60)

The Panel are invited to comment on contents of the report.

Executive Councillor: Tom Sanderson.

**Contact Officer: F Schulz
01480 388432**

6. CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE UPDATE 2024/25 Q4 (Pages 61 - 106)

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance & Growth) (Environment, Customers & Partnerships) is invited to comment on the contents of the report and make any comments for Cabinet.

Executive Councillor: Sarah Conboy

**Contact Officer: N Sloper
01480 388635**

7. INCREASING AFFORDABLE HOUSING- INSPIRED SOLUTIONS (Pages 107 - 158)

The Committee is invited to consider and comment on the proposal and recommendations contained in the accompanying paper.

Executive Councillor: S Wakeford

**Contact Officer: P Scott
07874 887465**

8. REGENERATION OPPORTUNITIES REPORT (Pages 159 - 186)

The Committee is invited to consider and comment on the proposal and recommendations contained in the accompanying paper.

Executive Councillor: S Wakeford

**Contact Officer: P Scott
07874 887465**

9. EXCLUSION OF PRESS & PUBLIC

To resolve:-

that the public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains exempt information relating to the financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

Contact Officer: L Adams
01480 388234

10. SHARED SERVICES AGREEMENT RENEWAL (Pages 187 - 248)

The Committee is invited to consider and comment on the proposal and recommendations contained in the accompanying paper.

Executive Councillor: L Davenport-Ray

Contact Officer: J Taylor
01480 388388

30 day of June 2025

Michelle Sacks

Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests.

Further information on [Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests is available in the Council's Constitution](#)

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Please contact Miss Lauren Adams, Democratic Services Officer, Tel No. 01480 388234/e-mail Lauren.Adams@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](#).

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 (PERFORMANCE AND GROWTH) held in Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 10 June 2025.

PRESENT: Councillor C M Gleadow – Chair.

Councillors A Blackwell, S J Corney,
I D Gardener, A R Jennings, R Martin,
S R McAdam, Dr M Pickering and
C H Tevlin.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors B S Chapman.

4. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 2nd April 2025 and 15th May 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor S Corney declared an other registerable interest in minute 25/9 by virtue of submitting planning applications as part of his employment.

6. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

With the aid of a report by the Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme was presented to the Panel.

It was noted the items had increased from 4 to 7 since the last work programme was populated and it was a struggle to read the additional pages. Disappointment was expressed that items had been added on last minute with little notice, especially Key Decisions and lack of a Parking update on the Agenda despite the discussions already held about this. In response, the Panel heard that Officers are working on this and an update would be sought with the intention of being added either to the Pending Agenda items or the immediate Work Programme.

7. OUTSTANDING RESPONSES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The Panel received and noted the responses received in relation to questions arising at previous meetings of the Panel and heard that other outstanding responses would be sought.

8. ECONOMIC GROWTH STRATEGY

By means of a report by the Economic Development Manager (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), The Economic Growth Strategy Report was presented to the Panel.

Councillor Gardener expressed his appreciation for the report and asked for clarification pertaining to page 54, noting the year read 2014 instead of 2024. The Council were asked how they are going to help the businesses in the district that struggle to hire additional staff due to the increase in National Insurance and Business rates as the report did not include this information. The Panel heard that this was a draft document and still had edits, ensuring errors will be corrected. They were advised this document is laying out the strategy of the Economic Growth Plan and not everything the team are currently working on. They cannot work by individual cost line and are focusing on ensuring Huntingdonshire is an attractive option to work and live in.

Councillor Pickering questioned whether the Council should be promoting areas within the district, rather than referencing Huntingdonshire itself due to the Local Government Reorganisation. He suggested maybe the Council should be looking towards their new identity rather than the existing one which isn't well known to people. The Panel heard that this strategy is designed for the present and that whilst there will be a restructure, the Huntingdonshire area will still exist. The strategy is designed to be entirely compatible and can work in a localised manner. It was reiterated to the Panel that the website for this will go live in July and the idea is to be the leading force in promoting the area and to be the example other Councils follow.

Councillor Martin expressed his disagreement with Councillor Pickering's point in relation to Huntingdonshire not having a known identity. He drew on the history of the district and advised the Council should be proud of this. He commended the team in their work on the strategy and encouraged the Panel to recognise this. He requested clarification on the use of Huntingdonshire economy being adaptable as he was unsure he agreed with this. The Panel heard that Huntingdonshire has a variety of key sectors, referencing advanced manufacturing, life science and the defence sector. The term adaptable was used as the Council are trying to be adaptable in supporting the

right sectors that the data says they should be focusing on. The Economic Development team remain flexible in their dealings with the local businesses for their needs in that moment in time. The Panel were reminded that Huntingdonshire's work force is not made up of a single business, it spans across different sectors as shown in page 6 of the report. Councillor Martin was appreciative of the confirmation and agreed with the use of adaptability.

Councillor Catmur referenced the Key Risks and that KPI's will be monitored closely, asking for confirmation of what they are and if these are the ones that should be closely monitored. The Panel heard that examples of the KPI's monitored are the Footfall figures from the market towns, business support provided by the team and the number of new people following the Linked-In page. It was reiterated that the report includes other metrics set out in the table which shows consultants the team have worked with and items the team has identified as things that must be worked on as they are indicators as to what is going on and the decisions that need to be taken internally. Councillor Catmur went on to ask if the risk of flooding in Huntingdonshire had been taken into account. The Panel heard that this has been considered and is covered in the Local Plan and that there will need to be a period of adaptability in relation to flooding and the effect climate change will have on businesses. It was heard that those strategies are more long term but the strategy being presented has the potential to last beyond 3 to 5 years and is something that can be taken forward to help with resilience.

Councillor McAdam expressed his agreement with Councillor Martin's comments regarding the history of the district, feeling this could be utilised to bring more tourists into the area. He referred to aims and statements in the report commented there was not a lot regarding how this would be achieved. It was suggested that case studies would be helpful and would like to know how we are helping a business prosper in spite of the current economical climate. The Panel were directed to view the delivery priorities set out in the report, which set the core objectives and the actions going forward. It was reiterated that this is a strategy document and not a step-by-step guide. They are not relying on just ambition but are working hard on the strategy and the hard work of the Officers involved.

Councillor Tevlin thanked the Officers for the report and advised she would also be interested in seeing case studies, specifically from the UK's SPF funding and the Huntingdonshire Futures funding, something that will appeal to people to make an application and why they apply. She referenced the comprehensiveness of the report and suggested that the web page contain information that is clearly laid out and easy to read, possibly a Q & A section that will assist with signposting.

After a question from Councillor Jennings, the Panel heard that the compliments of transport in the area and the location of Huntingdonshire is considered a unique advantage due to its accessibility to other areas of the country within a day's ride on the train. The adaptability mentioned earlier in the meeting regarding Huntingdonshire's workforce and the natural assets are further unique advantages.

Councillor Taylor referenced the report highlighting the ambitions in the market towns such as vibrancy and that they make a place desirable to spend time in. She expressed her disagreement regarding the comments surrounding market towns having stable retail and hospitality businesses with the decline driven coming from professional and office space sector. She expressed that the retail sector, particularly in St Neots had declined which has created unemployment but agreed with the report advising the market towns will be affected by a changing economy. She asked if Parking charges had been considered and the effect they could have in relation to people coming to the market towns. Councillor Taylor made a motion to add a recommendation to the Cabinet reflecting this. The Panel heard that parking is beyond the remit of the strategy but acknowledged there are significant decisions which must be taken regarding parking charges and the impact they may or may not have. The Officers acknowledged they are not the sole authority and the report comments around the market towns are backed up by data that is evidenced based and that there are different trends to how the economy is perceived. They recognised the economy has been challenged in the last few years, with market towns feeling the brunt.

The Panel's attention was drawn to page 15 which discussed the fastest growing areas for jobs in the district and that it is a matter of data Vs perception. The Panel heard that market towns were seen to be evolving rather than dying, such as moving away from just retail and onto more leisure-based businesses. It was reiterated that if this strategy were adopted, it could affect the way other policies are made, such as Parking but the Panel were reminded that not all the parking in the district falls under their remit as there are private car parks as well which they have no control over. Councillor Taylor pushed for the recommendation previously mentioned.

The Chair advised that additional clarification was needed in response to the questions that had been raised by the Panel.

Councillor Martin referenced page 13 of the Strategy regarding the net migration based on age. He expressed his concern over the net migration of 15 - 19-year-olds. He asked why this was and the impact this will have on the strategy. He also drew attention to Ambition 1, What success looks like. He asked if the

Council would be turning down businesses if they would not help the Council reach a Net Zero target. The Panel heard that there is a lack of higher education, drawing on St Neots as an example. It was heard that they have been working with the Combined Authority to manage this such as reviewing transportation and access to training possibilities. The Panel were advised that the Climate and Economic strategies recognise that you can have a positive impact on climate, even if you have emissions.

Councillor Blackwell asked if the report will be a living document as the measures are being set on an annual basis and expressed concern about dealing with out-of-date data. The Panel acknowledged that the Action Plan should be updated more regularly and will appear on the Invest in Huntingdonshire website. They also heard that gathering the data is not without cost and isn't something they can do on a regular basis but they do work with the Combined Authority in ensuring key information is available.

The Chair acknowledged that many of the Panel had questions and the issues raised would be taken on board by the Officers. It was advised that Councillor Taylor take her questions regarding Parking offline and discuss this directly with the Officers.

Following the discussion, it was

RESOLVED

that the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel be passed to Cabinet for their consideration when making a decision upon the recommendations within the report.

9. DISCRETIONARY FEES - PLANNING & PUBLIC PROTECTION

By means of a report by the Head of Planning, Infrastructure & Public Protection (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), the Discretionary Fees - Planning & Public Protection Report was presented to the Panel.

Councillor Martin requested confirmation as to when this was first discussed. The Panel heard that an exact date could not be provided but matters like this are discussed regularly with the Officers. Councillor Martin continued, referencing the Budget and Policy Framework procedure rules and claimed the procedure had not been followed in this instance, quoting Part

2.1, part A of the Constitution. He reiterated that the Panel should have notified as soon as it came up. It was confirmed to the Panel that the notices had been presented correctly and the procedure has been followed. Councillor Martin confirmed that he fully supports the proposal of charging additional fees but would like to make the Recommendation that this not be delegated to Officers but charges to remain a decision of Full Council. The Panel heard that the Officers have adopted a new system 2 months ago which highlighted the upturn in Section 106 agreements which must be signed. This must reach the July Council otherwise they will be doing this at cost to the Council. The Panel were informed this had been brought to them in June to allow them time to scrutinise and be fully informed before Full Council in July. The Panel were also asked to consider agility when debating the proffered Recommendation suggested. The report is based on data and guidance that's been gathered by other Councils. The team are undertaking a viability assessment as part of the development of the Local Plan. If there are viability recommendations that suggest we need to make changes at pace, is the timescale to bring something to Full Council. Delegation needs to be crafted so there are no unintended consequences that could impact other work streams. Councillor Martin expressed his concerns about setting a dangerous precedent as this would be the only discretionary charge that could be changed outside of a Full Council meeting, if this were approved. It was confirmed that the Panel could make this Recommendation to Council and that the whole budget process must be separated from variations in-year to the budget which is why the issue is going ahead to Council to be considered. It was confirmed to the Panel that new legislation is coming that will introduce a new process and that Officers would like to be empowered in an appropriate framework to enable making those decisions in the best interests of the Council.

Councillor Taylor sought clarification as to Options 3:4:2 and 3:4:3 in the report, regarding making recommendations to Council. The Panel heard that, due to the nature of the report, it will go to Full Council in July. It is with the Panel tonight. The Chair requested further clarification from the Officer on the implications of delaying. The Panel heard that there are a number of 106 agreements which must be signed. These can wait until the decision by Full Council in July but having to sign them now then delay further would result in them being monitored for the next 30 years at a cost. They have a Developers Forum and would ask for assistance in this so they can bring the question of fees to the Forum. It was noted to the Panel that costs, such as PPA's are already included in the budget. Moving forward It would be the BNG monitoring fees. They will be able to do a budget bid for the new line in August to build that in going forward.

Councillor Jennings asked why the scale of charges couldn't be set at Full Council in July. The Panel heard that the challenge could be that one person spends more and the next will be paying less in comparison. The example made was householders being unduly penalised where the larger developer would be getting a much better deal. They are working with the Finance Team on cost recovery and will be using this and the cost of contractors as a basis of the rates that will be set. They have sought to get feedback from the Developer community but this does not fit in with the July Council meeting.

A solution offered to the Panel would be to limit the delegation for the current financial year only. Councillor Martin agreed to this amendment to his Recommendation. The motion was seconded by Councillor Gardener and the Chair opened the floor for comments on the motion.

Councillor Taylor advised she was happy with the report as it had been presented and believes in putting her trust in the Officers as they are doing this to cover costs, not to make money. It was confirmed to the Panel that they would be working closely with the Section 151 Officer in this.

Councillor McAdam expressed his support for Councillor Martin's amended recommendation and reiterated that whilst the Officers should be making the recommendations, the final decision should lie with the Councillors as they have been elected.

Councillor Pickering expressed concern that this could potentially deter investors from wanting to invest in Huntingdonshire. The Panel heard that this had been taken into consideration as they do not want to deter growth in the region. There is a statutory obligation to monitor BNG and anyone who is undertaking development. They are following guidance from the Planning Advisory service which is what their model is based upon. They intend to be transparent in their costs and will be publishing these on the website. It was confirmed that there will be a possibility of reducing or waiving fees for projects such as community development.

The Panel hears the new Recommendation and a vote is called. 8 Members are For, 0 Against and 2 Abstainers.

Following the discussion, the Panel were informed that their comments would be added to the Cabinet report in order for Cabinet to make a decision upon the recommendations within the report, and additionally, the Panel request that the Cabinet consider adding the following recommendation to their report;

- 1) To be delegated to officers identified above for the current financial year only. Discretionary charges to be developed in consultation with relative Executive councillors as set out above but also include and Shadow Executive Councillors for planning and finance.

10. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2024/2025 (QUARTER 4)

By means of a report by the Business Intelligence and Performance Manager (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), the Corporate Performance 2024/25 Quarter 4 Report was presented to the Panel.

Councillor Jennings expressed frustrations regarding P121, particularly the red items which were explained to be an anomaly and that they would be coming back up whereas with each quarterly report, they appear to be getting further away. The Panel heard that this view was respected, and this was a rare off year for the service and may be contributed to the Green Waste subscription as well as other factors. They are looking to fix this next year and that the service's ambitious targets are something that they are striving to achieve. Councillor Jennings went on to confirm the report advised the Green Waste subscription did not impact this and that missed bins is a big concern for residents. The Panel were advised there was nothing further to be said regarding this issue. The panel were made aware that the target for missed bins was an ambitious stretch target which the service would rather retain to strive for improvement, that performance remains ahead of the APSE comparator Councils.

Councillor Taylor requested clarification in relation to action 34 within the Corporate Plan specifically for more detail regarding the expressions of interest to develop the Local Skills Implementation plan. St Neots was presented as an example of having received 10 under the CPCA skills capital grant funding. Councillor Taylor wanted to understand what this looked like and how much involvement the local community had with this. The Panel heard this would be taken away and responded to by the Officers. Councillor Taylor wanted to see a performance relating to the new funding that will be received to assist in completing projects. The Panel were advised the Officers would not report on funding for projects that had not begun yet as this could prove to be a never-ending task. The Panel also heard that the project for Quarter 4 is now completed, and anything further would need to be discussed with the Portfolio holder and

the coming year's budget setting process would be the time to explore future funding further.

Councillor Gardener conveyed disappointment over the PI18, 9% reduction in household waste recycled and reused since the implementation of the Green Wastes subscription service. PI20 confirms household residual waste has increased and believes this is a bad look for the Council as this is not very 'green' since this has resulted in 247,000 tonnes of additional waste to go to landfill. The Panel heard that being unable to collect food waste had been an issue, but this would be resolved next year by introducing the new food waste service from April 2026. They also heard that waste is measured by weight resulting in a disproportion shift in the percentage recycled when considering changes in green waste as food waste is heavier than for example recycled plastic. Huntingdonshire is working at the forefront of the implementation of Household food waste collections as part of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Waste Partnership and has received transition funding from the government to support the establishment of separate household food waste collection. This service will go live in April 2026.

Councillor Corney expressed his thanks to the Community Action Team service and commended them on the job they do. He requested clarification on what occurred in October/November of 2024 to push the fly tipping numbers into red and asked if any events at the recycling centres had an impact on this. The Panel heard that the hours of operation for the recycling centre had changed and were operating reduced seasonal hours. The Panel heard further explanation could be discussed with the Community Action Team as the Officers investigate fly tipping thoroughly and would have a greater understanding of this matter.

Following the discussion, it was

RESOLVED

that the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel be passed to Cabinet for their consideration when making a decision upon the recommendations within the report.

11. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2024-25 (QUARTER 4)

By means of a report by the Director of Finance and Corporate Resources (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), the Finance Performance 2024/25 Quarter 4 Report was presented to the Panel.

Councillor Martin was appreciative that time was made for the

report to be run through with him ahead of tonight's meeting. He wanted members of the public to understand that though this shows an overspending amount of £56,000, they are in fact £4 million better off than first set out in the budget. He reflected on the tough decisions they potentially wouldn't have had to make if they had known this would be the outcome. The Panel heard that £2 million of that £4.2 million was included within the budget as contributions to the Workforce Strategy to the Future Financial Sustainability earmarked reserves. The additional 2.2 million contributions to earmarked reserves were funded by additional interest receivable on cash investments. The Council has higher cash balances, and the interest has remained high. It was advised that if the interest changed or if they had not been as prudent in budget setting, the result would be very different, and it is impossible to predict when or if interest rates will change.

Councillor Jennings expressed his thanks for the table and its usefulness. He brought attention to the debt owed to the Council over a year old, referencing the £165, 000 owed to HDC for 3CICT services, wanting clarification about what this is and the likelihood of its recoverability. The Panel were informed that this is a primarily debt owed by Cambridge City Council for services. The new Chief Digital and Information Officer is on top of this and leaning heavily to get this debt paid. Councillor Jennings requested a layman's explanation for the Panel relating to the reduction in minimum revenue provision as he struggled to understand its meaning. The Panel heard that this is a statutory provision to repay debt. The provision is made up of many assets. This is based on the previous year's capital programme. It is best practise to review this annually and recalibrate it. If you don't have to make as much provision, that allows more money for Service provisions.

Councillor Taylor sought clarification on where the funding for the health and wealth building came from that was put aside at full Council. The Panel heard that this was a matter taken to the Overview & Scrutiny (Environment, Communities and Partnerships) Panel. A full discussion and presentation were given by Officers. The next steps are leading towards a small pilot scheme of grant arrangements. This issue falls under the remit of the other Scrutiny Panel and further clarification can be found in those papers and the recording.

Following the discussion, it was

RESOLVED

that the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel be passed to Cabinet for their consideration when making a decision upon the recommendations within the report.

12. TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN REPORT 2024/25

By means of a report by the Director of Finance and Resources (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), the Treasury Management Outturn Report 2024/25 was presented to the Panel.

Councillor Gleadow expressed her appreciation for the new Treasury Management Outturn report format, the graphs made the report a much easier read.

Councillor Martin agreed with Councillor Gleadow in that the report was very detailed and asked for confirmation of any issues that are foreseen that will negatively impact the good financial position (specifically in relation to treasury management) the Council is currently in. The Panel heard that interest rates are a concern, the forecasts received are from for the Bank of England lending rate rather than general investment interest rates, in addition the Council has a lot of money invested with the DMO and there is little historic evidence, and as a result a risk, in relation to how far and fast the DMO interest rates could fall if general interest rates start to drop (ie DMO could fall faster due to other factors). The DMO is used as there is a guarantee from the Government that they will repay it investments. Another factor to consider is global unrest and how that impacts the economy such as driving inflation or interest rates. The Russia-Ukraine war breaking out was drawn on as an example of this.

Following the discussion, it was

RESOLVED

that the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel be passed to Cabinet for their consideration when making a decision upon the recommendations within the report.

13. GARDEN WASTE FINANCE

By means of a presentation by the Head of Operations (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), the Garden Waste Finance item was presented to the Panel.

Councillor Martin reiterated that he was still not in agreement with charging for the Green waste service but understands this is the way the Council are moving forward. He asked if the implementation cost was included in the revenue costs. The Panel heard that it was not included but confirmed they implementation costs were £400K than originally predicted as

they managed the collections in-house.

In response to further questions from Councillor Martin, the Panel heard Cambridgeshire County Council oversee the recycling centres and that they do not monitor footfall. They do track the amount of waste by tonnage, confirming that green waste increased by 788 tonnes in the last 12 months. It cannot be confirmed if this was due to the introduction of charging for green waste or if it was seasonal. They also heard that ultimately, since introducing the charge for green waste, they collected 2498 less tonnes of waste overall.

The majority of the missed bins was from residual waste, not green waste and that was mainly due to losing 6 fulltime and experienced members of staff to long-term sickness which hits the service hard as much of that role relies on experience which takes time to build.

It was reiterated that the average target for missed bins set by the Council was 75 per 100K collections for Huntingdonshire and 72 by other Local Authorities. In 2023/2024, the final result was 39.8 missed bins per 100K. The service wanted to be ambitious in retaining this target for the 2024/2025 year. It was confirmed that unit costs were well below average when compared to the 16 other Local Authorities and that, whilst it is showing as red, the figures we have are enviable.

Councillor Pickering asked if the organic matter had been recovered from the residual waste. The Panel heard that the Officers do not have access to that information as Huntingdonshire are the collection authority, not the disposal. This is under the remit of Cambridgeshire County Council. It was confirmed that Cambridgeshire County Council are working hard to find the best way to deal with the residual waste.

Councillor Jennings admitted that he had been wrong in his previous stance regarding the estimated take up levels where he felt they were too high an estimation. He congratulated the Officers on the 65% take up achieved in the first year and asked if they think the rest will sign up later in the year. The Panel heard that this was difficult to forecast but some residents have signed up for the service ahead of the renewal date and sometimes doing this multiple times which shows satisfaction with the service. There are currently just under 51K subscriptions with a steady stream of 300-400 per week still coming in.

Councillor Taylor acknowledged that it was a hard decision in her previous role as portfolio holder to agree to this but believes it was the right decision, especially after hearing the figures that have come from it.

Councillor Gardener confirmed he still does not agree with this

service, drawing on his other role as a County Councillor and believes this is shifting costs from one Authority onto another and that this won't work once the Local Government Reorganisation happens. The Panel heard that once the reorganisation happens, this should get picked up and could result with one authority who will be doing the collection and disposal. It was also heard that 8K less tonnes of residual waste resulted in a saving of nearly £1 million for Cambridgeshire County Council this year.

Following the discussion, it was

RESOLVED

that the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel be passed to Cabinet for their consideration when making a decision upon the recommendations within the report.

14. CORPORATE PLAN - NEW PERFORMANCE INDICATOR-TARGETS AND TOLERANCES

By means of a report by the Head of Policy, Performance & Emergency Planning (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), the Corporate Plan - New Performance Indicator Targets and Tolerances Report was presented to the Panel.

Councillor Jennings expressed his pleasure that his previous comments regarding One Leisure targets had been incorporated in the Plan. It demonstrates that Scrutiny does work in practise.

Councillor Martin agreed with Councillor Jennings and expressed his thanks for the adjustments that had been made based on the feedback provided previously. He expressed an interest in receiving further data and statistics from other organisations as this would provide a rounder picture which will aid in the scrutinising process. The Panel heard that it had been a difficult year for reporting due to people leaving but they now have two new Officers who have agreed to continue assisting with the reporting.

Councillor Taylor expressed her concern and reminded Members that setting targets is a good thing, but it must be remembered that behind the data is humans and the cost of setting targets that are unattainable could be demoralising. The Panel heard that they have always been cognizant of that and that they are trying to encourage people, drive performances and reward excellent performance. This is carried out with the consent of the Service owners, and they try not to set unattainable targets. They have adjusted 2 on the report for this reasoning.

Following the discussion, it was

RESOLVED

that the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel be passed to Cabinet for their consideration when making a decision upon the recommendations within the report.

Chair

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

Prepared by: Councillor Sarah Conboy, Executive Leader of the Council
Date of Publication: 16 June 2025
For Period: 1 July 2025 to 31 October 2025

Membership of the Cabinet is as follows:-

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Councillor J Harvey	Executive Governance Services	Councillor for and Democratic	c/o Huntingdonshire District Council Pathfinder House St Mary's Street Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE29 3TN Tel: 07941 080531 E-mail: Jo.Harvey@huntingdonshire.gov.uk
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Councillor J Kerr	Executive Countryside, Waste and Street Scene	Councillor for Parks and	15 Crown Walk St Ives Cambridgeshire PE27 5QN Tel: 07906 899425 E-mail: Julie.Kerr@huntingdonshire.gov.uk
Councillor B Mickelburgh	Executive Resources	Councillor for Finance &	2 Grainger Avenue Godmanchester Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE29 2JT Tel: 07441 392492 E-mail: Brett.Mickelburgh@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

Councillor T Sanderson	Deputy Executive Leader and Executive Councillor for Planning	29 Burmoor Close Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE29 6GE Tel: 01480 436822 E-mail: Tom.Sanderson@huntingdonshire.gov.uk
Councillor S Wakeford	Executive Councillor for Economy, Regeneration and Housing	4 Croft Close Brampton Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE28 4TJ Tel: 07762 109210 E-mail: Sam.Wakeford@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

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.

Agendas may be accessed electronically at the [District Council's website](#).

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 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.

Page 22

- 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.

