

Place^{*} Strategy

Huntingdonshire 2050

MARCH 2023



Huntingdonshire

FUTURES

A Brighter Future for Huntingdonshire.

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foreword

Come on a journey towards Huntingdonshire's future.

A destination where we know the communities we want to build and the opportunities we want to create.

A destination where thinking radically and imaginatively will leave a legacy now and for generations to come.

A destination where shared ambitions and collective endeavour will realise a place renowned for doing things the right way.

At the heart of the Huntingdonshire Futures Place Strategy is understanding what is most important to residents, communities and stakeholders within our towns and rural areas.

By investing time and developing this shared strategy with our stakeholders and partners, who will continue to champion or lead on parts of it, we can influence better outcomes for our residents and communities to ensure Huntingdonshire continues to be one of the best places to live in the country. Together we can reach a brighter future for Huntingdonshire.

Cllr Sarah Conboy,

Executive Leader of Huntingdonshire District Council



Why a place strategy

We are living in a world of change, with the pace of change appearing to speed up. The climate emergency, the cost of living crisis, energy and food insecurity and the aftermath of the Covid pandemic means that many of us look forward with concern and a sense of unease.

However, uncertain times can ignite new ideas and revive optimism.

People are re-evaluating what is important in life, focusing on what makes our communities stronger. Our nation's small towns are reigniting their sense of local pride and distinction, shifting the limelight from the big cities. We are beginning to rethink what makes a successful society — focusing less on economic growth and prioritising well-being, happiness, and healthy ecosystems.

Positive change, great communities and places do not happen by chance.

They happen because stakeholders, residents and businesses share a clear vision of how they want them to be and have bold, well-thought-out long-term plans and priorities to achieve these.



OLIVER
CROMWELL

OLIVER
CROMWELL
FREE HOUSE

WELLS
& CO

CALL
ALL
GOOD
FOOD
PUBS
GARDEN



What is Huntingdonshire futures

Huntingdonshire Futures is a collaborative strategy which sets out a shared vision for the future of Huntingdonshire in 2050 and a clear way forward to achieve it.

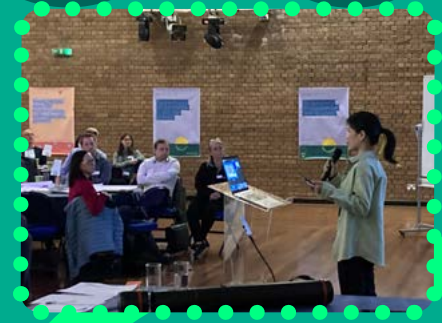
Together we seek to meet the following objectives:

- Gain a greater understanding of what is most important to residents, communities and stakeholders across Huntingdonshire.
- Unite stakeholders through a shared sense of direction and ambition.
- Create a shared Place Strategy that maps out our plans for our place, people, economy, and the environment which improves the lives of all of our residents, communities, and businesses.
- Guide future strategy, policy developments and investment decisions made by the council and partners, to enable more effective delivery of integrated interventions that better serve the current and future needs of residents, communities, and businesses.

Evolution of the strategy



Huntingdonshire Futures is a collaborative exploration of what makes Huntingdonshire unique, what challenges we face, and what our future may hold up to 2050. This Place Strategy captures what we have learnt and heard from reviewing evidence and an extensive programme of workshops and conversations. It also is the result of challenging our own thinking and looking beyond the district to innovative case studies across the world.



Sept
2022

Workshop 2
and Community
Engagement
continues

June
2022

Work begins
to develop a
shared vision for
Huntingdonshire



ENGAGEMENT PERIOD 2

Futures Literacy - Exploring 'What If?'

Workshop 1
and Community
Engagement
begins

July
2022

ENGAGEMENT PERIOD 1

The Here and Now

ENGAGEMENT PERIOD 3
Exploring the Vision



Nov
2022

Workshop 3 and beginning of the second phase of Community Engagement testing key directions



Draft strategy produced

Feb
2023

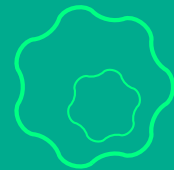


Huntingdonshire District Council look to adopt the Strategy

March
2023

ONGOING
DIALOGUE

Taking
the Vision
Forward



Huntingdonshire
FUTURES

A Brighter Future for Huntingdonshire.

Stakeholder engagement

This strategy for the future of Huntingdonshire has been led by local people — incorporating their understanding of the place, values and aspirations for the future.

A group of over sixty stakeholders were gathered to participate in a series of three workshops. Participants included representatives from business groups, the Police, Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue, the NHS and local community groups.

WORKSHOP 1

Workshop 1 explored the 'Here and Now', and sought to understand Huntingdonshire as it is. We encouraged participants to identify locations and characteristics that make the district special. They then explored strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats according to Huntingdonshire's economy, environment, people and place. Finally, they were encouraged to begin to look to the future and identify inspirational projects that could be achieved in the long and short term.

WORKSHOP 2

Workshop 2 focussed on the future, and participants were encouraged to think beyond the day to day by questioning 'What if?'. Building on knowledge gained from workshop one and community consultation, participants were

presented with a series of 'What if' statements, and encouraged to be bold and imaginative. They then explored the context, assets, opportunities and challenges, unique to Huntingdonshire to deliver these scenarios. They were invited to explore the direct and indirect consequences of each possibility and finally offer a pledge to the district to begin to establish some commitments.

WORKSHOP 3

The aim of Workshop 3 was to begin to test the direction for the place strategy. Each table of participants were presented with a draft 'What if' story gathered from Workshop Two and asked how well the statement was working or if anything was missed. They were then tasked with preparing an action plan of short and long term steps to implement the 'What if' story they were exploring. Finally, they were encouraged to define ideas to take the Place Strategy forward.

WEBSITE

An interactive website was developed to host activities and gather feedback. Over the course of the stakeholder engagement period, different material was shared and users encouraged to comment and input. This process was coordinated with community consultation to best capture feedback.



community co-creation

The approach to community engagement has been developed to enable and encourage local people to join a conversation about the future of their district. Using a range of techniques, the focus has been on deliberative dialogue and quality of discussion. We delivered two phases of engagement, the first focusing on understanding local people's aspirations for the future of Huntingdonshire, on the context of people, place, economy, and the environment. We went to local people with pop up events in local markets and at other events, as well as delivering a programme of structured focus group sessions and activities with young people in partnership with schools and colleges. We asked the question 'What if', encouraging the community to think about what is possible in the communities in which they live.

The second phase of the engagement programme was a check and challenge process. We delivered a programme of focus groups and activities, working with local

organisations including schools, community groups and foodbanks. This qualitative engagement was designed to give residents the opportunity to feedback on the proposed destination, journeys, and pathways. This involved working with local people to understand their priorities for change and what they consider to be most important as well as exploring what actions for change they would like to see within the strategy. We also discussed any perceived gaps in the proposed approach and the role of the community in delivering change.

Across both phases of engagement we reviewed the qualitative data collated and looked for words or phrases that participants used repeatedly to identify themes or patterns. These were used to conduct further analysis to ensure we had a rounded understanding and supported the drafting of the strategy, so it aligns with the perspective of our communities.





Thinking Ahead

The Importance of Thinking Ahead

What if?



The Importance of Thinking Ahead

Futures Literacy

In times of uncertainty, it can be a challenge to look up from our every day lives and work practices to think about the future. 'Futures Literacy', developed by UNESCO is the ability to imagine complex future scenarios beyond the realms of what we already know. We have used this thinking to help the people and businesses of Huntingdonshire to collectively imagine a new future and challenge current thinking. Futures Literacy builds upon 'literacy' which typically refers to the ability to read and write but is often applied to wider competencies such as 'computer literacy' or 'media literacy'. It is our ability to identify, interpret and communicate knowledge.

The act of imagining and planning for future scenarios within government, businesses and organisations has previously been left to specialists called 'futurists', but everyone in Huntingdonshire - students, politicians, teachers and business leaders, should be equipped with the skills to think imaginatively about the future. This is because everyone's vision of the future is personal. It will always be shaped by our biases and experiences, but by pulling together lots of these individual lenses, we add breadth and depth to our collective vision.

Everyone with a stake in our future should be equipped to think beyond the realms of 'probable' and 'preferable' and open up the world of 'possible' (and perhaps even 'impossible?'), because without big ideas, and brave imagination, it's just 'business as usual'.

Source: UNESCO Futures Literacy, [link](#)

● We have to stop “colonising tomorrow with the ideas of today” (Nicklas Larson, Medium)



WHAT IF...



What if...?

A simple question
with big ambition

To develop 'Futures Literacy' to collectively imagine a new future beyond business as usual, the people and businesses of Huntingdonshire were asked to question 'What if...'

Pioneered by the founder of Transition Town Totnes – Rob Hopkins, 'What if?' is a simple question, but perhaps the most important question we have to refocus our outlook on the future. In his book 'What if to what next', Hopkins explores what we must do to revive and replenish our collective imagination. If we can rekindle

that precious creative spark, whole societies and cultures can change rapidly, dramatically and unexpectedly for the better. Questioning what if allows us to imagine alternative stories for Huntingdonshire and explore what would be needed to get there.

This strategy brings together a shared understanding of the current strengths and challenges facing Huntingdonshire today, combined with future thinking to set out a clear vision for how we want Huntingdonshire to be in 2050.

