APPENDIX 4:   POLICY SCOPING SHEETS

POLICY SCOPING: KEY PRINCIPLES

Policy area
Sustainable Development

Policy approach
Policies in the plan will: • Indicate that all development proposals should contribute to the pursuit of sustainable development. • Set out criteria that will be used to assess a proposal's contribution to this objective, including: − making efficient use of land and existing infrastructure − minimising the use of non-renewable energy sources and construction materials − limiting water consumption, and having no adverse impact on water supplies and flood risk − minimising emissions of greenhouse gasses and other forms of pollution (including air, water, soil, noise, vibration and light) − maintaining and enhancing the range and vitality of characteristic habitats and species − conserving the diversity and distinctiveness of Huntingdonshire's towns, villages and landscapes − conserving buildings, sites and areas of architectural or historic importance − creating places that are attractive, appropriate to their surroundings, adaptable, and which are accessible and safe to use for all sections of the community − contributing to the social and economic well-being of the local population (e.g. through enhanced access to housing, employment, service and leisure opportunities, and improving public health) − limiting the need to travel, and increasing opportunities to make necessary journeys by foot, cycle or public transport

Policy source(s)	
PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPG1; draft PPS1
RPG6 / draft RPG14	RPG 6 (policies 1, 3); draft RPG14 (policy SS1)
Structure Plan policies	P1/1, P1/2, P1/3, P8/1
Existing LP policies	
Community Strategy	Long-term vision of protecting and improving the environment, promoting opportunity for all and supporting continued economic success
Best practice guidance	*Planning for Sustainable Development* (DETR, 1998) *The Planning Response to Climate Change* (ODPM, 2004)
Other sources	Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

Reason for policy approach
Promoting 'sustainable development' is central to what the planning system seeks to achieve: to improve the quality of life, both now and in the future, by managing the way that land is used. It is now a legal requirement that plans be produced with this overarching objective in mind. Sustainable development is defined most commonly as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (*World Commission on Environment & Development, 1987*). The policy approach signals the importance of this objective for all developments, and sets out the key criteria that will be used to assess proposals against it.

Alternative approaches

None. The promotion of sustainable development is required by national and strategic guidance, and criteria are necessary to indicate how this objective will be interpreted in practice.

POLICY SCOPING: KEY PRINCIPLES

Policy area
Settlement Hierarchy

Policy approach
Policies in the plan will: • Identify a settlement hierarchy for use in determining the scale of development appropriate in different locations • Identify St Neots, Huntingdon, St Ives and Ramsey as 'Market Towns' • Identify Yaxley, Godmanchester, Sawtry, Brampton, Little Paxton and Fenstanton as 'Key Centres' (Potential Growth) • Identify Somersham, Warboys, Buckden and Kimbolton as 'Key Centres' (Limited Growth). • List other villages as 'Smaller Settlements' • Indicate that the majority of new development will be directed to the Market Towns and Key Centres (Potential Growth)

Policy source(s)	
PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPG3; PPS7
RPG6 / draft RPG14	RPG6 (policies 4, 6, 22, 23); draft RPG 14 (policies SS1, SS2, SS9, CSR1, GPSR1)
Structure Plan policies	P1/1, P2/2, P5/5, P9/4, P10/3
Existing LP policies	STR1, STR3, STR4, STR5, STR6
Community Strategy	Specific action of developing policies to promote sustainable communities
Best practice guidance	*Reducing Transport Emissions Through Planning* (DoE / DoT, 1993) *PPG13: A Guide to Better Practice* (DoE / DoT, 1995) *Sustainable Settlements* (University of West of England / LGMB, 1995) *Planning for Sustainable Development* (DETR, 1998)
Other sources	*Are Villages Sustainable?* (Countryside Agency, 2001)

Reason for policy approach

The settlement hierarchy provides a framework for managing the scale of development in different locations. It steers most new development towards those larger places that offer the best access to services and facilities (both now and for the foreseeable future). This can help reduce the need to travel, as well as making good use of existing infrastructure and previously-developed land in urban areas.