Matter for Decision Description of Decision	Decision Maker	Date decision to be taken	Documents Available	How relevant Officer can be contacted	Reasons for the report to be considered in private (paragraph no.)	Relevant Executive Councillor	Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Community Chest Grant Aid Awards 2025/26 To consider applications received via the Community Chest Awards Scheme for 2024/25.	Grants Panel	18 Mar 2026		Claudia Deeth, Public Protection Manager Tel: (01480) 388233 or email: Claudia.Deeth@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		S Howell & L Davenport-Ray	Environment, Communities & Partnerships
Economic Growth Strategy To seek approval of an Economic Growth Strategy for Huntingdonshire.	Cabinet	15 Jul 2025		Rebecca Tomlin, Economic Development Manager Tel: (01480) 388534 or email: Rebecca.Tomlin@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		S Wakeford	Performance & Growth

Matter for Decision Description of Decision	Decision Maker	Date decision to be taken	Documents Available	How relevant Officer can be contacted	Reasons for the report to be considered in private (paragraph no.)	Relevant Executive Councillor	Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel
<p>One Leisure Independent Review Update</p> <p>This report relates back to the main Long Term Operating Model for One Leisure report presented and approved by Cabinet in March 2024. A recommendation of this report was to re-visit O&S and Cabinet after 12 months and provide an update on all of the recommendations that the original report specified.</p>	<p>Cabinet</p>	<p>15 Jul 2025</p>		<p>Gregg Holland, Head of Leisure Service, Health and Environment Tel: (01480) 388157 or email: Gregg.Holland@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</p>		<p>S Howell</p>	<p>Environment, Communities & Partnerships</p>

Matter for Decision Description of Decision	Decision Maker	Date decision to be taken	Documents Available	How relevant Officer can be contacted	Reasons for the report to be considered in private (paragraph no.)	Relevant Executive Councillor	Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel
<p>Shared Services Agreement Renewal</p> <p>The paper is seeking agreement to renew the shared service agreement for the provision of Legal, Building Control and ICT for a further 5 years, noting the same agreement will also be recommended to partners at Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Council.</p>	<p>Cabinet</p>	<p>15 Jul 2025</p>		<p>John Taylor, Corporate Director - Communities Tel: (01480) 3880119 or email: John.Taylor@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</p>		<p>L Davenport-Ray & B Mickelburgh</p>	<p>Performance & Growth</p>

Matter for Decision Description of Decision	Decision Maker	Date decision to be taken	Documents Available	How relevant Officer can be contacted	Reasons for the report to be considered in private (paragraph no.)	Relevant Executive Councillor	Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Revised Climate Action Plan To approve the Revised Climate Action Plan.	Cabinet	15 Jul 2025		Harriet Robinson, Climate Co-ordinator Tel: (01480) 388513 or email: Harriet.Robinson@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		L Davenport-Ray	Environment, Communities & Partnerships
Regeneration Opportunities Report##***	Cabinet	15 Jul 2025		Pamela Scott, Head of Economy, Regeneration and Housing Delivery	3	S Wakeford	Performance & Growth
Paxton Pits Nature Reserve##***	Cabinet	15 Jul 2025		Gregg Holland, Head of Leisure Service, Health and Environment	3	J Kerr	Environment, Communities & Partnerships
Increasing Affordable Housing - Inspired Solutions##***	Cabinet	15 Jul 2025		Pamela Scott, Head of Economy, Regeneration and Housing Delivery	3	S Wakeford	Performance & Growth

Matter for Decision Description of Decision	Decision Maker	Date decision to be taken	Documents Available	How relevant Officer can be contacted	Reasons for the report to be considered in private (paragraph no.)	Relevant Executive Councillor	Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Play Sufficiency To approve a new framework for play provision in the District and to ensure provision is sustainable and meets the needs of all communities.	Cabinet	16 Sep 2025		Helen Lack, Development and Delivery Manager - Parks Countryside and Climate Tel: (01480) 388658 or email: Helen.Lack@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		J Kerr	Environment, Communities & Partnerships

Page 27

Matter for Decision Description of Decision	Decision Maker	Date decision to be taken	Documents Available	How relevant Officer can be contacted	Reasons for the report to be considered in private (paragraph no.)	Relevant Executive Councillor	Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Huntingdon Sport and Health Hub - RIBA Stage 2## To gain approval to proceed with the preferred option and provide detail on the final designs, costs and capital requirements.	Cabinet	16 Sep 2025	Huntingdon Sport and Health Hub Feasibility Report - RIBA Stage 1 Built Facility Strategy Swim England Aquatics Review	Gregg Holland, Head of Leisure Service, Health and Environment Tel No: (01480) 388157 / email: Gregg.Holland@huntingdonshire.gov.uk	3	S Howell	Environment, Communities & Partnerships

Matter for Decision Description of Decision	Decision Maker	Date decision to be taken	Documents Available	How relevant Officer can be contacted	Reasons for the report to be considered in private (paragraph no.)	Relevant Executive Councillor	Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Community Infrastructure Levy Funding To consider application for funding from the Test Community Infrastructure Levy Funding round which opened on 2 June 2025.	Cabinet	14 Oct 2025		Claire Burton, Implementation Team Leader Tel No: (01480) 388274 / email: Claire.Burton@huntingdonshire.gov. uk		T Sanderson	Performance & Growth

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Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2025-26

Performance and Growth

Forward Agendas

Meeting Date	Pre-Scrutiny	Scrutiny Review
8 th July 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared Services Agreement Renewal Regeneration Opportunities Increasing Affordable Housing – Inspired Solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Peer Challenge Update 2024/25 Q4 Local Plan engagement review
3 rd September 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Performance Report 2025/26 (Quarter 1) Financial Performance Report 2025/26 (Quarter 1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Peer Challenge Update 2025/26 Q1 Planning Enforcement
8 th October 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Infrastructure Levy Funding 	
5 th November 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Performance Report 2025/26 (Quarter 2) Financial Performance Report 2025/26 (Quarter 2) Treasury Management 6 Month Performance Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Peer Challenge Update 2025/26 Q2
3 rd December 2025		

Pending Agenda Items

Meeting Date	Item	Recommendation	Outcome

O&S Topics Identified For Future Meetings

Subject	Brief	Status
Commercial Investment Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop to be arranged for members post budget setting and completion of project work by CIPFA 	Progress – schedule on to agenda
Local Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement with Parishes and residents – ease of submitting responses 	Progress – schedule on to agenda
Market Towns Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lessons learnt following project completion 	Progress – schedule on to agenda
Huntingdonshire Evening Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Huntingdonshire's Evening Economy - supporting the night-time economy across our District • How HDC currently supports the evening economy across our market towns and rural areas (possibly across financial/business support, safety, growth, •CCTV service, rural rates relief policies), as well as how we can influence our partners to provide further support for this strategic sector (including wider economic support, skills and employment). 	More info and scoping requested from Cllrs

Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2025-26

Environment, Communities and Partnerships

Forward Agendas

Meeting Date	Pre-Scrutiny	Scrutiny Review
10 th July 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One Leisure Independent Review Update Revised Climate Action Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One Leisure Annual Review The Annual Climate Report
4 th September 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Play Sufficiency Huntingdon Sport and Health Hub – RIBA Stage 2 (Private) Energy Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Right to Grow
14 th October 2025		
6 th November 2025		
4 th December 2025		

Pending Agenda Items

Meeting Date	Item	Recommendation	Outcome
TBA	Paxton Pits Contract Renewal	Send straight to Cabinet	Pending further info from officers

O&S Topics Identified For Future Meetings

Subject	Brief	Status
Community Safety Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider bringing forward a paper to review and understand what Huntingdonshire District Council has done or is currently doing in relation to the Community Safety Partnership (CSP). • Given the importance of community safety, I believe it would be beneficial to examine the CSP's activities, outcomes, and any ongoing initiatives to ensure transparency and alignment with local needs, thus improve local understanding. • Is it working, could this be improved? 	Progress – schedule on to agenda
Integrated Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative working between HDC and NHS • Reducing inequalities – health, housing, growth 	More info and scoping requested from Cllrs
Hinchingbrooke Hospital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on redevelopment works • Big organisations making a difference locally, local recruitment • Link to preventative and integrated care 	
Open Spaces in Huntingdonshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HDC owned – HCP, Paxton Pits • Great Fen • Green spaces perspective and how links with the local plan • Access for residents – health lifestyles, mental health, OLAL • Purpose of open spaces, and strategic use of them • Mental Health, Well-being • Wildlife corridors 	More info and scoping requested from Cllrs
Customer Service Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community support • Merits of speed of customer contact versus depth of discussion and customer outcome 	More info and scoping requested from Cllrs
Huntingdonshire's Legacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture and influence of Huntingdonshire • Creating a legacy for the district 	More info and scoping requested from Cllrs

Working Groups

Climate Working Group
Members: Cllrs T D Alban, M Hassall, C Lowe, D Shaw and two vacancies Lead Officer: Neil Sloper
Progress: November 2022: Initial Meetings held to establish Terms of Reference for the group. April 2023: Regular meetings established. Evidence and information gathering to be progressed. Group to be involved in the Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy Development. January 2024: Meetings held to discuss proposed work plan for the group and to discuss HVO Fuels project November 2024: Meeting to discuss future proposed projects January 2025: Group met to review the HVO draft report prior to its consideration by the Panel Next Steps: Review the membership of the group and increase the membership to 6 Councillors Meetings to be scheduled to allow involvement in proposed works.
Disabled Facilities Grants Group
Members: I P Taylor, B Banks, C Tevlin and C Lowe Lead Officer: Claudia Deeth
Progress: February 2024: Councillors invited to express their interest in being involved with the project. August 2024: initial meeting held and scope of project discussed February 2025: Further meeting held to update the group on the progress of the project Next Steps: DFG team to arrange ongoing schedule of meetings

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Overview and Scrutiny (Performance and Growth) Panel – Questions and actions requiring a response.

Minute No.	Item	Councillor	Question	Answer
24/65	Market Towns	Cllr Pitt	Electronic screens. What is the cost to continue the screens? Ongoing costs for two screens?	Response circulated to Panel via email.
24/58	Car Parking Strategy	Cllr Martin	An update regarding the car parking strategy.	<p>Officers are finalising the draft specification for this commission piece to inform the tender process which is expected to be run during July and August enabling works to commence September 2025.</p> <p>Regarding Cllr Martin's interlinked point relating to introduction of parking charges as per the budget papers agreed earlier in the year; Officers have raised the matter with the relevant Cabinet Members.</p>
25/10	Corporate Performance Q4	Cllr Taylor	Further information about Expressions of Interests - FE Cold Spots.	<p>The CPCA launched a programme in 2021 to address FE Cold Spots, areas with low skills participation and limited access to provision, identifying St Neots and East Cambridgeshire as key areas. A 2024 feasibility study, funded by a £4.5m grant, found insufficient demand for new FE colleges but highlighted a need for specialist provision in sectors like health, social care, construction, and digital skills.</p> <p>In February 2025, a Skills Capital Grant Funding programme was launched, attracting 10 applications for a £4.5m fund. Following a rigorous assessment, grants will be awarded to four providers, funding projects to support over 8,500 learners across St Neots, Huntingdon, and East Cambridgeshire.</p> <p>Priority sectors include green technology, construction, health and social care, advanced manufacturing, and employability skills. The funding allocation includes £2.3m to St Neots, £1.5m to East Cambridgeshire, £466k to Huntingdon, and £230k in partial funding for a project spanning multiple areas.</p>

				<p>The funded projects aim to equip residents with employer-demanded skills, addressing local skills shortages and improving economic participation. Providers will report annually to the Skills Committee starting in September 2025, with a programme completion report expected in 2028. Future plans for the FE Cold Spots initiative will be considered in late 2025.</p> <p>At the CPCA Skills Committee on 16.06.25 there was a paper which confirmed the details about the bids however these cannot be released until the grant agreements have gone out w/c 23rd June. A press release will then follow once all agreements have been signed. A forum will also be set up to facilitate regular catchups with HDC and ECDC colleagues throughout the project.</p>
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Public
Key Decision – No

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Local Plan Communications

Meeting/Date: Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth) – 8 July 2025)

Executive Portfolio: Executive Councillor for Planning

Report by: Head of Planning, Infrastructure & Public Protection/Chief Planning Officer

Ward(s) affected: All Wards

Executive Summary:

This report sets out details on previous local plan engagement, provides a review of the consultation and outlines future changes to engagement. The report also provides a proposed communications strategy for the next round of public consultation scheduled for October 2025 where a preferred options (draft) local plan and sustainability appraisal will be consulted upon.

Recommendation(s):

The Panel is recommended to:

- To consider and comment on the report and findings including Section 6 'Future Actions'.
- To consider and comment on the contents of the Local Plan Communications Strategy
- To grant delegated authority to the Head of Planning, Infrastructure & Public Protection in consultation with the Head of Communications, Engagement & Public Affairs and Executive Councillor for Planning to make any necessary typographical or other minor changes to the Local Plan Communications Strategy and engagement material prior to its implementation or dissemination.

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report sets out details on previous local plan engagement, provides a review of the consultation and outlines future changes to engagement. The report also provides a proposed communications strategy for the next round of public consultation scheduled for October 2025 where a preferred options (draft) local plan and sustainability appraisal will be consulted upon.

2 WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY/BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Preparation of the Local Plan is guided by statutory requirements. A local planning authority is required under Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 to invite representations on the potential content of any future development plan document.
- 2.2 At the request of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth), this report provides the opportunity for comment on the next round of [Regulation 18] public engagement and includes a background to, and the review of, previous consultation and engagement.
- 2.3 A communications strategy has been prepared for comment. The Strategy was developed in collaboration with the Communications Team. The intention is to use a multi-channel approach to communications to try to maximise the diversity of residents, organisations and businesses who can engage with and make comments on the Preferred Options Local Plan 2025.

3 LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION – BACKGROUND

- 3.1 There are a number of formal stages of engagement that Local Authorities are required to undertake in line with planning regulations such as The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The stages include:
 - **Pre-production and evidence gathering stage (also known as Regulation 18):** This is part of the pre-production and evidence gathering stage for Development Plan Documents. This stage assists the Council in the creation of a final version of the document which will eventually be examined by a Planning Inspector and adopted by the Council as a document that will be used to assess and make decisions on planning applications
 - **Pre-Submission (Regulation 19 & 20):** At this stage, a final version of the Development Plan Document is produced alongside any evidence-based and supporting documents as required through regulation (22). This is referred to as the Proposed Submission document. A consultation will be held with all representations sent to the Planning Inspector. These documents are later examined.
 - **Examination (Regulation 23 to 25):** During the examination process there are a number of further opportunities for the public to participate, this includes being invited by the Planning Inspector to provide further information or to appear at a public examination session to voice

objections. In addition, if the Planning Inspector suggests that the Development Plan Document requires amendments, a public consultation will be held on the 'proposed modifications' to the document allowing people to voice their opinion on the suitability of these modifications.

3.2 Local Authorities across the country engage to varying degrees, some local authorities consult on regulation 18 and 19 stages only (outlined above) or on an Issues/Options Plan, Preferred Options Plan and a Submission Version of the plan (which is consulted upon before all comments are submitted to the planning inspectorate).

- To date the Council has undertaken the following rounds of public consultation (below) to ensure public engagement and input into the Local Plan.
Consultation on a [Statement of Community Involvement](#) and [Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report](#) from 1 February to 15 March 2023.
- Consultation on the [Land Availability Assessment Methodology](#) and [Settlement Hierarchy Methodology](#) from 29 March to 10 May 2023.
- [Call for Sites](#) from 29 March to 7 June 2023
- The Issues Engagement Papers from 26 April to 5 July 2023 with 3 options to help people respond:
 - [The Issues Engagement Paper](#) - an in-depth look at the issues including detailed questions to encourage comprehensive responses
 - [The Issues Summary Paper](#) - a quick look at the headline issues, with one or two open questions to get opinions
 - [The Issues Easy Read Version](#) - a simplified document with tick box questions.
- The Further Issues and options consultation from 18 September 2024 and 27 November 2024 which included:
 - [Further Issues and Options](#) - Set out options for what may be included in the new local plan. It also asks some questions about what is important to you.
 - [Land Availability Assessments](#) - Assessed sites that were put forward by landowners, developers, agents and interested third parties to see if they are potentially suitable or unsuitable for development.
 - [Sustainability Appraisal](#) - Assessed our strategies, options, sites and future policies against a series of sustainability objectives.
- The Additional Sites Consultation recently closed and ran from the 23 April 2025 to 4 June 2025 and included:
 - [Additional Sites Land Availability Assessments](#) - Assessed additional sites that were put forward by landowners, developers, agents and interested third

parties to see if they are potentially suitable or unsuitable for development.

- [Additional Sites Sustainability Appraisal](#) – Assessed the additional sites against a series of sustainability objectives.

- 3.3 The consultations undertaken so far go significantly beyond the regulatory requirements allowing the public and stakeholders to comment on methodology papers, assessment of land submitted to the council and allowing early engagement to set out the themes and issues that the Local Plan should address. This has allowed the public to be involved in the earliest stages of Local Plan production, shaping it from the outset before any decisions have been made on the direction of travel. All consultations to date were also extended beyond the regulatory outlined 6 weeks to ten weeks to allow maximum time for those to respond.

4 FURTHER ISSUES AND OPTIONS CONSULTATION – ENGAGEMENT

- 4.1 The Further Issues and Options consultation ran between 18 September 2024 and 27 November 2024. The consultation period was extended beyond the statutory requirement of 6 weeks to ensure early engagement and input. In summary the following public engagement was undertaken.
- 4.2 Prior to the start of consultation workshops were held for Town and Parish councillors (2 workshops, offered online and in-person) and Members (1 workshop, online). This was followed up with an email providing slides, a recording of the presentation and briefing note to all. The presentation included a request for Town and Parish Councillors and Members to get involved and help spread the word. The briefing note included an overview of the consultation, the communications strategy, how to respond and a summary of the consultation documents.
- 4.3 Engagement packs were provided to Town and Parish Councils which were all picked up or distributed (by post to Parish Clerks) by the end of September. The packs included hard copies of the briefing note, consultation documents (a full copy of the Further Issues and Options consultation document and copies of the Land Availability Assessments and Sustainability Appraisals for their Town or Parish), posters (in A3 & A4 format), leaflets and a covering letter. Engagement Packs were designed to ensure that all residents within a Town/ Parish had access to the consultation documents to reduce the need to travel and enable greater accessibility.
- 4.4 The posters and leaflets provided a brief overview of the consultation and a description of the Local Plan. They included the dates and times for the public exhibitions, a QR code to the Let's Talk Huntingdonshire website and an email address to contact. Alternative options to respond were offered including email and paper forms (available upon request and at the public exhibitions).

- 4.5 At the commencement of consultation physical copies of the documents, posters and leaflets were distributed to all 11 libraries in Huntingdonshire and a copy was also provided at Pathfinder House.
- 4.6 In addition, a press release was issued at the start of consultation and published on the Huntingdonshire District Council website, social media platforms and the Hunts Post.
- 4.7 The consultation was also advertised on the Huntingdonshire District Council consultation webpage and further information was provided on the Local Plan Update Page. Under advisement the Let's Talk Huntingdonshire was used as a landing page to enhance outreach and provide key information and guides all on one platform. Let's Talk Huntingdonshire included a website link to the consultation portal on the frontpage banner, summaries of the topics and issues within the consultation documents, the inclusion of a video about the Local Plan Update and the consultations, FAQs, copies of the consultation documents and updated 'How to Respond' guides. This platform was promoted via social media and other media outlets to help people to navigate the consultation portal and understand the local plan process.
- 4.8 Posters and leaflets were provided to the mobile library service which covers the whole of Huntingdonshire, paper response forms were also posted to a number of parishes on request such as Yaxley.
- 4.9 Notification was sent at the beginning of the consultation to all those registered on the local plan consultation mailing list consisting of 5,000 consultees and agents. 2,306 new accounts were registered, an increase of 46% on the previous consultation.
- 4.10 Seven exhibitions were held in: Yaxley, Huntingdon, St Ives, Kimbolton, Sawtry, St Neots and Ramsey. Over 750 people attended the exhibitions comprising residents, Town and Parish Councillors and landowners. In comparison, the total number of attendees at previous exhibitions hosted for the Local Plan to 2036 consultation (7 exhibitions between 31 Aug – 23 Nov 2012) was 227. The exhibitions were an opportunity to learn more about the consultation, directed residents on how to respond to the consultation and provided the opportunity for residents to ask questions in person. Paper response forms were also available for those who wished to respond in writing.
- 4.11 The council attended multiple events to spread the word of the Local Plan consultation including: Invest in Huntingdonshire Intermediary Network, Cambs b2b (at Duxford and Peterborough), the Town and Parish Forum (including a presentation and question and answer session), The Climate Conference and Pride in Place: Visitor Economy event. At each event the team hosted a stall with exhibition boards, consultation documentation, leaflets and posters. This enabled further buy in from businesses and others to encourage involvement.
- 4.12 Regular updates about the consultation were provided to Town and Parish Councillors through the Parish Newsletter (4 updates), emails to Parish

Clerks and Chairs (2 emails) and through the Members weekly update (14 emails)

- 4.13 A social media campaign was conducted through Facebook, Twitter and Linked In. The campaign included a total of 11 posts (for each social media outlet) and included reminders of exhibition dates and locations, focus pieces on key topics, reminders to respond and release of Local Plan video (which provided an overview of the local plan, the consultation and key dates). Total impressions across all of the platforms was 41,726.
- 4.14 The Communications Team responded to queries from stakeholders on social media throughout the consultation and the Local Planning Policy Team responded and fielded queries assisting stakeholders and residents through the dedicated local plan email address and via phone.
- 4.15 During the consultation 5 articles were also published in the Hunts Post – written by Members including Cllr Mickelburgh, Lara Davenport-Ray, Taylor, Sarah Conboy and Tom Sanderson.
- 4.16 Advertisements publicising the Local Plan were placed on 7 Huntingdonshire District Council bin freighters, the route of which covered the whole district.
- 4.17 Large banners advertising the consultation were placed at local council owned parks including Huntingdon Riverside, Huntingdon Sapley Park, St Neots Riverside, St Neots Priory Park, St Neots Spar and St Ives Hill Rise. Banners were also installed at the four One Leisure Centre Venues: Ramsey, Huntingdon, St Ives and St Neots and posters and leaflets provided for those visiting the facilities.

5 FURTHER ISSUES AND OPTIONS CONSULTATION – ENGAGEMENT REVIEW

Successes

- 5.1 In total the number of responses received to the Further Issues and Options Consultation reached 6,982. Two of these responses comprised a petition totalling 387 signatures for sites in Hail Weston and 91 in Sibson. The Further Issues and Options Engagement Plan provided enhanced engagement in comparison to previous Local Plan Consultations.
- 5.2 When comparing these figures to the previous local plan consultation at a similar stage (for Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036) the Council received 5,101 more responses, approximately 1400% greater.
- 5.3 Total impressions across all of the platforms as a result of the social media campaign was 41,726. This was an increase of 257% on the previous Issues consultation in 2023 which received 16,210 impressions.
- 5.4 QR codes on leaflets, posters, exhibition boards and banners received a total of 600 scans.

- 5.5 Engagement with Town and Parish Councils to encourage local engagement opportunities and information dissemination resulted in 27 Town and Parish councils sharing our posts on social media, most more than once. 25 Town and Parish Councils also publicised the consultation on their webpages and at least 8 held their own local plan events.
- 5.6 Comparison with nearby local authorities shows that Greater Cambridge at a similar stage of consultation (First Conversation 2020) received 7,874 comments. For reference the population of Greater Cambridge is 313,000 in comparison to Huntingdonshire's population of approximately 186,000. Similarly, Central Bedfordshire received 6,828 responses at their Regulation 18 draft Local Plan consultation with a population of 301,000.
- 5.7 The Council's preferred method of contact is online via the consultation portal, this enables the swift processing of responses allowing resources to be allocated to other business as usual requirements, fielding enquiries and progressing other elements of local plan creation to ensure that the Council can meet the submission deadline to the Planning Inspectorate of December 2026. Notwithstanding, the Local Plans Team (Planning Policy) understand the importance of accessibility and the need to provide alternative means to communicate with the Council in relation to the consultation. Other methods offered included in person at exhibitions, via email and letter and phone.
- 5.8 The number of responses received via different mediums recorded were as follows:
- Via the online consultation portal – 4,544 (65%)
 - Via email – 2,397 (34%)
 - Via letter/paper response form – 70 (1%)

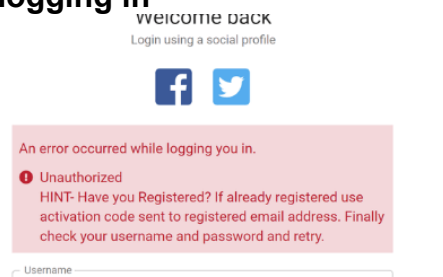
It should be noted that 29 of these responses were identified as 'inadmissible' and not counted in the final total number of responses, this is due to a number of reasons such as people submitting duplicate responses, updating their responses and some submitted blank responses.

- 5.9 The types of consultees were wide ranging from members of the public, neighbouring authorities, Town and Parish Councils, statutory consultees, landowners, developers, agents and special interest groups.

6 Challenges & Improvements

- 6.1 A number of challenges and issues were reported regarding the online consultation system. These issues were raised by the Planning Policy Team with the consultation portal provider or dealt with directly. Issues included:
- **Registration activation link not being received by consultee** – On most occasions the email was going to junk and spam folders and by the time they were accessed the link to activate accounts had timed out. Individuals were able to contact Local Plans team who manually activated accounts.

- **Error message ‘BE101 precondition required’ appeared to consultees when trying to submit comments** – the issue was raised with Objective (online consultation portal provider) in November 2024. Objective tested and recreated the error and implemented a fix. This issue has not been experienced since.
- **Consultees encountering the following message when logging in**



The issues was raised with and tested by Objective who found no software issue. It was likely a user error associated with agents who attempted to log in with no specific consultee to attach a comment to. This issue has not been experienced since.

- **Consultation portal and administration ‘back system’ running slowly including the public consultation portal** – Issue raised with Objective who advised this was due to the large number of traffic being directed to the consultation portal, particularly traffic from mobile phones. A fix was implemented by Objective to improve speed. This issue has not been experienced since.
- **Confusion regarding logging in** – the social media symbols confused some individuals who thought they had to log in via social media. Objective has a standard log in set up whereby a username and password can be used to log in or via another account such as social media. Objective are looking at a simpler log in, but this is part of a wider software update and there are no set timelines on when this will be implemented. Officers will ensure greater clarity is provided in consultation documentation e.g. briefing notes and information sheets to explain the log in process more clearly.

- 6.2 Some consultees reported difficulties in accessing the consultation portal and consultation material. The main landing page for the consultation was Let’s Talk Huntingdonshire whilst responding to the consultation online was via the Council’s online consultation system. The Planning Policy Team has consulted the Communications Team (the website owners) to identify any technical issues that may have impeded this process. They reported no technical issues with the Let’s Talk Huntingdonshire platform. Other potential reasons for this issue could be: The number of clicks to reach the online consultation portal, lack of clear signposting to information and the consultation portal from Let’s Talk Huntingdonshire and the number of consultation documents being consulted upon at one time.

7 COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

- 7.1 The next stage of consultation will be the Preferred Options Local Plan (a draft Local Plan) which will be accompanied by a Sustainability Appraisal (which will also be available for comment). The consultation is due to be held between October and November 2025.
- 7.2 The production and adoption of the Local Plan is identified as a Corporate Priority (34). To enable the Council to submit the Local Plan for examination by the Planning Inspectorate under the current planning system the Council must submit a Full Local Plan by December 2026. In line with the timeline set out in the Council's [Local Development Scheme](#) this will also require a final round of consultation in Summer 2026 prior to submission. Therefore to enable the Council to meet these targets and allow time for the finalisation of evidence based studies, refinement of policies and to continue discussions with organisations as required by regulation all future consultation will be scheduled to run for the statutory period of 6 weeks.
- 7.3 The Communications Strategy for the Preferred Options Local Plan consultation has been provided in Appendix A. The Communications Strategy proposes a continuation of the engagement approach of the Further Issues and Options Consultation with some amendments and recommendations.
- 7.4 In summary key changes to address issues experienced during the previous consultation include:
- Modifications to Let's Talk Huntingdonshire including clearer communication identifying the function of Let's Talk Huntingdonshire as a way of seeing FAQs and finding 'How to Respond' guides.
 - Further guidance in the briefing notes and how to respond guides to address how to log into the consultation portal and submit representations
 - In addition to the 'How to Respond' guides, a 'How to Respond' video will be created to be released on digital platforms.
 - Linking the consultation portal as priority on social media posts and QR codes rather than Let's Talk Huntingdonshire to reduce the number of clicks people need to make to access the consultation.
 - Response forms distributed to Town/ Parish Councils and members via email at the start of the consultation to allow councillors to assist residents with limited internet access.
- 7.5 In addition, a number of recommendations have been included which have the potential enhance engagement, these are subject to financial and staff resources and will require review. Recommendations include:]
- Paid social media: targeted Facebook adverts to reach people in certain areas and age groups.
 - Advertisement boards in town centre locations or use of digital screens in Market Towns.
 - Site allocation notices to be put up in areas where there is a site included within the Preferred Options consultation

- Attendance at the Developers Forum which has been reintroduced following the Planning Peer Review.
- Shorter format videos posted on Facebook with Councillors covering key information and topics.
- Hold workshops and focus groups for relevant stakeholders.
- Graphic design assistance to help enhance marketing material such as posters, leaflets, banners and potentially exhibition boards.

8 KEY IMPACTS / RISKS

- 8.1 The Council is currently in the 'tilted balance', therefore fast-tracking the Local Plan for Submission to the Planning Inspectorate by December 2026 reduces the amount of time that the Council will remain in this position. A six week consultation window will be one of the factors that will assist the Council in achieving this deadline.

9 WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN/TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- 9.1 The timetable for Local Plan consultation is set out in the [Local Development Scheme](#) with updates on Progress provided within the [Annual Monitoring Report](#).

10 LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND/OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

- 10.1 The production and adoption of a Local Plan aligns strongly with priority 2 of the Corporate Plan 2023-2028 which seeks to create a better Huntingdonshire for future generations. It contains options relating to each aspect of 'Improving housing', 'Forward thinking economic growth' and 'Lowering our carbon emissions'. Within the Action Plan item 34. Specifically references the Local Plan as one of the mechanisms that can assist in achieving the vision "Continue the update to the Local Plan, including updating evidence bases in line with National Planning Policy". The Local Plan also aligns with the aims of priority 1 to improve the quality of life for local people through options relating to creating well-designed places that people are proud to call home, providing affordable homes to help those who need them and attracting employers and visitors.

11 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The Council must follow specific Regulations in preparing the Local Plan. Eventually, once the final document is adopted, the Council has a legal duty to determine planning applications in accordance with development plan policies unless there are material considerations that indicate otherwise.

12 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 There are limited financial resource implications directly for the engagement work, primarily for exhibition hall hire and board production, publicity materials and printing. Staffing for exhibitions will be drawn from across the wider Planning department. Further discussion will be required to determine if the additional recommendations identified in paragraph 7.5 can be achieved.

13 REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 13.1 Public engagement is a statutorily required element of local plan preparation. It will also contribute towards achieving action 32 of the Corporate Plan 2023 – 2028's annual Action Plan for this year, "Continue the update to the Local plan, including updating evidence bases in line with National Planning Policy, particularly where it relates to Economy, Environment and Housing." Receipt and consideration of responses from residents, businesses, organisations and other stakeholders will contribute towards preparation of the Local Plan Update.
- 13.2 It is recognised that some members of the public, including Parish Council's raised concerns through previous rounds of engagement regarding engagement. This approach ensures Members have oversight of the proposed approach to engagement and can support their communities through the next phase of consultation.