Source: Rob Hopkins, [link](#)

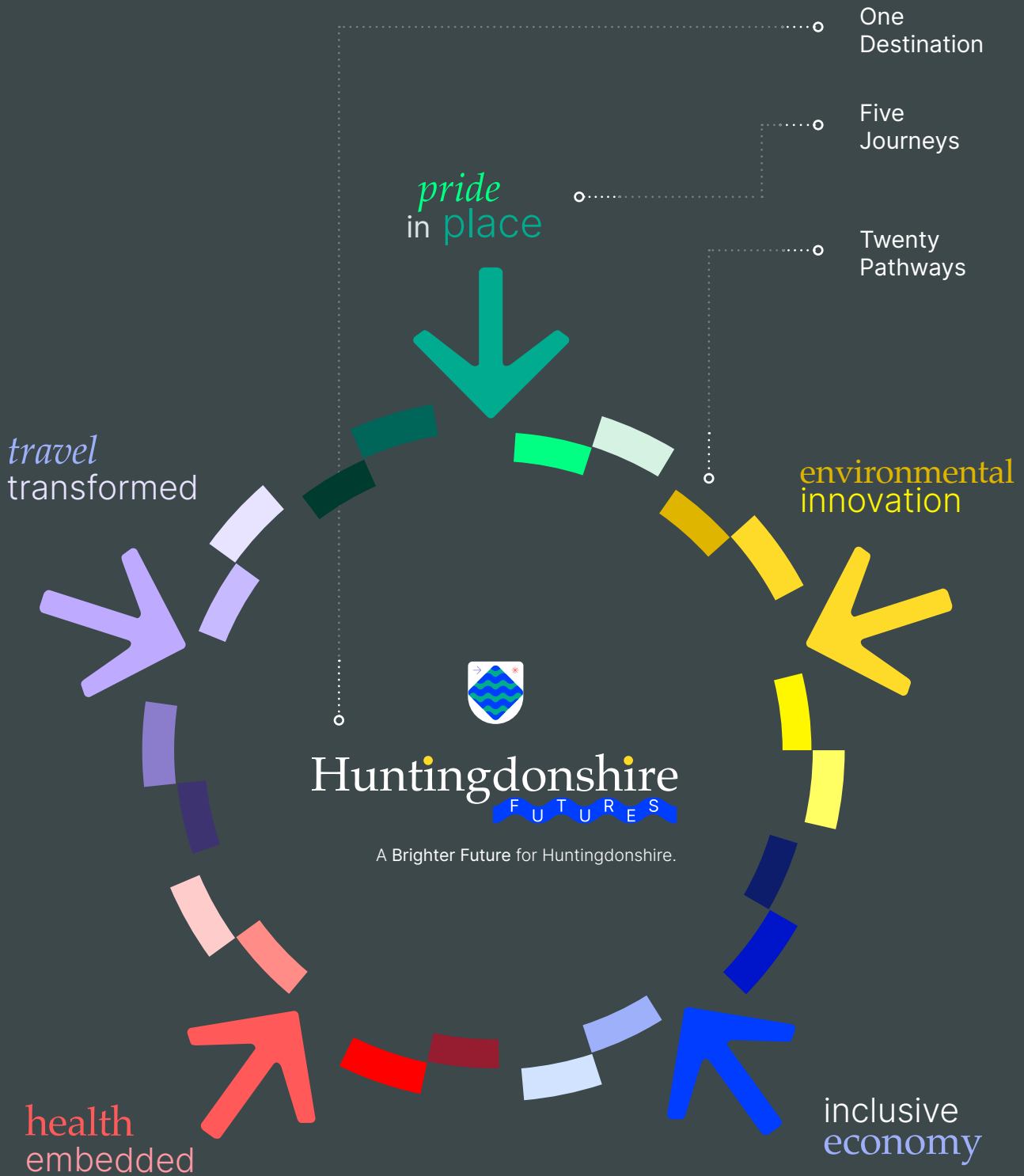




Huntingdonshire Futures

- Introducing the Place Strategy
- Pride in Place
- Inclusive Economy
- Health Embedded
- Environmental Innovation
- Travel Transformed

introducing the place strategy



One Destination

Huntingdonshire Futures - A simple message that encompasses the brighter future that we are reaching for.




Five Journeys

Five areas of focus that describe what we want Huntingdonshire to be like as a place and the common outcomes that we will work towards.

Twenty Pathways

Each journey is made up of four distinctive pathways, these outline how we might reach our desired journey.

The Pathways consist of the following:

-  **What If?**
Asking ourselves 'What If...?' helps us to imagine what's possible. Each pathway is introduced with a 'What If...?' statement which articulates what we imagine Huntingdonshire could be.
-  **Guiding Lights**
These are examples of relevant projects which show what can be done.
-  **What Could We Do?**
This presents potential steps, projects or initiatives that could be picked up by various stakeholders in order for us to achieve the vision

Each pathway will have different delivery requirements, stakeholder involvement and action plans. These are currently under development. By exploring these we hope to be able to catalyse new types of collaboration across sectors and develop truly cross-cutting initiatives that build on existing strengths and address multiple challenges at once. Not all pathways will be taken forward immediately and they will be reviewed and revised to keep them up to date.

Journey One

Distinct, unified and well-loved — by 2050, Huntingdonshire's citizens will feel proud to live and work in a place with stand-out character. We will enjoy homes that respond to our needs, great places to spend time in and a strong and safe community who take care of their surroundings.

You said...



'What is Huntingdonshire anyway?'



'I would like to be proud of where I live. I think if I did, I would be more inclined to get involved and make it better'



'You can't find an affordable home when you're young. Then when you want to downsize you can't'



pride in
place

we had a strong identity
for the whole district?

our homes responded
to our needs?

WHAT IF?

we built up the
resilience of our
communities?

our high streets were the
centre of social and cultural
life?

What if...

we had a strong identity for the whole district?

In a world where... we are all spending more time locally, a sense of pride in our local area is fundamental. Yet we have heard that Huntingdonshire lacks a strong identity compared to neighbouring places such as Cambridge and Peterborough. Our residents, particularly our younger ones, don't feel a sense of belonging to the district.

There is a place... next to Cambridge with untapped potential including rich heritage and remarkable landscapes. We love our wide open fens and parklands, rolling claylands, and the picturesque Ouse Valley. And there's so much to enjoy about our charming market towns and villages.

Which could become... a district that people from all over the UK are drawn to, and residents are proud to call home. A place which celebrates its unique assets and competes with its neighbours — attracting employers, visitors and new residents who recognise what it means to live, work and play in true Huntingdonshire style.

But only if... we come together to recognise all the great localised initiatives taking place, and define what makes our place and people unique. The District Council, residents, businesses, cultural institutions and community groups must work together to decide what the essence of Huntingdonshire is and begin to promote our shared story.

Source: Huntingdonshire Futures Stakeholder Engagement

What could we do?

1.

Create a powerful place brand

Huntingdonshire needs a place brand that articulates the shared identity of the district. In close collaboration with the community, businesses and marketing experts a recognisable brand based on Huntingdonshire's unique identity should be developed.

Local people will feel a sense of ownership over it, and visitors can get to know the district and what it stands for through the brand. Campaign events engaging with the local community could kickstart the initiative and then maintain the momentum through regular marketing activity. The place brand could be co-created to draw on the aspects of the district that local people love.

2.

Introduce Place Champions

Nobody knows this district better than our long-standing local residents. We should seek out knowledgeable, passionate and well connected local people to become Place Champions. These champions will 'shout' about all the local activities and initiatives taking place, including the hidden treasures.

Place Champions will work together to make sure that great things do not go unnoticed, and these will reinforce the Place Brand and further inspire locals to feel proud of their district.





Guiding Lights



Raising the local profile: Visit Peak District and Derbyshire

Derbyshire County Council is working with Marketing Peak District & Derbyshire and partner authorities to develop the county's visitor economy by improving the offer, quality and identity of individual towns as part of wider destination management and place branding.

Local businesses can join the members network and enjoy benefits that help raise their profile. Support provided includes workshops, networking events, press and PR coverage and affordable advertising opportunities.

Source: Visit Peak District and Derbyshire, [link](#)



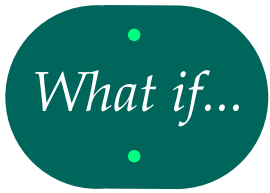
3.

Establish a tourism board

The establishment of a tourism board could help coordinate and promote Huntingdonshire as a place to visit.

By involving local businesses, interest groups, cultural institutions and relevant organisations we can create a unique narrative around what makes Huntingdonshire special and why visitors should come.

This board can help identify gaps in the market, generating business opportunities and help to create a clearer sense of identity for local residents, raising awareness of local leisure and culture opportunities.



our homes responded to our needs?

In a world where... affordable housing is in scarce demand, social infrastructure is under strain and the majority of new housing in England lacks design quality and distinctiveness (Housing Design Audit for England by the Place Alliance). And where people are concerned that developers focus on building homes, rather than integrated communities.

There is a place... with a high quality of life, picturesque market towns and villages with incredible character, and landscapes that can inspire the creation of beautiful new places. A place that has been delivering 1,000 new homes per year since 2018, with similar levels projected to 2030.

Which could become... a leader in high quality, affordable, adaptable and energy efficient housing, which blends with the rich local character. A place where housing responds to the residents' needs and is served by essential social infrastructure, such as GPs and primary schools. Where new developments form integrated communities within their surrounding areas.

But only if... the council worked with stakeholders from the industry, including developers and land owners, and with other local authorities and institutions, to raise the ambition of well-designed, affordable housing which meets the community's needs.

Source: Place Alliance Housing Design Audit, [link](#), Huntingdonshire Local Plan 2036

Guiding Lights



Lovedon Fields, Hampshire

The 50 dwelling development of Lovedon Fields has recently won both the RIBA South Award and RIBA National Award for 2022 for its design quality. The rural housing scheme comprises of 40% affordable and shared ownership housing, a typology mix of apartments, terraces and detached houses, including some lifetime homes. The scheme has plentiful green public space, two-thirds of the site is conceived as a wildflower meadow and roofs feature integrated solar panels. The scheme is aligned with the local vernacular and provides a sensitive edge to South Downs National Park.

Source: RIBA Architecture, [link](#)
Top image: Jim Stephenson



What could we do?

pride in place

1.

