

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Market Housing Mix

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Huntingdonshire
district council

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This document has been adopted by Huntingdonshire District Council as supplementary planning guidance to the adopted development plan for the area. A draft was issued for public consultation in May 2003, and this revised version was formally adopted by the Council's Cabinet at its meeting on 4 March 2004. Further details of the consultation process are contained in Appendix 1 of this document.

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PART A INTRODUCTION

1. Purpose of this document

- 1.1 Supplementary planning guidance (or 'SPG') is published by the District Council from time to time. Its purpose is to expand upon the guidance contained in the adopted development plan for the area. This SPG deals with the mix of dwelling sizes in new market housing developments. It contains important information for anyone contemplating residential development, and will be taken into account as a 'material consideration' when such proposals come to be assessed by the Council. The appropriate mix of affordable housing will continue to be determined on a site by site basis.
- 1.2 Supplementary planning guidance on this subject has been produced for two reasons:
- to address the requirement for more variety in the mix of property sizes in new developments, in accordance with the needs of the area.
 - to guide potential developers on how policies HL5 and HL10 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan Alteration may be interpreted and applied; these state that new housing should reflect the full range of the local community's needs and provide an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes and types.
- 1.3 The document is split into three parts. This introduction – Part A – continues with a brief overview of **recent trends** in dwelling completions, followed by a summary of the findings of the Huntingdonshire Housing Needs Survey 2003. It then identifies the **key objectives** that the SPG is seeking to achieve. Part B summarises the national, strategic and local **planning policies** that provide the context for the more specific guidance in this SPG. Part C then sets out the **planning guidance** for including an appropriate mix of housing in new developments. Part D provides **case studies** illustrating successful residential mix.

2. Recent trends

- 2.1 Table 1 below shows the proportion of properties completed in Huntingdonshire with one or two bedrooms since mid-1991. Although the proportion of one and two bedroom properties completed has fluctuated slightly from year to year, this tends not to be at the expense of properties with four or more bedrooms, which represent a fairly consistent 50% of Huntingdonshire's overall housing completions since mid-1991. In addition to market housing the figures include affordable housing completions which typically involve an above average proportion of smaller properties. The low proportion of smaller properties being built contrasts with a general trend towards decreasing average household size.

Table 1 One and two bedroom dwellings as a proportion of all completions

1991/92	1992/93	1993/94	1994/95	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99	1999/01	2001/02	2002/03
33%	29%	24%	21%	25%	13%	21%	18%	24%	28%	25%

Source: Cambridgeshire County Council

2.2 The proportion of properties completed with one or two bedrooms in Huntingdonshire has consistently been at a low level compared with other authorities in the county. There has been a marked difference between Huntingdonshire (average 23% 1991-2001) and the other rural districts of Fenland (47%), East Cambridgeshire (32%) and South Cambridgeshire (32%).



A recent successful scheme incorporating a mixture of dwelling sizes and types (Octavian Park, Papworth Everard).

2.3 The composition of the district's housing stock has changed significantly in the last 30 years. Although base populations and definitions vary slightly between censuses the increasing trend towards large properties is clear. The 1971 census gave 7% of the stock with 7 or more habitable rooms and by the 2001 census this had increased to 32%. This compares to 23% for the East of England and 26% for Cambridgeshire at the same date. These figures provide further evidence of the shift towards larger properties in Huntingdonshire.

2.4 The introduction of revised PPG3 in 2000 has resulted in significant increases in the density of development completed. However, this has most commonly been achieved by increasing the height and number of storeys of properties rather than through provision of a greater number of smaller properties.

3. Housing Needs Survey

3.1 A new Housing Needs Survey was conducted by Fordham Research for Huntingdonshire District Council in 2002. This provides a picture of the numbers and types of households who expected to move by 2007. Nearly 80% of respondents were existing owner occupiers whose future housing needs would predominantly be expected to be met within the private housing market.

3.2 The Housing Needs Survey considered the likely requirements for market priced housing and affordable housing for the period 2002 to 2007. The survey assessed both people's aspirations for housing and their expectations of what they might realistically obtain to indicate the level of effective demand. The results are aggregated to produce an indication of the level of housing sought. Table 2 below only reflects respondents whose intention is to move within or into private market housing, and indicates the balance of properties sought after existing supplies (of second-hand properties) have been taken into account. Respondents were asked to assess for themselves how many bedrooms they would need.