14 LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 – Preferred Options Local Plan Communications Strategy

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- [Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#)
- [Statement of Community Involvement](#)
- [Local Development Scheme](#)
- [Annual Monitoring Report](#)

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Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation Communications Plan Autumn 2025

Overview

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

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

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

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

We are consulting on:

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

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

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

Objectives

Primary Objectives:

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

Secondary Objectives:

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

Audience

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

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

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

Huntingdonshire Demographics

Census Maps - Census 2021 data interactive, ONS

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

Social media breakdown:

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

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

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

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

Approach:

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

Key Messages:

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

Implementation

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

- Email banners for staff to include in all emails
 - Videos to be posted on digital platforms:
 - A summary of the consultation documents, key dates and signposting to relevant websites.
 - How to respond – step by step guide showing people how to register an account on the consultation portal and submit a comment.
 - Shorter format videos to be posted on social media with Councillors covering key information and topics.
 - HDC intranet post.
 - Notification email when the consultation starts to the over 5,500 active accounts registered on the consultation portal.
- Public Engagement
 - Drop-in Sessions: Organise at least 7 drop-in sessions at local community centres and libraries where residents can view documents and ask questions.
 - Hold interactive workshops and focus groups for stakeholders
 - Enhanced marketing materials such as posters, leaflets, banners and potentially exhibition boards
 - Exploring additional online engagement options
- Traditional Media:
 - Press Releases: Issue press release to local newspapers, radio (Black Cat, Cambs Live) to announce the consultations and highlight key milestones. A series of articles in different formats with the potential for a Q and A, interview format, pictures included. Potential to have different portfolio holders for different subjects e.g. housing, planning, economy, climate change to embed key themes through the consultation process.
 - Posters and leaflets: Creation of artwork for distribution as posters and leaflets in public places, such as libraries, community centres, and, the mobile library, to inform about the consultation and how to participate.
 - Exhibition boards for in-person briefings and public exhibitions.
 - Banners for parks and One Leisure facilities
 - Bin lorry banners
 - Potential for advertisement boards in town centre locations or use of digital screens in Market Towns.
 - Packs including a cover letter, consultation documents, posters, leaflets, and briefing note distributed to Town and Parish Councils.
 - Documents available within the libraries across the district and Pathfinder House.
 - Notices to be put up in areas where there is a site
- Direct Outreach:
 - Public exhibitions (see public engagement above)
 - Parish and Town Councillor and Members briefings to ensure Parish and Town Councillors are well informed and understand the documents, process and timeline of the consultation.
 - Hold interactive workshops and focus groups for stakeholders

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

Accessibility:

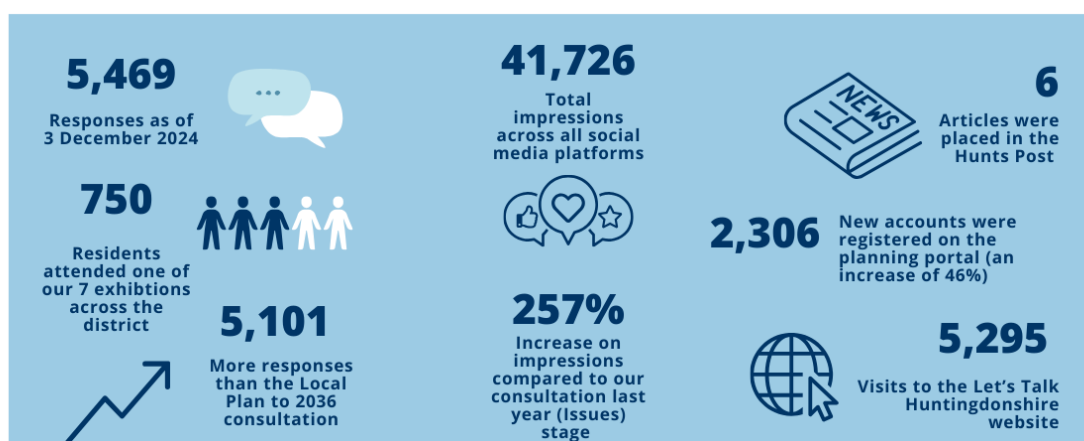
- Support Services: Help via a dedicated email for those needing help with accessing or understanding the documents. Support for people who cannot read or write in making submissions if requested, via phone calls.
- Distribution of consultation documents to libraries and the mobile library (planning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

Scoring and Evaluation

Metrics:

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

Local Plan to 2046 consultation stats



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

Evaluation:

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

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

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

Preferred Options consultation – 29th October 2025 for 6 weeks

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

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

Public
Key Decision – No

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title:	Corporate Peer Challenge Actions Update
Meeting/Date:	Performance & Growth – 8 July 2025
Executive Portfolio:	Councillor Sarah Conboy, Executive Leader
Report by:	Head of Policy, Performance and Emergency Planning
Ward(s) affected:	All

Executive Summary:

This report presents an update to the Scrutiny Panel on the progress against the actions arising from the Corporate Peer Challenge undertaken in May 2024, and the progress review completed on 4th March 2025. The actions are presented in Appendix 1.

The Corporate Peer Challenge report was received by the Council on 17th July 2024. This is the third update following an update to Performance and Growth on 2nd October, 16th October 2024 and 2nd April 2025.

Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) is a key part of the improvement and assurance framework for local government. The CPC assists councils to meet part of their Best Value duty, with the UK Government expecting all local authorities to have a CPC at least every five years. The CPC is part of the Council's approach to deliver the corporate plan priority of **doing our core work well**, the 2025/26 Corporate Plan includes the action to:

60. Implement the recommendations and suggestions made from the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge, continuing to drive transparent continuous improvement.

Since completing the CPC in May 2024, an action plan to address the eight formal and additional informal recommendations was established.

The CPC Team undertake a progress review around six months after the publication of the council's action plan, this took place on the 4th March 2025. The Team confirmed good progress had been made by the Council, with some additional feedback to support further actions. As a learning Council this feedback has also been incorporated within the action plan. The progress review report has been published (Appendix 2).

The approach for monitoring progress and reporting completion of the action plan has been changed to reflect the feedback from the Scrutiny Panel meeting on 2nd April 2025. The summary (Appendix 1) now includes a breakdown of actions that are in progress or have been completed with supporting evidence where relevant. This shows continued progress since March 2025 with 22 actions completed, and 15 in progress.

Within the action plan, appropriate officers and a lead Member have been identified to ensure responsibility for delivery and governance. The action plan contains 27 actions linked to the eight recommendations and 10 actions linked to additional comments.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance & Growth) (Environment, Customers & Partnerships) is invited to comment on the contents of the report and make any comments for Cabinet.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides a summary (Appendix 1) to update the Scrutiny Panel on the progress against the actions identified from the Corporate Peer Challenge undertaken May 2024, and the progress review undertaken in March 2025.

2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY?

- 2.1 Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) is a key part of the improvement and assurance framework for local government. The Challenge assists councils to meet part of their Best Value duty, with the UK Government expecting all local authorities to have a CPC at least every five years.
- 2.2 Council on 16th October 2024 requested an appropriate mechanism for reporting back to Council Members on progress with the actions identified through the Corporate Peer Challenge.

3. SUMMARY

3.1 Corporate Peer Challenge

- 3.1.1 The CPC provides an opportunity for external peers from other Local Authorities to assess how effectively we deliver our services and measure our ability to deliver on our plans and vision for the future. This will help inform and shape our improvement journey and share learning.
- 3.1.2 The CPC is focused on five core components that underpin good performance that all LGA Corporate Peer Challenges cover. They are:
- **Local priorities and outcomes:** Are the council's priorities clear and informed by the local context? Is the council delivering effectively on its priorities and achieving improved outcomes for all its communities?
 - **Organisational and place leadership:** Does the council provide effective local leadership? Are there good relationships with partner organisations and local communities?
 - **Governance and culture:** Are there clear and robust governance arrangements? Is there a culture of respect, challenge and scrutiny?
 - **Financial planning and management:** Does the council have a clear understanding of its current financial position? Does the council have a strategy and a clear plan to address its financial challenges?
 - **Capacity for improvement:** Is the organisation able to support delivery of local priorities?

3.2 Update

- 3.2.1 The summary progress position at the end of March 2025 as set out in Appendix 1 with examples of how the actions across the 8 recommendations is:

27 Actions linked to 8 Formal Recommendations:

19 actions completed*	
8 actions in progress	
0 action not started yet	

* Evidence supporting the 19 actions completed has been listed as background information.

10 Actions linked to Additional Recommendations:

3 actions completed	
7 actions in progress	
0 action not started yet	

- 3.2.2 The detailed progress against each action is shown in Appendix 3.

4. **RISKS**

- 4.1 Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) is a key part of the improvement and assurance framework for local government. The Challenge assists councils to meet part of their Best Value duty, with the UK Government expecting all local authorities to have a CPC at least every five years.
- 4.2 The Peer Challenge provides an opportunity for external peers from other Local Authorities to assess how effectively we deliver our services and measure our ability to deliver on our plans and vision for the future. As such the CPC and actions contribute to the governance of the Council and control of risk.

5. **LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND CORPORATE OBJECTIVES**

- 5.1 Huntingdonshire Futures sets out the shared ambitions and collective endeavour to realise a place renowned for doing things the right way to influence better outcomes for our residents and communities. The Corporate Peer Challenge is a robust, strategic, and credible form of external challenge and support, that supports Councils to improve performance and deliver better outcomes for their communities.
- 5.2 The Corporate Plan provides a 'golden thread' throughout the organisation, linking activity at strategic levels from Huntingdonshire Futures through to activity in service plans, filtering through to objectives set for teams. The CPC is part of the Local Government Association's

(LGA) sector-led improvement framework designed to be a supportive, non-inspection-based process where experienced peers from other councils assess how effectively a council is performing in delivering the outcomes they set out to achieve.

5.3 Priority 3 – Doing our Core Work Well is focused on:



The Corporate Plan had a specific action in 2024/25 which was completed:

58. Deliver an independent Corporate Peer Challenge of the Council that will assess, challenge and improve what we do

The Corporate Plan updated for 2025/26 includes the action to:

60. Implement the recommendations and suggestions made from the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge, continuing to drive transparent, continuous improvement.

6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no additional resource requirements arising from the Corporate Peer Challenge or the Action Plan derived from the recommendations.



7. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 7.1 This report presents Council members with an update on the progress with actions arising from the Corporate Peer Challenge 2024, and revisit March 2025.
- 7.2 The approach for monitoring progress and reporting completion of the action plan has been changed to reflect the feedback from the Scrutiny Panel meeting on 2nd April 2025.

8. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

- Appendix 1 - Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan Summary Update
March 2025
- Appendix 2 – Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Revisit report 4th
March 2025
- Appendix 3 - Corporate Peer Challenge Detailed Action Plan

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Council 16th October – [Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge](#)
- [Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge, item 40.](#)  PDF 109 KB
- [Appendix 1 - Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan, item 40.](#)  PDF 89 KB
- Evidence for action CPC001 and CPC002: Senior Leadership Team consultation outcome January 2025
- Evidence for action CPC003: Community Health and Wealth Building Strategy. Overview & Scrutiny Panel 5 June 2025. Agenda item 8
- Evidence for action CPC005: The Communication Network Champions internal group have been meeting once a quarter with an updated list of pipeline activity.
- Evidence for action CPC007: The development of a Communications Strategy 2024-28
- Evidence for action CPC008: The Corporative Narrative has been completed
- Evidence for action CPC009: Development Management Committee 19 May 2025 item 7 - Planning Service Peer Review
- Evidence for action CPC010: Consultation for 'Further Issues and Options Paper' Local Plan November 2024
- Evidence for action CPC011: The May 2025 Member Briefing
- Evidence for action CPC012: An independent review of the major project at Hinchbrook Park identified lessons learnt.
- Evidence for action CPC013: Presentation to Leadership and Service Managers early 2025, with service plans submissions completed in March 2025
- Evidence for actions CPC014 to CPC019: Employment Committee 25 Feb 2025 item 6 Workforce Strategy Update
- Evidence for action CPC024: Overview and Scrutiny process map for how topics are requested, considered and decided upon for future work programmes.
- Evidence for action CPC025: Cabinet Away Day Briefing 2025 Service Planning

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CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE:

Action Plan summary
Updated March 2025

Introduction

Since receiving the corporate peer challenge (CPC) report in July 2024, we have:

- Developed an action plan setting out how we will address the eight formal, and other informal, recommendations in the report.
- Appropriate officers have been identified to ensure appropriate responsibility for delivery and governance, and a lead Member to aid with political accountability and ownership (whilst the overall response to the CPC remains within the remit of the Leader and Chief Executive).
- The action plan contains **27 actions** linked to the **eight recommendations**.
- The CPC Team completed a progress review in March 2025 with 3 actions linked to additional comments.
- There are now **10 actions** linked to the **additional comments**.

Overview of the Action Plan

27 Actions linked to 8 Formal Recommendations

19 actions completed	
8 actions in progress	
0 action not started yet	

10 Actions linked to Additional Recommendations

3 actions completed	
7 actions in progress	
0 action not started yet	

Recommendation one

Align finance and workforce to deliver the agreed political priorities including a review of organisational structure.



STATUS

Completed

Completed action

- A consultation with senior staff was conducted on restructuring the senior leadership team.
- Following the closure of the consultation in December, the final proposal presented on 17th January 2025.
- The new structure has been fully implemented. Heads of Service are now meeting portfolio holders and internally there is clear governance for leadership direction in setting priorities **Completed March 2025**

✓ **Evidence:** CPC001 Senior Leadership Team consultation outcome January 2025

Recommendation two

Strengthen the internal approach to engagement which ensures the voice of residents/service users are at the heart of decision making.

STATUS

Ongoing

Ongoing actions

- **Policy decision to strengthen internal approach.** To more effectively manage consultation and engagement activity aligned to Senior Team restructure. Options paper went to SLT in February 2025, with further actions to explore options for additional, specialist consultation and engagement resources. **In progress, due Sept 25**
- **Focussed resources to support delivery of engagement events.** And to ensure there is a co-ordinated approach for the delivery of the Corporate Consultation Schedule. Resources to support co-ordination of engagement activities has been identified and recruitment to be completed by August 2025. **In progress, due Aug 25**

Page 71

Completed actions

- **Community Health and Wealth building – co-design.** Three community co-production workshops took place in August and September 2024, which were as demographically balanced as possible to garner a share of voices from across our communities. Further focus groups have taken place with seldom heard groups, including young people and people living in low-income households, rural communities, and from ethnic minority backgrounds. **Completed December 2024**
 - ✓ Evidence – CPC003 Overview and Scrutiny Panel 5 June 2025 item 8. Community Health and Wealth Building
- **Champions.** A network of communications champions has been established with services across the council to provide more co-ordinated communications messages, share learning and develop key campaigns. **Completed January 2025**
 - ✓ Evidence – CPC005 The Communication Network Champions internal group have been meeting once a quarter with an updated list of pipeline activity.

Recommendation three

Develop a resourced Communications and Engagement Strategy which defines the HDC brand and strategic narrative.



STATUS

Completed

Completed actions

- **A Communications Strategy** and supporting Communications Action Plan has been developed and shared with Cabinet. **Completed December 2024**
 - ✓ Evidence: CPC007 The development of a Communications Strategy 2024-28.
- **A new corporate narrative** has been developed, and work is now underway to embed this across the organisation. **Completed December**
 - ✓ Evidence: CPC008 The Corporate Narrative has been completed.
 - New additional action suggested by Peer Review Team March 2025 is to produce an elevator pitch for the Corporate Narrative. See additional suggestions page

Recommendation four

Review the planning service to ensure that within the planning policy framework the council's priorities are being delivered, for example climate, environment and inclusive growth.



STATUS

Completed

Completed actions

- **Engagement with the team.** From November, monthly member briefings are being used to encourage a holistic view to delivering the Council's growth and development ambitions. All Member briefings are now embedded as part of the wider approach to information sharing and council decision making.

Further work will continue with Planning specifically, alongside the action plan for this service.

Completed March 2025

- ✓ Evidence: CPC011 The May 2025 Member Briefing
- **A Planning Service Peer Review** was completed, recommendations provided, and an action plan developed to take into 2025/26. Draft report received and comments fed back with action plan linked to service planning for 2025/26. **Completed March 2025**
 - ✓ Evidence: CPC009 Development Management Committee 19 May 2025 item 7 - Planning Service Peer Review
- **The Council wide continuous improvement journey** was one of the key objectives for the Service Planning process rolled-out early 2025. All Services have now submitted actions and projects focused on continuous improvement and transformation efficiency and change. This continued focus across the Council is linked into the budget setting process, regular review of service plan projects and actions, and identified audits and external reviews.

Completed March 2025

- ✓ Evidence: CPC013 Presentation to Leadership and Service Managers early 2025, with service plans submissions completed in March 2025.

Continued Recommendation four

Review the planning service to ensure that within the planning policy framework the council's priorities are being delivered, for example climate, environment and inclusive growth.



Completed actions continued

- **A Local Plan consultation** on issues and options was conducted December 2024. And in March 2025 a response to the Government's National Planning Policy Framework expectations to produce an updated Local Development Scheme plan was completed and submitted to MHCLG. **Completed March 2025**
 - ✓ Evidence: CPC010 Consultation for 'Further Issues and Options Paper' Local Plan November 2024
- **Delivery board, strategic board and lessons learnt** at both the tactical project level, and the sponsor level, to inform future HDC delivery of significant change programmes requiring planning. The recommendations from an independent project review were endorsed in January 2025, identifying lessons learnt for earlier engagement with Planning Services. **Completed February 2025**
 - ✓ Evidence: CPC012 An independent review of the major project at Hinchbrook Park identified lessons learnt.

Recommendation five
Deliver the imminent Workforce Strategy at pace – including addressing staff concerns.

STATUS

Completed

Completed actions

- An action plan, which includes a schedule of prioritised actions, timeframes and resources, was approved by Employment Committee, and is now underway with regular quarterly reports being provided. **Completed December 2024**
- ✓ Evidence: CPC014 to CPC019 Employment Committee 25 Feb 2025 item 6 Workforce Strategy Update

This includes:

- Awareness of impacts to team performance and absence with implementation of robust policies and practices.
- Development of an employee value proposition is scheduled between January to March 2025, which will feed into the corporate narrative.
- Staff pay review is underway.
- A new provider in place to provide Employee Assistance Programme to support wellbeing for staff.
- A review of policy and practice is continuously ongoing.
- Shortlisted for an LGC Workforce 2024 award for the 'best innovation in recruitment' category

Recommendation six

Continue to strengthen the council's approach to governance, compliance and risk.



STATUS

Ongoing

Ongoing actions

- **A Constitution Review Working Group** has been established and key areas of focus identified. Meeting in February 2025 completed to review Council Procedure Rules and Scheme of Delegation, LGR being factored in whilst setting priorities. Further meeting scheduled 18 June 2025 with support from the Association of Democratic Services Office. **In progress, due February 2026**
- **Recruitment of a Monitoring and Deputy Monitoring Officer** to follow completion of the Senior Team restructure (recommendation one). To commence employment 30 June 2025. **In progress, due June 2025**
- **Member training.** Training on topics such as scrutiny has been provided, with further training session arranged. The Member Development Working Group now meet quarterly. They have met to consider future training needs and development documents, reviewing attendance, and development of a Member intranet portal for accessing resources. Continued partnership working between Members and Officers to develop the Scrutiny approach and agendas for 2025/26. On going training programme in place. **In progress, due September 2025**

Recommendation seven

Support and develop a member led scrutiny work programme and prioritise areas where they can add value and help mitigate risk – SLT support.



STATUS

Ongoing

Ongoing actions

- **Processes and approach to briefings** has changed (agendas changed and the Chair's briefing includes the future plan for meetings). Further discussions took place end of 2024 and January 2025 including work programme for the coming year, use of external support to assist committee development, and reflecting on feedback to Officers. More support in development in partnership with the Member Development Group. Development of the action tracker, and a best practice guide including a topic submission form have been shared with each Panel, and will be shared again June 2025 to finalise the process and approach. **In progress, due June 2025**

Completed actions

- Training has also been provided by EELGA regarding self-scrutiny. **Completed December 2024**
- ✓ **Evidence: CPC024 Reflection on the training has resulted in an agreed Overview and Scrutiny process map for how topics are requested, considered and decided upon for future work programmes. This has been shared with members.**

Improvements identified

- Ensure less pre-decision scrutiny and less of information items
- Develop a clearer forward plan of items for scrutiny consideration; making use of service plan actions
- Identify additional topics outside of service plan scope
- Identify policy development involvement
- Identify agenda items following monthly member briefings
- Identify external partners to present to panel to strengthen partnership working

Recommendation eight

Define and communicate your approach to transformation/ continuous improvement.

STATUS

Ongoing

Ongoing actions

- Improvements to data management and use of data to drive risk-based decisions is underway. Collation of benchmarking information and service metrics from across the Council will support these decisions for prioritising transformation across HDC. Scheduled to be completed early 2025/26. **In progress, due September 2025**
- A new approach to service planning has been established, approved by SLT, and launched for 2025/26 in December 2024 to generate a single Transformation Plan focused on change projects (replaces the Annual Delivery Plan and Productivity Plan). This has a shared ambition of a 15% net reduction in expenditure through efficiency savings and/or increased income/commerciality. Initial draft was completed April 2025, with the final 'check and review' process to be completed July 2025. **In progress, due July 2025.**

Completed actions

- Appointment of a new Chief Digital Information Officer across the shared IT service reporting to the Chief Executives to drive focus change. **Completed November 2024.**
 - ✓ Evidence: Employee recruited
- A new appointment to the role of Business Performance and Transformation Manager, with the Improvement Team becoming the Transformation Team. **Completed November 2024**
 - ✓ Evidence: Employee recruited
- Action identified to combine the outputs from the Annual Delivery Plan process with the three cross-cutting service reviews; customer, leisure, planning - with appropriate governance in place. **Completed January 2025**
 - ✓ Evidence: CPC025 Cabinet Away Day Briefing 2025 Service Planning
- 2025/26 Transformation Approach **Completed February 2025**
 - ✓ Evidence: Framework was approved by CLT in February 2025 for implementation Q1 2025/26.

Additional recommendations and suggestions



Suggestion: To meet the council's ambitions for enhanced partnership working, review the skills and capacity needed to support this work with senior stakeholders and partners.

- Action: To identify a maturity assessment tool, and develop proposals for how it is used, with supporting training and action plan. **In progress, due December 2025**
- Action: To publicise Council structure and responsibilities by July 2025. To develop the partnership working model by September 2025, aligning implementation with any maturity assessment tool by December 2025. **In progress, due December 2025**

Suggestion: Create and communicate key points of entry into the council for partners and stakeholders.

- Action: To follow the Senior Team restructure under recommendation one. **Completed March 2025**

Additional recommendations and suggestions



Suggestion: Facilitated top team development would assist the new team in building relationships, understanding leadership styles and create space for strategic visioning.

- Action: CEX has appointed team development coaches to work with CLT and HoS. CLT team coaching commenced in December and HoS commenced in March. **Completed March 2025**

Page 80

Suggestion: Further work is needed with service managers to improve horizon scanning and feed this into the budget setting process.

- Action: To be undertaken as part of annual service planning and budget setting.
- Action: The updated and simplified service planning process for 2025/26 requires all services to undertake a SWOT analysis to be the basis of the actions for change in the next three years for each service area. This is linked to the Contextual Information for Huntingdonshire established in 2024/25 as part of the Council's Performance Management Framework. **Completed March 2025**

Additional recommendations and suggestions



Suggestion: The Ideas Board should be taking a more strategic approach to reviewing requests for funding, making sure any bids are aligned to the councils' priorities and clearly drive innovation. There also needs to be consideration given to how any projects funded on a trial basis could be sustained in the longer term if deemed successful.

Page 81

- Action: The outcomes of the Ideas process was reviewed and presented to SLT in January 2025. A review of the Ideas process and purpose has commenced with the aim of completing the review May 2025. With a focus on enabling Transformation and invest to save. **In progress, due May 2025.**

Suggestion: Consideration should be given to undertaking a full staff survey.

- Action: A full staff survey was completed in September. Results have been reported to SLT with any concerns raised with relevant Managers. **Completed September 2024**
 - ✓ A review will happen in September 2025 to assess whether a further survey is required.

Additional recommendations and suggestions



Suggestion: The council to continue driving efficiencies and value for money across the organisation through service improvement and contract management to enable focused delivery on political priorities.

- Action: Additional support in Contract Management; Audit and Transformation services has been completed by February 2025.
- Action: SLT have set a shared organisational target of a 15% reduction in net expenditure driven through either efficiency, savings or income opportunities as a clear driver behind the 2025/26 Service Planning. All services are to contribute towards this target. The service planning process is focused on transformational actions to contribute towards this target. **In progress, due June 2025**

March 2025 Peer Team Revisit - Additional recommendations and suggestions



Suggestion: Produce a short punchy statement to accompany corporate narrative. Communicate to staff and members, and use this narrative statement for internal and external communication.

- Action: To produce an elevator pitch to provide a brief and introduction for the corporate narrative document. **In progress, due June 2025**
 - ✓ Have started to embed the narrative and brief summary with staff and members. To conclude action once all services are initially advised regarding future communications.

Suggestion: Develop the PAS review action plan and utilise the Councils scrutiny functions to oversee the action plan and implementation of recommendations.

- Action: To develop the PAS review action plan and to develop appropriate governance for scrutiny. **In progress, due September 2025.**
 - ✓ The report was considered and recommendations agreed by DCM on 19th May 2025. Action plan is being developed.

Suggestion: Peer suggest further communication on the process and timeline for how reviewing the 121 processes, working with Unison looking at performance management and L&D will be linked to pay increments and remuneration in the future.

- Action: To provide further communications for staff regarding the expectations of the 121s for managing performance and development, and how this aligns to the pay increment and remuneration process. **In progress, due September 2025**

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LGA Corporate Peer Challenge - Progress Review

Huntingdonshire District Council

4 March 2025

Feedback



Corporate Peer Challenge



Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Summary of the approach	3
3. Progress Review - Feedback	6
4. Final thoughts and next steps.....	16

1. Introduction

The council undertook an LGA Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) 15 – 17 May 2024 and promptly published the full report with an action plan.

The Progress Review is an integral part of the Corporate Peer Challenge process. Taking place approximately ten months after the CPC, it is designed to provide space for the council's senior leadership to:

- Receive feedback from peers on the early progress made by the council against the CPC recommendations and the council's RAG rated CPC action plan.
- Consider peer's reflections on any new opportunities or challenges that may have arisen since the peer team were 'on-site' including any further support needs
- Discuss any early impact or learning from the progress made to date

The LGA would like to thank Huntingdonshire District Council for their commitment to sector led improvement. This Progress Review was the next step in an ongoing, open and close relationship that the council has with LGA sector support.

2. Summary of the approach

The Progress Review at Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) took place (onsite) on 4 March 2025.

The Progress Review focussed on each of the recommendations from the Corporate Peer Challenge, under the following theme headings:

Vision and Priorities

Recommendation 1 - Align finance and workforce to deliver the agreed political priorities including a review of organisational structure.

Communications and Engagement

Recommendation 2 – Strengthen the internal approach to engagement which ensures the voice of residents/service users are at the heart of decision making.

Recommendation 3 - Develop a resourced communications and engagement strategy which defines the HDC brand and strategic narrative.

Planning

Recommendation 4 - Review the planning service to ensure that within the planning policy framework the council's priorities are being delivered, for example climate change, environment and inclusive growth.

Workforce

Recommendation 5 - Deliver the imminent workforce strategy at pace – including addressing staff concerns.

Governance and Scrutiny

Recommendation 6 – Continue to strengthen the council's approach to governance, compliance and risk.

Recommendation 7 - Support and develop a member led scrutiny work programme and prioritise areas where they can add value and help mitigate risk – SLT support.

Transformation

Recommendation 8 - Define and communicate your approach to transformation and continuous improvement.

For this Progress Review, the following members of the original CPC team were involved:

- Chief Executive Lead Peer, Kate Ryan, New Forest District Council
- Member Peer, Jim Mckenna, Independent Member Peer, Cornwall Council
- Member Peer, William Nunn, Conservative Member, Breckland Council
- Kirsty Human, Peer Challenge Manager, Local Government Association

4

3. Progress Review - Feedback

Peers returned to Huntingdonshire District Council during a period of significant importance for local government following the English Devolution White Paper. In addition to the scale of activity and change the organisation is going through, peers reflected on the openness, positivity and willingness to learn from everyone spoken to throughout the progress review. Local government reorganisation (LGR) was not a distraction or something to fear but rather an opportunity for the council to promote the economic growth, development and cultural prospects of the district. The council's political and managerial leadership want to use the CPC progress review for due diligence to support the LGR process.

It is testament to the council's fortitude, drive for improvement and solid leadership that all eight of the CPC's recommendations have been significantly progressed. Of the CPC's eight recommendations, the council's RAG rated action plan reports that 63 per cent of recommendations are complete and 37 per cent continue to be progressed.