Address housing affordability

An inclusive community is one where diverse groups of people can live together and enjoy life. This requires high quality of housing to be accessible and affordable to all who need it, especially young people who want to climb the housing ladder.

This could be achieved through trialling new forms for affordable housing delivery such as self-build schemes, community land trusts, council led house building and public private partnerships. New developments will be built with affordable housing, forming well-serviced inclusive communities.

2.

Respond to evolving needs

People's lives evolve which means that their housing needs evolve in parallel. Growing families need homes that cover their new needs, young people need flexible homes that allow them to work and play from there, and the older generation needs housing that enables them to be independent.

This requires the availability of diverse housing typologies, from flats to town houses and custom-built homes, which offer flexible spaces of the right size responding to their inhabitants' needs. Homes which are inter-generational, accessible and adaptable.

This also includes the requirement for homes to be close to the necessary infrastructure, including schools, healthcare and public transport, to foster sustainable communities.

3.

Raise the ambition for better design

The ambition and inspiration for better housing design should be reinforced across the district. The council will work with the industry and other local authorities and public institutions to promote and encourage well-designed high quality homes.

Local guidance and standards can promote a higher design aspiration and requirement utilising best practice examples from the district, the County and the rest of the country. Local towns and Parishes can enable locally led ambitious design guides, or opportunities to shape their areas through Neighbourhood Plans. Initiatives such as the Public Practice and the Eastern Design Review Panel could also be considered. Finally, a new local or joint housing expo with other authorities could be organised to showcase best practice and kickstart the discussion around better design.

What if...

we built up the resilience of our communities?

In a world where... the squeeze on income for people and businesses reduces everyone's ability to do good things for others, people can feel disconnected from where they live. Young people in Huntingdonshire particularly feel alienated here.

There is a place... with strong, conscientious communities, business forums and networks, where people are fiercely proud of their neighbourhood and actively involved in helping each other.

Which could become... a place that feels safe, inclusive and offers access to support. A place that encourages bottom-up initiatives, making sure everyone sees the value of investing in the fabric of our society.

But only if... community groups, businesses and volunteers are enabled and supported to work together. Only if programmes are established to make new engagement and collaboration easy, backed up by increased awareness of opportunities.

Source: Huntingdonshire Futures Stakeholder Engagement

What could we do?

1.

Enable citizens to shape their communities

The district could set up its very own Citizens Assembly, where anyone interested in shaping their community can get involved. This would give a voice and a sense of agency to everyone in the district, including residents, business owners, teenagers and employees and encourage participation in the political process. The Assembly could raise issues that concern its members, collectively decide which are the most important to address, seek funding and implement the improvements.

As an independent organisation it could set the priorities that mean the most to its members, hold others to account and deliver change in a more direct way.

2.

Support community and voluntary organisations

The district boasts a very strong and established volunteering sector with numerous community and volunteer groups, such as Warm Spaces, actively supporting and helping the community.

This rich sector should be supported through a digital platform with access to guidance on governance, fundraising and grants, recruiting volunteers and training. The platform could also host a network to support the different community organisations and voluntary groups to collaborate and attract volunteers, and get in touch with businesses and service providers for their needs. Venue hire, events organisation and other communications could be facilitated through the same platform.



Guiding Lights



Oxmoor Community Fridge

As the cost of living is rapidly increasing, more people are in need of support to put food on the table. The Oxmoor Community Fridge fills this need, by redistributing food given away by supermarkets and other donations, from Thongsley Fields Primary and Nursery School every Tuesday. The service is in very high demand, supporting approximately 45 residents every 1.5 hour session and having redistributed more than 10 tonnes of food in the past year, helping to reduce food waste. It even provides the option of home delivery to vulnerable residents.

Source: Zero Waste Initiatives, Huntingdonshire District Council, [link](#)



3.

Strengthen the sense of safety

The spaces we inhabit and our public spaces are an integral part of our lives, and therefore should feel safe, welcoming and well-kept. Places that look less well maintained are more likely to attract anti-social behaviour and vandalism.

Therefore, the council, the public services and other key stakeholders should work together to make improvements in the public realm's infrastructure, maintenance and supervision. It is important to keep spaces such as schools and housing estates safe, through good surveillance and clean public areas, to ensure the students' and inhabitants' wellbeing. Public realm and infrastructure interventions should have regard to attracting activity and feeling secure to use.

What if...

our high streets were the centre of social and cultural life?

In a world where... high streets are in decline, our village and town centres are no longer the heart of community life. Research by the Local Data Company and Power to Change has found vacancy rates at an all time high, due to the growth of out of town retail, online shopping and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

There is a place... that benefits from its diversity arising from a cluster of market towns and villages each with its own unique offer of markets, independent shops, picturesque historic cores and plenty of citizens with an entrepreneurial spirit.

Which could become... a district that leads the revival of the high street across the UK. Rich in diverse spaces that go beyond retail, embrace the café culture and allow people to come together. Places that attract and retain locals and visitors, both in the day and later in the night with a revived offer of night time activities.

But only if... we work together — retail is all about exchange after all. We need cross-sector collaboration between landowners, the council, businesses and community groups to identify and revamp empty spaces and create vibrant public places where people want to linger.

Source: Power to Change, [link](#)

Guiding Lights



Art in the High Street

The Croydon Art Store converted a four story shopping centre unit into an arts and cultural venue, created in collaboration between Croydon Council, Kingston School of Art, the local arts organisation Turf Projects and Art Halo. The project seeks to provide affordable studio space, a gallery space to exhibit work from local artists, a free bookable creative event space, and a research space to develop a Croydon biannual art exhibition with Kingston School of Art. It will also give the council an opportunity to see how arts and cultural activities can be made more accessible and regenerate sites that would otherwise be vacant.

Source: Croydon Arts Store, [link](#)



What could we do?

pride in place

1.

Promote meanwhile use

Empty space on our high streets creates a feeling of decline, but meanwhile use, which refers to temporary use of empty property and land, can help enliven spaces as well as provide a great resource for local people.

The council can take a closer look into its high streets and identify vacant and underused spaces, then work with landlords to support temporary use of these spaces by local community groups, businesses and organisations at affordable rates to activate the spaces before a long term solution is found. This can be facilitated by providing a register of spaces, advertising the opportunities, producing guidance and enabling planning policies.

2.

Boost the night time offer

Huntingdonshire's market towns can lack diversity. While high streets are places of activity and attraction during the daytime, we need to ensure they stay bustling with leisure opportunities also at night.

This could include promoting night markets, cultural events and a cafe and restaurant culture, including pop ups, to test out new businesses and reinstate the high street as the heart of the community, even at night. The council can work together with the local business owners, entrepreneurs, community groups and cultural institutions to identify opportunities and mobilise initiatives through events, branding and advertising, permits and adapting licences.

3.

Enhance the public realm

Physical improvements on high streets and their surrounding public realm can be crucial to create inviting and attractive spaces. Widening the pavements, dedicating more space to pedestrians and spill out activities can greatly change the experience of high streets into more people-focussed and relaxing spaces.

The addition of public furniture and incidental play facilities can attract people to linger for longer. Reallocating some parking spaces on the high street into public realm can help reduce the dominance of the car and create a more child friendly place.



Journey Two

Talented, trained and confident — by 2050 Huntingdonshire will champion upskilling and provide inspiring job opportunities for residents in a variety of industries. We will nurture start-ups, enable businesses to grow, and build a strong local economy.

You said...



'There are communities of like minded people, like here in St Neots. How will this support those of us who are already here?'



'What if we make market towns work as market towns?'



'Don't put me on a kids' table. If you want to work with us, take us seriously'



inclusive economy

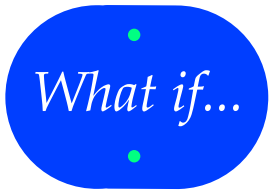
we created a place where our
businesses could flourish?

our businesses and
organisations worked hand
in hand with young people?

WHAT IF?

we chose to buy
more local?

we could learn new
skills at all life stages?



we created a place where our businesses could flourish?

In a world where... resilience and cash reserves of businesses have been hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, and where small to medium enterprises often prefer to cluster in areas outside of the district, like Cambridge.

There is a place... that has a truly entrepreneurial spirit with 150 start-ups per month, and a strong economy worth £10billion/year led by manufacturing. With strategic road and rail infrastructure and land prices which are attractive to investors and companies looking to seed, develop and scale. With Cambridge and its world-leading science and research industries and cluster of incubating Uni spin outs on its doorstep.

Which could become... a place where businesses choose to locate and grow thanks to strategies and infrastructure that attract inward investment and high value jobs. Where both start-ups and established industries are supported by the right affordable spaces, whether that be in innovative incubators or large-scale environmentally friendly developments.

But only if... the district throws its weight behind fledgling new businesses — establishing more support networks such as the St Neots Initiative, and only if it ensures its high performing sectors are supported and taps into the potential arising from Cambridge.

Source: "Ready to Recover" Economic Growth Strategy For Huntingdonshire District 2020-2025, Huntingdonshire Economic Growth Plan 2013 – 2023, Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough Enterprise Partnership (LEP) (2014)

Guiding Lights



Alconbury Enterprise Campus

The Alconbury Weald Enterprise Campus is a multi-use development backed by Enterprise Zone status. It facilitates the co-location of research and development production spaces for small and medium-sized businesses in addition to flexible office incubators, as well as bespoke large buildings. The campus is home to a growing number of companies implementing technology solutions including AI, robotics and automation that supports its manufacturing, cleantech and engineering base. It hosts regular business support seminars including expertise from HDC's Invest in Huntingdonshire team.

Source: Space to make and grow your business - Alconbury Enterprise Campus, [link](#)



What could we do?



1.