Table 2 Housing sought by sub-region (2002 to 2007)

Number of bedrooms	Quantity of market housing sought	% sought by dwelling size	Cumulative % sought by dwelling size
North and West Huntingdonshire			
One	794	34.2	34.2
Two	1300	56.0	90.2
Three	115	5.0	95.2
Four or more	112	4.8	100.0
Cambridge sub-region			
One	1536	43.0	43.0
Two	1012	28.3	71.3
Three	155	4.3	75.6
Four or more	872	24.4	100.0

Source: Housing Needs Survey

3.3 In North and West Huntingdonshire some 90% of the requirement which could not be met within the existing housing stock was for properties with one or two bedrooms. In the Cambridge sub-region over 70% of the requirement was for one and two bedroom properties. However, in this area nearly 25% of the requirement was for properties with four or more bedrooms.

3.4 Fordham also conducted a survey of local estate agents to gain a picture of the local housing market. This resulted in almost universal agreement that demand for housing outweighed supply throughout the district, and that there were particular shortages of homes for first time buyers. It is important to note that the present guidance is not targeted at the provision of entry level housing in particular. New build properties comprise only a small fraction of the housing market, and are generally much higher priced than the second hand one when dwellings of similar size are compared.



Huntingdonshire's towns and villages have traditionally contained a mix of large and small properties.

3.5 The intention of the SPG is, rather, to help increase the overall diversity of housing stock in the district, so that the range of properties built corresponds more closely to local housing requirements. It is over the long term that this approach is most likely to help meet the needs of first time buyers, once the initial premium value of new-build smaller properties has diminished.

4. Key Objectives

- 4.1 The promotion of more sustainable forms of development now lies at the heart of both national and local planning policies. A key aspect of this entails providing a mix of homes to meet the needs of the local community. The guidance contained in this SPG, and the development plan and government policies upon which it is based, reflect this overall aim.
- 4.2 In more specific terms this guidance seeks to promote a number of objectives:
- To increase the proportion of smaller properties coming forward through new development;
 - To provide a broad range of housing reflecting the economic and social needs of the district;
 - To make better and more efficient use of housing land.
- 4.3 This last point reflects the fact that incorporating a proportion of smaller units in new developments can also help to increase the density of new development, which is also a central aim of national and local policies.
- 4.4 The planning guidance set out in Part C indicates how these objectives will be pursued in relation to proposals for the development of new market dwellings throughout the district. The case studies in Part D provide some illustrations of how schemes can achieve a good mix of housing, efficient use of land and produce a high quality residential environment.

PART B POLICY CONTEXT

5. National and regional guidance

- 5.1 National planning policy guidance in relation to housing is set out in PPG3 *Housing* (March 2000). This makes clear that local planning authorities should plan to meet the housing requirements of the whole community. It states in paragraph 11 that they should plan to:

“...secure an appropriate mix of dwelling size, type and affordability in both new developments and conversions to meet the changing composition of households in their area in light of the likely assessed need”

- 5.2 It stresses that a community's need for a mix of housing types is a material consideration in deciding planning applications. The guidance emphasises the importance of having up to date assessments of local housing needs, and the role that a suitable mix of new dwellings plays in promoting balanced communities and limiting social exclusion.
- 5.3 Regional planning guidance is contained in RPG6 *Regional Planning Guidance for East Anglia to 2016* (November 2000). This notes that much of the additional housing developed in recent years has comprised larger detached properties, and makes clear that future housing development should contribute towards creating a better balance between housing supply and needs. It advises that development plans should include policies that enable an appropriate mix of dwelling types and sizes to be secured. The key policy (Policy 10) is reproduced in full in Appendix 2 of this SPG.