It became clear during the progress review that the use of RAG ratings for the recommendations is not nuanced enough to reflect the progress being made. Peers received comments like "there is a lot of green" or "how can it all be complete". HDC's leadership and peers agreed that most recommendations contained elements of work that had been completed but also some that would take more time to achieve the outcomes the council desired. It was agreed that future reporting on the actions would look to reflect the ongoing nature of the work to ensure full understanding and embedding of all elements.

Vision and Priorities

Recommendation 1 - Align finance and workforce to deliver the agreed political priorities including a review of organisational structure.

A senior officer restructure has been implemented which aligns the three new corporate director roles with the council's three corporate priorities:

- Communities - priority 1: improving quality of life for local people.
- Place - priority 2: creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations.
- Finance and resources - priority 3: doing our core work well.

This has generated increased focus on delivery of priorities, ownership and accountability of performance and more understanding with staff around how their work aligns with what the council wants to achieve.

The council's [budget was approved on 26 February](#) enabling the finances to align with the corporate priorities. Provision of a £750,000 fund to support community health and wealth building over three years is key to delivering the corporate priorities. Officers have now turned their attention to how the funds will be allocated along with processes, procedures and member oversight to ensure good governance of the fund.

Given the importance of LGR and the role HDC is playing in this, peers were supportive of the £1m ring fenced reserve to support this work, in addition to the planned work on service transformation.

Communications and Engagement

Recommendation 2 – Strengthen the internal approach to engagement which ensures the voice of residents/service users are at the heart of decision making.

HDC hosted three community co-production workshops in August and September 2024, which were as demographically balanced as possible to gather diverse voices from across different communities. Further focus groups have taken place with seldom heard groups, including young people and people living in low-income households, rural communities, and people from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Peers could clearly see how the outcomes and key messages from this work directly supported the business case to provide a community health and wealth building fund.

Further examples of good practice across the council were raised by staff, including working with service users to support an accreditation from the

7

Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA), involving service users in selecting new equipment at the leisure centres and seeking views on refurbishment.

A senior leadership team (SLT) and cabinet survey on consultation and engagement enabled consideration of a range of options to support improvements in engagement, consultation and sharing of information. A proposal for a fixed term role to lead on this area of work is being considered and peers strongly support implementing this. There are more opportunities for engagement and for improved coordination across the council if capacity can be created; examples include the Local Plan, LGR, community health and wealth building, and the redesign of leisure facilities. A role to coordinate work across these larger projects whilst supporting and mentoring service areas through smaller exercises would help to embed good practice throughout the council and put service users right at the heart of decision making.

Recommendation 3 - Develop a resourced communications and engagement strategy which defines the HDC brand and strategic narrative.

Following the CPC the LGA facilitated a workshop which led to the development of a new corporate narrative, which the council set as its strategic 'north star'. Clearly a lot of thought and work has gone into producing this, but peers found limited understanding or knowledge of the narrative amongst staff and members, apart from within human resources where the corporate narrative had benefitted recruitment, with consistent advertisements and understanding of the council.

Consisting of almost 450 words, peers felt the corporate narrative needed a short punchy statement to accompany it, that every member of staff and councillors would be able to remember and cite when talking about the council. The communications team are seeking to address this and create consistency in application by using different elements of the narrative to support internal and external communication.

The political group leaders could play a stronger role in communicating key messages, documents and policies within group meetings ahead of formal committee meetings to ensure better understanding. This would also help members to feel more confident in using elements of the corporate narrative and key political lines in their own communications.

It was good to see a restructure of the communications team had resulted in additional capacity and skills. Cabinet have informally endorsed a new communications strategy and plan for the period 2024 – 28 which the team are committed to delivering with council support. There now needs to be greater visibility and understanding of the new strategy and plan with all councillors.

Peers heard about the three campaigns being delivered to support each of the corporate priorities:

- Priority 1: improving quality of life for local people – “Hunts hears” an engagement campaign.
- Priority 2: creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations – “Place successes” a campaign focused on the benefits of council grants.
- Priority 3: doing our core work well – “The quiet friend” an animation campaign to show how many services are accessed daily by a typical member of the public.

The success of these campaigns could constitute best practice, and peers were keen to follow their progress and share in the learning.

Planning

Recommendation 4 - Review the planning service to ensure that within the planning policy framework the council's priorities are being delivered, for example climate change, environment and inclusive growth.

Following the CPC, the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) completed a review of HDC's planning service in December 2024. The final report is due to be published imminently, supported by workshops with staff and

councillors to talk through the recommendations, next steps and development of an action plan.

In anticipation of the PAS review recommendations, peers were pleased to hear additional resource has been secured for two years to lead a change programme within planning. The main responsibilities of the role will be to turn the report's recommendations and conclusions into an action plan and support implementation of changes to drive improvements in the service.

Political oversight will be key to navigating the implications of some changes and peers considered there was an opportunity to utilise the council's scrutiny functions to oversee the action plan and implementation of the recommendations.

Consultation on the most recent issues and options for the local plan saw over 6,000 responses. The planning policy team trialled the use of Microsoft Copilot to summarise the consultations. This resulted in freeing up a lot of officer time and the council is looking at how to embrace artificial intelligence software and digital applications further across the service and the wider council.

A greater emphasis on how the planning service supports delivery of the corporate priorities, specifically, climate change, environment and inclusive growth is being considered through engagement with the team. An independent project review has identified lessons learnt at sponsor and tactical levels to inform future change programmes involving planning. Furthermore, monthly elected member briefings are being used to encourage a holistic view to delivering the council's growth and development ambitions.

LGR is at the forefront of thinking on the local plan. The leadership are clear that significant economic growth is required to support the financing of services, particularly those additional functions associated with unitary status that the district is not currently responsible for. To this end, the ambition for growth, economic development, and visions for towns and investment in the district is significant, cutting across all three corporate

10

priorities and focusing the minds of the senior leaders when promoting and selling Huntingdonshire as a place destination.

Workforce

Recommendation 5 - Deliver the imminent workforce strategy at pace – including addressing staff concerns.

There is no doubt the council has prioritised delivering the workforce strategy. Two staff have been seconded into fixed term roles to drive forward the action plan, engage with staff and report progress quarterly via the employment committee and every two weeks with the chief executive as sponsor. Peers witnessed a shift in organisational culture and wellbeing and staff spoke of a sense of momentum within the council. SLT have delivered roadshows at all employee sites, promoting the purpose of the strategy and its benefits to staff. They have asked for ideas and suggestions on how to make HDC an employer of choice, and staff have been forthcoming.

HDC is listening to its staff and making changes, for example implementing a 20 per cent staff discount for pay and play, gym memberships, swimming lessons, children's parties and adding a discount for people one year post retirement to support health and wellbeing.

Activities and initiatives to date include:

- Procuring a new Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).
- Expanded menopause offer to staff.
- Developed a buddy scheme for new staff – lots of interest from staff offering to be buddies.
- Set up health kiosks to check BMI, heart rate and blood pressure – 34 people were triggered to see a GP, so the council bought a nurse in to the offices to do appointments at work.
- Developed an employee handbook.
- Formal recognition and celebration of key national events/days – International Women's Day, Comic Relief, Blue Monday, Acts of Kindness Day.

- Launched a new leadership development programme for managers.

The action plan contains an “embed” column to ensure these activities and more are sustainable and will continue into the future with a designated owner.

The staff peers spoke with are clearly feeling much more engaged and happier to work for HDC. Reference was made to the Christmas decorating competition, the chief executive’s weekly email, senior management visibility, and engagement with staff on a development of a new 121 form. Activities that have clearly improved morale and provided opportunities for engagement and communication.


The only element staff remained dissatisfied with was pay and remuneration. This was raised in conversations and is reflected in the staff survey (September 2024) as the top thing staff would change about their job, with incremental progression coming fourth and recognition and reward sixth.

Provision has been made within the budget to resolve any outstanding salary issues associated with the workforce strategy, but the next steps to progress this issue remain unclear to staff. Peers suggest further communication of the process and timeline for how reviewing the 121 processes, working with Unison, looking at performance management and learning and development will be linked to pay increments and remuneration in the future.

Governance and Scrutiny

Recommendation 6 – Continue to strengthen the council’s approach to governance, compliance and risk.

A new constitution working group has been established and begun to review the council’s procedure rules and scheme of delegation. The scope of the group’s work will be factoring in LGR and prioritising key elements of the constitution to ensure HDC remains agile and efficient whilst also safe and legal.



A new corporate director for finance and resources was recruited at the end of 2024 and took over responsibility for overseeing governance, risk and compliance. The role of monitoring officer (MO) has been disaggregated from the 3C partnership and HDC are interviewing for their own role imminently. This is an important milestone for the council and will ensure ongoing governance improvements and greater oversight whilst relieving pressure on the democratic services and elections manager, and chief executive.

Since the CPC, vacancies in the internal audit and risk management services have stalled the progress being made on the 17 recommendations from the LGA peer challenge of internal audit arrangements in 2023 and five recommendations from the LGA Governance Peer Challenge in May 2024. In addition, the council's external auditor EY are suggesting not enough internal audits have been completed to provide adequate assurance across governance, risk and internal controls.

Peers were reassured to hear that the new corporate director of finance and resources is starting to renew the rigour and grip around governance by appointing RSM to resolve outstanding internal audit issues and deliver a new set of audits for 2025/26. The appointment creates greater capacity in internal audit more generally and has been extended to support the councils risk function whilst options for longer term provision are considered.

Peers would like to see the outstanding recommendations from previous audit and governance peer challenges addressed and progress overseen by the corporate governance committee.

The council's risk register has been taken offline, reviewed and reshaped with SLT making it more manageable and fit for purpose. There is a shared approach to risk across SLT creating greater accountability, but the function is not settled within the organisation with the resource to keep it actioned and fed into corporate governance. There is a suggestion risk could find a home within the new transformation team which in time may

13

prove to be a sensible approach. In the short term RSM will continue to provide support in this area. HDC may find the new LGA [must know guide: risk management](#) helpful when considering options.

Recommendation 7 - Support and develop a member led scrutiny work programme and prioritise areas where they can add value and help mitigate risk – SLT support.

HDC has two overview and scrutiny panels.

- Environment, communities and partnerships
- Performance and growth

Since the CPC, training has been provided regarding self-scrutiny with the following improvements identified:

- Ensure less pre-decision scrutiny and less for information items.
- Develop a clearer forward plan of items for scrutiny consideration, making use of service plan actions.
- Identify additional topics outside of service plan scope.
- Identify policy development involvement.
- Identify agenda items following monthly member briefings.
- Identify external partners to present to panel to strengthen partnership working.

Working with the member development group, further learning and development opportunities are being explored for all members and an increased budget is supporting this. Senior officer support has been provided by way of the directors for place and communities taking the lead for each panel and briefing of the chairs. Officers have supported and worked with chairs and vice chairs to set the workplans and consider topics, with much of the workplan being member led. Through discussions with officers and elected members peers sensed a consensus that performance of the panels is improving.

However, members of the performance and growth scrutiny panel had concerns about the size of their agenda, particularly as most members work full time, there was a feeling this isn't allowing enough time to

support good scrutiny. Peers observed that the size of agenda packs for this committee were as follows: March 2025 – 136 pages, February 2025 – 270 pages, December 2024 – 66 pages, November 2024 – 186 pages, October 2024 – 36 pages, September 2024 – 3446 pages.

Clearly a work in progress, further discussion between chairs and their SLT director lead could help to refine the information required by the panel with perhaps further information available on request or by exception.

Transformation

Recommendation 8 - Define and communicate your approach to transformation/ continuous improvement.

Peers were pleased to hear of appointment to a new chief digital information officer across the shared 3C ICT service who was reporting to each of the three chief executives to drive change. This has created stability within the partnership and a refreshed focus for HDC in the use of technology to achieve efficiency.

The improvement team is now the transformation team and appointment to a new business performance and transformation manager was completed at the end of the year. The new team are focussed on taking forward the council's transformation programme, which considering other priorities for example, ensuring HDC is best in class and leaves a community legacy, is still evolving.

A new approach to service planning has been launched for 2025/26 to generate a single transformation plan focused on change projects. The ambition is to achieve a 15 per cent net reduction in expenditure through efficiency savings and/or increased income or commerciality. Services will be supported to look at digital methods of delivery, channel shift and reviewing the customer experience.

Given the change the council has gone through over the past 18 months, culturally there are still parts of the organisation that need further engagement to understand what is meant by transformation. Following completion of service plans in April, it will be important to develop the

transformation plan and communicate this extensively across the organisation with officers and elected members. Peers suggest there is an opportunity to link the plan to the corporate priorities and create themes or pillars (like the workforce plan model) to group projects according to their drivers, for example, technology, workforce, structures, culture, communications and so on.

It may prove helpful to the new transformation team to explore the [resources available from the LGA on transformation](#) and consider opportunities to be part of round tables and action learning sets. The support for elected members may also help with increasing understanding and the art of the possible.

4. Final thoughts and next steps

The LGA would like to thank Huntingdonshire District Council for undertaking an LGA CPC Progress Review.

We appreciate that senior managerial and political leadership will want to reflect on these findings and suggestions in order to determine how the organisation wishes to take things forward.

Under the umbrella of LGA sector-led improvement, there is an on-going offer of support to councils. The LGA is well placed to provide additional support, advice and guidance on a number of the areas identified for development and improvement and we would be happy to discuss this.

Rachel Litherland (Principal Adviser) is the main point of contact between the authority and the Local Government Association (LGA) and their e-mail address is Rachel.litherland@local.gov.uk

HDC Peer Review 2024 - ACTION PLAN

Unique ref	Recommendation number	Recommendation	Definition	Action description	Assigned to owner	Month due to be completed	Action delivery status	In progress RAG	Progress comments for 2024/25 Qrt4
CPC001	Recommendation 1	Align finance and workforce to deliver the agreed political priorities including a review of organisational structure.	A single narrative needs developing and communicating so that everyone is clear what the priorities are, how they are being delivered and what the timescales are for this. The council needs to ensure its officer structure enables delivery of the political priorities, that officer capacity is directed to the priority areas and the finances are aligned	A restructure of Senior Leadership Team to be launched for consultation in October 2024	Michelle Sacks	Mar-25	Complete	Complete	Evidence: Senior Leadership Team consultation outcome January 2025
CPC002	Recommendation 2	Strengthen the internal approach to engagement which ensures the voice of residents/service users are at the heart of decision making.	Building on the good practice shown in consulting on Huntingdonshire Futures, develop different engagement mechanisms to gain the views of residents/service users on their experience of the council and how these can be responded to.	Policy decision about whether Comms is accountable for engagement across the organisation to be agreed	Michael Hann	Mar-25	Complete	Complete	Evidence: Senior Leadership Team consultation outcome January 2025 Note: not showing as completed on summary as linked to action 006 for completion by recruiting a resource.
CPC003	Recommendation 2			Community health and wealth building - resident workshops to co-deliver a strategy. This is the start of the live engagement opportunities available to our residents	Michael Hann/ John Taylor	Dec-24	Complete	Complete	Evidence – Link for Overview and Scrutiny Panel 5 June 2025 item 8. Community Health and Wealth Building
CPC004	Recommendation 2			Options paper created for different engagement events and approval from Informal Cabinet once completed. Depending on the option chosen there will be a likely budget identified but there will be a need for BAU coordinator resource to facilities and advice on service specific engagement activities	Michael Hann	Aug-25	In progress	Within target	A way forward has been identified, and although recruitment has not yet been successful, we are considering advertising an alternative role. We're aware of the planned engagement and consultation activities for the year, and once the vacancy is filled, the postholder can support coordination efforts.
CPC005	Recommendation 2			Network of Communications Champions established within HDC to share learning and key campaigns, in order to provide coordinated comms and key messaging	Michael Hann	Jan-25	Complete	Complete	Engagement Group meet quarterly. Evidence – The Communication Network Champions internal group have been meeting once a quarter with an updated list of pipeline activity.
CPC006	Recommendation 2			Creation of a corporate consultation schedule to a managed approach to consultation. This will include corporate consultations eg: on budget setting as well as service specific consultations eg: Local Plan	Michael Hann	Sep-25	In progress	Within target	To more effectively manage consultation and engagement activity aligned to Senior Team restructure. Options paper went to SLT in February 2025, with further actions to explore options for additional, specialist consultation and engagement resources. Linked to additional resources and recruitment of co-ordinator

Unique ref	Recommendation number	Recommendation	Definition	Action description	Assigned to owner	Month due to be completed	Action delivery status	In progress RAG	Progress comments for 2024/25 Qrt4
CPC007	Recommendation 3	Develop a resourced Communications and Engagement Strategy which defines the HDC brand and strategic narrative.	Promote the services the council delivers. Don't undersell the impact being made in the community by leisure, parks and open spaces and operational services. Ensure everyone knows these are delivered by HDC. Be clear about who leads external communications to prevent confusion of messages and brands.	Communications strategy for the year ahead being refreshed and being approved by Informal Cabinet	Michael Hann	Dec-24	Complete	Complete	Evidence: The development of a Communications Strategy 2024-28
CPC008	Recommendation 3			LGA commissioned to create the HDC narrative and develop a comms and engagement strategy to deliver individual campaigns. Within the campaign plans will be a resource and budget profile	Michael Hann	Dec-24	Complete	Complete	Evidence - Yes Evidence: The Corporative Narrative and elevator pitch (short, persuasive summary) have been completed.
CPC009	Recommendation 4	Review the planning service to ensure that within the planning policy framework the council's priorities are being delivered, for example climate, environment and inclusive growth.	Create understanding across all council services that there needs to be a holistic approach to deliver the councils growth and development ambitions. The planning service is a major contributor to fulfilling the longer-term outcomes of the council, but the results will benefit and impact on the whole council and it is important the service is appropriately positioned and supported to deliver these ambitions	Undertake a Peer review challenge on the Planning department through engagement with the LGA to agree timeframes. The review will then provide recommendations and an action plan to take into 25/26	Clara Kerr	Mar-25	Complete	Complete	Evidence - Yes Development Management Committee 19 May 2025 item 7 - Planning Service Peer Review
CPC010	Recommendation 4			Local Plan consultation on issues and options. Activities and findings to be presented SLT, Management team, Strategic Board, Members	Clara Kerr	Mar-25	Complete	Complete	Evidence no. Consultation for 'Further Issues and Options Paper' Local Plan November 2024
CPC011	Recommendation 4			Cultural issue to take an holistic view - want to have monthly briefings on topics for Informal Cabinet and Management team about what's going on and why it's important.	Mike Gildersleeves	Mar-25	Complete	Complete	Evidence - May 2025 member briefing
CPC012	Recommendation 4			Delivery board, Strategic Board and lessons learnt at both the tactical project level and the sponsor level to inform future HDC delivery of significant change programmes requiring planning	Mike Gildersleeves	Feb-25	Complete	Complete	Evidence - An independent review of the major project at Hinchingsbrooke Park identified lessons learnt
CPC013	Recommendation 4			Facilitation of the continuous improvement journey - that as an organisation we need the peer reviews over a number of different services and not just planning	Mike Gildersleeves	Mar-25	Complete	Complete	All Services, including Planning, when submitting their Annual Service Planning actions and projects, focussed on the need of continuous improvement and transformation efficiency and change. Action complete. Evidence: Presentation to Leadership and Service Managers early 2025, with service plans submissions completed in March 2025

Unique ref	Recommendation number	Recommendation	Definition	Action description	Assigned to owner	Month due to be completed	Action delivery status	In progress RAG	Progress comments for 2024/25 Qrt4
CPC014	Recommendation 5	Deliver the imminent Workforce Strategy at pace – including addressing staff concerns.	The extensive consultation on the new strategy has raised awareness and staff have high expectations of what it will deliver. Ensure the strategy addresses the inconsistency in policy and practice and brings services together to support a one council approach, where best practice is shared across services and fairness and equity is at its core.	Action plan to be prioritised and then presented at SLT, Informal Cabinet and then Employment Committee for approval. Will include a scheduled plan to show prioritised actions, timeframes and resources. Employment committee - will be monitoring the WFS action plan alongside established KPIs eg: sickness, staff turnover.	Leanne Harfield	Dec-24	Complete	Complete	Evidence - Yes Evidence CPC Recommendation 5 - Evidence Workforce Strategy Action Plan A4 Updated Feb 20255
CPC015	Recommendation 5			Impacts to performance and absence likely to occur in team and services with the introduction of robust implementation of policies and practices - needs to be considered against the KPIs to give context.	Leanne Harfield	Mar-25	Complete	Complete	Evidence: Link for Employment Committee 25 Feb 2025 item 6 Workforce Strategy Update
CPC016	Recommendation 5			Employee value proposition to be developed, which will feed into the corporate narrative	Leanne Harfield	Mar-25	Complete	Complete	Evidence: Link for Employment Committee 25 Feb 2025 item 6 Workforce Strategy Update
CPC017	Recommendation 5			Staff pay review undertaken	Leanne Harfield	Mar-25	Complete	Complete	Evidence: Link for Employment Committee 25 Feb 2025 item 6 Workforce Strategy Update
CPC018	Recommendation 5			Well being for staff review undertaken	Leanne Harfield	Mar-25	Complete	Complete	Evidence: Link for Employment Committee 25 Feb 2025 item 6 Workforce Strategy Update
CPC019	Recommendation 5			Policy and practice review undertaken	Leanne Harfield	Mar-25	Complete	Complete	Evidence: Link for Employment Committee 25 Feb 2025 item 6 Workforce Strategy Update
CPC020	Recommendation 6	Continue to strengthen the council's approach to governance, compliance and risk.	To support the council's improved governance approach: Review the council's constitution	Establish a Constitution Review Working Group - constitutional review, supported by Association of Democratic Services Officers (ADSO) for 6 meetings. An opportunity for Members say what they are concerned with and work up proposal to address. Paper will go to Governance committee and then full council for approval	Suzanne Jones	Feb-26	In progress	Within target	Working Group still meeting and scheduled to meet next on 26/6/25 with ADSO support. Target to aim to complete before end of current term of councillors. To be read in conjunction with Internal Audit Report scheduled for CGC on 18/6/25 on the Committee Governance Structure
CPC021	Recommendation 6		Provide additional capacity for MO and DMO roles	Recruitment for MO and DMO roles to ensure dedicated resource for each individual council in the shared services partnership.	Suzanne Jones	Jun-25	In progress	Within target	New dedicated Monitoring Officer for HDC to commence employment on 30/6/25
CPC022	Recommendation 6		Ensure sufficient investment and resource for member development	Full programme of member training to identify concerns of Peer review and from Members. Certain number of session already delivered to the Cabinet, about how officers and Members work together. Ways of working can be optimised with LGA training	Suzanne Jones	Sep-25	In progress	Within target	Ongoing training programme for Members established with support from Member Development Working Group and Portfolio Holder to encourage participation

Unique ref	Recommendation number	Recommendation	Definition	Action description	Assigned to owner	Month due to be completed	Action delivery status	In progress RAG	Progress comments for 2024/25 Qrt4
CPC023	Recommendation 7	Support and develop a member led scrutiny work programme and prioritise areas where they can add value and help mitigate risk – SLT support.	Ensure there is adequate time between Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Cabinet for members to add value to the process. Support them to shape agendas and work plans and contribute to policy development.	Agendas changed for the meeting - chairs briefing also includes the future plan for meetings In September update on priority one to partnership O&S panel (quarterly) - OM	Mike Gildersleeves	Jun-25	In progress	Within target	Further sessions January 25 with Panel members, looking at future topics and programme of works, and reflecting on Officer input. Further development and support with Member Development Group. Action tracker, best practice guide and topic submission form all in development. Have been shared with Members, and to be shared again for sign-off June 2025
CPC024	Recommendation 7			Centre for Governance & Scrutiny to come in and do a review - to help understand best practice and steps we can undertake to improve our scrutiny panels	Suzanne Jones	Dec-24	Complete	Complete	Evidence: Reflection on the training has resulted in an agreed Overview and Scrutiny process map for how topics are requested, considered and decided upon for future work programmes. This has been shared with members.
CPC025	Recommendation 8	Define and communicate your approach to transformation/continuous improvement.	Put in place the cross-cutting foundations (technology, workforce, structures, culture, communications) to prepare the organisation for holistic service transformation rather than reinforcing some silos and risk services continuing their own custom and practice.	Combine the outputs from the Annual Delivery Plan process with the 3 cross-cutting service reviews; customer, leisure, planning - with appropriate governance in place (through Delivery Board)	John Taylor	Jan-25	Complete	Complete	Evidence: Cabinet Away Day Briefing 2025 Service Planning
CPC026	Recommendation 8			Play back to SLT the update from the continuous improvement/transformation plan to confirm strategic activities and prioritisation	John Taylor	Jul-25	In progress	Within target	A new approach to service planning has been established and launched for 2025/26 in December 2024. Final 'check and review' to be completed June 2025
CPC027	Recommendation 8			Improvements to data will be managed on a risk-based approach in order to manage workloads and impacts across the organisation	John Taylor	Sep-25	In progress	Within target	Improvements to data management and use of data to drive risk-based decisions is underway. Collation of benchmarking information and service metrics from across the Council will support these decisions for prioritising transformation across HDC. Scheduled to be completed mid 2025/26. Data Quality Audit planned for Q1 2025/26. Data Maturity Assessment planned for Q1 2025/26.
Additional comments and actionable activities									
CPC028	Additional comments		To meet the council's ambitions for enhanced partnership working, peers recommend the council reviews the skills and capacity needed to support this work with senior stakeholders and partners.	Identify a maturity assessment tool, and develop proposals for how it is used. With supporting training and action plan.	Michelle Sacks	Dec-25	In progress	Within target	Proposal to be drafted by end Q2 2025/26 for progression by Dec 2025
CPC029	Additional comments		Creating and communicating key points of entry into the council for partners and stakeholders would significantly help the council to develop its partnerships and generate opportunities to enable and influence.	Simplify the reporting arrangements and responsibilities through Senior Team restructure.	Michelle Sacks	Dec-25	In progress	Within target	Senior Management team Restructure Implemented 1st April 2025. Roles and responsibility summaries completed. Next to publish leadership structure by July 25, then develop partnership working model by Sept 25 and implement by Dec 25
CPC030	Additional comments		Peers advise some facilitated top team development would assist the new team in building relationships, understanding leadership styles and create space for strategic visioning.	Implementaion of Senior Team development following restructure.	Michelle Sacks	Mar-25	Complete	Complete	

Unique ref	Recommendation number	Recommendation	Definition	Action description	Assigned to owner	Month due to be completed	Action delivery status	In progress RAG	Progress comments for 2024/25 Qrt4
CPC031	Additional comments		Further work is needed with service managers to improve horizon scanning and feed this into the budget setting process.	Service planning to include horizon scanning and inform transformation, aligning to budget cycle.	John Taylor	Mar-25	Complete	Complete	
CPC032	Additional comments		Consideration should also be given to undertaking a full staff survey.	Pulse survey being undertaken in August Full staff survey will be delivered as part of the WFS Action plan dates and resources TBC	Leanne Harfield	Sep-24	Complete	Complete	
CPC033	Additional comments		The Ideas Board should be taking a more strategic approach to reviewing requests for funding, making sure any bids are aligned to the councils' priorities and clearly drive innovation. There also needs to be consideration given to how any projects funded on a trial basis could be sustained in the longer term if deemed successful.	Review the Ideas Process to focus on transformation, simplification, deliver more focussed support to develop outline business cases for consideration including financial benefits realisation and/or process to project initiation Revise terms of reference and governance to reflect a transformation focus, council wide view on change projects.	John Taylor	May-25	In progress	Within target	A review of the Ideas process and purpose has commenced with the aim of completing the review May 2025. With a focus on enabling Transformation and invest to save
CPC034	Additional comments		The council to continue driving efficiencies and value for money across the organisation through service improvement and contract management to enable focused delivery on political priorities	Revise Council's approach to transformation and contract management.	Suzanne Jones	Jun-25	In progress	Within target	Contract management resources in place. Transformation resources assigned to support procurement team. Corporate Transformation Update The Corporate Transformation Framework was approved by CLT on 17 February 2025. Service changes will begin in Q1 of 2025/26. A hybrid transformation approach has been agreed: - Service-led changes will be driven through service planning. - Corporate-wide opportunities will be identified using unit cost analysis and benchmarking by the end of Q2. - The Transformation Plan will be finalised in June 2025, outlining key actions to improve efficiency.