Promote Made in Huntingdonshire

Designed to celebrate all that is positive about the Huntingdonshire Business landscape, 'Made in Huntingdonshire' will provide the platform to help celebrate our amazing businesses and their fantastic achievements, which include the diversity of the products that are designed, prototyped and produced en-mass and the service excellence offered by local companies. As well as our people and residents who make all of the above happen, including our rich base of entrepreneurs, heavyweight business leaders and all of the unsung heroes whose combined industry helps underpin our £10 billion/year economy.

2.

Foster business development programmes

The setting up of a new business can be daunting and complex. A digital platform with essential guidance to navigating the process can help many entrepreneurs. They might provide guidance on funding, regulation, finding suppliers and marketing, the right premises and much more.

An organisation could be set up as an intermediary who brings into contact the ambitious entrepreneurs with established or larger businesses, suppliers and other experts in the field.

3.

Secure the right workspaces

The right space which responds to a business' needs, lies at the heart of a healthy operation. Affordable and flexible incubator clusters where start-ups can flourish, versatile offices which enable hybrid work, and innovative green R&D, warehousing and production facilities with easy distribution access, are all necessary for the district's economic growth. With the right policy and processes, we can deliver and promote spaces, which are accessible by public transport and situated at strategic locations, supported by targeted lower business rates and green grants.





our businesses and organisations worked hand in hand with young people?

In a world where... young people want to change the world, they also simply want meaningful work that reflects their values. At the same time businesses struggle to recruit the right staff with the knowledge and skills needed by that particular industry. In Huntingdonshire, the working age population is expected to decrease from 61.8% aged 16-64 in 2020 to 57% in 2043, in part due to people moving away.

There is a place... that has a strong and friendly business community, including a high proportion of Small to Medium Enterprises, with plenty of manufacturing, construction, science and tech businesses. With independent initiatives such as Shift Momentum and collaboration potential with Cambridge's world-class economy.

Which could become... a place where businesses, educators and young people work together and listen to each other to match skills with industry needs. Where the younger generation is aware of local opportunities available, the skills they need to get there, and feel motivated by the potential to do what they love. Businesses can become more sustainable in the long run, future proofing their workforce and being exposed to new ideas from our bright young thinkers.

But only if... there is the time, space and networks available to facilitate exchange, relying on a culture of openness. We look to develop a choice of the right training programmes with apprenticeships and short courses providing different ways to get those valuable qualifications.

Source: Cambridgeshire Insights. Top image: Huntingdonshire Youth Work Forum



What could we do?

1. Define Huntingdonshire as a District of Learning

Huntingdonshire could be inspired by European Cities of Learning to integrate learning and training into everyday life, and make participation easier and more engaging.

Local businesses could help design these small scale training programmes, so they reflect local specialisms and industry needs and raise the awareness of local opportunities.

Source: Cities of Learning, [link](#)

2. Create a culture of work experience

Work experience programmes are a great way for young people to understand opportunities available to them or learn first hand about a job they might be interested in but may not have the access to. Businesses gain access to a young pool of labour, who are eager to learn and build a career as well as share their ideas.

Businesses could be encouraged to initiate apprenticeship and work placement programmes across the district. Schools and students could also be supported through a programme that helps find students a place and assists handling their concerns or developing additional skills.



Guiding Lights



Cities of Learning

Many European cities have become Cities of Learning, where learning opportunities are more visible and accessible to young learners. Each city or region uses digital technology to map the learning opportunities, compile online learning 'playlists' and provide 'open badges'. Young people are encouraged to find events and experiences that match their ambitions, either digitally or locally, and build a digital portfolio of their learned skills and achievements. The learning opportunities are contemporary and broad, ranging from game design and entrepreneurship to architecture.

Source: Cities of Learning, [link](#)
Bottom image: Shift Ignite Programme



3.

Build a professional network

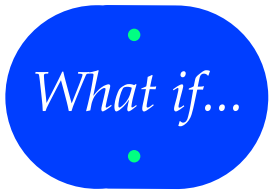
Planning for the future and ensuring that the current young workforce has the right knowledge and skills is imperative both for their own development and the district's economic growth.

In order to match demand with supply, a network could be established that links education and training providers, job seeker organisations and youth groups with local businesses.

This could be a combination of a digital platform and events to support information sharing, foster the closer collaboration of educators and employers, advertise opportunities and training, and bring young people into contact with a pool of professionals.

Source: Blueprint for All, [link](#)





we chose to buy more local?

In a world where... what we consume is increasingly expensive and reliant on vulnerable global supply chains, while our high streets are struggling. We are seeing a rise in obesity and diabetes because we aren't eating good quality, healthy food like we used to. In Huntingdonshire, 65.3% of adults are classed as overweight or obese, higher than the England average.

There is a place... with a strong local agricultural economy, a network of diverse local businesses and makers, supported by a wealth of independent retailers. With vibrant market towns which host numerous street markets with local produce and other goods.

Which could become... a district with a revitalised food and goods network where local choices are always the most convenient and cost effective. Local food producers, makers, residents, businesses, supermarkets, schools and community groups can use physical spaces and digital tools to make local products the go-to option. A place with easier routes for businesses to trade and contract with each other locally across all industry sectors.

But only if... farmers and other local producers are encouraged to supply what local people need and sell it in the region. If appropriate physical space and distribution infrastructure are put in place and consumers are informed about the health, sustainability and economic benefits of buying more locally.

Source: Cambridgeshire Insights

Guiding Lights



Totally Locally

Totally Locally is helping towns around the UK and the world support their independent retailers and producers. Volunteers and groups of businesses receive the 'Town Kit', which includes marketing material and a guide on how to launch the campaign. Local businesses are the 'Hidden Gems' who learn how to celebrate their unique products and inform local consumers. This is all centred around the concept that if each person spent £5 per week in local shops, £13.5 billion would go directly to the local economy.

Source: Totally Locally, [link](#)



What could we do?



1.

Support local food hubs and markets

Local Food Hubs could be established at various central locations in the district and rural locations close to their production. The Hubs will aggregate, store, sell on-site and also distribute and market the food products which have been locally produced.

Hubs can play an essential intermediary role between producers who may not have access to warehouses and transport, and the consumers. Farmers Markets, which already exist in the district, are another way of promoting locally sourced products.

Source: Getting to Scale with Regional Food Hubs, [link](#)

2.

Support local business networks

In order to foster the local making, growing and producing, our businesses should be effectively supported. The council should work with the business community and other stakeholders to boost existing networks, forums and associations to enhance local trading and contracting.

Support could be in the form of promoting networking platforms and events, where businesses can come into contact with other potential business partners and exchange services. Other mechanisms could include incentives and grants to contract with other local businesses and establishing a district-wide database of businesses and associated service providers.

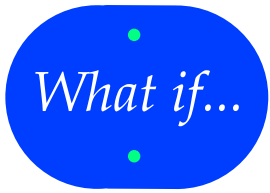
3.

Launch marketing campaigns

Marketing is vital to help local producers, makers, growers and retailers reach their local target market and establish a client base. Digital advertising, news articles, press coverage, email marketing and social media are all effective marketing tools that could be utilised.

We can provide support to businesses through free material, training and guidance, taking advantage of opportunities such as Totally Locally. Local volunteer and community groups could join forces with businesses to become the pioneers who will celebrate the unique local products and make sure the district is informed about them.





we could learn new skills at all life stages?

In a world where... educational attainment in the district is below the national average. Where people aged 65 and above are forecast to grow to 26.7% in 2043, from 20.4% in 2020. But also where digital advancement means that the knowledge and skills attainment methods become more versatile.

There is a place... where 79% of the working age population are economically active, with a robust business network and education providers. This includes good local schools and colleges, and strong links to nearby world-class education at Cambridge University.

Which could become... a place where all residents have access to lifelong learning. Where potential is nurtured from the first thousand days at outstanding schools and early years facilities, and everyone independent of their background and age can reach their full potential at any stage — allowing them to discover fulfilling work or productive new hobbies.

But only if... the public, private, community and academic sectors come together to raise collective ambitions and provide useful training and education in a range of accessible formats, including both physical and digital classrooms.

Source: Huntingdonshire Futures Stakeholder Engagement. Top image: Trumpington Community College, Richard Ellis

What could we do?

1.

Reinforce the first years of education

The first thousand days of a child's life are crucial in setting the foundations for future growth. Therefore, it is important to have high quality Early Years facilities and nurseries which nurture and stimulate our young residents.

High quality teaching and learning should continue from primary through to post-16 education. Students should be given opportunities to fulfil their educational potential, including children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, and socially vulnerable students.

Sufficient supply of high quality school places, physical space enhancements to facilities, and incentives to retain students in education should be provided.

2.

Establish community learning centres

Community learning centres are service providers or physical spaces that provide functional literacy, vocational skills, and work-related skills to youth and adults not in education, employment or training. This helps to get people into work, improving skills and confidence.

Huntingdonshire could work in partnership to deliver initiatives and make use of existing spaces, facilities and networks such as libraries, vacant shop units or community centres. The training programmes should respond to the needs of the community and could include English skills, vocational courses, business skills and female-focused upskilling, whilst identifying the types of employment opportunities available through engagement with business networks.



Guiding Lights



Lifelong Learning

Post-pandemic, we have expanded our definition of traditional schooling, including online, shorter, and more specialised courses in our library of learning. Attitudes are still changing. It's not just teaching methods but also subjects and student demographics that are being rewritten. Learning becomes a life-long activity, with no traditional university age, as schools and businesses encourage people of every generation to continue in education. Specialist lifelong learning centres and initiatives are being set up across the UK to widen participation for people of all life stages and demographics.

Source: Lifelong Learning, [link](#)



3.

Support the University of the Third Age

The University of the Third Age is a network of local groups across the UK that provide opportunities for people to learn together for fun. Starting in 1982, the approach encourages groups of people no longer in full-time work to come together and continue their enjoyment of learning subjects of interest to them. University of the Third Age groups already exist in Huntingdonshire, focussed in the market towns. These could be supported to raise awareness and expand their reach, particularly to rural areas and diverse new communities. Collaboration between the existing groups and businesses and education providers could also be supported to facilitate knowledge sharing and community cohesion.