6. The development plan

- 6.1 The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Joint Structure Plan (2003) recognises the need for housing to meet locally identified needs. Policy P5/4 specifically identifies the need for provision of one and two bedroom homes. The Structure Plan acknowledges that a large proportion of newly formed households up to 2016 will comprise one or two people. It states that Local Planning Authorities will make every effort to provide for a higher proportion of one and two bedroom properties which will contribute to securing a better mix and choice of housing types and more varied urban forms at higher densities.
- 6.2 The Huntingdonshire Local Plan Alteration (December 2002) focuses on meeting housing needs in the district up to 2006. It emphasises the importance of good design and layout in all new housing developments and contains an explicit requirement to provide an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes, types and affordability. Policies HL5 and HL10 are set out in Appendix 2. This SPG intended to elaborate upon these policies.

PART C PLANNING GUIDANCE

7. How to use this guidance

- 7.1 This part of the guidance explains how developers of new housing can contribute towards achieving the District Council's policies of providing an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes and types which reflect the full range of the local community's needs. The first section below summarises the overall approach which the guidance employs. This is followed, in Section 9, by the criteria that can be used to implement this approach on specific sites. Finally, Section 10 provides additional advice on how individual development proposals will be assessed.
- 7.2 The guidance does not apply to proposals for affordable housing. However, where a development comprises a mixture of market priced and affordable housing the guidance will apply to the market priced element of the scheme. Affordable housing requirements on specific sites will be negotiated in relation to identified need in the settlement concerned.
- 7.3 If you are in any doubt about how these provisions should be interpreted on a particular site, you should contact one of our planning officers at the earliest stage possible. The telephone number and e-mail address can be found inside the front cover.

8. Overall approach

- 8.1 The Housing Needs Survey indicated that the area's housing requirement to 2007 would be dominated by households seeking one and two bedroom properties. Accordingly, this guidance seeks the provision of a significant proportion of one or two bed dwellings on new housing sites. New development can make an important contribution to meeting the unsatisfied requirement for smaller properties by starting to introduce a greater supply into the housing market. This will help to create wider choice in the market over time.
- 8.2 Bedroom numbers are used in this guidance as the easiest, most widely understood measure of dwelling size. Individual properties may vary considerably in terms of total floorspace, despite having the same number of bedrooms, according to the particular specification. This variation is welcomed as it is likely to contribute to increasing the choice of properties available. However, it is important that the scale and design of individual properties is appropriate to the character of the proposed site and its surroundings.
- 8.3 This guidance seeks to aid interpretation of what policy HL5 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan Alteration (2002) terms "an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes". New residential developments should aim to provide at least 40% of private market dwellings with one or two bedrooms. The provision of properties with four bedrooms or more should be limited, with at most 40% being considered appropriate for the needs of the district, and preferably less. It is not thought fitting to impose a more restrictive approach in North and West Huntingdonshire than the Cambridge sub-region as this could contribute to widening the variations in housing markets within the district and have an adverse impact on the viability of development in North and West Huntingdonshire.

- 8.4 During consultation on the draft version of this guidance concern was expressed by developers about the feasibility of integrating one and two bedroom properties onto small sites (less than 9 dwellings), especially in villages. Since 1991 typically 70% of dwellings completed on small sites in villages have had four or more bedrooms. However, the consultation also revealed strong support from parish councils for a high proportion of smaller properties to be built, even on infill sites for one and two dwellings. Examples of need cited included elderly people wishing to downsize into more manageable properties but retain their existing social networks, as well as young people wishing to establish separate households. Hence developers are urged to develop as high a proportion of small sites in villages with one and two bedroom properties as possible, in accordance with the guidance in Section 9.
- 8.5 When determining the number of dwelling units a site is capable of accommodating a minimum net density of at least 30 dwellings/hectare should be assumed unless there are site-specific material considerations which justify a lower density. The preferred dwelling mixes given in Section 9 are expressed as percentages of the total number of market dwellings on the site. Due to the obvious need to build complete dwelling units some flexibility will be necessary in designing schemes which achieve the preferred mix, particularly for infill and group scale housing sites. Other material considerations, for instance the impact on the appearance of a conservation area and site specific constraints, may justify some flexibility in the precise mix of dwellings appropriate to an individual site.