The proposed hierarchy reflects a combination of strategic guidance and local circumstances. National and regional policies give priority to urban areas for accommodating growth; An accompanying paper explains how this approach has been interpreted for Huntingdonshire, but in summary the categories in the hierarchy reflect the following characteristics:

Market Towns:	The main towns in the district, offering a wide range of shops and services, and a variety of employment opportunities
Key Centres (Potential Growth):	Large settlements with a reasonable range of shops and services, employment opportunities and good access by foot, cycle or public transport to a city or market town
Key Centres (Limited Growth):	Large settlements with a reasonable range of shops and services (and in some cases employment opportunities), and which provide facilities for nearby villages
Smaller Settlements:	Villages which are in general smaller than the Key Centres, and with limited (or no) services and facilities

Alternative approaches

The hierarchy could be changed in various ways to facilitate a wider distribution of growth: by designating a greater number of places as 'Key Settlements' (whether 'Potential Growth' or 'Limited Growth'); by introducing an intermediate tier of settlements between Key Centres (Limited Growth) and Smaller Settlements; or by indicating that the majority of new development will be directed to all the key centres (effectively, abandoning the distinction between those identified as 'Potential Growth' and 'Limited Growth'). However, the effect of all such changes would be to weaken the link between additional growth and ease of access to shops, services and employment opportunities. This would be contrary to the principle of limiting the need to travel and promoting a more sustainable form of development. There is no evidence that a wider distribution of growth would have any significant impact on retaining or enhancing village facilities (due to the many other influences on commercial decisions, growth would need to occur on a large scale at particular villages to have much effect).

Alternatively, the settlement hierarchy could be based on the physical capacity of different settlements to accommodate growth (taking into account their form, character and land availability), rather than access to services and facilities. However, this would not ensure that national and strategic policies to reduce the need to travel are being addressed most effectively. There are, in any case, policies elsewhere in this DPD to conserve and enhance the character of places, while the settlement hierarchy's emphasis on urban areas will help to safeguard the character of Huntingdonshire's villages (many of which have experienced considerable growth during recent years).

POLICY SCOPING: KEY PRINCIPLES

Policy area
Development in the Countryside

Policy approach

Policies in the plan will:
• Indicate that outside the defined limits of the Market Towns and Key Centres (Potential & Limited Growth), and outside the existing built-up framework of the Smaller Settlements, development will be restricted to the following categories:
  – that which is essential to the efficient operation of agriculture, horticulture or forestry, or required for the purposes of outdoor recreation, mineral extraction, waste disposal, infrastructure provision or national defence
  – the alteration, replacement or change of use of existing buildings in accordance with other policies in the plan
  – limited and specific forms of housing or business development, as provided for in the relevant chapters of the plan
  – land allocated for particular purposes in other Development Plan Documents

Policy source(s)	
PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPS7
RPG6 / draft RPG14	RPG6 (policy 12)
Structure Plan policies	P1/2
Existing LP policies	En17
Community Strategy	Desired outcomes include a high quality built and natural environment
Best practice guidance	
Other sources	

Reason for policy approach
It is government policy that development in the countryside should be strictly controlled, in order to conserve its character and natural resources. This policy sets out the limited circumstances in which development outside settlements will be allowed. The distinction between settlements and the countryside will be drawn in two ways: • In the case of the Market Towns and Key Centres, where most development is expected to take place, by drawing 'settlement boundaries' around the existing built-up areas. This will give a clear delineation between urban areas and the countryside. • In Smaller Settlements, where only limited forms of development will be permitted, policies will refer to the 'built-up framework'; criteria in the supporting text will indicate that this excludes buildings that are clearly detached from the main body of the settlement, and gardens and other undeveloped land within the curtilage of buildings at the edge of the settlement.

Alternative approaches

None considered in relation to restricting development in the countryside, as this is a cornerstone of national and strategic policies.

Defined boundaries for smaller settlements were considered. However, boundaries can be misinterpreted as implying that development within them is, in principle, acceptable. Such an interpretation would be incompatible with the policy approach of strict limitation on development away from the Market Towns and Key Centres. In addition, the limited forms of development that will be permissible within Smaller Settlements (such as residential infilling) can be guided appropriately by clear criteria-based policies. Settlement boundaries for Market Towns and Key Centres are considered more appropriate given the wider range of development that may suitably be located there, and the fact that these places will be the focus of development activity.