Unique ref	Recommendation number	Recommendation	Definition	Action description	Assigned to owner	Month due to be completed	Action delivery status	In progress RAG	Progress comments for 2024/25 Qrt4
CPC.update.1	Additional comments		<u>Relating to Recommendation 3</u> Produce a short punchy statement to accompany corporate narrative. Communicate to staff and members, and use this narrative statement for internal and external communication	<u>New action from March 2025 revisit.</u> To produce an elevator pitch to provide a brief and introduction for the corporate narrative document.	Michael Hann	Jun-25	In progress	Within target	Elevator pitch developed as part of Corporate Narrative. This has been shared with members and staff, and is on the intranet. Next is to share it wider with staff and service to embed into any future communications. This work is ongoing and completion will be once the initial wider sharing across services has been completed.
CPC.update.2	Additional comments		<u>Relating to Recommendation 4</u> Develop the PAS review action plan and utilise the Councils scrutiny functions to oversee the action plan and implementation of recommendations	<u>New action from March 2025 revisit.</u> To develop the PAS review action plan and to develop appropriate member oversight.	Clara Kerr	Sep-25	In progress	Within target	The report was considered and the recommendations agreed by DMC on the 19th May 2025. A training session was also held with Members of DMC to discuss the report. The action plan is being developed, and some 'quick win' outcomes have been achieved or are in process - for example the pending report to Council to amend discretionary planning fees linked to amendments.
CPC.update.3	Additional comments		<u>Relating to Recommendation 6</u> Peer suggest further communication on the process and timeline for how reviewing the 121 processes, working with Unison looking at performance management and L&D will be linked to pay increments and remuneration in the future	<u>New action from March 2025 revisit.</u> To provide further communications for staff regarding the expectations of the 121s for managing performance and development, and how this aligns to the pay increment and remuneration process.	Leanne Harfield	Sep-25	In progress	Within target	One to one form has been launched (1st week of April 25), comms have been sent out, intranet posts and presented to management team and CLT. A process for how this links to increments and a submission form have been drafted and due to be sent out for feedback to WFS champions and a selection of managers. WFS road shows are in mid June feedback will be sought on one to one process.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Increasing Affordable Housing – Inspired Solutions

Meeting/Date: Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Performance and Growth) – 8 July 2025

Cabinet – 15 July 2025

Executive Portfolio: Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy & Housing – Cllr Sam Wakeford

Report by: Pam Scott – Head of Economy, Regeneration and Housing Delivery

Ward(s) affected: All

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report details the proposal to work alongside Inspired Solutions to deliver various development sites across Huntingdonshire to support housing delivery in particular affordable housing responding to housing need. In essence the sites will be delivered by Inspired Solutions on behalf of the Council.
- 1.2 The Council continues to face considerable pressure and demand for housing with circa 3000 applicants on the Council's Housing Register.
- 1.3 Inspired Solutions is an investment and development company looking to improve affordable housing supply across the UK. The Council would effectively form a partnership to deliver affordable housing, which would be provided by Inspired Solutions via long lease agreements for a period of 40 years. The properties would be underlet to a company associated with Inspired Solutions, who would then manage the homes, and the Council would be able to nominate individuals from our housing register to support our housing need and homelessness function. They are one of a number of new and innovative models of affordable housing delivery which the Government is seeking to encourage, their interest lie in developing on private or public land and then subsequently leasing to the Council at Local Housing Allowance (LHA) Levels. The objective of working with Inspired Solutions is to secure a sustainable supply of affordable homes, all priced at LHA rates and market rents. The Council would also have the option to acquire development for a nominal sum after the 40-year lease.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1** To agree in principle to establish a working partnership with Inspired Solutions to deliver affordable homes within the district on various sites – noting an initial aspiration for circa 200 homes.
- 2.2** To delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources (S151 Officer), in consultation with the Corporate Director of Place to negotiate and draft the following agreements:
 - i. Heads of Terms, Agreement for Leases and eventual Leases with Inspired Solutions
 - ii. Heads of Terms, Agreement for Underleases and eventual Underleases with a company associated with Inspired Solutions
 - iii. Nomination Agreements for 100% nomination rights for all residential units for the period of the underleases

3. BACKGROUND AND DETAILS

- 3.1** Huntingdonshire Council were initially approached by Inspired Solutions at the 2024 UKREiF Conference where they demonstrated their capital and delivery expertise. Since this point, Officers have met to discuss the possibility of building a working partnership with Inspired Solutions.
- 3.2** Inspired Solutions are a developer/investor with an aim of increasing affordable housing supply. Inspired Solutions are the partner organisation to Inspired Community Homes who lead on the development. A completed company organisational structure and additional information has been provided in Appendix A. They are one of a number of new and innovative models of affordable housing delivery which the Government are looking to support – most notably this is due to their ability to secure alternative financing and a limited reliance on Government grant funding.
- 3.3** Although Inspired Solutions has not yet completed any developments, they are in contract with several other Local Authorities and have agreements in place to deliver 752 homes. Officers have undertaken necessary discussions to confirm the accuracy of this as part of due diligence. There is an initial aspiration for circa 200 homes in the District.
- 3.4** Once sites have been identified, schemes are expected to be made available to the Council within a period of 36 months from the date of agreement for lease. Inspired Solutions would be responsible for securing the land, necessary permissions, and development delivery.
- 3.5** It is likely that the Council would be looking at several sites across the district as it is not expected that there will be one site meeting the 200 home level. Prior to entering the final Leases for the properties, the Council would undertake due diligence to ensure that all Fire Safety standards are met to be in line with Council policy and requirements as well as Building Safety Standards.
- 3.6** The aim of building a working partnership with Inspired Solutions is to increase the availability of secure affordable homes in the district for residents and to improve housing provision. We anticipate that some homes will be able to support the Council's Homelessness duty, as well as presenting opportunities to deliver more specialised forms of accommodation to meet the needs of individuals with specific challenges.
- 3.7** The Council would not be liable for any upfront payments towards a development, nor would the Council be taking any planning or development risk. The Council would only need to fund its administration, legal and other advisory costs. The properties would be underlet as a back-to-back transaction to another private provider, associated with Inspired Solutions, that would then be responsible for management of the tenancies and repairs and maintenance of the buildings.
- 3.8** The developer or their associated entity would be responsible for all repairs and maintenance without charging the Council for this. Inspired Solutions have a mechanism to draw down from Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to cover service charge costs and have identified three further sources of income generation associated with the energy generation from their developments. These approaches reduce risks associated with service charges being passed on to residents.

- 3.9** Inspired Solutions propose to generate income from the sale of discounted green energy to tenants (under their 'GREAT' scheme), carbon credits, sale of surplus energy to the grid, and eligible service provisions set out and paid by the DWP. These funding sources provide sufficient income to the underlessee to pay for all property related costs. The developer would also be responsible for all lifecycle and major works (including fire and building safety) related to the building for the term of the lease. The Council would only be responsible for void risk, arrears by tenants, although we would have the ability to cover this and recharge the residents and any damage, accidental or deliberate, by the tenant.
- 3.10** The rents for both the headlease and the underlease would be set at LHA rates provided in April for each financial year. The Council would need to set aside a budget for potential void risk, arrears and damage caused by tenants. Officers consider that this risk can be mitigated acceptably and built into future budget setting. The Councils Corporate Director of Finance and Resources (S151 Officer) has been involved in the due diligence of this proposal to date and has confirmed their agreement to the approach.
- 3.11** After the 40-year period the Council would have the option to acquire the units for a heavily discounted sum. This could enable the Council to work in partnership with a Registered Provider to enable the homes to continue to deliver low cost housing.

4. Operational Considerations

- 4.1** The Council would not be responsible for development delivery. Once complete, the aim is to underlet the units to another provider and the Council would hold nomination rights. The Council would not have any risk related to the property unless there is damage caused by the tenant. This has the benefit of not giving the Council any property management duties.
- 4.2** The Council would need to ensure that there are no void costs and that operations related to placing and assessing tenants is done efficiently. This is considered to be achievable given the levels of housing need across the District.
- 4.3** The proposal includes a 'Green Renewable Energy Affordable Tariff' (GREAT). Inspired Solutions are indicating that this technology will result in significantly reduced energy costs for residents.
- 4.4** The progress of this proposal is subject to contract and legal due diligence; the Council has appointed Devello as its legal advisors and an update is awaited. In the event that significant issues are identified, the Council would not move forward. .
- 4.5** The proposal by Inspired Solutions is for the Council to enter into an Agreement for Lease for each site brought forward, which will unlock funding for the developer and allow them to proceed towards planning and development. At the same time the Council will sign an Agreement for Underlease for each site with the underlease organisation.
- 4.6** Once the scheme has been completed a formal Lease Agreement will be signed with the developer for a period of 40 years and at the same time an Underlease Agreement will also be signed.

- 4.7** The Council will also, at completion of each development, enter into a Nomination agreement with the Underlessee allowing the Council to have 100% rights over the units.
- 4.8** The income from the Underlease, less deduction for voids and tenant damage will be used to pay for the Headlease payments. The Council is taking a long-term commitment and will be responsible for funding the leases for 40 years.

5. RISKS

- 5.1** This proposal has several risks that need to be considered as part of the wider decision making and could have an impact on the delivery and financial outcomes for the Council.
- 5.2** Inspired Solutions have not completed delivery of any schemes but have indicated they have the financial means and experience to deliver the schemes and are already in contract with several other Local Authorities.
- 5.3** Nonetheless, it is a risk in the event they fail to complete the delivery of the schemes, the council will have lost the opportunity to acquire other schemes that can be delivered. However, Inspired Solutions is part of an organisation called Trebbie, which have the experience and resources to construct residential schemes. Further group company and related parties' structure has been provided in Appendix A. However, if schemes are not delivered the Council would not be under any obligation to take Leases of those schemes and so would not incur any financial costs apart from costs associated with entering into agreements which are typically minimal.
- 5.4** The developer will include technology and building design that will enhance the provision of energy through self-generation methods. The incorporation and building approach to make this viable requires specific technology. At the end of the 40 years the Council would need to discuss this with Inspired Solutions to see how this could be transferred as part of the purchase of the homes, as the Council does not currently manage housing, this activity could be passed on to another organisation.
- 5.5** A decrease in future demand may result in these units being underutilised while the Council remains responsible for lease payments. Whilst we do not believe that the demand for housing at affordable rents will decrease in Huntingdonshire, if this is the case the Council will have the option to request that the properties be turned into private rent units.
- 5.6** With Local Government Reorganisation in 2028, it is anticipated that any contracts signed in relation to this proposal and entered into by the Council will be transferred to the responsibility of the new authority. To further mitigate the risk of insufficient occupancy in the units, future demand is expected to be supported across the broader area encompassed by the new strategic authority, thereby providing a wider area of housing demand.

6. Financial

- 6.1** The aim of building a working partnership with Inspired Solutions is to reduce reliance within the private rented sector for provision of housing.
- 6.2** The proposals presented to the Council do not require any capital investment by the Council and protects the Council against operational repairs and maintenance costs, although as stated in 3.10 the Council would be expected

to cover void risk and vandalism. The Council would have 100% nomination rights on the units under lease.

6.3 A follow-up report will be made available with a detailed breakdown of costs and savings once specific sites are identified.

6.4 The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources (S151 Officer) has been involved with this project from the beginning, there will be a need to create a fund as a reserve to cover the risks associated with damage, arrears or long term voids.

7 LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES, AND/OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

7.1 The delivery of housing is aligned with the principles and key objectives of HDC's Corporate Plan, specifically it links to Priority 2: Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations, through Improving Housing, this project would enable additional high quality homes to be provided across the District.

8 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The progress of this proposal is subject to contract and legal due diligence; the Council has appointed Devello as its legal advisors and an update is awaited. In the event that significant issues are identified, the Council would not move forward.

9 EQUALITIES

The Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. The delivery of good quality affordable housing aligns with the Council's existing housing procedures.

10 ENVIRONMENTAL

The Council has a duty to ensure we continue to promote an environmentally positive recovery in Huntingdonshire following the impacts of COVID 19. We also have a duty to deliver sustainable place making. In December 2021, the Council adopted a core set of environmental principles. In October 2022, the Council passed a Cost of Living and Climate Change motion that recognises that the current cost of living, and climate crises require joint attention to support the wellbeing of residents and businesses. In February 2023 Council formally recognised the Climate Crisis and Ecological Emergency, adopted the Council's Climate Strategy underlining the organisations commitment to:

- setting a positive example through its actions to be a net carbon zero Council by 2040
- an enabler supporting action within our communities and across our partners.
- an encourager to those that live, work, and visit Huntingdonshire to take climate action and reduce carbon emissions.

The Council has direct control of only a tiny proportion of all the carbon emissions within Huntingdonshire, but we can adopt a key role to influence the

district, demonstrating good practice whilst setting policies and strategies to influence businesses and communities to tackle climate change whilst enabling sustainable living and growth.

11 LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

1. Inspired Solutions 2024
2. Home Angel
3. GREAT
4. Letter of Intent

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Letter of Intent made between Huntingdonshire District Council and Lucra Asset Management Limited and Inspired Structured Solutions Limited in relation to the provision of 200 social homes within the district.

Following extensive and determined discussions, the parties have reached a mutual understanding and a firm decision to engage with each other. This letter of intent is a recital of the matters contained in the Heads of Terms and lease agreements.

Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) is prepared to enter into a long-dated lease for 40 years without break clauses with Inspired Structured Solutions (“ISSL”) nominated subsidiary (SPV). The terms of this lease are to be set out in a separate lease agreement. This Letter of Intent is conditional in that it is subject to Huntingdonshire District Council securing internal approvals and Cabinet approval on 17th June to enter into lease agreements to provide 200 social homes.

Inspired will provide 200 sustainable homes at no capital cost to HDC with the location, specification, bedroom mix, timetable, and space standards being agreed by HDC, and the homes being provided within its spatial area.

HDC are responsible for placing tenants from their waiting list into the homes which qualifies for Housing Benefit or Housing Allowance or Universal credit.

HDC is responsible for insuring the homes (building insurance).

The rent will not exceed the LHA rates stipulated by the DWP for that postcode district during the period of the lease. Indexation will be limited to and track the rates set by the DWP.

Inspired or its nominated company will collect the social/affordable rent and service charge from the tenants and pay the LHA rates and Service Charge to JP Morgan. Any shortfall in rent collected (bad debts) will be paid by HDC.

All general repairs, major repairs and replacements will be borne by an Inspired nominated company, and at no cost to HDC.

Inspired will indemnify HDC from any rent voids that are caused by a defect that results in uninhabitable homes (in absence of a reserve home being available to tenants). Any other voids costs or bad debts will be paid by HDC.

Inspired will be responsible for all maintenance, general upkeep and life cycle remediation of the properties and common parts throughout the term of the lease at its own cost.

Any damages or breaches of the tenancy agreement that cause a cost of repair will result in reimbursement by HDC. All expenditure will be pre-approved between Inspired and Local Authority.

HDC shall have the right to use the property as it sees fit provided always that it ensures rents that are linked to LHA and are paid in full to Inspired.

Inspired has the right to supply, electricity, fresh water and used water treatment services to the properties.

Inspired will offer HDC the following three options to be expedited before the final year of the 40-year Agreement -

- The purchase of the properties at the end of 40th anniversary of the Agreement for a heavily discounted sum, or
- HDC chooses not to exercise its option to purchase (the properties will need to be vacated by the 40th anniversary of the Agreement) or
- HDC elects to extend the existing Agreement by a further of period on the same terms (minimum period 25 years). Notification and signed agreement for the extension of the Agreement needs to be completed prior to expiry of the existing Agreement.

Inspired has the right to access the properties to repair or replacement of the property.

Inspired has the right to install systems and upgrades whilst allowing access to IOT (Home Angel and G.R.E.A.T).

In the event Inspired Solutions seek grant funding from Homes England, HDC will support such bids.

Huntingdonshire District Council

Authorised Signatory

Name

Lucra Asset Management Limited and Inspired Structured Solutions Limited

Authorised Signatory

Name



Green Renewable Energy Affordable Tariff

Introduction

Inspired Solutions has created a dynamic new way to provide affordable energy to our tenants, using proven green energy technologies from other sectors - including hotels, leisure, transport, and manufacturing – and adapted them for use in our homes.

We always put tenant wellbeing at the heart of everything we do. We have looked at current and future needs, researching the very best of the available proven technology to design and create high quality, inclusive homes that have the highest possible energy efficiency.

As part of our tenant focused strategy, we decided that our tenants should be able to heat their homes throughout the year without the fear that they may not be able to afford it.

So, we built the Green Renewable Energy Affordable Tariff.

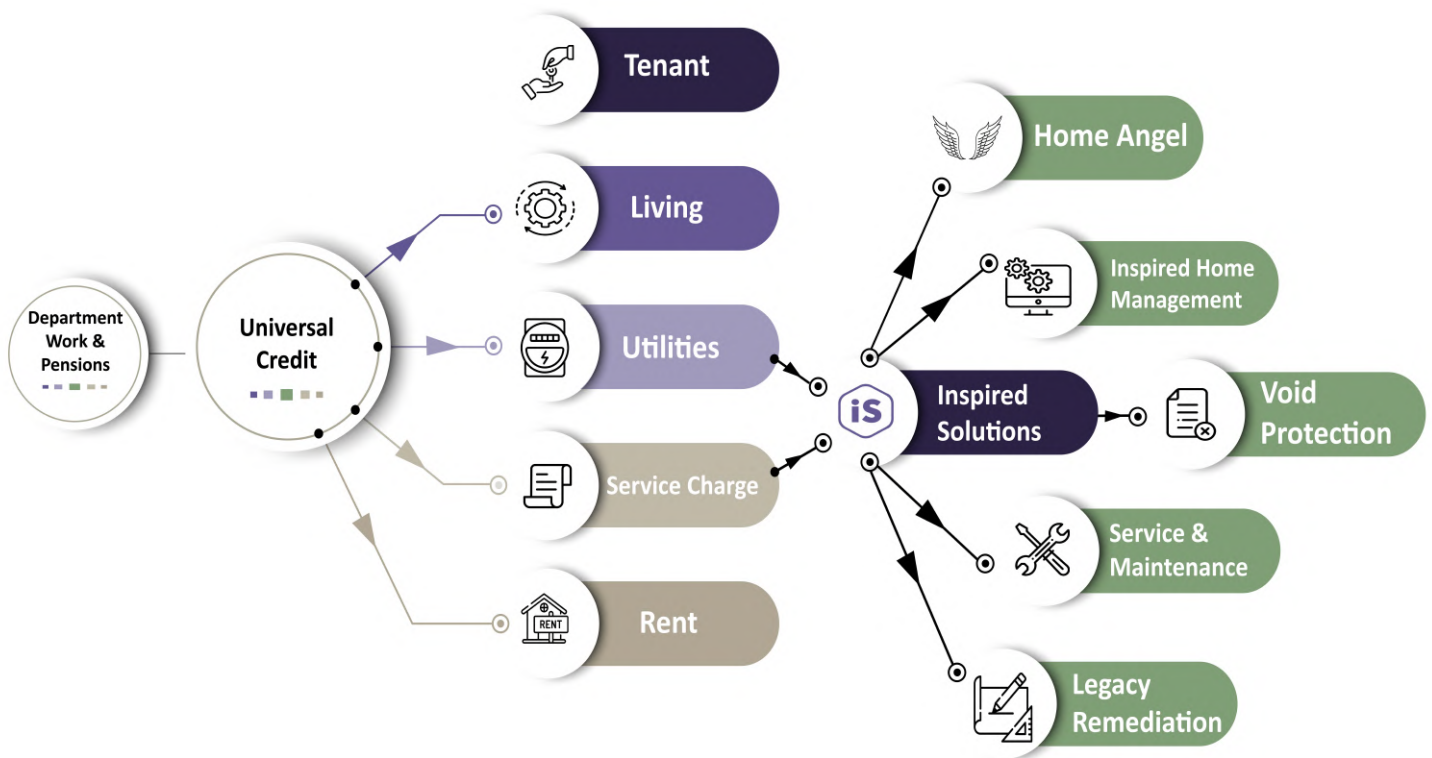
Current Situation

Rising fuel prices affect everyone, but particularly the most vulnerable. People and families, the elderly and those on the lowest incomes are being forced to choose between food or heating. The physical and psychological damage that this causes tenants is leading to many health problems that the National Health Service are struggling to cope with. According to [a report by Age UK](#), health conditions related to lack of heating cost the NHS £1.36 billion each year and an estimated 27,000 excess winter deaths.

There are two key issues that urgently need to be addressed in order to remedy this situation:

1. People and families cannot afford the energy prices and the cost of living crisis is forcing them to make impossible decisions.
2. The homes are so poorly insulated that it costs significantly more to heat the home than a new build home of the same size.

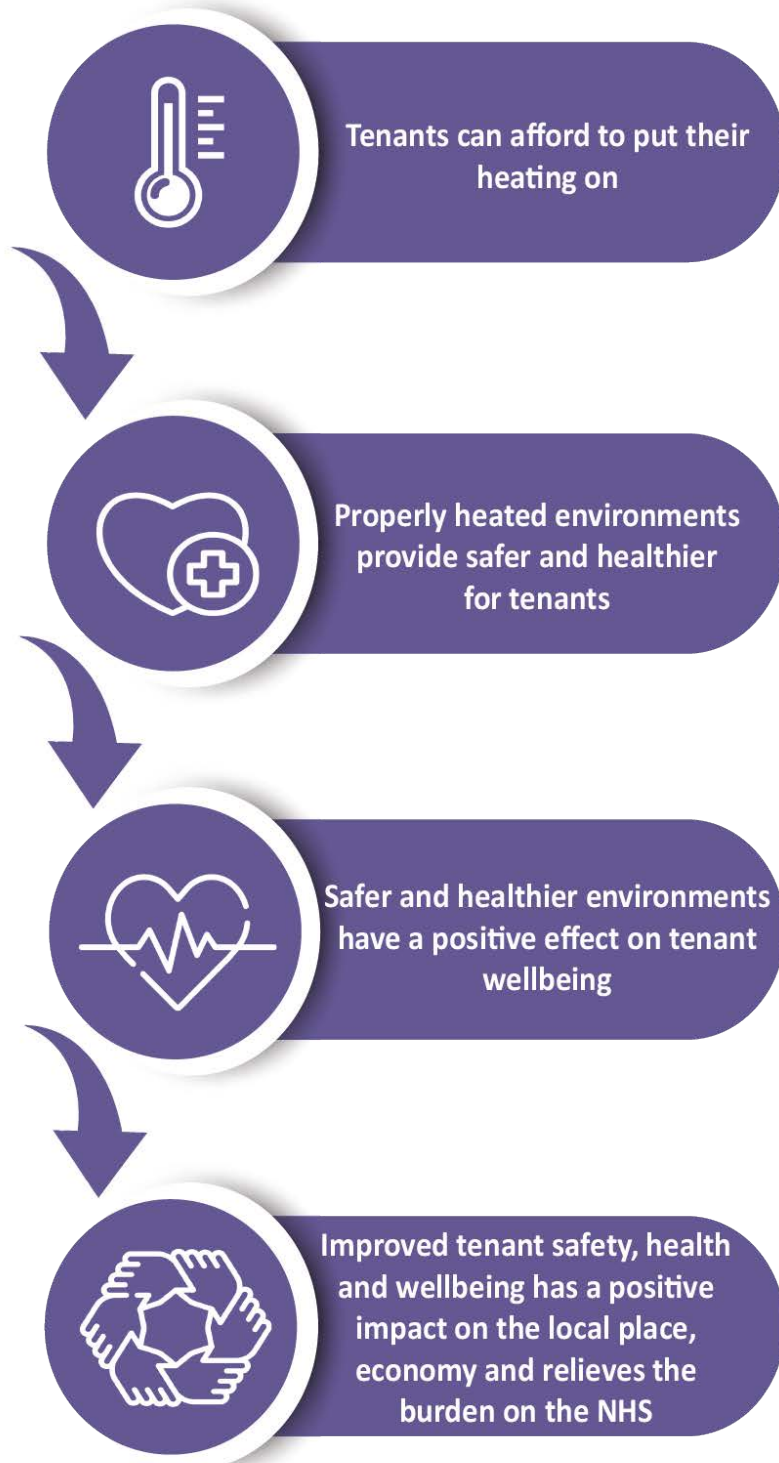
Our Solution: What Does Inspired Solutions Do With The Green Energy Utilities Service Charge?



Green Renewable Energy Affordable Tariff

The Green Renewable Energy Affordable Tariff has been created to allow tenants to afford electricity and heating in their homes. Through the combination of multiple proven technologies it will enable the tenant to have a minimum of 40% cheaper energy than the grid would normally charge.

The benefits of the tariff are:

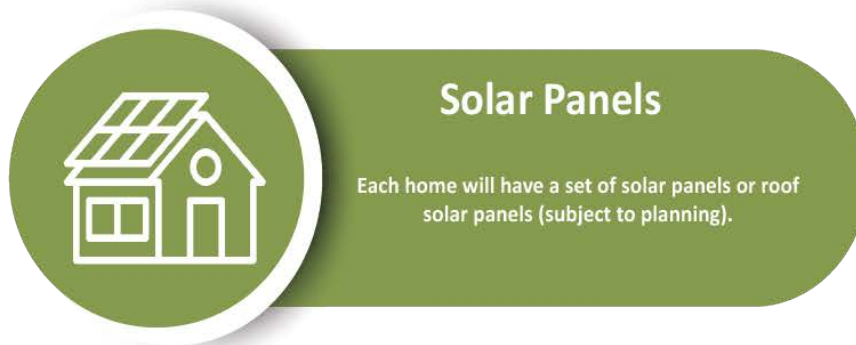
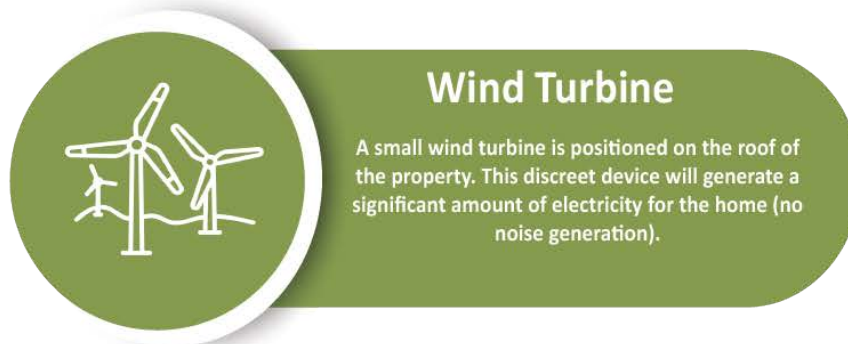


All our homes will be insulated in accordance with SAP/TFEE and SBEM standards as outlined in the building regulations. We go above and beyond this, by combining multiple renewable technologies to create our Green Renewable Energy Affordable Tariff.

Sites may vary due to restrictions in the area, but the elements of our strategy can be combined in multiple scenarios to address any constraints as required.

Each home has a selection of solar panels and small wind turbines which will generate a significant amount of electricity into the home. The organic waste produced from humans is collected and biogas is created through our onsite production centre. This feeds the Combined Heat and Power engine to produce electricity. If Biogas capacity is low it will use natural gas.

A typical combination in a housing scheme is as follows, in the order of hierarchy of use:





Solar Panels

The combined heat and power unit will create electricity. This will be fed via biogas or natural gas.



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Inspired Solutions: Home Angel – Tenant Protection

Introduction

Our vision is to provide a fully funded solution for housing and deliver high quality, inclusive homes, and communities to those in need. We always put tenant wellbeing at the heart of everything we do, and we ensure all people and families feel safe and secure in their homes. Therefore, we are providing this at no cost to the local authority or the tenant.

We use the very best, proven technology to design out problems, create better buildings and reduce maintenance costs and we have listened to understand the current challenges in housing. Having researched the issues that are most important to tenants, we designed out the factors that we know affect their wellbeing and designed in lasting solutions.

We have looked at current and future needs, researching the very best of the available proven technology and found innovative ways to proactively address these issues and safeguard tenants, neighbours and the properties involved.

Current Situation

In any types of residential setting, including social housing, events and incidents can occur, such as water leaks, mould and damp, fires, instances of domestic abuse, emotional distress, narcotics related issues and subletting leading to overcrowding. Each and all of these events can have a negative impact on the wellbeing of the tenant, the condition of the property and surrounding neighbours.

It is within our guiding principles always to put tenant wellbeing at the heart of everything we do and to ensure all people and families feel safe and secure in their homes.

‘Home Angel’ has been developed by Inspired Solutions and our IoT partners as an innovative new way of achieving this goal.

What is the ‘Internet of Things’ or ‘IoT’?

The Internet of Things (IoT) is a network of interconnected physical devices and objects embedded with sensors, software, and internet connectivity, enabling them to collect and exchange data. This network can encompass a wide and diverse range of applications, from smart home devices like thermostats and cameras to industrial machines and healthcare sensors.

We have partnered with experts in this field to create a network of such devices to make our homes safer for people and families. We call this innovative system ‘Home Angel’.