9. Appropriate mix of dwelling sizes

Infill sites

- 9.1 Infill development is defined in policy STR2 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan Alteration (2002) as the filling of an undeveloped plot in an otherwise built-up frontage by no more than two dwellings. It is recognised that percentage targets for housing mix are not appropriate on such sites due to the limited number of units involved and the importance of securing cohesive development proposals that respond to the character and context of the site.
- 9.2 However, developers are strongly encouraged to consider building as high a proportion of one or two bedroom properties as can be successfully integrated into the local environment. Where two or more dwellings are proposed every effort should be made to incorporate at least one dwelling with only one or two bedrooms, or at the very least a three bedroom home.



A rare example of a small scheme containing a mix of types and sizes of new homes, and contributing to the need for smaller properties (Oriel Court, St. Ives).

Housing groups and estates

9.1 Housing groups are defined in policy STR2 as a development of up to eight dwellings; exceptionally up to 15 dwellings may be permitted. Housing estates are the largest scale of development defined in policy STR2. Other than in exceptional circumstances their development is limited to Huntingdon, St Neots, St Ives, Ramsey/Bury, Godmanchester and Yaxley.

9.2 Any proposal for residential development in these categories should contribute to the supply of smaller dwellings by:

- Providing not less than 40% of all properties with one or two bedrooms
- Providing not less than 60% of all properties with one, two or three bedrooms

Appendix 3 contains a 'quick reference chart' showing the implications of this approach for sites of different sizes.

9.3 The Council encourages the provision of higher proportions of smaller homes than listed above and developers are recommended to aspire to schemes incorporating around 70% of properties with one, two or three bedrooms. This applies especially to housing estates which, because of their size, have the potential to contribute significantly to the community's need for a wider range of dwelling sizes and types.

10. Assessment of development proposals

10.1 The Council is keen to encourage innovative design and adaptable dwellings, which may mean alternatives to traditional layouts and built form. Clear annotation of bedroom numbers and proposed dwelling mix on planning applications will greatly assist the assessment of proposals. A schedule of the mix of unit sizes should be provided either on the plans or in an accompanying statement. Floor plans for properties indicating two or three bedrooms with three or more reception rooms will be carefully considered to see if they could reasonably be marketed as three or four bedroom dwellings respectively.



Innovative design can contribute to a diverse mix of dwellings and interesting, attractive places.

10.2 Since the revised PPG3 was issued in 2000 there has been a significant increase in the use of loft accommodation for habitable rooms to facilitate increased development density. For the avoidance of doubt loft accommodation which is made habitable by the incorporation of natural lighting and ventilation will be considered as a potential bedroom where two reception rooms are already provided.

10.3 A selection of case studies follows, illustrating schemes that successfully incorporate an appropriate dwelling mix within an acceptable urban design solution for their locations.

PART D CASE STUDIES

11. Mill View, Eaton Socon, St Neots

11.1 The Mill View development lies in a riverside setting by the lock at Eaton Socon next to the 19th century Rivermill. On land last occupied by a garden centre, Archstone Developments built five linked villas, seven townhouses and 11 apartments. The homes have large room sizes, home network cabling, and outdoor living areas in the form of balconies and patio areas and are designed to make the best of the views. The design of the new homes is sympathetic to the historic watermill, but not deferential, having very contemporary styling.