Source: University of the Third Age, [link](#)



Journey Three

Healthier and more holistic — in 2050 Huntingdonshire will value happiness and health above all else, supporting good quality of life for all people at all stages of life.

You said...



'It would be better to do more to prevent people from getting to the point where they're really ill. Whether that's physical health or mental health.'



'Mental health is being pushed aside in this conversation.'



'There are lots of people who work in care in this area, and we don't do enough to support them'



health
embedded

*happiness was top
of the agenda?*

*it was easier to live
healthily?*

WHAT IF?

nobody was lonely here?

*this was a vibrant place for
children and young people?*

What if...

happiness was the top of the agenda?

In a world where... we know that economic growth does not necessarily result in wellbeing — health really matters and our mental and physical health is under strain. Prioritising profit has widened social inequality and in Huntingdonshire fewer than 1 in 3 residents have 'very good' life satisfaction.

There is a place... that has all the ingredients of a great quality of life; a kind community, beautiful green spaces, access to secure jobs and generally low levels of deprivation.

Which could become... a place that prioritises the happiness of its people and their health. A place with a cohesive support system that starts from the top and spreads through the community. A place with culture, a good work life balance, access to nature and opportunities for leisure and play — all the ingredients for a good life.

But only if... 'happiness' is top of the agenda for the council and our businesses, instead of just a nice-to-have. This will involve defining what happiness means for Huntingdonshire and how it can be measured in a way that reflects the diverse community — and then using this to inform our plans and decision making.

What could we do?

1.

Define what happiness means for Huntingdonshire

In order to try to achieve happiness, we need to know what happiness means for the people of Huntingdonshire.

Through collaborative sessions, for example a Citizens Assembly, we could come up with a way of defining and measuring happiness that reflects all of Huntingdonshire's diverse communities. This approach could consider factors such as health metrics, work life balance, mental health, opportunities to socialise, access to culture and leisure and financial security.

2.

Ensure happiness drives decision making

Once a definition for happiness has been determined, and metrics developed, improving happiness should be the shared goal alongside economic growth.

Council programmes and grant-funded organisations should be required to demonstrate how they are improving happiness and the direction of these organisations should be structured towards an approach that best improves happiness.

There should be regular information gathering, to understand progress and understand which aspects of happiness are harder to achieve and require additional investment.

Guiding Lights



Gross National Happiness

The concept of Gross National Happiness was developed by the Buddhist nation of Bhutan as they felt that sustainable development should take a more holistic approach towards notions of progress and give equal importance to non-economic aspects of wellbeing.

An Index was developed which seeks to define what happiness means for the residents of Bhutan and includes metrics on health, wellbeing, nature and culture. This is used as a tool to measure national progress and inform policy, with projects, funding and decision making meant to be directed in a way that increases happiness.

Source: Gross National Happiness, [link](#)



3.

Celebrate happiness

Raise the profile of Huntingdonshire as a happy place to live and work. This includes branding campaigns that celebrate the high quality of life that Huntingdonshire provides and its new and innovative approach to running volunteering actions, community projects, the local services and initiatives.

This could be supported by a series of community events and festivals that bring places and people together.

What if...

it was easier to live healthily?

In a world where... our physical and mental health isn't something we can take for granted, living healthy lives needs to be the obvious choice, but that's often not the case. If you live in the least deprived areas, you can expect to live on average 7 years longer than those living in the most deprived areas of Huntingdonshire. Residents are frustrated by the health service — often struggling to get basic appointments. Depression rates have almost doubled since the pandemic began and depression is also more prevalent amongst young people and those in more precarious economic positions.

There is a place... with abundant parks and open spaces, topography that supports active travel and community initiatives that can help to remove barriers to healthy, happy lifestyles.

Which could become... an environment where being healthy is inclusive — where all people independent of their abilities can easily access their daily needs so that exercise is embedded in their daily routine, where choosing fresh food options is the easiest and most affordable choice, where mental health is prioritised and where service providers are coordinated and mobile, bringing care into our communities.

But only if... the council, NHS, Cambridgeshire County Council, businesses and residents view health and wellbeing holistically, investing in programmes that examine the social and economic determinants of health and treat the cause of physical and mental health complaints before they arise. This includes the promotion of healthy new places, encouraging active travel and addressing economic insecurity and social isolation.

Guiding Lights

The High Street Hospital

Post-pandemic, we reflect on how interlinked community and healthcare are.

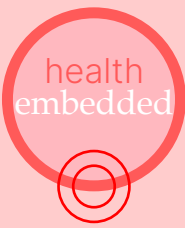
Being local to the community also plays a vital role in accessibility and ways of navigating healthcare are changing, as it strives to become human-centred, meeting people where they are.

Sheffield Hallam Teaching hospital, alongside ARUP, plans to replace dying city centre retail with walk-in clinics – high street hospitals that can use these strategically placed spaces.

Source: Arup High Street Hospital, [link](#)



What could we do?



1.

Focus on low income communities

There are significant health inequalities across Huntingdonshire, so investment in health and wellbeing should be directed towards those that need it most. In Huntingdonshire, this tends to mean low income neighbourhoods and rural communities.

The council should work together with key stakeholders to ensure that new services or investment in improvements to existing services, public realm and open space prioritise these areas. They tend to be in less accessible locations, with poor access to public transport or low car ownership. Investment in public transport including subsidies would also improve health outcomes for those that need it most.



2.

Fast track community based integrated services

Community-based integrated services enable people to receive care closer to home, preventing physical and mental health challenges before they arise.

Focusing on everyday health and wellbeing at the local level, through coordination between health care providers and community groups, gives people the support they need when they need it, including services to support self-care and wellbeing, independence and social participation. These sectors should coordinate, adapting the design of their services to better reflect the specific needs of the local population.

This aims to avoid unnecessary hospital care which can be traumatising for individuals and place strain on the NHS.

3.

Create community food systems

A “community food system” is one in which sustainable food production, processing, distribution and consumption are integrated to enhance the environmental, economic, social and nutritional health of a particular community. This could be facilitated across Huntingdonshire to initiate diverse projects that develop connections between different parts of the food system. More allotments and orchards can be created in spaces close to residents that support mental and physical wellbeing. Space in both high streets and rural areas could become equipped with community kitchens where people can gather. There could also be support for the development of small food enterprises.

Source: Community Food Systems



What if...

nobody was lonely here?

In a world where... increasing loneliness and social isolation affects the mental health of every pocket of society, the most vulnerable and the elderly are hit hardest — although isolation is also rising in young people. Research by the Campaign to End Loneliness found loneliness is likely to increase your risk of death by 26%.

There is a place... with passionate and empathetic people in an active volunteering sector and communities focussed around neighbourly towns and villages. People are proud of the strong community ties here, and a growing retired population have time to help those in need.

Which could become... a place where everyone has a friend, as all residents have the opportunity to feel engaged in their community and places help facilitate social interaction. This includes parks, high streets community centres, playgrounds and allotments which provide ample opportunities to leave the house, making it easy to engage and participate.

But only if... we ensure the built environment provides solutions including co-living, activated public realm, community spaces and good connectivity. In addition, there is promotion of a diverse range of events and volunteering opportunities to increase participation and grow local networks.

Source: Campaign to End Loneliness, [link](#)

What could we do?

1.

Trial co-living

With loneliness on the rise, collective living offers a solution and could be trialled in Huntingdonshire. Here, a community of unrelated individuals or families share housing and facilities. This might be a fully shared home, or just a group of homes organised around a communal garden or kitchen.

This helps counter loneliness and supports a sense of belonging and cohesion by creating easier opportunities to socialise. Through sharing space, these models can be more affordable and reduce consumption of resources.

2.

Promote intergenerational care

Intergenerational care refers to the practice of bringing the young and elderly together by co-locating and integrating nurseries and care homes.

The practice can decrease loneliness and improve quality of life amongst the elderly participants and has been shown to delay mental and physical decline. This also gives children the opportunity to mix regularly with elderly people, which can be missing if extended family do not live nearby. Children can also benefit from the attention of people who have time to listen and share stories which connect them with the past.

This could be achieved through locating a new nursery and care home together, expanding sites if the opportunity is available or by having reading sessions or shared outings.

Guiding Lights



Marmalade Lane

As we are beginning to understand the dire consequences of loneliness on our health, new models of co-living are being tested on our doorstep, with concepts such as Marmalade Lane, Cambridge.

Here, residents across forty two homes share facilities such as a common house for residents to socialise, host guests and eat together. A shared garden makes up the heart of the community, with mature trees, food growing and space to relax and play. The homes face onto a child friendly car free street which encourages neighbourly interaction.

Source: Marmalade Lane, [link](#)



3.

Create a community well-being network

Healthcare providers and the voluntary sector could collaborate to establish a network whose purpose is to improve the wellbeing of individual participants and the community as a whole.

This involves creating support plans, signposting to opportunities, helping individuals to access support groups, referring them to specialist agencies or just having a chat.

The network could serve as connectors in the community, providing spaces to socialise and find out about the range of opportunities available across Huntingdonshire, from events, clubs, volunteer opportunities and training.

What if...

this was a vibrant place for children and young people?

In a world where... poor mental health is on the rise, social media has worsened social isolation and there is the perception that crime and anti-social behaviour is on the rise.

There is a place... that has passionate and engaged communities, a strong voluntary sector, independent initiatives such as Shift Momentum and the potential to make the most of links with Cambridge, London and Peterborough.

Which could become... a place where children and young people are engaged and inspired through activities and opportunities that reflect their diverse interests. Where ambition is nurtured and young people can reach their full potential — allowing them to socialise, develop confidence, discover productive new hobbies or learn new skills.