Our Solution: Home Angel

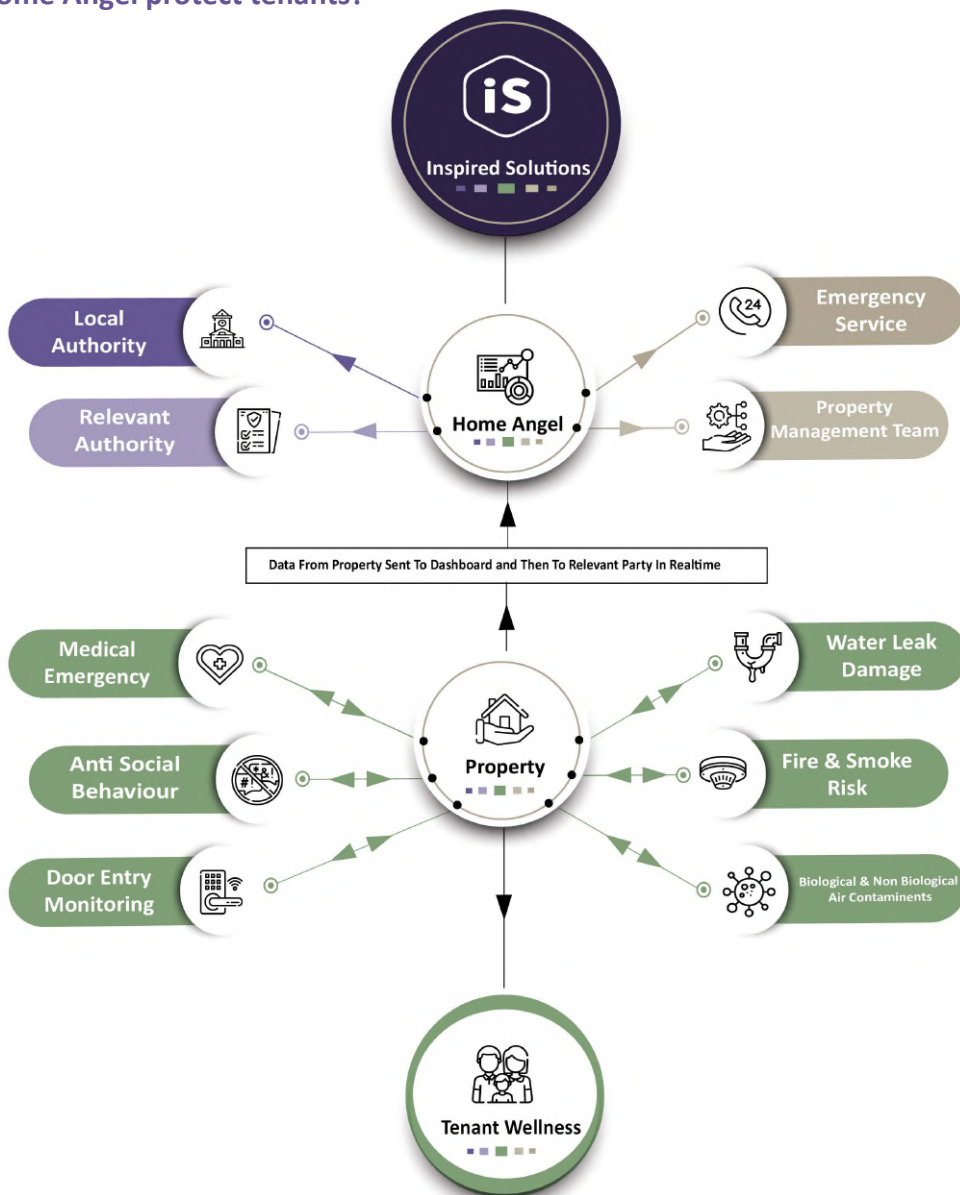
Home Angel is an Internet of Things (IoT) Development Software that Inspired Solutions has developed in collaboration with our expert partners. We will install multiple devices within our properties to enhance tenant safety and provide technological measures to prevent or avert potential issues that could have significant and detrimental consequences for tenants and their wellbeing.

Home Angel allows tenants to report any issues to the Property Management Team. This enables a fast response to carry out any minor or major repairs.

Inspired Solutions puts tenant wellbeing at the heart of everything we do, and the devices built into our homes from Home Angel can help make this guiding principle a reality.

Home Angel is included in all our properties at no cost to the local authority or the tenants.

How does Home Angel protect tenants?



**HOME ANGEL IS PROVIDED AT NO CHARGE TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITY OR TENANT
AND IS FULLY GDPR COMPLIANT WITH TENANT IDENTITY PROTECTED**



Fire Prevention: Predictive and Sensor Active Technology

All our homes are built with fire detectors as standard to building regulations. However, our devices have patented technology which enables Home Angel to detect a pattern of false alarms or issues in the home with smoke detection. Based on the nature of the alert it can relay information directly to the Property Management Team or appropriate authority or local fire service to carry out a home visit. This preventative technology can help deal with the issue before it could become a life threatening fire and may cause serious harm to the individual or neighbours.



Fire Reactive Technology

In apartment high rise properties, appropriate sprinkler systems will be installed in accordance with building regulations. In the event of a fire, detectors will notify tenants, prompting evacuation. We have introduced mains connected pressurized water mist devices in the kitchens, living rooms and main entrances of our homes, where data shows most fires originate. This system is designed to assist in extinguishing fire, reducing impact and damage, as well as providing more protective assistance for occupants to escape to safety.



Condensation, Damp and Mould

The devices in the property can monitor humidity, air toxin, CO2 levels and moisture levels. This technology will highlight to the Property Management Team that there could be an issue in the property and it needs a home visit. Also, when the humidity levels reach a specific threshold, the system will automatically activate the ventilation extraction in that particular room to eliminate the excess moisture.



Occupancy

Unauthorised subletting can lead to occupancy numbers exceeding intended limits for the home. This poses potential health hazards and safety risks. Our devices enable us to monitor whether properties exceed approved occupancy limits and promptly alert the Property Management Team in the event of such occurrences. Our devices also help prevent 'cuckooing' (where individuals take over the homes of vulnerable tenants or unlawfully occupied vacant properties without legitimate rights to do so).



Emergencies

The technology in our homes not only listens but understands need for assistance. By speaking a simple keyword Home Angel can instantly reaching out to emergency services when you need them the most. No buttons, no complications.



Death

It is unfortunate reality is that there have been instances where individuals have passed away and remained undiscovered for prolonged periods. This doesn't just affect the immediate surroundings but deeply impacts the community and neighbors. Home Angel, with its advanced sensing capabilities, can detect atmospheric changes consistent with such unfortunate events. While technology can never replace genuine human connection, our goal with Home Angel is to add an extra layer of care and concern, ensuring the well-being of all residents in our community.



Narcotics

Home Angel is built with the capability to detect the presence of non-biological air contaminants. It can differentiate between different types of narcotics, whether for personal consumption or being produced within the property for distribution. This feature allows the Property Management Team to promptly report suspicious activities to the appropriate authorities.



Domestic Abuse & Anti Social Behaviour

Home Angel will detect any loud decibel sounds of a specific nature and certain specific occurrences, which can help ensure the relevant authorities are informed of this pattern of behaviour.



Door Entry

Forget the worry of misplaced keys, our properties have incorporated keyless fob entry to ensure both convenience and security for our tenants.

Misplaced key? With a quick request, a tenant will receive a unique pin code granting immediate access to your home. This temporary solution ensures tenants are never locked out.



Water Leak Detection

In our homes there are multiple leak detectors. In the event the device becomes wet then the mains water is shut off. This prevents any bursts or leaks damaging the property.



Web Application

In today's digital age, clear and compassionate communication is more vital than ever. Our web application is not just about data; it is about ensuring you have a clear picture of your building's well-being. We understand the responsibility and trust you place in us, and that's why our platform not only keeps you updated about the present but also anticipates the future to allow for preventative measures by highlighting potential problems.



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inspired**solutions**

Creating homes
together

Private & Confidential

Welcome to a new future for social housing

Page 134



The highlights

Page 135



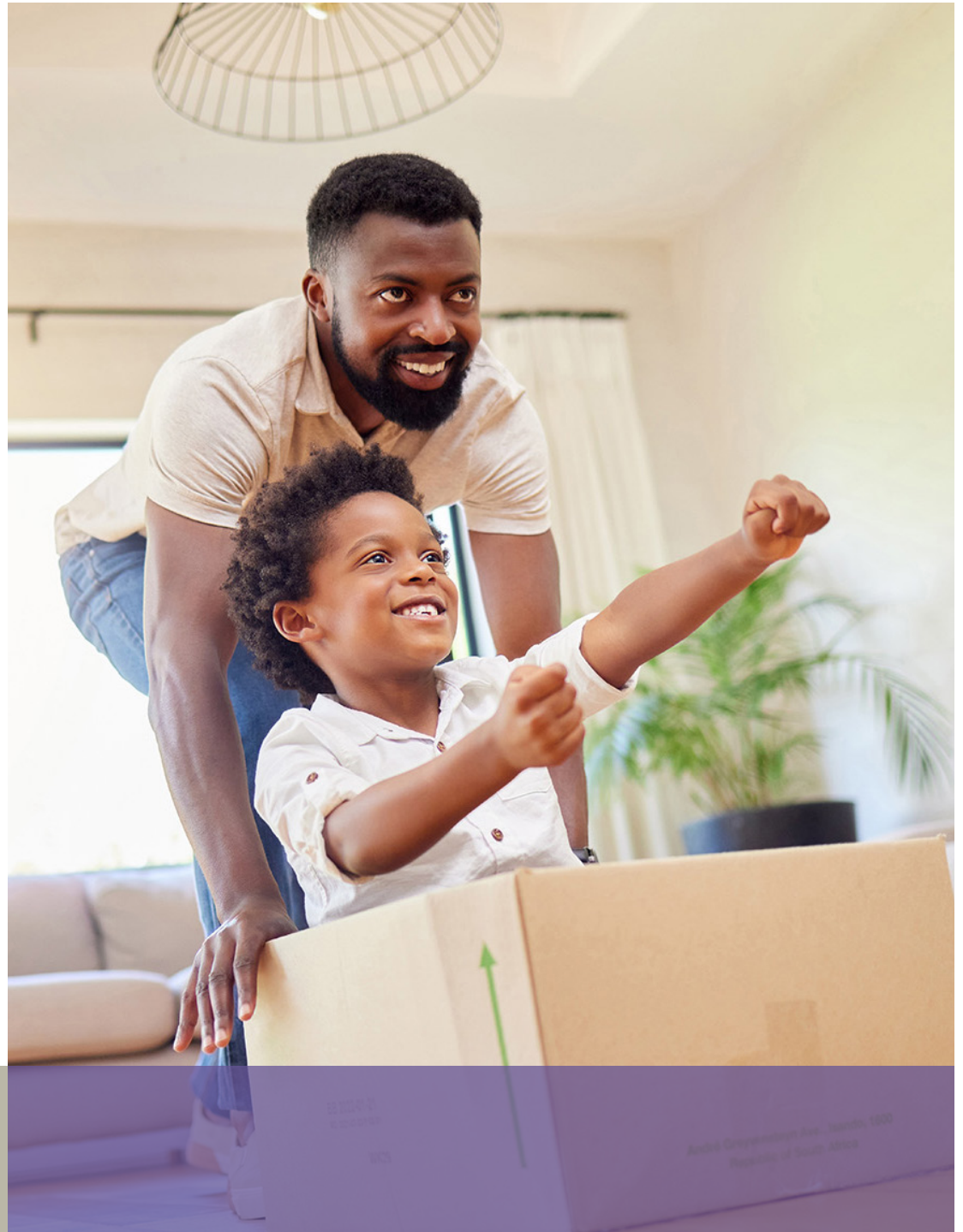
Summary

- Inspired Solutions is a collaboration between industry leading experts who share a vision to provide a fully funded solution to the social housing crisis and deliver high quality, inclusive homes to those in need
- Inspired has found an innovative new way to fund and deliver high quality social homes, putting tenant wellbeing at the heart of our strategy
- We build or refurbish high quality, inclusive homes for local authorities that address their social housing needs, at no cost to the local authority
- The relationship with the local authority provides a level of confidence to investors that the buildings will always have tenants
- The rents on the homes offer return on investment and long-term income for Inspired's pension customers
- Rent will always be at or below local housing allowance rates
- All homes are delivered, serviced and maintained to the highest level at no cost to the local authority and the local authority will never have financial exposure
- At the end of the lease term, the building will transfer to the local authority for a peppercorn sum
- Tried and tested technology from other industries provides all homes with inclusive and innovative management systems and green energy



What we do

- We fund new-build and redevelopment projects that provide high quality social housing to those in need, at no cost to the local authorities
- We partner with organisations that share our vision and we have the capability to build or refurbish high quality, inclusive homes that meet everyone's needs
- We design, build and finish homes that last, with tenant wellbeing at the heart of our strategy
- We include green energy in everything we do, making our homes cheaper to run and more sustainable
- We provide homes to people in need
- We deliver and maintain new build and renovation social housing for local authorities and registered providers, who can implement how they want to use our homes for their tenants





How we do it

- We use private sector funds to deliver high quality, inclusive properties to local authorities, housing associations and registered providers
- The rent on the building offers return on investment and long-term income for Inspired Solutions' pension customers, reducing the risk and exposure created by traditional market volatility
- We listen to the issues and we do our research. By bringing together the very best available technology in building and maintaining our homes, we make them cheaper to run, to everyone's benefit
- We have sought out technology and initiatives from other industries to provide the best solutions for tenants. We will use these to provide cost and energy savings, meaning we provide very affordable homes that ensure sustainability and efficiency
- We create financial benefits through green energy. These are shared between our pension customers, our partners and tenants through our Green Energy Tariff, and re-invested in maintaining our buildings

Who benefits?

Tenants

- High quality spaces that people are proud to call 'home'
- Affordable energy tariff to help with cost of living
- Inclusive, safe and welcoming communities
- Homes that are built with tenant requirements in mind
- Technology that makes life easier and safer



Local Authorities

- High quality homes that meet social housing needs and reduce waiting lists
- Increase in income from rents
- Rents are never above local housing allowance rates
- No financial exposure, now or in the future
- No ongoing maintenance costs
- All properties are maintained to a high standard
- The building transfers for a peppercorn sum at the end of the lease
- Green energy helps deliver on net zero targets



Inspired Solutions

- The relationship with the local authority provides a level of confidence that the buildings will always have tenants
- Rents from the tenants provide long-term income for Inspired's pension customers
- Rent on the buildings offers return on investment
- The impact of market volatility is reduced for pension customers
- Assists Inspired in achieving its ESG targets



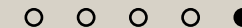
Local Places

- Job creation for local people, both direct and through the supply chain
- Opportunities to supply goods to the project
- Increased economic activity in the local area
- Local skills development
- Investment in local communities and their spaces
- Infrastructure improvements
- Shared best practice and knowledge transfer
- Support for local small businesses



Pension Customers

- More reliable income stream
- Reduced reliance on state provision in difficult economic conditions
- Reduced reliance on local authorities for welfare provision
- Guaranteed 40 year pension



Working with local authorities

The local authority commits to:

Page 140

- Introducing tenants in need of high quality, social housing, whose rental obligations are funded by the DWP
- Fostering a mutual partnership that secures the best outcomes for local areas during the planning process
- Long term leases that grant financial predictability for Inspired's pension customers

Inspired Solutions commits to:

- Providing homes to people in need
- Funding new-build and redevelopment projects that provide high quality social housing to those in need, at no cost to the local authorities
- Designing, building and finishing homes that last, with tenant wellbeing at the heart of our strategy
- Including green energy in everything we do and sharing cost benefits with partners and tenants through the Green Energy Tariff





The details

Our vision

To provide a fully funded solution for social housing and deliver high quality, inclusive homes and communities to those in need.



Our story

In 2020 a think tank of financial experts from the world of banking and investment came together to solve the problem of volatility on assets held within pension funds. They realised that the rental income from social housing was the perfect fit and solution, while also providing high quality homes for those in need.

Page 143
Since this beginning in 2020 Inspired Solutions has gathered together a team of industry leaders from finance, construction, property management and local government to provide high quality homes for people in need.

We are passionate about creating inclusive and modern spaces for people and families, so we put tenant wellbeing at the heart of our strategy.





Our guiding principles

Everything we do is guided by some basic beliefs. These support our vision to provide a fully funded solution to social housing and deliver high quality, inclusive homes to those in need.

They shape our actions and guide our solutions, every day:

- We always put tenant wellbeing at the heart of everything we do
- We ensure all people and families feel safe and secure in their homes
- We create high quality spaces that people and families are proud to call 'home'
- We deliver homes, not just houses, creating thriving communities
- We use the very best, proven technology to design out problems, create better buildings and reduce maintenance costs
- We help release local authorities from their financial burden
- We help with the energy crisis by creating energy efficient homes
- We create real and lasting social impact and benefits to the community
- We enable housing associations and regulated providers to give an exceptional service
- We do good, by doing good business and supporting charities that share our goals

Tenant focused solutions

Having created the funding proposition, we turned our attention to the details of delivering homes to the very highest standards. We took time to listen and understand the impacts on of the shortages in social housing and supported living on local authorities, communities, people and families.

We understand the psychological damage that uncertainty brings to people and families. Putting tenant wellbeing at the heart of our strategy means that people and families are proud to call our affordable, high quality spaces 'home'.

Having researched the issues that are most important to tenants, we designed out the factors that we know affect their wellbeing and designed in lasting solutions. We have looked at current and future needs, researching the very best of the available proven technology to design and create high quality, inclusive homes that have the highest possible energy efficiency.

Page 145

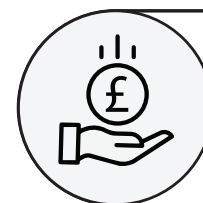
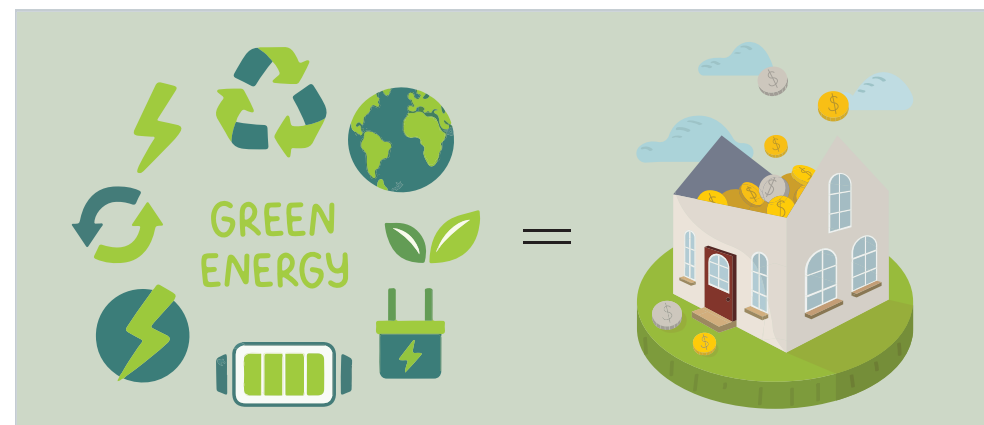


Fuel poverty & cost of living

Rising fuel prices affect everyone, but particularly the most vulnerable. This is why we have invested in research to find real solutions for our tenants. The result is our Green Energy Tariff. Green energy is cheaper than buying from the grid and provides a tangible cost saving for people and families, but it requires an up-front investment that few can afford.

Our funding model allows us to build energy efficiency into our homes from the outset and we share cost savings with tenants and partners from day one. We have identified and secured green energy technologies from other sectors - including hotels, leisure, transport and manufacturing, and adapted them for use in our homes.

Green energy is improving all the time and we are committed to staying ahead of developments. We will constantly scan the market, joining with partners who offer the best available solutions for every home. Green energy solutions are affordable, sustainable and support our goal to target carbon zero in all our homes.



The use of Green energy creates substantial financial benefits for Inspired Solutions.



We share this with our partners & tenants, who pay for their energy through our Green Energy Tariff, which is cheaper than buying from the grid.



We also use these funds to finance the ongoing maintenance of our homes.

Bringing our vision to life

We have the experience, passion and commitment to make a difference and to provide a fully funded solution to social housing and deliver high quality, inclusive homes and communities to those in need.

We will create a new generation of homes, with a focus on raising the benchmark for social housing and supported living. We combine a forward-thinking approach to social housing and supported living issues, while remaining true to our social responsibilities and sensitive to the needs of our environment.

To achieve this, we have created a substantial funding proposition with our banking counterparts (JP Morgan) tailored to the specific needs of the social housing and supported living and sectors.

We will fund the redevelopment of existing stock as well as new build projects. Given the current economic climate and the pressures on scarce resources, we understand the urgency in delivering these much-needed homes and how to do so within local housing allowance rates.





Technology

Our extensive research and adaptation of existing technologies means that our homes will be designed, constructed, and finished with longevity and clean energy in mind.

We have developed our technology package in line with our guiding principles and our focus on tenant wellbeing.

Each home will be equipped with multiple systems to protect tenants and support their welfare. Our technology will also enable proactive maintenance and stop issues before they happen. Not only does this mean minimal maintenance is required, it creates a more positive environment and supports tenant wellbeing.

Examples of technology in use:

Solar and wind power will sit alongside technology to monitor fuel usage, condensation, dampness, and mould. Humidity detection will link to mechanical extraction systems, and raised humidity will trigger extraction before it results in mould in the home.

Community spaces

Providing quality community spaces supports our principle of putting tenant wellbeing at the heart of what we do.

As part of our commitment to providing new homes, we will work with local authorities, charities and community partners to find ways to provide spaces that support the needs of the communities where we're based. From community centres and playgrounds to community gardens, we work with appropriate local and national charities to make spaces where the community can thrive and grow together.



How we deliver

We use private sector funds to deliver off-balance sheet (local authority) property solutions to local authorities, housing associations and registered providers and have created a package of tailored solutions to support their placemaking initiatives.

We understand that local authorities and their tenants have specific needs and we continue to work closely with them, alongside housing associations and registered providers, to give the best solutions for people and families. It is within our guiding principles to deliver homes, not just houses, within thriving communities. We will continue to foster relationships with authorities throughout the UK to understand different places, recognising that everyone's needs are different and respecting the diversity of social needs for each area.

The homes we build will be designed, constructed, and finished with longevity and clean energy in mind. By bringing together the very best available proven technology under our roofs, we are able to provide very affordable homes that ensure sustainability and efficiency. Our unique design and proven technology enable us to create homes for today that not only exceed EPC standards of conventional buildings, but will future proof our homes with a zero-carbon target.



How the model works

Inspired Solutions will provide high quality, inclusive social housing at no cost to local authorities, creating an immediate and permanent solution to housing shortages while supporting economic growth. Inspired helps solve social housing shortages by providing energy efficient homes with low rents that will never exceed the local housing allowance.

Our leasehold model, in collaboration with JP Morgan and Inspiring Community Homes (Part of Trebbi Group), provides the funding mechanism to build, refurbish and deliver the highest quality new-build social housing. We enter a long dated reversionary lease with the local authority, starting on the date of the practical completion of a building. The rent on the building offers long-term income for Inspired Solutions' pension customers and the council has high quality homes that address its social housing needs. At the end of the lease term, the building will transfer to the council at a 'peppercorn' cost.

A key aspect of our proposal is setting rent no higher than the local housing allowance rate determined by the DWP. This means that there is no liability for the local authority, now or in the future. Our goal is to reduce the need for maintenance throughout the home's lifespan. We provide options to maintain the property on behalf of the local authority, which can save costs for the council in both the short and long-term.



Fire safety

Fire safety is an important factor in our ability to build new homes. We ensure that the use of materials meets all necessary building regulations.

The use of fire consultants and quality assurance procedures on fire safety is always a primary objective in the new homes we build.

Page 152





Ecology

We will design and construct our new homes in the most sustainable manner possible and with care for the environment.

We take care to protect existing habitats, introducing new or alternative habitats as appropriate to each project.

We employ specialist ecologists to conduct site surveys and impact assessments, working with our design and construction teams to advise on all aspects of habitat management and creation.



Warranties & third party guarantees

Our homes will have a suitable 10 year structural warranty. This will be through the NHBC or similar. All certification will be provided to the local authority to ensure adequate cover in the event of a defect.

All subcontractors and professionals will have third party collateral warranties with the local authority. Again, adding additional contractual protection in the event of a latent or patent defect.

All of our products come with different lengths of warranties and will be allocated to the local authority to draw upon in the event of an issue.

How far have Inspired got so far

Inspired has 8 sites at the LOI stage, of which 5 have progressed to HOT's and have been publicly announced as of the 23rd September. Upon approval, Inspired will start to deliver 752 homes across 8 sites.



The team

Simon Smith
(Board)



- Managing Director, Inspired Solutions
- Financial consultant providing regulated investment management and advice

Charles Benson
(Board)



- Founder and Director, Inspired Solutions
- Lawyer, investor and entrepreneur who is passionate about social housing

Craig Hibbert
(Board)



- Managing Director, Trebbi Group
- Expertise in all aspects of construction delivery

Carsten Sennov
(Board)



- Group COO, Inspired Solutions
- Expertise in Start-ups, Energy & Technology as well as Operational structure

Bill Pollard



- Specialist in residential, destination and commercial property
- Leads complex transformation projects and acquisitions

Adam Tyas



- Managing Director, Inspiring Community Homes
- Expertise in large scale residential construction and social housing

John Jory



- Specialist in local government
- Former council Chief Executive

Kevin Stewart



- President of IRRV
- 40+ year in local government. Specialist in revenues and benefits

Geoff Brooks



- Founder and CEO, Alpha Beta Partners
- Specialist in retirement solutions

Andrew Thompson



- Founder, Alpha Beta Partners
- Specialist in corporate financial structuring and compliance

Richard Garrod



- Founder, Inspired Solutions and Tlireme Pension Services Ltd
- Specialist in tax issues and reliefs specific to property sector



For more information visit
inspired-solutions.uk





Inspired Solutions

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Public

Key Decision – Yes

* Delete as applicable

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter:	Regeneration Opportunities Report
Meeting/Date:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Performance and Growth) 8 July 2025 Cabinet 15 July 2025
Executive Portfolio:	Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy & Housing – Cllr Sam Wakeford
Report by:	Head of Economy, Regeneration and Housing Delivery
Ward(s) affected:	Various – specific wards unknown at this time.

Executive Summary

This is a report to seek Cabinet approval to move forward to the next stages with a regeneration partnership with Capital and Centric (C&C) relating to sites within the Market Towns. This project seeks to bring forward economic and housing led opportunities which will contribute positively and create new homes, jobs and other benefits.

Recommendations:

Officers are seeking Cabinet approval:

- To support Officers identifying and working up proposals for regeneration opportunities in the Market Towns, which could be brought forward for development in conjunction with C&C as a private sector partner – noting the benefits of the C&C operating model as listed within the appendix to this report.
- Endorse the principle of working with C&C as a partner to develop and potentially deliver identified proposals – noting the appointment via a Direct Award from the 'Bloom' Framework – and based on the advice of the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources (S151) advice supports the use of funding from Reserves to work up proposals to enable consideration of more detailed proposals.
- To endorse Officers proceeding to undertake engagement with stakeholders relating to any identified opportunities and potential developments as part of business case development.
- To support the principle of Officers engaging in efforts to acquire land and buildings in connection with the principle of regeneration in the Market

Towns, where this would align with the principles of delivering economic or housing led regeneration.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Following the Council's attendance at UKREiiF in 2024 with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, (CPCA) discussions commenced with C&C about the opportunity for regeneration opportunities within Huntingdonshire's Market Towns.
- 1.2 The Council is already delivering a number of regeneration schemes throughout the Market Towns under the Market Towns Programme, the main element of this work has focussed on St Neots, following the allocation of Future High Streets Funding, which enabled further funding to be secured from the CPCA and Highways England. Whilst these schemes are aiming to bring significant change to the towns, the Council believes that we can do more and is looking to partner with suitably qualified and experienced regeneration specialists.
- 1.3 C&C are property developers based in Manchester and responsible for some of the most innovative and exciting new developments in the City, as well as developments under way in Stockport, Stoke-on Trent and Newcastle under Lyme. They are experienced in an engagement led design/development approach, and work regularly with Homes England to secure funding and investment. A particular characteristic of C&C is that once construction and fit out of a development has been completed, they continue to manage the development, as owners, to ensure it remains successful in terms of end user experience and satisfaction. C&C believe in creating sustainable change not just in the communities they create but also in the areas that they work in. They consider themselves to be a Social Value Developer, examples of this are a homeless initiative called Embassy Village that supports vulnerable individuals with homes and wraparound support, a further example is the Regeneration Brainery a mentoring programme to support young people from disadvantaged and diverse backgrounds and have helped over 5,000 people to date. This approach also enables them to bring forward innovative approaches to securing economic outcomes for example supporting community cafes, pop-up food outlets, and loss-leading approaches where they deliver place benefits and outcomes.
- 1.4 The C&C approach, whereby they retain ownership and management of developments once completed has a significant positive impact for the Council in terms of both financial and operational risk:
 - The model requires only short-term financing by the Council, rather than long term borrowing. This reduces interest costs from c.40 years to 2-3 years; this model reduces potential exposure for the Council in respect of funding and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) exposure. Additionally, this model reduces end risks relating to future ownership of the completed development, as the asset would transfer ownership once complete.
 - The model shifts the ongoing risk of maintaining occupancy of the finished development away from the Council and onto the operator.