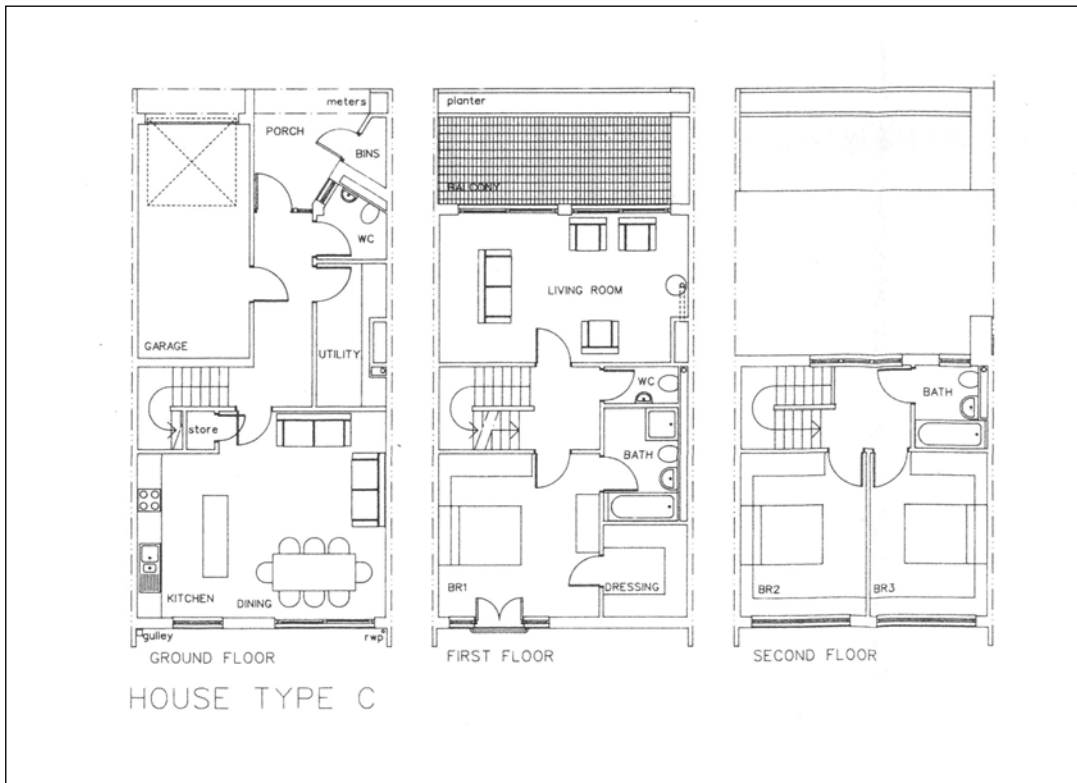
11.2 The development comprises:

- 11 x two bedroom apartments = 48%
- 7 x three bedroom houses = 30%
- 5 x four bedroom houses = 22%
- Total of 23 dwellings on 0.62 ha, the equivalent of 37 d/ha.

11.3 The floor plans below show how two bedroom properties can be incorporated into a high quality development providing a choice of two, three and four bedroom units. Either a garage or car port is provided for each property. The scheme was awarded 'Housing Development of the Year' by the Mail on Sunday.



First and second floor layout plans showing arrangement of two bedroom apartments



Layout plan showing arrangement of three bedroom, three storey town houses



Part of the award winning block of two bedroom apartments

12. Manor Farm, Yaxley

12.1 The proposed scheme comprises 161 dwellings of which 115 are private market properties and 46 are affordable homes. The 5.8ha site is former agricultural land enclosed on all sides by residential development. A significant area in the west of the site is of known archaeological importance on which development is not to take place resulting in a net developable area of 4.0 ha. This portion is to be used as a village green providing a useful community facility and contributing to the visual setting of Yaxley parish church. The scheme provides a mix of housing to complement that recently constructed at the Co-op farm site to the north of the Broadway in Yaxley.

12.2 The market element of the proposed development comprises:

- 49 x two bedroom houses/ maisonettes = 43%
- 27 x three bedroom houses = 24%
- 35 x four bedroom houses = 30%
- 4 x five bedroom houses = 3%

12.3 In addition there are 46 two and three bedroom affordable homes incorporated into the overall scheme. Thus, there is a total of 161 dwellings on 4.0 ha, the equivalent of 40 d/ha.