But only if... the public, private and voluntary sectors come together to deliver places, projects and events that children and young people can enjoy. This includes listening to and responding to the actual interests and needs of those who are intended to participate and fostering a culture of trust that fosters independence and a sense of care for the community.

Source: Huntingdonshire Futures Stakeholder Engagement. Top image: #iwillmovement Twitter

Guiding Lights

Young Technicians Academy

Recently opened in Yaxley, the Young Technicians Academy helps young people build their skills, knowledge and experiences in the creative industries, including music, performing arts, media and live events. Primary and secondary school students learn about backstage operations from performers, while young people can participate in courses and clubs to learn essential skills while having fun.

Creative therapies are also delivered in partnership with communities and not-for-profit organisations.

Source: Young Technicians Academy, [link](#)



What could we do?

1. Promote Youth Social Action and the #iwill movement

Youth social action refers to activities that children and young people can do to make a positive difference to others or the environment. The #iwill movement is made up of over 1000 organisations and 700 young ambassadors across the UK that helps to ensure meaningful action is taken to support more children and young people to be active citizens.

Huntingdonshire organizations including schools could sign up to gain access to support and funding opportunities to increase youth social action, recognizing the benefits this provides.

2. Support Youth Services and Create a Youth Action Plan

Create through collaboration with young people and organisations across Huntingdonshire, an action plan for the district that sets out how to plan and deliver youth services. This includes preparing a comprehensive map of youth services and out of school activities across the district. Then invest in services and assets that can deliver opportunities for children and young people. This could include community transport options for rural areas, encouraging existing community organisations and spaces to deliver more youth specific activities and providing adequate resources for youth work. The action plan may identify priorities for young people in the district, for example the need for investment in mental health support or requirements to widen participation in youth services to meet Huntingdonshire's changing demographics.

3. Youth volunteering networks

Huntingdonshire already has a strong voluntary sector. Enhancing youth participation would support skills building, create opportunities for meaningful social interaction and deliver community benefits.

A network could be established between youth organisations and existing voluntary groups to establish a programme for youth volunteering that balances the interests of children and young people with the specific opportunities Huntingdonshire has to offer. This could be linked to digital tools and incentives to widen participation.

Youth volunteer networks could also make the most of links to opportunities in nearby cities, to broaden the horizon of children and young people, particularly those who may not have access without family support.



Journey Four

Home to beautiful, local landscapes and pioneering global ambitions — in 2040 Huntingdonshire will be net zero carbon. We set out to be a leader in green innovation making the most of our wonderful natural assets.

You said...



'All houses should have no carbon footprint.'



'We should be protecting what we already have.'



'There needs to be more done to make people change'



environmental innovation

zero carbon became
the norm?

our natural assets inspired
a new infrastructure?

WHAT IF?

all our energy was
produced within the
district?

we accelerated
climate action?

What if...

zero carbon became the norm?

In a world where... concern over the climate emergency has failed to be translated into serious action, the economy and finance mechanisms remain intertwined with the fossil fuel industry. Huntingdonshire produces 5.3 tonnes of carbon dioxide per person per year compared to the UK average of 5.2 tonnes, and our overall emissions are 88% higher than the UK average, mainly due to road traffic.

There is a place... that has the conditions for a rapid transition to net zero – plenty of versatile space for rewilding, developing carbon sinks and building renewable energy projects, as well as a community who support climate action especially if they can see tangible benefits.

Which could become... a test bed for initiatives that fast track the transition to net zero and the circular economy, a system based on re-use and regeneration. Where major infrastructure projects and new forms of financing go hand in hand with widespread behaviour change for both businesses and individuals. Where net zero initiatives don't feel like compromises but part of a bright future.

But only if... we establish a culture of openness to experimentation, taking risks and investing in ambitious net zero projects that build on current expertise and experience whilst balancing other priorities, proving to communities that they can share in the benefits of these schemes.

Source: Huntingdonshire BEIS Emission Data 2020, Huntingdonshire District Council Climate Strategy

What could we do?

1.

Improve energy efficiency

A grant scheme could be established to provide financing for homeowners and businesses to better insulate buildings. This would improve energy efficiency, reducing energy demand and its associated cost and carbon emissions.

Financing mechanisms could include grants, preferential loans or a mechanism to encourage groups of homeowners or businesses to coordinate to achieve economies of scale.

A drive to insulate would also create new business and employment opportunities across the district. This model could also explore localised insulation production business models, such as the use of reed-mace which would also help restore fenlands.

2.

Deliver re-wilding projects

Carbon sinks are natural environments that remove more carbon than they produce, which in Huntingdonshire includes woodlands, scrublands and wetlands.

Land owners should be encouraged to deliver rewilding projects that maximise the role of the landscape as a carbon sink whilst also promoting biodiversity. This could work across different environments; from the planting of street trees, to increasing land set aside for nature in agricultural fields, to improving the carbon sink function of existing open spaces or delivering ambitious rewilding projects such as the Great Fen.

In addition, processes to estimate the amount of carbon absorbed could be developed to measure progress.



Leeds Climate Innovation District

Achieving low or zero carbon does not need to feel like a compromise. The Climate Innovation District in Leeds has created a desirable, sustainable urban community on former industrial land in the heart of Leeds.

The district integrates housing with healthcare, schools, offices and manufacturing plant surrounded by diverse and accessible open spaces. The buildings are designed to near Passivhaus standard, made from cross laminated timber frames and powered by 100% renewable energy.

Source: Leeds Climate Innovation District, [link](#)



3.

Support developments to function like the circular economy

Circular economy is a system where waste and pollution are eliminated, goods and materials are re-used and nature is regenerated. We could investigate if developments can function like the circular economy to achieve net zero carbon. This includes design allowing for repair and reuse, maximising the use of shared resources, considering embedded carbon in the building materials and construction process, as well as ensuring energy efficiency and use of renewable energy sources while in operation. This would need to be defined and achieved through collaboration with all stakeholders.

We could encourage residential and commercial buildings to achieve high sustainability standards. Awareness campaigns could increase the understanding of and demand for environmentally friendly homes.

What if...

our natural assets inspired a new infrastructure?

In a world where... societies have ignored and exploited nature, the climate crisis is accelerating with devastating effects including dramatic floods and droughts. In Huntingdonshire it is expected that nearly 1 in 10 homes will be affected by river flooding by 2100.

There is a place... that is defined by its lush, varied natural landscape, with river valleys, woodlands, meadows and fenlands.

Which could become... home to an extensive network of nature-based infrastructure which mimics or incorporates natural processes to create resilient urban and natural environments with enhanced biodiversity. Through wetlands, water meadows, green roofs, rain gardens and natural water filtration — we work in step with nature instead of against it.

But only if... we repaired and retrofitted ageing infrastructure, supported new nature-based solutions both in the public realm and in private buildings and protected and enhanced existing habitats.

Source: Fairness, nature and communities: addressing climate change in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, CPICC. HDC Climate Strategy

Guiding Lights

Hammarby Sjöstad

New neighbourhoods across the UK and Europe are already leading the way by integrating nature based solutions into urban neighbourhoods.

Hammarby Sjöstad represents a complete infrastructural project in which energy, water, transportation, and waste collection systems were designed to work together as an “eco-cycle”. The integration and remediation of existing water features and incorporating sustainable urban drainage systems achieves greater resilience to extreme climates. The landscapes are designed to be multi-functional, naturally managing flood waters, increasing biodiversity and creating places for informal play.

Source: Hammarby Sjöstad, [link](#)



1.

Reduce water consumption

Water is one of our most precious resources, and is particularly vulnerable as the effects of the climate crisis become apparent.

Rainwater harvesting is the process of collecting and filtering rainfall from the roof of residential and commercial buildings. Greywater recycling collects wastewater from domestic appliances such as washing machines, baths, showers and sinks and treats this so it can be re-used. A programme of retrofit and standards for new developments could be investigated to fast track the transition to more sustainable water management, reducing demand whilst delivering savings.

2.

Promote biodiverse back gardens

Re-wilding doesn't just have to mean nature reserves and large open spaces; back gardens can be home to a diverse range of habitats. A promotional campaign developed with local conservation groups could encourage individuals to take steps in their own homes and neighbourhoods to increase the role of gardens as habitats and green corridors.

This could include building ponds or nesting opportunities for birds, insects and mammals or involve planting species that are great for pollinators, with a wide variety of species that flower throughout the year. Avoiding the use of pesticides, herbicides and insecticides as well as soils containing peat would also reduce harmful environmental impacts.

These steps deliver benefits for humans too, creating beautiful and peaceful spaces that are good for our mental health and teach us about our natural world.

3.

Retrofit sustainable drainage systems

Sustainable urban drainage solutions mimic natural processes to reduce the risk of flooding. By increasing permeable surfaces and planting, rain and floodwaters are better able to infiltrate into the soils and slow the rate of surface run off.

This involves replacing hard standing with more permeable surfaces, green and blue roofs, restoring wetlands and planting rain gardens.

Guidance for individual homeowners would raise awareness of the benefits and advise on small scale solutions. Planning policy could consider requirements that new developments deliver multifunctional green infrastructure including sustainable drainage. More large scale retrofit projects such as redesigning open spaces in flood prone areas and retrofitting road side raingardens could also be explored.

What if...

all our energy was produced within the district?

In a world where... we are faced by the perfect storm of energy, climate and cost of living crisis, we are all feeling the impact. Individual household energy bills are skyrocketing, influenced by global politics. This can make it a challenge to invest in the future even though we know these issues will only get worse.

There is a place.. that has a strong, aspirational business community, many of which are clustered in networks, as well as flat landscapes and a dry and sunny climate. This includes places and organisations such as Waterside Green Energy that are beginning to implement community energy projects.

Which could become... a beacon of community energy production, with local people owning the process and reaping the benefits. From solar, wind and ground source heat pumps to processing reedmace for insulation, we can use our natural resources to power green growth across the district.