- 1.5 Further information on this proposal from C&C is included as an appendix at the end of this report. At this stage it is not possible to advise on particular sites or specific opportunities (and in any event this would need to be treated with commercial confidentiality in mind), save to say that Officers and C&C have identified a number of potential locations within our Market Towns.
- 1.6 Officers have undertaken a significant degree of due diligence overtime since first connecting with C&C. This has included Officer and Member visits to their offices and existing schemes; statutory Officer engagement with counterparts at other Councils working with C&C; and consideration of initial proposals for a series of identified sites. Member feedback has been positive. Officers also note that Homes England see C&C as a credible partner, and have recently appointed them on the town centre proposals for Northstowe. We are also aware that C&C are in discussions with other Councils within our region.

2. ANALYSIS

- 2.1 This is a new project that Officers are proposing should be taken forward. The potential to further demonstrate place leadership through a combination of 'do, enable and influence' in respect of regeneration projects in our Market Towns would align with our Corporate Plan aims; Place Strategy; and would serve as an extension of the established Market Towns Programme. Significantly, such opportunities would have the potential to create jobs, secure investment, provide homes, revitalise parts of our towns, and create new places that our communities and businesses can be proud of. There are various opportunities within our Town Centres which represent potential chances to address the current and historic challenges they have faced and bring forward investment.
- 2.2 A series of initial proposals have been identified and worked up in concept to demonstrate credibility. Officers consider that these should be developed further based on the RIBA approach and Gateway approach set out by C&C. This does not necessarily mean that the Council is committed to taking forward any or all of the sites at this stage, that will be subject for later decisions. It does not also rule in or out any other opportunities, and Officers consider it would be appropriate for Members to consider supporting the principle of the Council looking at further asset acquisitions (where appropriate) where they would support regeneration potential or be of benefit to identified sites. It should also be noted that C&C have advised that they would be in a position to support such acquisitions, or indeed work alongside the Council to secure any identified land or buildings themselves where it would be of benefit to the parties and the project aims – their experience and network in this space is also considered to be a benefit.
- 2.3 Officers are confident that the model proposed by C&C is a good fit with the Councils objectives as set out within the Corporate Plan and Place Strategy. We are also heartened to note that C&C have been appointed by Homes England within the region, to bring forward development at Northstowe.

- 2.4 We note that C&C want to work with the Council as a partner of choice due to the alignment between our Place Strategy objectives, and C&C's own strategic aims. They are also keen to work with us as an ambitious, pro-growth location, and see the potential to unlock some of the challenges faced by our Market Towns. This is demonstrated by their continued dialogue with us over a period of many months, their responsiveness to questions and queries, and ability to provide answers and solutions to challenges we have posed.
- 2.5 C&C are committed to engagement, and understanding of the challenges faced by regeneration schemes in urban contexts – particularly those involving town centres. Examples include the inclusion of social spaces within developments, or the provision of makers-markets or 'loss leading' uses that are necessary to ensure creation of high quality places and delivering beneficial outcomes such as jobs and local spend. This is a good fit with the Councils preferred approach to development. They are also experienced in looking at challenging or difficult sites; with a flexible and solution-focused outlook.
- 2.6 It is considered that their ability to deliver at scale, at pace, and to a high standard, are all positive traits which are exemplified by their track record. They place a significant emphasis on creation of place, and seeking to ensure vibrant and active schemes; that are shaped by the community and create new places people want to be.
- 2.7 The Council has considered the procurement route for this project, and have identified a pathway which allows us to work with them in a compliant way. Initially this will be via a Direct Award from the Bloom Framework to enable proposals to be worked up to more detailed business cases. This is with a view to a future approval via the Pagabo Framework in 2026 (C&C are not on the Pagabo framework in our area - although they are for other parts of the Country). They expect to be on Pagabo in our area in 2026.
- 2.8 Whilst the C&C model envisages taking developments through to completion and then purchasing the completed development and assuming the lead role in managing the operation of the development, as with all developments, there are a series of gateways through which schemes must pass to assure their viability.
- 2.9 These are based upon agreements through the Bloom and Pagabo Framework and once each stage is complete a subsequent agreement is signed for the next stage of the project development:
- Once feasibility is assessed then a new agreement to take the scheme up to planning permission and a cost envelope are obtained.
 - Upon receipt of planning permission, the final construction drawings are produced, and a contract sum is agreed.
 - Construction will then commence to an agreed plan / design and cost.

- 2.3 At this stage, the commitment to C&C extends only to Stage 1 after which the Council would need to take a formal decision to progress to Stage 2 and incur the expenses for full planning drawings and submission to gather planning approval and new target cost. The final decision on whether or not to commit to borrow and develop is then taken before the final Stage 3.
- 2.4 A critical part of this final stage would be determining which of the elements would remain in Council ownership, and which would be bought by C&C. Critically, the model which involves C&C purchasing the end development is highly significant in terms of the Council's approach to funding potential schemes. This helps to reduce risk exposure both in terms of the necessary financial implications, but also in securing an end owner of the asset. Thus it helps to mitigate some of the traditional challenges with Council-led regeneration projects. It is considered that based on the due diligence to date, C&C are a credible partner, and this is reinforced by their recent appointment by Homes England in the region. Throughout, the Council and C&C would also work to leverage other funding opportunities through bodies such as Homes England where this would be of benefit to specific projects

As a result of the above, it is recommended that a series of in principle decisions are made to enable further, more detailed work to be undertaken, with a view to creating a more formalised partnership with C&C and to actively pursue development opportunities.

3. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 3.1 The comments of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel will be included in this section prior to its consideration by the Cabinet.

4. KEY IMPACTS / RISKS

- 4.1 It will be necessary for the Council to consider the risks at each relevant stage of the project and to monitor them on a regular basis. A thorough Risk Assessment will be undertaken for the project and this will be included as part of the next update on the scheme.
- 4.2 On a high level basis, there are no significant risks which cannot be managed or mitigated which would in turn pose a concern in relation to the recommendations of this report.

5. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND/OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

- 5.1 The delivery of Regeneration Schemes is aligned with "Priority 2 Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations through Forward Thinking Economic Growth and Improving Housing" it is expected that these schemes will not only drive economic benefits for the District but will

support the Council's aim of increasing housing supply and support our key performance indicators in number of homes delivered.

- 5.2 The delivery of this project will also support the Council's Place Strategy, specifically the Pride in Place and Inclusive Economy journeys through the regeneration of our Market Towns and the delivery of new homes. It will also support the Council's Housing Strategy in the delivery of both market and affordable housing and the Economic Growth Strategy by encouraging new businesses into the area and supporting existing companies to thrive.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 This project will contain multiple elements where legal advice and guidance is required as part of delivery. Officers have appointed Devello Group to support the Council's Legal team to ensure appropriate legal oversight and advice is provided when relevant including the appointment of specialist to support the Council's decision making.

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 This project will be resourced by the Council's Regeneration Team, with support from the Corporate Director of Place and Corporate Director of Finance and Resources (S151). As and when required other specialist consultants including legal and property professionals will be required to support decision making.
- 7.2 The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources (S151) has confirmed that they are in agreement with the use of reserves to fund the initial work identified, with recognition that future decisions will be required once detailed business cases are available. These can be appraised on a case by case basis. Further, there is recognition that if projects are taken forward, they can be built in to the Council's Capital Programme at the appropriate time through budget setting etc.

8. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 8.1 The delivery of this project will support the Council's aims under the Priority 2 of the Corporate Plan, as well as wider objectives as set out in the report.

9. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 – Capital and Centric additional information

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

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HUNTINGDONSHIRE BUSINESS CASE.

CAPITAL&CENTRIC

WE ARE SOCIAL MISSION DEVELOPERS

INTRODUCTION.

Huntingdonshire District Council ('HDC') are looking to appoint Capital&Centric ('C&C') as development partner to bring forward place making regeneration in the towns of Huntingdon, St Ives and St Neotts.

The redevelopment of the towns provides an incredible opportunity to act as a catalyst for, and a symbol of the region's renaissance.

Like all towns across the UK, all three have seen a decline in their high street and a shift in population demographics caused by several key issues including internet shopping, Covid and high inflation. The impact of these seismic macroeconomic changes has not been as devastating in St Ives, St Neotts and Huntingdon as other towns across the UK, but it has still led to empty retail units, a lack of quality operators and a reduction in footfall leading to a need to make a change. There has also been a lack of quality development in the towns themselves which has led to a failure to attract young graduates and economically active people who will form the next waves of long terms residents in the towns.

The developments Capital&Centric bring forward will be pivotal in the resurgence of the town centres, providing a mix of uses, all tied together by new verdant public spaces. Anchored by aspirational residential accommodation and an independent led commercial offer, the proposals will extend the towns appeal as a place to live and visit, creating jobs and supporting local businesses.

Further still, our plans will make a new market in all three towns, proving that developments of this nature can be delivered in regional market towns, which will unlock inward investment and bring forward the development of other key sites.

Through our focus on award winning architecture and community curation, we will widen the demographic of the town centres, drawing in graduates and young professionals who are currently leaving the towns and choosing not to settle there. With a focus on luring highly skilled and educated workers from the Oxford Cambridge tech corridor, we will create homes and active ground floors full of market leading operators that will bring this new wave of resident into the towns.

By bringing national press coverage to the area, we will raise the profile and bring new visitors, and lure back existing residents, raising the discretionary spend and bolstering the economy.



INTRODUCTION.

As with all C&C developments, our focus on social impact will ensure that we leave a lasting positive legacy for the people of St Ives, St Neotts and Huntingdon.

C&C have a proven track record of delivering market leading and multi award winning regeneration projects, creating places people want to live, work and play, the detail of which can be found in the corporate track record document in appendix A which is appended to this document.

The Business Plan aims to address three key points which are as follows:

- **Why is the development needed?**
- **How would the proposed development address these needs?**
- **How do we deliver the project**



THE OPPORTUNITY.

WHY IS THE DEVELOPMENT NEEDED?

C&C have for some time been conscious that, unlike core locations such as central Manchester, Birmingham and London, smaller towns and cities struggle to attract developers and funders willing to deliver high quality, high density urban homes. Part of the reason for this is that often the economics simply do not always work. However, there is also a perception, particularly from London or internationally based funds, that they don't want to invest in smaller market towns as they don't understand the market or see how they will obtain critical mass, and hence do not see them as attractive a place to invest in.

However, Huntingdonshire is a region with so many positives, including existing affluence, wonderful towns and villages and great connectivity to London and surrounding cities like Peterborough and Cambridge. It is perfectly placed to capitalise on these assets to maximise the potential of the towns and wider region.

Town centres are going through rapid change, large retail footprints are no longer required, and this is a trend that is not going to be reversed. In light of this, traditional town centres need to find a new purpose, and they need to find ways of encouraging residents back into them in order to support remaining and new retailers, but also to support the switch to leisure and cultural offerings.

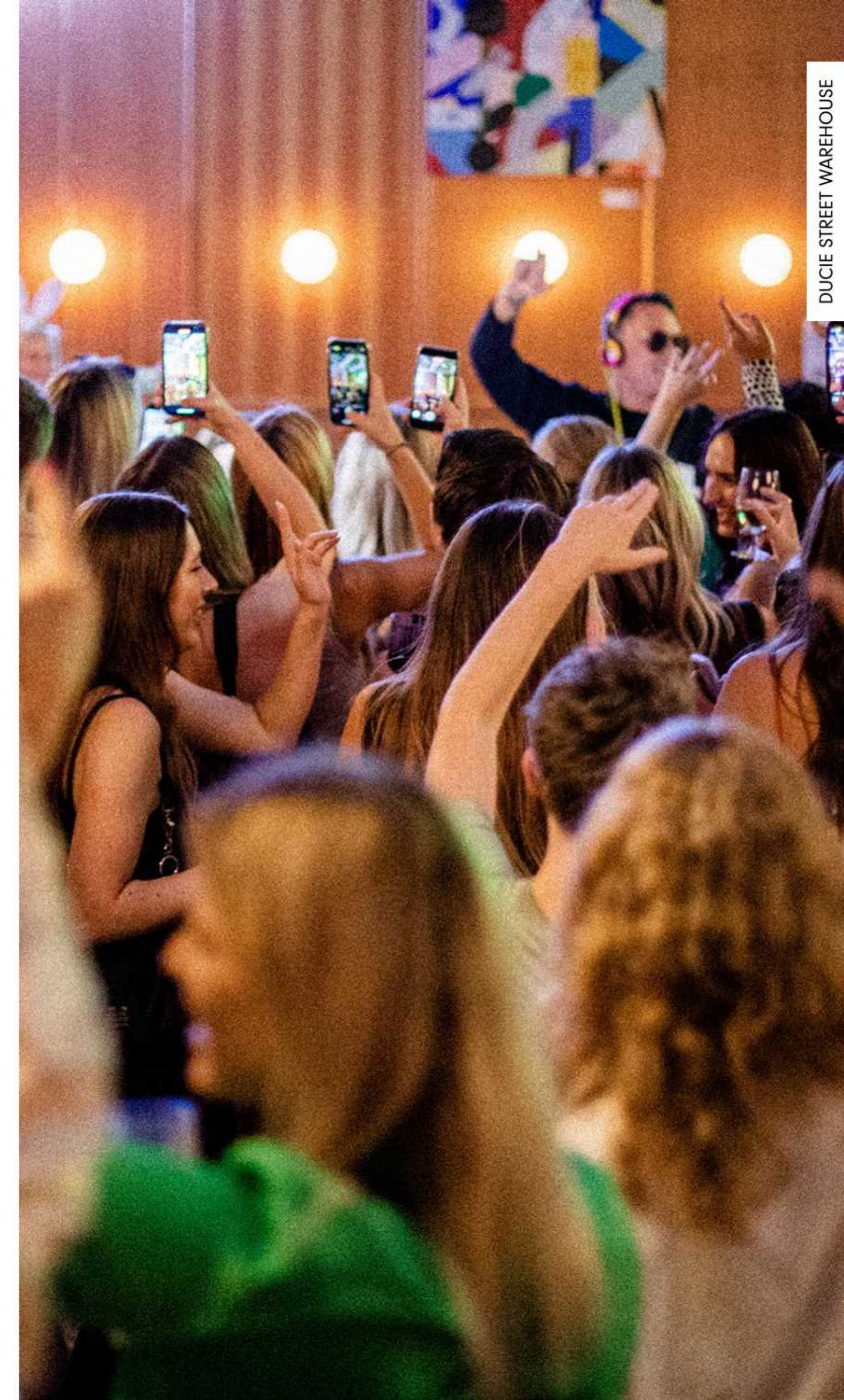
Progressive towns and cities are driving policies forward that deliver homes and businesses right back into the heart of these centres. It will be the increased footfall and dwell time both during the daytime and evening that results from these policies, that will underpin the future of their traditional hearts, securing the amenities that we need from our built-up areas.

We need to provide a mix of tenure in our towns and in Huntingdon, St Ives and St Neotts' case, this should also include a high-quality rental product. People are marrying and often buying homes later in life. The average age of a first-time buyer in the UK is now 34 years old, which is 4 years older than in 2018. Market towns such as these need to accommodate this demographic and attract them to start off their adult lives in the town itself, instead of perhaps for example being tempted to move to Cambridge or Peterborough.

It's harder to attract these higher earners back to towns such as these three once they have already settled down and put down roots in other parts of the region or UK. Providing great quality rental accommodation will hopefully encourage a lot of residents to stay within the urban area, and in the coming years move to owner occupier developments and houses in the immediate surrounding areas. It will also encourage those with jobs in Cambridge and the wider tech corridor to move to and put down roots in the region.

Each year thousands of graduates from Cambridge University and other academic institutions make a decision as to where to put down their roots, and our plan is to give them a reason to choose to do so in either St Ives, St Neotts or Huntingdon town centres. With each town bringing something a bit different, it provides the perfect opportunity to deliver a range of schemes that will appeal to a variety of people.

According to the Office of National Statistics (ONS) over the last ten years, Huntingdonshire has seen an increase of 27.9% in the 65-74 age demographic bracket, and a decrease of 7.4% in those aged between 35-49. Developments of this nature and calibre, will be instrumental in rebalancing this demographic shift and securing the long-term future of the region.



THE DESIGN APPROACH.

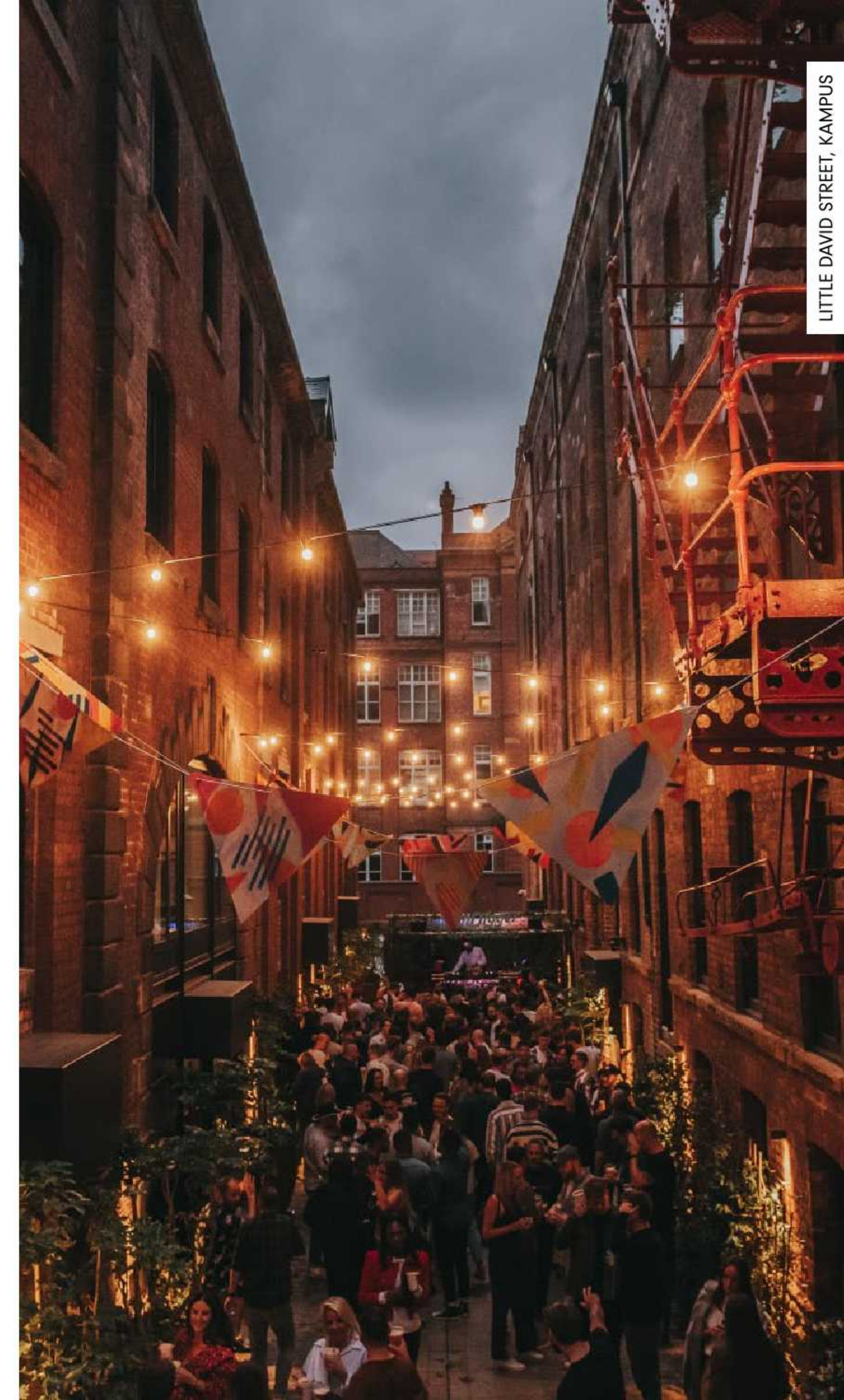
The key to this development is quality and appropriateness. Many towns and cities have been ruined by inappropriate and cheap development which, whilst it provides an initial buzz, quickly leaves the place in no better position, in fact arguably worse as poor quality buildings stand for decades to come.

This is particularly the case with the fractional overseas investor led residential model which, by its very structure, encourages extensive value engineering once the homes are sold, meaning the scheme delivered is far poorer quality than the original proposals. Then once complete, as landlords never actually visit the asset, they tend not to be managed as well, and so visually deteriorate over time.

However, our approach is wholly different, and we want to ensure that these developments stand for decades to come as a testament to what high quality development can do for a town, so the fractional sales model is something we will never employ. Every residential development we deliver, will either be exclusively for sale to owner occupiers, or institutional Build to Rent which we will retain ownership and control over, ensuring they're well maintained long into the future.

All three towns have amazing historic assets and are all very attractive market towns. Our plans will be sympathetic to the towns history while also meeting our brief of aspirational, award-winning architecture. We hold a core principle that all public realms should be as well designed and delivered as the private realm, and this equality of design extends geographically too, so that any development we deliver in Huntingdonshire is of exactly the same calibre that we would deliver in Birmingham or Manchester city centre.

Placemaking is at the heart of everything we do, and through our in-house marketing and animation expertise, we'll ensure that not only do our developments look fantastic, but there's also always a new reason for people to come into the town centre to enjoy them.



LITTLE DAVID STREET, KEMP TOWN

OUR TRACK RECORD.

Of course, all of this is easy to talk about, it's the seeing it through that is more difficult. But we're doing this elsewhere on developments that are either completed or coming up to completion. We've appended a document in appendix A that summarises C&C's track record with photographs and images of what we're creating elsewhere.

At Tempest, we created Liverpool's first roof top garden for office workers in the city. Doubling as a bar and event space on warmer evenings, it also provides outdoor space for our office residents to enjoy free fitness classes or corporate cinema nights whilst the BBQ is cooking away in the background.

We also took the decision to invest our own money to fit out the top floor of the building as a co-working space for a charity, who previously hadn't expanded outside of London. As part of their operation, they provide 30% of their desks free of charge to people from disadvantaged backgrounds, in order to encourage a wider participation in start-ups. Out of this space, businesses have grown which are now worth over £800m, including the sportswear brand Castore.

At Crusader Mill, we made the bold decision to only sell the 201 loft apartments in that development to owner occupiers as we'd noticed that the majority of Rightmove adverts for the city at the time were excluding them in favour of investors. We did the exact opposite of the market, and as a result ended up with the first queue of buyers seen in the city for a decade, all waiting to acquire a unit in a building that wouldn't be ready for two years.

In order to achieve this, we realised that owner occupiers wouldn't be able to purchase an apartment off plan unless they were able

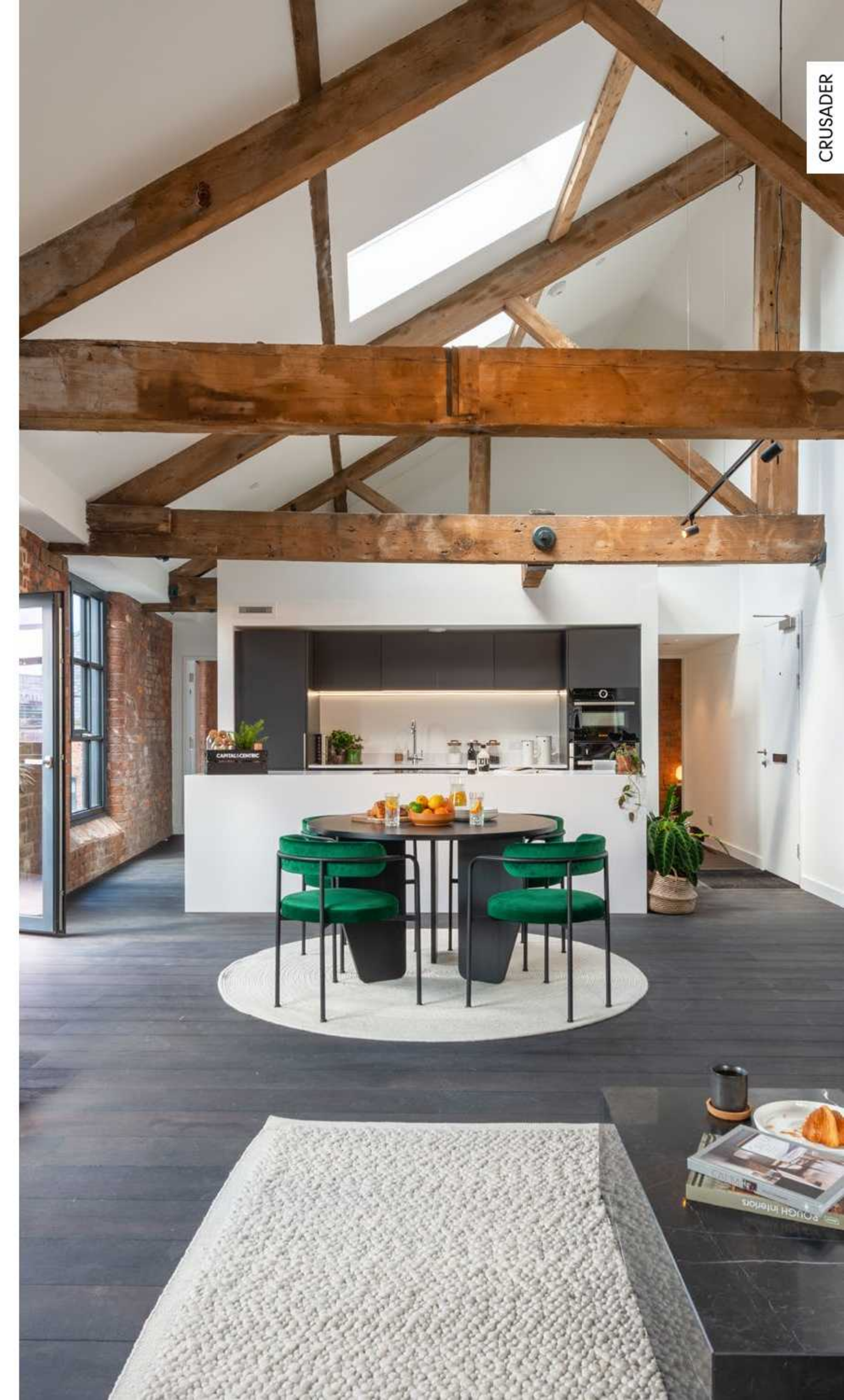
to view the finished product, so we created a full virtual reality experience in which potential purchasers could view the finished scheme, with its exposed brick walls and timber beams.

Character is an increasingly valuable commodity in a market where so many new build apartment buildings are so uniform, and so in addition to exposing as many original features as possible, we also wrote and produced a book which educated our purchasers about the 200-year history of the building they would be living in.

In order to keep our purchasers emotionally invested in their purchase we repurposed a bunch of 200-year-old keys which we found when clearing the building out, and had a metalsmith turn them into Crusader keyfobs which we gave to all our purchasers.

Again at Crusader, instead of following the crowd and filling the courtyard with car parking spaces (despite the majority of city centre residents not needing to own a car!), we decided to create a verdant courtyard garden. Far more sustainable and far more in tune with what people need today.

At Kampus, a 500+ unit Build To Rent development, our residents have the choice of new build, a 1960s conversion or old 1800s shipping warehouses to live in. But they also all share another lush garden which has palms, giant tree ferns and other exotic plants, creating a mature oasis in the heart of the city. We've also retained the old 1960s brutalist concrete security cabin next to the canal as a pop-up restaurant and event space. The commercial offer focuses on independent bars, restaurants and bakeries making it destination that attracts visitors from throughout Manchester and further afield as well as providing amazing amenities for the residents.



RAISING THE PROFILE.

Consistently, our communities have featured in national media 'best places to live' guides, with our developments often seen as an anchor in the renaissance of a town or up-and-coming area. Our ability to play this catalytic role and put the national spotlight on local regeneration ambitions is a major strength.

Take our work in Sheffield, where we convinced an internationally renowned production company and Channel 4 to base their new primetime interior design show, despite previously considering other cities. The design series 'The Big Interiors Battle' aired in Spring 2023 and shone a spotlight on the historic Eyewitness Works and contestants got involved with local charities and small businesses as part of their weekly design challenges. All in all, it showed Sheffield as a vibrant place to build a life.