POLICY SCOPING: KEY PRINCIPLES

Policy area
Mixed development

Policy approach

Policies in the plan will indicate that:
• Development proposals should incorporate a compatible mix of uses, where opportunities exist to foster more sustainable communities
• Particular opportunities for securing mixed development in Huntingdonshire include:
   – the integration of appropriate community facilities and employment opportunities into the development of new neighbourhoods
   – the introduction of more residential accommodation into town centres (including flats over shops)
   – the incorporation of live/work units within residential developments
• The business element of live/work units should be limited to activities falling within the B1 Use Class, and should occupy at least one quarter of the internal floorspace of each unit

Policy source(s)	
PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPG1; PPG3; PPG6; draft PPS6; PPS7; PPG13
RPG6 / draft RPG14	RPG6 (policy 3); draft RPG14 (policy SS16)
Structure Plan policies	P1/3
Existing LP policies	
Community Strategy	
Best practice guidance	*Shaping Neighbourhoods* (Barton, Grant & Guise, 2003) *Mixed-Use Development* (DTLR, 2002) *Urban Design Compendium* (English Partnerships / Housing Corporation, 2000) *Planning for Sustainable Development* (DETR, 1998)
Other sources	*Living at Work* (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2000)

Reason for policy approach
A mix of uses within an area can help to create diverse and interesting places, reduce the need to travel between home, work, and services, and cut the risk of crime (by ensuring that the area is populated at all times of the day). It can be achieved in various ways: by incorporating an appropriate mix of uses in the development of large sites, through the incremental redevelopment of small sites in ways which increase diversity, and by including a mix of compatible uses within individual buildings where suitable opportunities arise (such as utilising vacant space above retail units). This policy approach indicates the importance of pursuing mixed development where possible, and highlights particular opportunities that exist within Huntingdonshire. Live/work units are a particular form of mixed use development which combine residential and business uses in one property. They are attractive to people establishing or seeking to expand a business while working from home, and may be appropriate in a variety of locations: for example, as an element within large new residential and mixed-use developments, or within established mixed-use areas such as town centres. It is important to ensure that a minimum proportion of each live/work unit is retained for business use (to prevent their loss to wholly residential buildings), and that the business activities carried out will not have an adverse impact on residential amenity.

Alternative approaches

None. The promotion of a mix of uses is required by national guidance.

POLICY SCOPING: KEY PRINCIPLES

Policy area
Amenity

Policy approach
Policies in the plan will indicate that development proposals should not have an unreasonable impact upon the living conditions of existing or future occupiers, within or adjoining the site, in terms of: • Access to daylight and sunlight • Privacy • Noise and disturbance • Fumes and other pollutants • Safety and security

Policy source(s)	
PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPG23; PPG24
RPG6 / draft RPG14	Draft RPG14 (policy SS16)
Structure Plan policies	P1/3
Existing LP policies	H30, H31, H34, H37, H38
Community Strategy	Desired outcomes include a healthy population and low crime / fear of crime
Best practice guidance	*Safer Places* (ODPM / Home Office, 2004)
Other sources	

Reason for policy approach
An important role of the planning system is to protect the public interest by preventing harm to the 'amenity' of those affected by development. This policy sets out the key criteria that will be used to judge whether a proposal could have an unreasonable impact upon amenity.

Alternative approaches
None. Safeguarding amenity is an important planning function, and one which needs clear criteria to articulate the key matters that will need to be assessed.