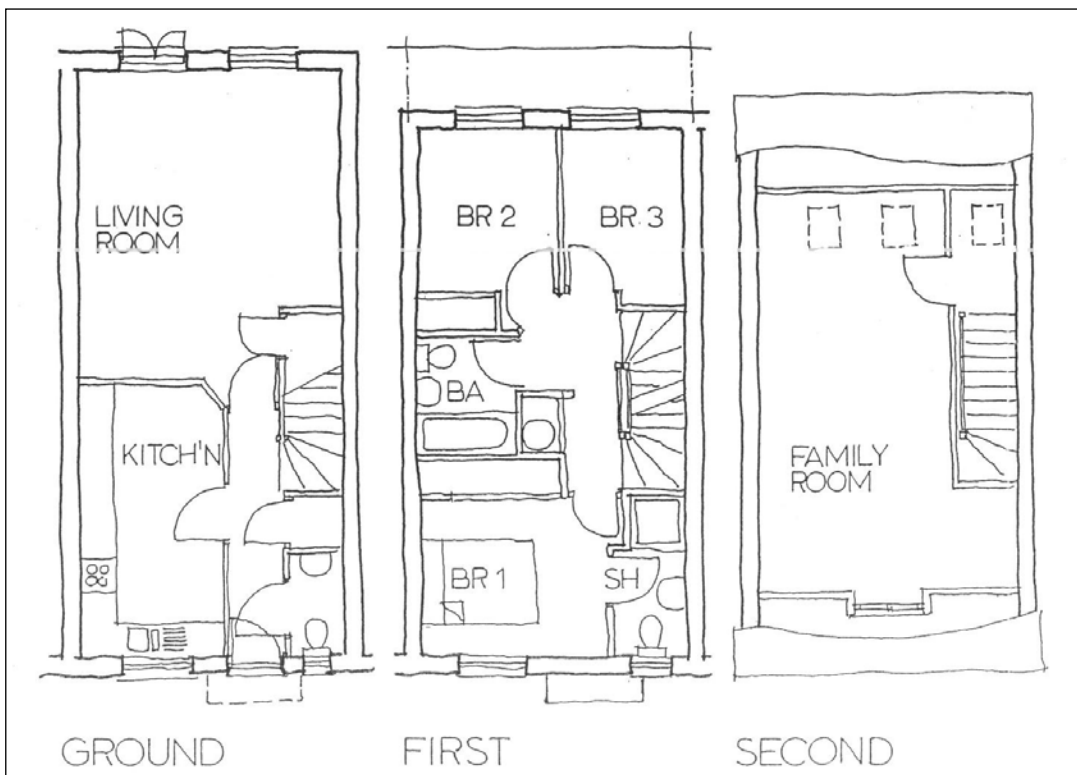
The above plan shows the overall layout of the proposed scheme incorporating 67% 1, 2 or 3 bedroom properties within the market housing area and clusters of 2 and 3 bedroom affordable housing spread through the development. A large home zone area is incorporated to create a safe, pleasant residential environment.



Manor Farm: Front elevations of house type D, a simple two bedroom home

Right: front and rear elevation of house type K, a 2 1/2 storey three bedroom property

Below: the family room in the upper storey provides a second reception room and helps to make efficient use of the land.