Our aim is to use the regeneration of these sites as a platform to shout about Huntingdonshire, further raising its profile, enabling the Council to secure greater support from central government, and draw in greater inward investment, thereby assisting the Council in achieving its regeneration objectives.

This type of development, and the funding structure which is laid out in this business case is a formula which has already been deployed to good effect in other towns. We have highlighted here two specific examples.



RELEVANT CASE STUDIES.

GOODS YARD, STOKE-ON-TRENT.

Goods Yard occupies a highly prominent location adjacent to Stoke-on-Trent Railway Station and the Trent & Mersey Canal in the heart of Stoke Town centre.

The development is a mixed-use scheme that will re-purpose a listed goods shed, and over one acre of brownfield land, to create a vibrant destination neighbourhood. The development comprises the following:

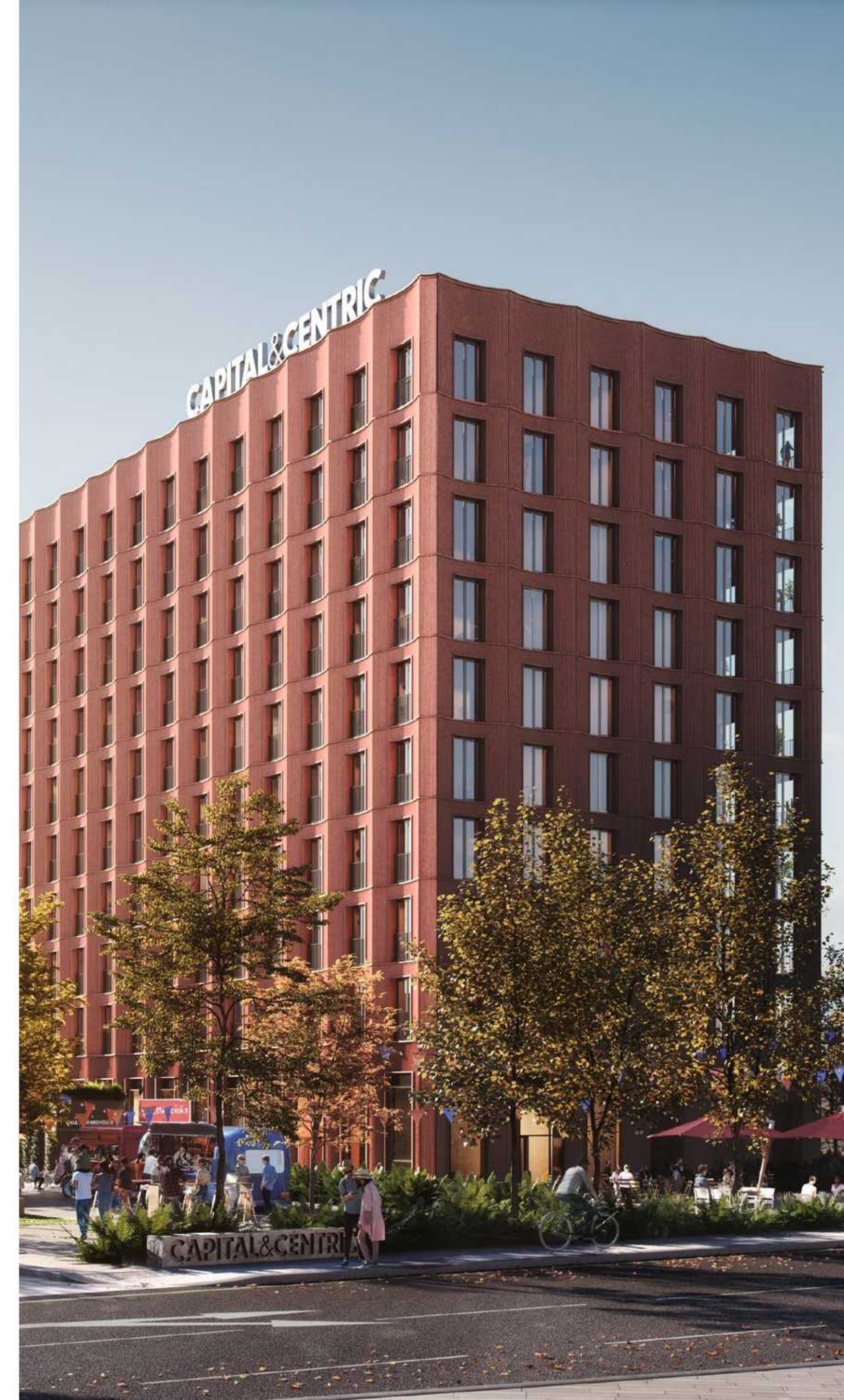
- **35,000sq.ft. of commercial and leisure space**
- **174 apartments**
- **20,000sq.ft. vaulted goods shed fronting onto the canal**
- **2,500sq.ft. signal box**
- **10,000sq.ft. new two-storey contemporary office building**
- **Half an acre of new public realm.**

Goods Yard will provide Stoke-on-Trent with an area they can be proud of, contributing to the enhancement of the local architecture, as well as creating a neighbourhood with real identity, one that nods to the city's rich heritage but writes a new, exciting chapter. A genuine community will be created with everything available to support a city centre lifestyle.

People calling the Goods Yard home will have shops, bars, cafes, businesses, and green outdoor spaces to meet up on their doorstep. The Goods Yard is a strategic priority for Stoke-on-Trent City Council, and accordingly the project was awarded £16m of levelling up funding in 2022.

As a result of this grant funding support, C&C is able to deliver a premium product which incorporates an industrial feel to apartments with exposed concrete soffits and exposed services, providing a 'New York loft' feel interior with generous floor to ceiling heights. The design of the Build To Rent building incorporates a strong historic link to Stoke-on-Trent's pottery heritage, from both an internal and external architectural perspective.

The development secured planning approval in April 2022, and construction began in September 2022, with Bowmer and Kirkland appointed to deliver the whole development under a JCT Design & Build contract.



RELEVANT CASE STUDIES.

WEIR MILL, STOCKPORT.

Weir Mill is a two-and-a-half acre site at the heart of Stockport town centre, home to a complex of dilapidated mill buildings and dissected by a Grade I listed railway viaduct. The site fronts onto the River Mersey and is just a two-minute walk to Stockport Interchange, which is on the direct West Coast Mainline between Manchester and London Euston. The buildings offer stunning original features, such as brick vault arches, cast-iron columns, and a vast expanse of bare brick, while the ground floor spills out directly onto the waterside. It is bounded to the west by the iconic brick viaduct – a truly prominent and iconic site for the town.

C&C is securing a future for the two historic textile mills, creating a new chapter in their story, and delivering 253 design-led new homes. The project will feature a mix of one, two and three-bedroom apartments across the mill conversion and new build block, providing real choice and diversity of product. Weir Mill will boast a tenants' lounge and private dining space, which will spill out onto a rooftop terrace, with such high-end amenity adding further significant value to each apartment.

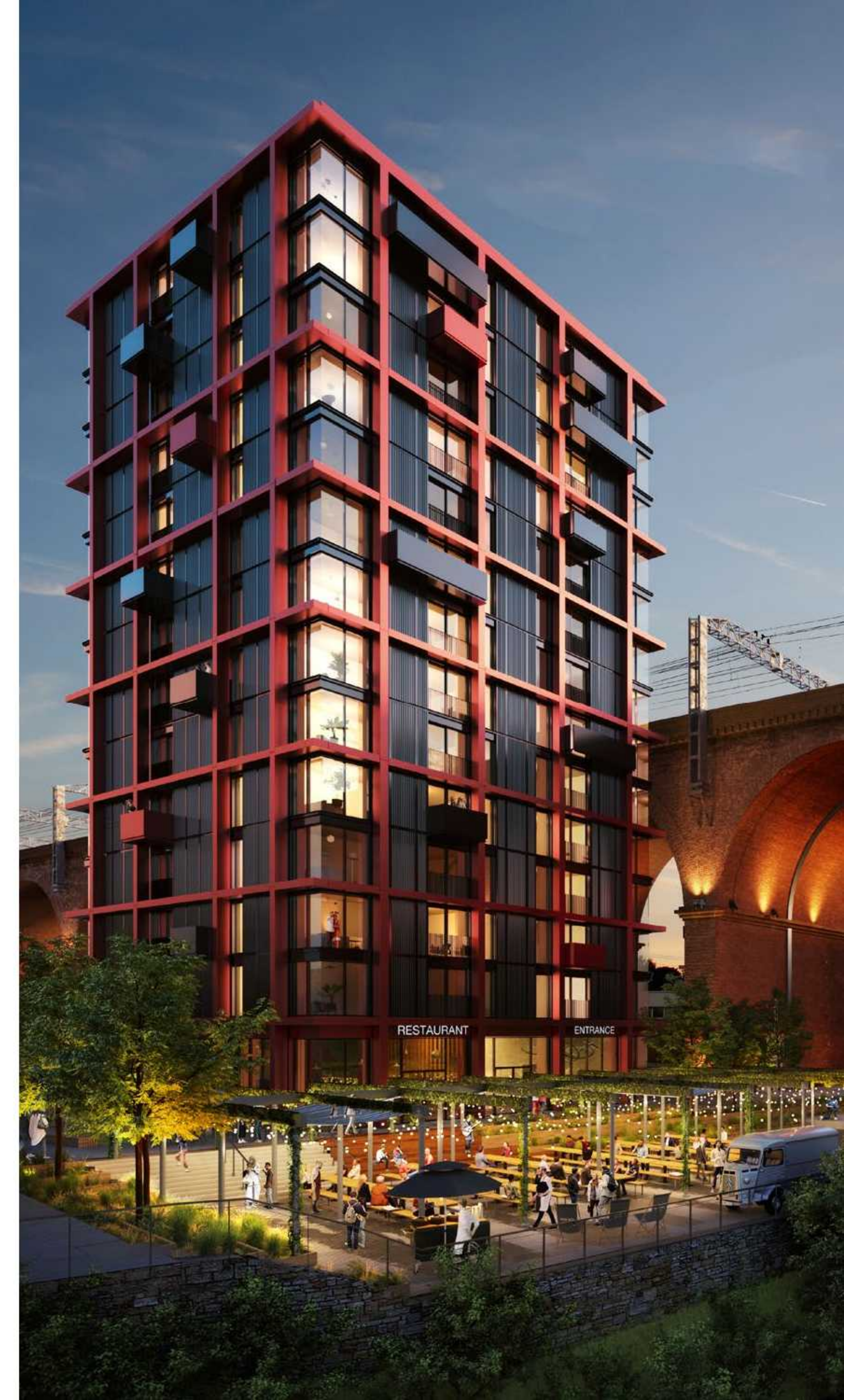
At ground level there will be 25,000sq.ft. of retail and leisure space, set around expansive public realm extending down onto the waterfront, which will be filled with the best local independents. C&C have already been approached by fantastic local companies who want to ensure they get in early. The public realm extends to over 60,000sq.ft. across three distinct areas:

- **Weavers Square, an animated public space that will house makers markets and other events to draw people into the neighbourhood**
- **Several large outdoor performance spaces underneath the viaduct arch, which will play host to live music and theatre**
- **A more intimate courtyard, with mature landscaping and secluded seating, offering residents a sheltered space away from the bustling Weavers Square.**

Weir Mill is a strategic priority for both the local authority, and also Homes England and GMCA who have collectively provided over £10m of grant funding.

The development secured planning approval in October 2021, and construction began in May 2022, with John Sisk and Son appointed to deliver the whole development under a JCT Design & Build contract.

Both the Goods Yard and Weir Mill are particularly relevant to Spode, as Capital&Centric has demonstrated expertise in revitalising large heritage assets. Through the restoration of these historic sites, they have been transformed into vibrant mixed-use developments, seamlessly blending residential, commercial, and community spaces. This approach not only preserves the character of these historic landmarks but also fosters regenerative placemaking, creating dynamic, sustainable environments that enhance the surrounding area, which is the fundamental objective of the Spode development.



HOW WE DELIVER.

Our vision is to create a development that compliments the surrounding area and integrates the surrounding historic assets and market town feel with phenomenal new buildings that change people's perceptions of the area. This is an exceptional opportunity to bring forward several transformational residential offers with vibrant, active and placemaking commercial space.

Through the proposed works we want to achieve the following:

- Page 177
- **Celebrate the existing assets in the towns including rivers, parks and heritage assets**
 - **Provide verdant landscaping within the town centres.**
 - **Develop exceptional architecture that changes perceptions of the market towns.**
 - **Bring new independent F&B operators into the towns and create a symbol of the resurgence of Huntingdonshire, as a place which is creating an aspirational future.**
 - **Provide a market leading F&B offer of independent operators to drive new visitors and capture additional discretionary spend.**
 - **Create an industry leading Built To Rent product, which not only draws institutional focus to the area, but also helps in reversing the brain drain and attracting young professionals and graduates into the towns.**
 - **Create public spaces for local residents to enjoy.**

We envisage the development in all three towns being brought forward in two stages:

STAGE 1- PLANNING APPROVAL.

This stage involves creating a masterplan for the three sites taking the design to RIBA Stage 3 and a business plan for each. The two gateways are the submission of a pre-planning application followed by the second gateway of submission of a full planning application. We propose that to deliver this stage C&C will be appointed as development manager under the Bloom Framework as detailed later in this business case.

STAGE 2- PROJECT DELIVERY.

Design development for each of the three sites, through RIBA stage 4 to a fixed price building contract and project delivery. The stage involves three gateways, securing a fixed price building contract, practical completion of the projects and the project launch period prior to disposal.

FINANCIAL STRUCTURE.

We all acknowledge that there are financial challenges here as values in town centres in Huntingdonshire are generally lower than those of larger more established cities, despite building costs being broadly comparable.

The parties acknowledge therefore that innovative funding structures are needed with local government support, to overcome the lack of confidence from traditional funders. This also provides the comparable evidence that will allow future developments to obtain funding more easily.



HOW WE DELIVER.

The structure proposed here is for HDC to provide funding to allow C&C to develop the design to planning prior to appointing C&C as developer under a development agreement to further develop the design and deliver the projects.

SECURITY.

In all scenarios, HDC will have reliance on all work undertaken via collateral warranties and full control of the expenditure through a series of Gateways.

COSTS AND GATEWAYS.

All projects will be split into five key stages with a gateway at the end of each stage to enable HDC to review the status of the project and approve progression to the next stage.

This business case covers the work to the end of Gateway 2, the submission of a planning application. A full breakdown of all costs up to RIBA Stage 3 is summarised below.

The costs detailed below are a budget to be controlled by HBC to bring forward the design and planning application.

Gateway	Stage Description	Total
Gateway 1	RIBA Stage 1 Concept design	£1,000,000
Gateway 2	RIBA Stage 2 Planning design & submission	£1,000,000
Total		£2,000,000



HOW WE DELIVER.

GATEWAY 1 - CONCEPT DESIGN.

This includes the initial conceptual design work which reflects RIBA stage 1 and 2. Other costs including surveys, site investigations and a placemaking event. The output from this stage will be the submission of a pre-planning application.

GATEWAY 2 - PLANNING.

The planning stage allows the development of the detailed planning design of RIBA stage 3. During this stage the concept design will be developed to allow submission of a planning application.

GATEWAY 3 - DETAILED DESIGN AND PROCUREMENT.

This stage sees the development of detailed design including RIBA stage 4 to develop sufficient information to allow procurement of a fixed price design and build contract. The output at the end of the stage will be the completion of the Stage 4 design and the procurement of a main contractor.

GATEWAY 4 - PROJECT DELIVERY.

This stage is the delivery of the project following the appointment of the main contractor. It will see the development of the RIBA stage 5 design and the completion of the project ready for launch and occupation.

GATEWAY 5 - PROJECT LAUNCH.

The project launch period occurs following completion of the development until the project is stabilised, whereby 95% of the residential units are occupied and 50% of the commercial units. This will facilitate the acquisition of the scheme by the core fund.



THE PROPOSALS.

COUNCIL CONTROLS.

HDC would have complete control over the process and C&C will be required to pass through clear gateways before we can progress to the next stage. How those controls are managed and reported on is bespoke to the council, but we envisage the following measures will be put in place:

1. GATEWAYS.

We have shown two key Gateways under the appointment. These are key points in the project where C&C cannot continue to progress work until they have received formal approval from HDC that they are satisfied with the work completed. The gateways are explained in more detail earlier in this business case.

2. PROJECT BOARD.

We would look to set up a project board which would have key members of HDC team and progress would be reported on a regular basis to suit the council. Key decisions and progress would be reported.

3. WORKING GROUP.

C&C will work autonomous but would look to have in place a working group of relevant officers who would be able to input into the scheme and be provided with an update and an opportunity to influence the development.

4. FINANCIAL REPORTING.

C&C would provide monthly update reports which would include financial reporting against the budget.

The purpose of the above measures is to ensure HDC have control over the outputs from the development and to ensure the councils objectives are met. The agreement entered between the parties will allow the council to stop or terminate works during the process if macro conditions change and they no longer wish to continue with the schemes.



THE PROGRAMME.

Assuming C&C are appointed by May 2025, we have assumed a 10-month programme to complete stage 1 and submit a planning application. The current programme is as follows:

Gateway	Start	End	Months
Gateway 1 - pre-ap	Aug 2025	Dec 2025	5
Gateway 2 - planning	Jan 2026	May 2026	5

STRATEGIC PLAN.

The plan is to develop a best-in-class placemaking development that re-energises the three towns with market leading animation to the ground floor that encourages local residents and new visitors into each town. This will be supported with high quality rental accommodation that rejuvenates the towns economies. It will be a prestigious address which will exceed market rents due to its reputation for high quality design, amenities, and location.

Our plans for the site will create ‘game changing schemes’ across Huntingdonshire that will set a new benchmark development in the region and drive the strategic growth of towns.

PLACEMAKING.

C&C will seek to partner with the best that the region has to offer to create a new destination in the town centres that will complement existing businesses and help attract more people to the towns.

The developments will maximise their potential and create a new commercial offer that will compete with those found in cities like Cambridge and Manchester.

A carefully considered management plan including events aimed at bringing amination to the sites and surrounding areas for the community and visitors to the towns, will ensure increased footfall to the area and catalyse the wider development and regeneration of Huntingdonshire.

ADVERTISING.

- **Full Strategy to be developed through design development and construction**
- **Marketing the schemes throughout the design phase to create a buzz – press releases, local interest, social media etc**
- **On-site branding showing the change to the region**
- **Meanwhile use**
- **Strategic partnerships – High quality local independent businesses**

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT.

C&C will provide a programme of Regeneration Brainery’s targeted primarily at the local schools and colleges of Huntingdonshire and the surrounding area. The Brainery will provide opportunities for children from disadvantaged and diverse backgrounds to engage in the built environment and be offered an insight into the various careers and opportunities it offers.

Once the scheme progresses, C&C and the chosen main contractor will work together to try and provide more opportunities for apprenticeships to local people. C&C and the chosen main contractor will engage in discussions with local charities and organisations to offer additional opportunities for people in the local area to get back into work.

We understand that the three projects need to be brought forward with the support of the local community. As such, we will undertake community engagement prior to submission of a pre-planning application and the planning submission. We will hold community events in each town and target a wide range of the local community to understand their concerns and gain their trust and support.

By selling the vision of what we are trying to bring to their towns, and listening to their feedback, we will deliver projects that change perceptions of each town. We will ensure the events are fun and accessible to all with food and drinks being provided to entice a wide range of residents who will all bring with them a unique take on our proposals.

SOCIAL VALUE.

Rather than sit on the side-lines and bemoan the lack of diversity in the property sector and access to careers for young people, we did something about it. We founded the Regeneration Brainery – a not for-profit academy to inspire a diverse generation of young adults into careers in the built environment.

Starting with in-school masterclasses which inspire those listening to attend our regular week-long intensive ‘brainery’ bootcamps; we then put all our ‘Brainees’ into a graduate club where they can benefit from mentor matchmaking and industry placements. What started as our passion project has blossomed into a major force in the industry with over 6,000 students across 5 major cities, with over 500 industry mentors actively involved. It’s non-stop for the team, with plans to expand into new locations including Huntingdonshire if C&C are appointed.

MEET SAMI.

Sami Mhar (18) is just one of the 6000+ young people who credit the Regeneration Brainery as being instrumental in their future. He knew the science and medicine path many of his classmates were taking wasn’t for him.

Attendance at a week-long Brainery fanned an initial flame to explore the sector. Whilst the hands-on tasks put him out of his comfort zone, the unparalleled access to industry experts through the week and subsequent networking events saw his determination to secure a job grow. He’s just secured and started a full-time apprenticeship with a land and property company, linked to a degree at the University of Salford. “You get out what you put in. I threw myself into the Brainery and I owe so much to it as a result” says Sami.

We will put on regular Regeneration Brainery bootcamps in Huntingdonshire to engage and inspire the next generation of property professionals. We will engage with local schools and visit them to conduct masterclasses which seek to inspire students who are currently disengaged with the education process. We’ll also be seeking to engage local community groups and other charities, to help establish links between students and employers, or from start-ups to angel investors for example. More detail on Regeneration Brainery is included in appendix D.

COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING.

This is a core ethos at C&C and carries through to how we deliver each of our developments.

In Manchester we funded the conversion of a former tour bus into a safe and secure bed for the night for the homeless and then went on to plan Embassy Village. A UK-first, the community planned for disused rail arches in Manchester city centre will provide safe, secure homes for homeless people.

Far beyond a warm bed, Embassy Village is currently being delivered on site and will provide a community hub, outdoor spaces and, crucially, the support and training needed to end the cycle of homelessness. It will provide long term support and structure to help those in need back into work.

We’re proud to have helped assemble some of the best in the business to work pro-bono to make our vision a reality. We helped secure a £3.5 million donation from the Moulding Foundation to fund the project, with construction on site and due to be completed soon.



SAMI MHAR

SOCIAL VALUE.

We don't shy away from bucking trends in order to create something special. We hit the headlines in 2017 when our first homes at Crusader Mill came to the market, where we made them just available to owner occupiers. It was an intentional move to help build a genuine community where people lived, built their lives and got to know the neighbours. It was the antithesis to the anything else on the market, where fractional ownership was creating barriers to community cohesion.

At the time, it was a bold move, and one that didn't come without risk. But we stuck to our guns and the results were worth it. Crusader Mill is now a place where residents chat on shared Whatsapp groups, hang out in the communal gardens, go on dog walks on their lunch breaks and even plan neighbourly mini breaks. Of their own accord, they've also formed groups to assist police in tackling anti-social behaviour and do ad hoc gardening in the green shared spaces.

At Kampus, The Bungalow – our brutalist village hall on stilts – has been given for free as a residency space to budding restaurateurs, breweries, and makers, as a city centre shop window for their business.

Elsewhere, we've given over our derelict sites for use as temporary bars and restaurants whilst we went through the planning process. On top of that, we've also capitalised on the generosity of a city.

During Covid-19 lockdowns, our former MOT garage on Manchester's Swan Street was used as a supplies depot, where over £500,000 worth of supplies were donated to local charities.

These things are not money-spinners, but something we see as our role in giving back.



KEY OBJECTIVES.

COMPETES WITH OTHER THRIVING REGIONS.

The Covid 19 Pandemic has had a significant impact on people's working lives in many cases providing greater freedom, with people spending far more time at home both socially and professionally, with flexible working being the norm.

This move sees people's proximity to the office becoming less important, being replaced with a desire for alternative living spaces with access to amenities and experiences which will be provided in these developments across St Ives, St Neotts and Huntingdon.

The commercial offering on the site will be focused on targeting quality, local independent businesses who will provide a city centre quality product. This will be targeted at town centre residents and those from the local surrounding area, giving people a reason to visit the towns and then stay and increase spending for the benefit of the wider local economy.

This new standard of accommodation will also help to retain Huntingdonshire's talent pool including graduates, that it would otherwise lose to competing local and national city centres and bring residents with a higher discretionary spend back to the town centres boosting the local economy.

PRIVATE SECTOR INVESTMENT.

The wider city centre masterplan will require a significant level of private sector investment. The current city centre rental market data does not support this level of investment, however that's only because there isn't an aspirational product on offer currently. These developments will exist to make a market, not to serve an existing one.

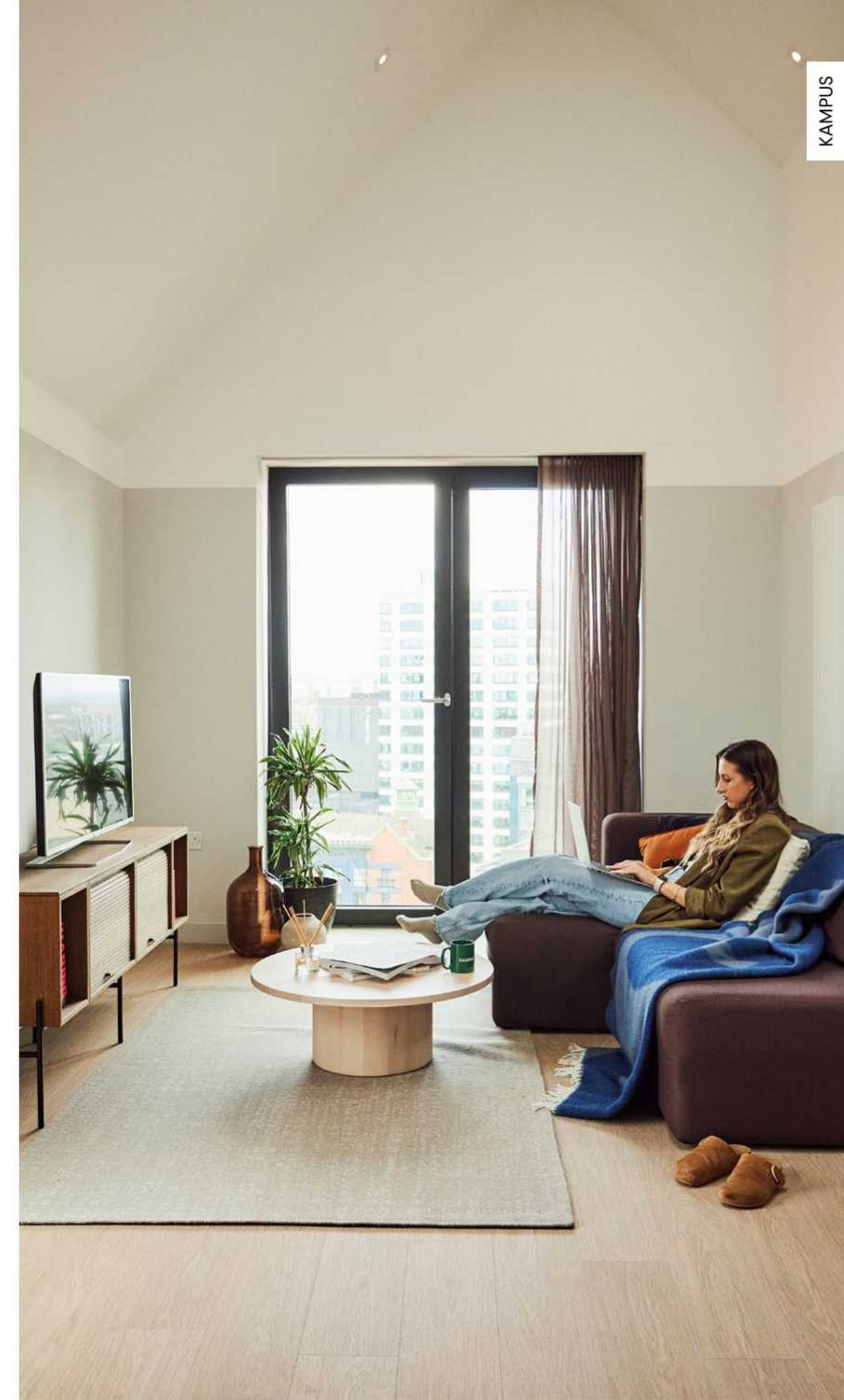
The strategic partnership between C&C and HDC, with support from other public sector bodies, enables the development of a scheme that would otherwise fail due to viability, with costs exceeding the investment value.

Once complete and stabilised, a development of this calibre will set a rental tone which will encourage further institutional investors into the local Built To Rent sector. In turn this will assist the council to access funds such as greater council tax and business rate revenue to support the wider regeneration of Huntingdonshire.

Furthermore, we believe that a market leading placemaking development will begin to bring further institutional interest to the region as others aspire to deliver developments of a similar nature. It will also provide homes and places to dwell for the new jobs created in the tech corridor and local region.

INCREASED REVENUE.

The delivery of over 300 homes and commercial space will increase the number of residents and businesses in Huntingdonshire, leading to increase discretionary spend in the region and more activity. More than that, the increase in residents and companies locating there will lead to an increase in council tax and business rate revenue for the council.



THE APPENDICES.

APPENDIX A - C&C TRACK RECORD



APPENDIX A.

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

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