POLICY SCOPING: KEY PRINCIPLES

Policy area
Flood Risk

Policy approach
Policies in the plan will indicate that development should: • Not take place in areas at risk from flooding, unless suitable flood protection measures can be agreed and implemented • Not increase the risk of flooding to properties elsewhere (e.g. through a net increase in surface water run-off, or a reduction in the capacity of flood water storage areas) • Make use of sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) to manage surface water run-off, where technically feasible • Be informed by a flood risk assessment, unless the site lies within an area where there is little or no risk of flooding (i.e. the annual probability of flooding is less than 0.1%, or 1 in 1,000 years)

Policy source(s)	
PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPG 25
RPG6 / draft RPG14	RPG6 (policy 44); draft RPG14 (policy SS14)
Structure Plan policies	P1/2, P6/3
Existing LP policies	CS9
Community Strategy	Priority Action to reduce the risk and/or impact of flooding
Best practice guidance	*The Planning Response to Climate Change* (ODPM, 1994)
Other sources	

Reason for policy approach
Flooding is an important issue facing the district. Parts of some towns and villages have suffered from serious flooding during recent years, and episodes of heavy rain are forecast to increase as a result of climate change. The damage caused by floods is costly, disruptive and distressing for those affected, so it is essential that new development does not add to the risk that already exists. While development in areas at some risk of flooding may often be unavoidable (large parts of all the major towns in the district are within such areas), this policy approach requires mitigation measures so that there is no net increase in risk.

Alternative approaches
None. This approach is required by national and strategic guidance.

POLICY SCOPING: KEY PRINCIPLES

Policy area
Infrastructure requirements

Policy approach

Policies in the plan will indicate that:
• Development proposals should contribute towards the cost of providing infrastructure, and of meeting social and environmental requirements, where this is necessary to make a scheme acceptable in planning terms.
• The nature and scale of any planning obligations sought for this purpose will be related to the form of development, its potential impact upon the surrounding area and the need for contributions towards affordable housing requirements.
• Contributions may be necessary for some or all of the following:
  – education
  – health care
  – open space and recreation
  – footpaths, cycleways, highways and public transport
  – other community facilities (including meeting halls, library services and places of worship)
  – environmental improvements
  – drainage / flood prevention
  – affordable and key worker housing
• Contributions may also be required to meet the running costs of services and facilities provided through an obligation, where such costs cannot be met from the public purse in the short-term.
• The appropriate range and level of contributions will be assessed in a comprehensive manner, taking into account strategic infrastructure requirements and using standard charges where appropriate. Standards and formulae for calculating contributions will be set out in a Supplementary Planning Document.

Policy source(s)	
PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	Circular 1/97; Draft Revised Circular on Planning Obligations (2004)
RPG6 / draft RPG14	Draft RPG14 (policy IMP2)
Structure Plan policies	P6/1; P9/8
Existing LP policies	OB1, OB2
Community Strategy	Desired outcomes include improved and sustainable infrastructure for communities.
Best practice guidance	
Other sources	

Reason for policy approach

Development can place additional demands upon physical infrastructure and social facilities, as well as having impacts upon the environment. In many cases planning obligations will be required, so that provision is made for the necessary improvements to services and facilities, or to secure compensatory provision for any loss or damage created (e.g. a loss of open space). Obligations may also be necessary for wider planning objectives to be secured – in particular, the provision of affordable and key worker housing where this is justified.

This policy approach highlights the general principle that obligations will be required where necessary in planning terms, and indicates the broad range of matters that may need to be addressed. The detailed framework for calculating and negotiating obligations will be set out in a Supplementary Planning Document, enabling the basis for contributions to be updated relatively quickly.

Huntingdonshire forms part of a wider growth area, and some of the items for which contributions will be required will be strategic in nature (such as strategic open space). The formulae to be set out in SPD will allow for contributions from individual developments to be pooled where appropriate, but in all such cases the nature and scale of contributions sought will be related to the size of scheme and the extent to which it places additional demands upon the area.

Alternative approaches

None. Existing national guidance (Circular 1/97) requires development plans to set out policies indicating the circumstances in which planning obligations may be sought. Emerging guidance (in the draft revised Circular) reiterates the need for high-level policies in Development Plan Documents, indicates that formulae and standard charges may be used where appropriate, and points to Supplementary Planning Documents as the appropriate vehicles for setting out detailed requirements.