But only if... we develop new models of investment and ownership, with credible programmes and long-term support for both energy generation methods and retrofitting where possible to increase energy efficiency. Only if we create a mechanism which all people are aware of and can afford to participate in.

What could we do?

1.

Fast-track community energy

Community groups, partners and businesses could be inspired by the Waterside Green Energy Project to come together to develop their own community energy projects, taking collective action to reduce, purchase, manage and generate energy. These projects have an emphasis on local engagement and control and the local community benefits collectively from the outcomes.

This could be achieved through collaboration between partners and businesses to exploit funding and opportunity for local power generation. Toolkits could also be prepared that set out steps required to get different types of energy projects up and running, including information on grants and funding streams, advice on governance arrangements or organisational structures and lists of resources or help available.

2.

Embed renewable energy generation

We could investigate the delivery of renewable energy generation through new developments. The appropriate technique would be dependent on the local context and scale of the schemes. For example a network of ground source heat pumps could be more appropriate for larger developments, small wind turbines may be more appropriate for rural communities and solar PV's could be required on rooftops.

New and innovative approaches to renewable energy generation should be encouraged where appropriate. There could also be support programmes in place to encourage sensitive retrofit of existing homes and places.

Guiding Lights



Waterside Green Energy

Communities in Huntingdonshire are already taking initiative, developing local, resilient, zero carbon energy projects.

Waterside Green Energy project is a charitable cooperative established in 2020. It seeks to develop and implement local renewable energy projects to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030. In particular, it is exploring how to implement hydropower generation on the River Great Ouse near Little Paxton. This has the potential to generate 860,000 KW hours per year equivalent to the energy required by over 300 homes whilst saving 257 tonnes of CO2 emissions per year.

Source: Waterside Green Energy, [link](#)

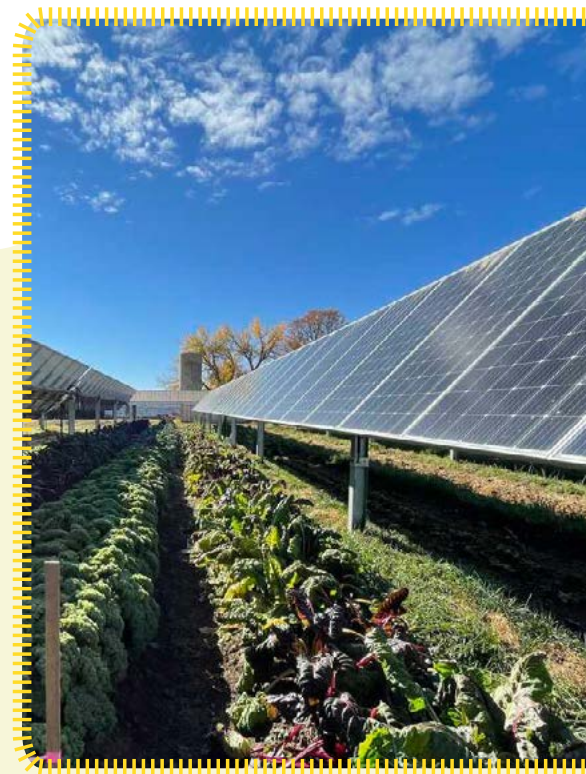


3.

Promote multi-functional agricultural land

Huntingdonshire's wide flat landscapes and dry sunny climate are ideal conditions for renewable wind or solar energy generation and there are many initiatives already in place. Huntingdonshire is well placed to become a leader in the transition to net zero by expanding this energy generation in the right places.

Given the significant role of agriculture in the district, renewable energy could be delivered in tandem with agricultural practices such as innovative stacking systems where arable and pastoral farming take place under solar panel systems. Green waste could also be converted through anaerobic digesters into gas for use in cooking and heating as well as a fertiliser.



What if...

we accelerated climate action?

In a world where... climate change is beginning to impact every aspect of society, young people are leading the shift in mindset and lifestyle. 78% agreed that looking after the environment was important to them but do not feel that enough is being done.

There is a place... that has great schools, community and business networks where many people, particularly the young, are in touch with the natural world through our abundant green spaces and where steps, such as Eco Councils, are already underway.

Which could become... a place where children and young people lead the net zero revolution. Where young people drive decision making and where the necessary steps to fast track change is clear for residents, businesses, the voluntary sector and communities and they are all held accountable.

But only if... action planning involves all stakeholders, reflects local capabilities and addresses inequalities. Decision making on how to balance sometimes competing priorities should be transparent and reflect local opinion, and young people who will be most impacted by these choices are meaningfully involved in the decision making process.

Source: The Children's People and Nature Report, [link](#)

Guiding Lights

Our City, Our World

Schools across Brighton & Hove have worked together to produce a climate change, sustainability and environmental education programme.

The council, schools and local groups work collaboratively to develop and implement a Sustainability, Climate Change and Environmental Curriculum across all phases and types of school. This enables young people to learn about the environment, develop skills to investigate their environment and learn how to make intelligent, informed decisions to care for the environment and support climate justice.

There are also steps to develop action plans to become leading sustainable institutions.

Source: Our City Our World, [link](#)



1.

Establish a Youth Climate Council

A Youth Climate Council could be established made up of interested representatives from children and young people across the district. They would come together on a regular basis to formulate policy proposals or review directions and decisions.

These would then be included in internal processes to create a direct link between policy makers, politicians and the people most likely to be affected by decision making.

The Youth Climate Council could also collaborate with other networks or Youth Councils at different scales, to extend their remit beyond local government.

2.

Provide business support and training

There is a wealth of expertise and understanding in our community about sustainable business practices and how to facilitate business models towards the circular economy. Huntingdonshire District Council could lead on or partner with existing providers to encourage and support businesses in improving the sustainability of their work practices.

This could include training opportunities and establishing networks with the business community to deliver sustainability improvements through cooperation and knowledge sharing. We could also establish metrics and targets to understand progress, and provide incentives for the transition.

3.

Develop advice, training and awareness programmes

Education providers across the district could develop dedicated courses and information material on various aspects of sustainability and better integrate sustainability into the existing curriculum. This could also include providing guidance on small steps local people, community groups, the voluntary sector and businesses can make to reduce their impact.

This could build upon the expertise that already exists across Huntingdonshire, linking with existing organisations, businesses and groups. For example, courses on ecology, rewilding and green infrastructure could link with the Great Fen project. Training on the circular economy could partner with businesses at Alconbury Weald. Training in construction could focus on low carbon methods such as modular housing, cross laminated timber or more traditional building methods such as rammed earth.



Journey Five

Greener, smarter and a lot more fun — the future of travel in Huntingdonshire will transition away from the car. We welcome effective public transport, on-demand travel options, a sustainable distribution and an attractive cycling and walking network.

You said...



'Public transport needs to be frequent, cheap and reliable otherwise it won't work.'



'More needs to be done to create a network, rather than just a hodge potch of paths.'



'The river is lovely; it would be great to see paddleboards and rowers on it more often.'



travel
transformed

the car wasn't the first
choice of transport?

it was fun to move around
here?

WHAT IF?

we were more connected to
our region?

transport responded to our
needs?

What if...

the car wasn't the first choice of transport?

In a world where... petrol prices are high, further exacerbated by the energy crisis, we need new modes of getting around. Public transport is inadequate and the car remains a necessity to get around, especially in rural areas. The impacts of car-led carbon emissions on the environment are alarming and Huntingdonshire is currently the most polluting district in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough in terms of road transport emissions.

There is a place... home to communities who genuinely care about the climate crisis. The district has green picturesque landscapes and flat towns perfect for cycling and is already trialling new approaches to public transport including the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway and the on demand Vectare Bus.

Which could become... a place where it is easy to make trips by green, zero-carbon public transport that is fast, frequent, reliable and affordable; where short trips are only made by walking or cycling through safe picturesque routes; and where bus stops provide a sheltered, comfortable hub, equipped with cycle parking and charging facilities and which provide real time bus information.

But only if... we invest in our public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure and transform it into a sustainable, efficient and convenient system which is subsidised and thus affordable to all.

Source: Huntingdonshire BEIS Emission Data, 2020

What could we do?

1.

Upgrade the bus service

Buses serve the district as the key public transport mode. The most regular bus services are to the key service centres, the market towns. Nevertheless, the more rural parts of the district are less well connected to service centres.

The provision of more frequent and reliable bus routes to villages and rural settlements, every day of the week and from early in the morning until late in the evening, will help reduce reliance on the car. The service should also be affordable to become a better alternative to the car.

The timetables of these routes should be integrated with the wider bus, Guided Busway and rail services to create a fully integrated service.

2.

Trial car free days

To support the transition away from car dominated travel, special car free days could celebrate sustainable travel choices.

The concept of giving streets back to residents can promote wider and longer term positive effects. The council can support residents in closing streets to traffic over weekends to create play streets and parklets and encourage local groups to organise neighbourhood cycle rides or walking routes. People can be reminded of the joys of active travel and discover desirable walking or cycling routes which they could utilise in their daily lives.

The days can also be used to trial options and approaches, before committing to expensive projects or to work out gaps in the network.

Source: Living Streets, [link](#)



Guiding Lights



Every village, every hour

The rural region of North Hesse in Germany boasts a bus network that reaches every village of more than 200 residents, at least every hour, with the ambition to double public transport use in the region by 2030. This is achieved through a mix of public and commercial operators who provide a service for at least 12 hours a day, seven days a week. Overall it runs 32 million passenger trips by bus per year. The bus service is in alignment with the rail timetables, offering an integrated system.

Source: Every village, every hour - A comprehensive bus network for rural England, 2021, [link](#)



3. Establish mobility hubs

Building on the potential expansion of the bus and the Guided Busway network, the establishment of mobility hubs in key stops along their network can enhance the whole-journey experience of people travelling within, into and out of the district.