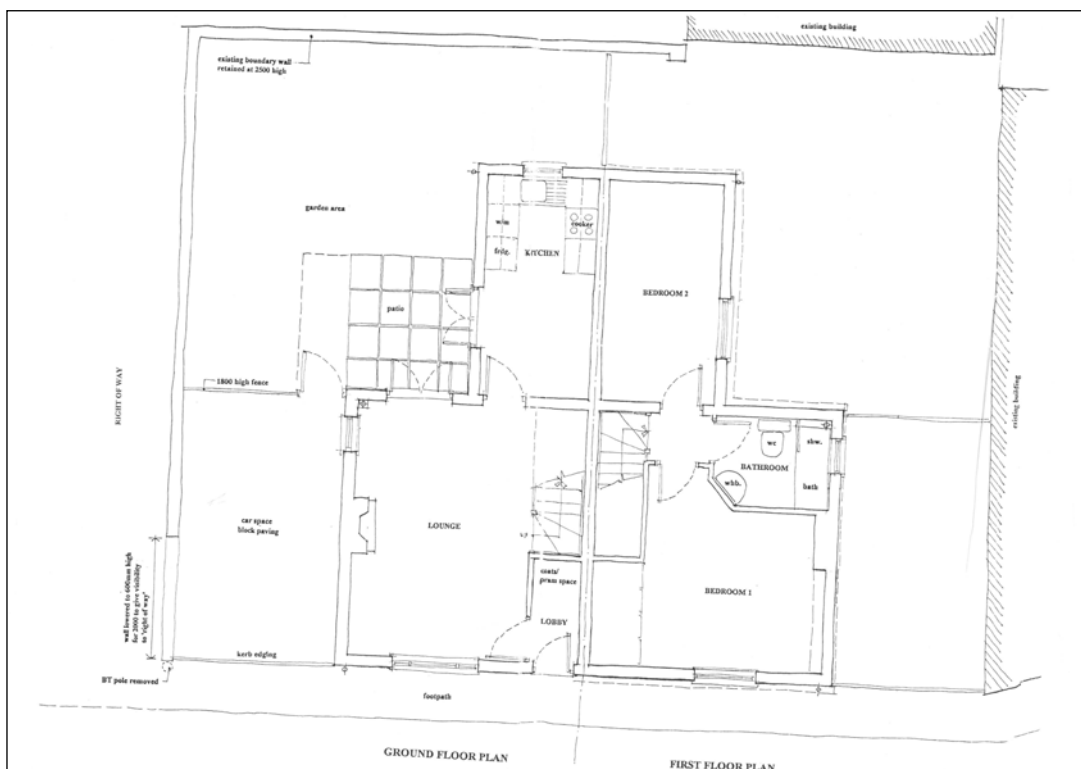
13. Great Northern Street, Huntingdon

13.1 This case study illustrates an infill site within a conservation area. The site is quite tight in terms of space but the erection of two small semi-detached houses has helped to reinforce the small-scale character of built development in the area which is predominantly residential. The scheme involves two relatively modest houses using good quality materials to reflect the traditional characteristics of the locality. A previous application for two dwellings on the site had been refused for being out of keeping with the character and appearance of the area and having an adverse impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties. Re-orientation of the layout and form of the dwellings, and improvements to the proposed materials and detailing, made the scheme acceptable and it has now been completed. One car parking space is provided for each dwelling which has high pedestrian accessibility to Huntingdon town centre.



13.2 The development comprises:

- 2 x two bedroom houses = 100%
- Total of 2 dwellings on 0.02 ha, the equivalent of 100 d/ha.



Plan showing internal arrangement of two bedroom houses and general site layout

APPENDIX 1 CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT SPG

The Council's Cabinet considered the draft supplementary guidance at its meeting on 17 April 2003 when the document was approved for public consultation. Extensive invitations to comment were issued including parish and town councils in Huntingdonshire, planning agents, developers, housebuilders, civic and environmental interest groups. The public consultation period lasted from 9 May to 27 June 2003.

Over 40 responses were received predominantly from parish and town councils and development interests. Responses to the draft SPG split into two broad categories. It was generally supported by parish and town councils and the CPRE. Developers, housebuilders and planning agents objected in varying degrees to both the principle and the content of the draft document.

As a result of the detailed and extensive representations received from some of the development interests an independently facilitated round table discussion was arranged by the Council. This aimed to promote better understanding of the objectives and potential impacts of the SPG and to identify possible changes to the SPG which might reconcile the Council's aspirations with the need for developers to produce viable, marketable developments. This took place on 15 December 2003 with a report on the findings received on 12 January 2004. Both the outcomes of this and the original representations have been considered and revisions made to the document.

The revised SPG was approved by the Council's Cabinet at its meeting on 4 March 2004. A schedule summarising the representations received and the Council's response to them is available free of charge from our offices (*Market Housing Mix: Response to Draft SPG*), as is the report or the independent facilitator (*Report of facilitation into Huntingdonshire District Council's Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance 'Market Housing Mix'*).

APPENDIX 2 POLICY SOURCES

Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs)

The Government publishes a series of Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs) which set out its policies on various planning subjects. Like the supplementary planning guidance produced by local authorities, the guidance in PPGs can be a 'material consideration' in assessing particular development proposals. PPGs are revised by the Government from time to time. A full list of current PPGs can be found at <http://www.planning.odpm.gov.uk/ppg/index.htm>, from which the documents can also be viewed and downloaded. PPG3 Housing (2000) is most relevant to the issue of securing a suitable housing mix.