POLICY SCOPING: GREENSPACE

Policy area
Open space and recreational land

Policy approach
Policies in the plan will indicate that development proposals should not entail the whole or partial loss of open space within settlements, or of outdoor recreation facilities or allotments, unless all of the following criteria are satisfied: - There would be no harm to spaces which: - contribute to the distinctive form and character of a settlement   - create focal points within the built-up framework   - provide the setting for important buildings or monuments   - allow views into or out of a settlement   - The loss would not result in (or worsen) a shortfall in land used for informal or formal recreation, when assessed against the standards set out in the Local Development Framework   - Any replacement facility (or enhancement of the remainder of the existing site) provides a net benefit to the community in terms of the quality, availability and accessibility of open space or recreational opportunities

Policy source(s)	
PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPG17
RPG6 / draft RPG14	RPG6 (policy 37); RPG 14 (policy C5)
Structure Plan policies	P4/3
Existing LP policies	En14, En15, En16, R17
Community Strategy	Desired outcomes include a high quality built and natural environment, good cultural and leisure opportunities and a healthy population
Best practice guidance	*Green Spaces, Better Places* (DTLR, 2002) *Assessing Needs and Opportunities: A Companion Guide to PPG17* (ODPM, 2002)
Other sources	

Reason for policy approach
Many open spaces within Huntingdonshire's towns and villages make a significant contribution to their character and attractiveness. For the purpose of this policy approach 'open space' within settlements includes any undeveloped land such as parks, village greens, play areas, sports pitches, undeveloped plots, semi-natural areas and private gardens. It is important to prevent their loss where this would harm the visual quality of a settlement. Equally, many such spaces play a vital role in providing opportunities for formal or informal recreation, as do those parks, sports pitches and allotments located outside the built-up areas. The policy approach also safeguards all such sites of recreational value, unless there would be no shortfall of recreation land when assessed against the Council's standards, any replacement facility provides net benefits to the community, and there would be no visual harm as a result.

Alternative approaches

The approach taken to safeguarding land of recreational value is required by national and strategic guidance. In terms of protecting visually important open space within settlements, individual spaces could be identified and designated to give certainty about the areas covered by the policy approach. However, it would be difficult to do this in a sufficiently exhaustive and consistent manner across the whole district, given Huntingdonshire's size and the variety of spaces involved. As a result, spaces that 'missed' being designated would come under inappropriate pressure for development. The use of a criteria-based approach avoids this risk, and means that the character of spaces will need to be given full and careful consideration if development of them is proposed.

POLICY SCOPING: GREENSPACE

Policy area

Landscape Character

Policy approach

Policies in the plan will:
- Indicate that development proposals within or adjoining the countryside should respect and respond appropriately to the distinctive qualities of the surrounding landscape
- Set out criteria that will be used to assess a proposal's contribution to this objective, including:
    – avoiding the introduction of incongruous or intrusive elements into views (by virtue of the development's siting, scale, form, colour or use of materials)
    – conserving and enhancing natural or semi-natural vegetation characteristic of the area
    – retaining historic landscape features, such as field patterns, drains and hedgerows
- Require appropriate mitigation measures where harm to local landscape character as a result of necessary development is unavoidable

Policy source(s)

PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPS7
RPG6 / draft RPG14	RPG 6 (policy 37); draft RPG14 (policy ENV2)
Structure Plan policies	P7/4
Existing LP policies	En21
Community Strategy	Long term vision of protecting and improving the environment and promoting healthy lifestyles.
Best practice guidance	*Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland* (The Countryside Agency / Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002)
Other sources	*Huntingdonshire Landscape & Townscape Assessment* (HDC, 2004) *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment* (Landscape Institute / Institute of Environmental Assessment, 2002)

Reason for policy approach

As a predominantly rural district, Huntingdonshire's landscapes play a major role in shaping the character of our environment, stimulating leisure and tourism and supporting the overall 'quality of life'. The Huntingdonshire Landscape & Townscape Assessment identifies a number of landscape character areas across the district, and it is important that both the quality and distinctive characteristics of these areas are conserved and enhanced when new development occurs.

Alternative approaches

The existing 'Area of Best Landscape' designation which covers parts of the district could be retained as an alternative, or in addition to, the preferred criteria-based approach. However, it is government policy that such local designations should be maintained only where criteria-based policies would not provide sufficient protection. The policy approach outlined above requires all proposals within or adjoining the countryside to be assessed carefully for their potential landscape impact, regardless of whether they are in an area that might be regarded as 'best'. Therefore it protects the distinctive character of all Huntingdonshire's landscapes, and provides clear criteria for making appropriate judgements.