Mobility hubs concentrate complementary transport modes, which minimise or eliminate the need for car. Bus stops can be co-located with cycle and car hire facilities, sheltered cycle parking, car parking and be equipped with real time bus information, wifi or electric bike charging points. These hubs can substitute the usage of car for the entire journey or parts of it and can serve people travelling from urban and rural locations alike.

What if...

it was fun to move around here?

In a world where... people are rediscovering the pleasure of being out on a bike or going for a stroll, active travel on accessible routes is recognised as not only a fun way to connect with our surroundings, but also an essential part of a healthy lifestyle.

There is a place... that is characterised by its picturesque towns and villages with beautiful flat landscapes and expanding network of trails and quietways.

Which could become... a joyful, safe and inviting place for everyone, whether 8 or 80, to travel on an extended, safe and fun pedestrian and cycle network that crosses urban areas and beautiful natural landscapes, connecting homes with services, employment, schools and leisure opportunities.

But only if... the pedestrian and cycling routes form a comprehensive joined up network including quiet country lanes and riverside routes linking towns, villages and key destinations. This should be supported by infrastructure including bike parking spaces, showers and repair stations. To increase participation, e-mobility hire infrastructure should be widely available and promoted across the district.

Guiding Lights



Joyful Journeys

Waltham Forest is one of the leading Boroughs of the country piloting sustainable transport improvements with funding from Transport for London. Through its 'Mini Holland' scheme, it has delivered 29km of segregated cycle lanes and 62 improved pedestrian crossings. The scheme focuses on creating cycle lanes with safe dedicated space, walking and cycle routes between town centres, cycle hubs and designing new attractive outdoor spaces along the way.

Source: Enjoy Waltham Forest, [link](#)



1.

Establish a network of cycle routes

The existing cycling paths which are mainly concentrated within towns and in certain open spaces, are an invaluable asset which can be built on to create a comprehensive and joined up network.

The delivery of cycle paths will be given priority away from main roads, with appropriate signage and lighting. A comprehensive plan of existing and new paths could establish commuting routes in town and village centres.

Apart from the utility routes, leisure routes can take advantage of the district's rich natural assets and traverse its scenic parks and rivers while connecting them to the rest of the district.

2.

Have fun on the river

The River Great Ouse winds its way across Huntingdonshire connecting market towns and villages. Promoting boating and paddle-boarding on the river could be a slow leisurely way to move about the district and support great quality of life.

Celebrating the river could also be a great way of building local identity and promoting slow sustainable tourism.

3.

Improve wayfinding and safety

Safe and accessible pedestrian and cycle routes are much more likely to be used for both leisure and commuting purposes. Signage that incorporates strong graphics, simple maps and pointers to interesting landmarks which is co-designed with residents and local interest groups will help to create a clear shared identity for the district. Improved wayfinding should be delivered along with wider accessibility improvements such as better lighting, mobility and visibility impairment adaptations, crossing enhancements and outdoor seating, to aid people of all abilities.

Signage should also be placed in strategic locations including near bus stops, train stations, high streets, mobility hubs, and places of interest.



What if...

we were more connected to our region?

In a world where... road traffic is steadily increasing, causing Huntingdonshire to have much higher greenhouse gas emissions than the UK average. And where housing and employment growth put pressure on the region's transport infrastructure.

There is a place... that is located at the heart of the UK with links to London, the Midlands and the North, through key routes such as the M11, A1(M), A14, the East Coast Mainline with direct Thameslink Great Northern services to London and the Guided Busway connecting the district to wider Cambridgeshire.

Which could become... a place linked to its neighbours, to wider Cambridgeshire and beyond, which makes longer journeys easy, fast and reliable. A place where strategic housing and employment locations and other key attractions of the district are conveniently connected with its surrounding areas, thus drawing people in.

But only if... strategic collaborations are secured which raise and direct funding towards regional transport infrastructure improvements.

Source: Huntingdonshire Strategic Transport Study - Baseline Report, Mott Macdonald, 2017. Image to the right: Thameslink Railway



What could we do?

1.

Expand the Guided Busway

The Cambridgeshire Guided Busway has proven its success by connecting housing to employment locations and residents to central places. The Busway is already linked to Huntingdonshire with three frequent and high quality services into and out of Cambridge to St Ives but less frequently to Huntingdon and the bus network also misses out rural locations and key employment hubs outside of market towns.

It will be a key move to expand the bus service across the district and make trips more frequent, reliable and affordable which will encourage more passengers. This upgraded network will effectively connect the entire district and make the bus the more desirable option to the car.

2.

Improve highway capacity

Given Huntingdonshire's location, its strategic road corridors are vital in accommodating local, regional and even national journeys. Frequently these routes are impacted by heavy traffic, resulting in longer journey times and safety concerns.

Investment in key highway improvements, especially for congestion hotspots, road upgrades, junction enhancements and bypasses, will result in more reliable and safe car trips.

To mitigate their impact, highway improvements should be accompanied by sustainable drainage, green infrastructure and biodiversity corridors.

Source: CPCA Local Transport Plan, [link](#)



Local Transport and Connectivity Plan

The Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority’s Local Transport and Connectivity Plan outlines the long term strategy towards transport improvements across the region as it aims to bring communities closer together. Travel Demand Management will aim to reduce pressure on the transport system, namely by offering public transport alternatives. A 15% cut in car mileage will also be targeted to help cut carbon emissions. The Plan will even include internet connectivity for all, to enable access to jobs and reduce social inequalities.

Source: CPCA Local Transport Plan, [link](#)
Image below: Cambridgeshire County Council



3.

Link up strategic locations

Sustainable housing and employment growth can only be accommodated by directing growth to locations well connected with public transport, and by strategically planning for mobility infrastructure in accordance with growth needs.

In addition to housing and employment, other key attractors, such as natural spaces, should also be part of the regional transport network.

This way, the district’s residents get closer to the wider region and its opportunities, and conversely the district becomes more attractive to people from outside, for living, working and leisure.

What if...

transport responded to our needs?

In a world where... people are reliant on cars, especially in rural regions, traditional public transport options are often lacking. Yet new digital services and technologies mean that individual car ownership is being reassessed.

There is a place... that is predominantly rural, with villages and towns scattered around expansive landscapes, but shows that change is possible with pioneering public transport options including the Vectare Bus service (previously the Ting Bus) and the Guided Busway.

Which could become... a place where reliable, responsive and affordable on-demand mobility options with joint ticketing mean that it is easy to live and move around without your own car. The district could become a hub for on-demand mobility with car-sharing, ride-sharing, bike-sharing and the extended Vectare Bus serving all our urban and rural neighbourhoods.

But only if... communities, businesses, developers and transport authorities collaborate to attract and support mobility investment and commit to using different forms of mobility. In addition, on-demand options should be widely encouraged and promoted, so people know it is an easy option. We must allow for sufficient time and testing to create a system that is easy, affordable and effective.

Top image: Voi e-bikes

Guiding Lights



Fflecsi Flexible Bus Service

Fflecsi is an on-demand bus service provided in partnership with Transport for Wales. Through the app, the website or by calling, customers can book their trips at their desired times, including pick-up and drop-off locations. The bus's route is updated in real time to reflect passenger demands as they arise. The service is particularly valuable for rural communities, where public transport is limited.

The app even provides information on other public transport options to help customers decide the best means of travel for them.

Source: fflecsi, [link](#)



1.

Grow the Vectare Bus coverage

The Vectare Bus is currently one of the uncelebrated heroes of the district. It provides an on demand service currently only in West Huntingdonshire, 6 days a week until 8pm. This service connects some of the most rural parts of the district with towns such as St Neots and Huntingdon.

The pilot could become a permanent service and extended to the entire district, especially with an expanded service on Sundays and later in the night. The App makes it easy to instantly book trips on the phone and get picked up at the chosen time. Promoting the service to more residents would increase its passenger numbers and solve many transport issues faced by rural areas.

2.

Promote cycle sharing

Access to cycling does not have to depend on owning a bike. Cycle share is an effective way to attract more people to embrace cycling without the commitment and investment. A commercial or community bike share pilot can be established with bikes and stations in key locations and especially close to bus stops, the Guided Busway and mobility hubs. This could include a mix of traditional bikes, e-bikes and cargo bikes to meet diverse needs.

One-way cycling trips could increase and become the preferred mode for last-mile travel combined with other means of transport for short amenity trips. In order to be successful, the service has to be complemented with the right cycling infrastructure, creating integrated networks of safe routes with clear signage.

3.

Establish a car club

The rural parts of the district depend heavily on the car due to public transport deficiencies, while the urban areas are frequently congested and face parking problems. Some trips will always be more convenient by car, nonetheless they do not have to depend on car ownership.

Establishing a car club through a partnership between the community, businesses and local authorities, could cover this need. An appropriate provider can be attracted and supported through dedicated parking spaces in convenient locations, charging facilities and signage. A marketing campaign could be rolled out to inform the district of the benefits, money savings, convenience and environmental advantages of car clubs.





Fewer peat = carbon emissions.

Amazing heritage and environmental projects walks/trails



Taking the Vision Forward

 This is just the start

Enchanted Fairy Trail





this is just the start

In this world of change, we need big ideas and bold thinking to inspire us to look beyond the status quo as we head out on this journey together.

Huntingdonshire Futures has brought together a community of people who truly believe that our district has a brilliant future ahead. Together we have defined what that destination is and how we might travel there.

This process has drawn on our heads and our hearts. It's taken imagination and creativity to look beyond the realms of the here and now and inspire ideas that get people excited. It's also involved picking apart those ideas to figure out how we might achieve them in a way that feels achievable, sustainable and practical.

So, we invite you to continue on the next steps of this journey as together we look at the practical actions that we can deliver to deliver a Brighter Future for Huntingdonshire.

This is just the start...

Huntingdonshire

FUTURE S

A Brighter Future for Huntingdonshire.