Regional Planning Guidance

RPG6 *Regional Planning Guidance for East Anglia to 2016* (2000) provides a regional context for local planning policies, and is also a material planning consideration. Policy 10 of RPG6 states:

Policy 10: Affordable housing and mix of dwelling types

To ensure that everyone has the opportunity of a decent home and that land and buildings are used efficiently, local and strategic planning authorities should monitor housing needs in co-operation with the regional planning body, Housing Corporation, National Housing Federation, registered social landlords, private housing developers and other regional partners. Development plans should:

- make provision for a range of dwelling types and sizes to meet the assessed needs of all sectors of the community, including the elderly and disabled;
- ensure that affordable housing is provided where it is needed in both rural and urban areas and located, wherever possible, where there are good public transport services to employment and services;
- set out clearly the mix of dwelling types that would be expected in different parts of the plan area against which development proposals can be assessed;
- include policies for securing an adequate supply of affordable housing based on local housing strategies which in turn should be based on robust local assessments of need;
- explain how the powers in Circular 6/98 (*Planning and Affordable Housing*) will be used to contribute towards meeting the need for affordable housing, including setting indicative targets for the proportion of affordable housing on specific sites;
- consider, in the Cambridge sub-region, whether there is evidence to justify the application of lower thresholds as set out in Circular 6/98 (i.e. down to developments of 15 dwellings or 0.5 hectares) and, if so, set out this justification; and
- in rural areas set appropriate thresholds for settlements with a population of 3,000 or less. Measures such as agricultural occupancy conditions and rural exceptions policy will continue to be appropriate in some circumstances.

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Joint Structure Plan (2003)

Policy P5/4 is the key policy on meeting specific housing needs:

Policy P5/4 Meeting locally identified housing needs

Local plans should make provision to meet the locally assessed need for:

- Affordable housing, including key worker housing;
- One and two bedroom homes;
- Housing suitable for the elderly and those with mobility problems;
- Other specific groups, including students, the homeless, travellers and gypsies.

Huntingdonshire Local Plan Alteration (2002)

The following policies are particularly relevant to this SPG:

Policy HL5

Good design and layout will be required in all new housing development including conversions and changes of use. Planning permission will only be granted for development if it:

- i) achieves an efficient use of the land;
- ii) respects the townscape and landscape of the wider locality, including the local pattern of streets and spaces, building traditions and materials, and maintains open spaces, important gaps in development, mature trees and other vegetation that contributes to the quality of the local environment;
- iii) provides an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes, types and affordability;
- iv) incorporates landscaping as an integral part of the design;
- v) creates attractive, distinctive and safe places and spaces which focus on the needs of pedestrians and cyclists rather than the movement and parking of vehicles; and
- vi) promotes energy efficiency.

Policy HL6

Housing development will be at densities of between 30 and 50 dwellings per hectare. High densities will be required on sites in or close to town centres or close to public transport nodes.

Policy HL10

Housing provision in Huntingdonshire should reflect the full range of the local community's needs by ensuring a choice in new housing.

APPENDIX 3 QUICK REFERENCE CHART

The chart below is intended to give a quick indication of the mix of dwellings preferred on different sizes of site. The broad proportions are as given in paragraph 9.4:

- Providing not less than 40% of all properties with one or two bedrooms
- Providing not less than 60% of all properties with one, two or three bedrooms

Some flexibility will be needed in interpreting the guidelines, particularly where small numbers of units are involved, as obviously not all site sizes are neatly divisible into the above proportions. However, for housing estates the preferred mix for a site of 10 dwellings can be multiplied and then an appropriate mix of dwellings incorporated for the remainder. The chart below gives examples of the mix arrived at.

Size of site (private dwelling numbers)	Number of properties sought with no more than 2 bedrooms	Total number of properties sought with no more than 3 bedrooms	Number of properties with no restriction on size
3	1	1	1
5	2	3	2
8	3	5	3
10	4	6	4
13	5	8	5
15	6	9	6
18	7	11	7
20	8	12	8
25	10	15	10

APPENDIX 4 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council. 2003. *Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Structure Plan 2003*. Cambridge: Cambridgeshire County Council.

Government Office for the East of England. 2000. *RPG 6: Regional Planning Guidance for East Anglia to 2016*. London: The Stationery Office.

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