POLICY SCOPING: GREENSPACE

Trees, hedgerows and other environmental features

Policy approach

Policies in the plan will indicate that:
- Development proposals should minimise the risk of harm to trees, hedgerows or other environmental features of visual, historic or nature conservation value. Where such features lie within a development site, they should wherever possible be incorporated effectively within the landscape scheme.
- Proposals should not damage or destroy any tree protected by a Tree Preservation Order, or lying within a Conservation Area, unless:
  - it is in the interests of good arboricultural practice; or
  - the work would enable development to take place in the public interest, and would bring benefits that outweigh the harm to the trees concerned.
- Where harm to trees, hedgerows or other features of value is unavoidable, provision should be made for appropriate mitigation measures, reinstatement of features and/or compensatory planting and landscaping.

Policy source(s)

PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPS7
RPG6 / draft RPG14	RPG6 (policy 37); draft RPG14 (policy ENV4)
Structure Plan policies	P1/3
Existing LP policies	En18, En19, En20
Community Strategy	Desired outcome of a high quality built and natural environment
Best practice guidance	*Tree Preservation Orders: A Guide to the Law and Good Practice* (DETR, 2000)
Other sources	

Reason for policy approach

Many development sites contain or adjoin features such as trees, small areas of woodland, hedgerows, ponds and old boundary walls. These can be of great importance to the character and quality of the local environment. Often they are attractive in their own right, but they can also provide important habitats, focal points, a link with the past and contribute to the overall 'sense of place'.

To ensure that these benefits are retained, development proposals will be expected to avoid harm to such features wherever possible, and if necessary incorporate them within an appropriate landscape scheme. Mitigation, replacement or compensatory measures will be required when this cannot be achieved, to ensure that there is no loss of environmental value as a result of development.

Where specific trees or groups of trees are of particular value (such that their removal would have a significant impact upon the local environment and its enjoyment by the public), and are potentially under threat, the Council will make Tree Preservation Orders to protect them. Where trees are covered by TPOs, the policy approach safeguards them from damage or destruction unless there are overriding reasons for the work to go ahead.

Alternative approaches

None. A criteria-based approach, coupled with the protection of important trees using TPOs, is the most appropriate means of safeguarding important environmental features. Failure to do so would cause harm to the character of Huntingdonshire's environment.

POLICY SCOPING: GREENSPACE

Policy area
Protected habitats and species

Policy approach
Policies in the plan will indicate that: • Development proposals should not harm sites of national or international importance for biodiversity or geology • Proposals that could damage County Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves, Ancient Woodland or important species[1] should not proceed unless the need for (and benefits of) the development outweigh the potential harm to nature conservation interests • Where harm to protected habitats or species is unavoidable, provision should be made for appropriate mitigation measures, reinstatement of features and/or compensatory work that will enhance or recreate habitats on or off the site [1] species protected by legislation, or recognised as being of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England

Policy source(s)	
PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPG9; draft PPS9
RPG6 / draft RPG14	RPG6 (policies 38, 39); draft RPG 14 (policy ENV3)
Structure Plan policies	P1/2, P7/1, P7/2
Existing LP policies	En23
Community Strategy	
Best practice guidance	*Planning for Biodiversity: Good Practice Guide* (RTPI, 1999)
Other sources	

Reason for policy approach
The Governments White Paper 'This Common Inheritance' sets out a strong commitment to conserving wildlife for future generations and the importance of finding the right balance between conservation and development. A diverse and rich environment is important to health and well-being and for the value of the habitats themselves.

Alternative approaches
None. This approach is required by national and strategic guidance.

POLICY SCOPING: GREENSPACE

Policy area

Historic Parks and Gardens

Policy approach

Policies in the plan will indicate that development proposals within or affecting the setting of a historic park or garden should:
- Demonstrate a clear understanding of the park/garden's historic importance; and
- Not harm the overall condition of the park/garden or any features that contribute to its special interest; and
- Where appropriate, support the long-term preservation of the park/garden and its setting through sensitive restoration, adaptation and re-use

Policy source(s)

PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPG15
RPG6 / draft RPG14	Draft RPG14 Policy ENV4 – The historic environment
Structure Plan policies	None
Existing LP policies	None
Community Strategy	N/A
Best practice guidance	English Heritage (1996) Repair and Restoration Schemes for Historic Parks and Gardens (draft)
Other sources	

Reason for policy approach

Historic Parks and Gardens are a fragile and finite resource. They can easily be damaged beyond repair or lost forever. Their character can also be changed by development in their setting, close to but outside their boundaries.

Alternative approaches

The concept of protecting and maintaining historic parks and gardens is set out in national planning guidance (PPG16). There are no alternative policy approaches.

POLICY SCOPING: GREENSPACE

Policy area
Areas of Strategic Greenspace Enhancement

Policy approach

Policies in the plan will:
• Define areas of Strategic Greenspace Enhancement, and identify green corridors connecting them
• Indicate that within these areas:
  – co-ordinated action will be taken to improve their biodiversity, landscape and recreational value through appropriate forms of habitat creation and landscape management, and projects to promote quiet enjoyment of the countryside
  – development proposals should be compatible with these objectives, and contribute positively to their achievement (e.g. through additional planting or introducing new rights of way)

Policy source(s)	
PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPS9
RPG6 / draft RPG14	RPG6 (policy 42); draft RPG14 (policy ENV1)
Structure Plan policies	P7/3
Existing LP policies	
Community Strategy	Long term vision of protecting and improving the environment and promoting healthy lifestyles. Specific actions of improving access to the countryside, supporting implementation of the biodiversity action plan, linking key habitats, increasing the biodiversity value of open space and promoting the cultural, environmental and leisure opportunities presented by the Great Fen project
Best practice guidance	*Biodiversity By Design: A Guide for Sustainable Communities* (TCPA, 2004)
Other sources	

Reason for policy approach
Improving the biological, visual and recreational value of the countryside brings obvious environmental and social gains, but can also benefit the local economy through increased visitor spending. It is something that should be addressed by all proposals within or adjoining the countryside (see policy area X), but some particular opportunities for significant enhancement have been identified. These areas of 'strategic greenspace enhancement' reflect the target areas for habitat creation identified in the Structure Plan and the Biodiversity Partnership for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's 50 Year Wildlife Vision. They include: – the Great Fen Project area (wetland habitat creation) – the Fen Edge Woodland (woodland and hedgerow creation) – the Grafham – Brampton Woodlands (woodland and hedgerow creation) – the Ouse Valley (wet grassland and hay meadows creation) – the South Cambridgeshire Boulder Clay Woodlands (woodland and hedgerow creation) Focusing countryside enhancement efforts on these areas will give maximum scope for consolidating and linking important habitats, and enable complementary access improvements to be pursued. Within the defined areas, it will be important to ensure that development proposals do not conflict with this vision, and – when development does occur – that the design, landscaping and any community benefits contribute to its realisation.

Alternative approaches

None. The identification of areas for large-scale habitat enhancement is required by strategic guidance, while ensuring that development proposals are compatible with this objective (and contribute positively to its achievement) is necessary if the objective is to be achieved.

POLICY SCOPING: BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Policy area
Design quality

Policy approach

Policies in the plan will:
• Indicate that development proposals should demonstrate a high quality of design in terms of their layout, form and contribution to the character of the area.
• Set out criteria that will be used to assess a proposal's contribution to this objective, including:
  – responding appropriately to the particular qualities of the site and its surroundings, through the size and arrangement of development plots, the position, orientation, scale and massing of buildings, and the use of appropriate materials and architectural features
  – incorporating a clear network of routes that provide a good level of connectivity with the wider settlement and assist navigation through the scheme
  – using building frontages to define streets, squares and green spaces and help distinguish between public and private areas
  – ensuring that motor vehicles do not dominate the urban form, by using the arrangement of buildings to shape the spaces occupied by roads, and limiting the amount of on-street parking
  – achieving an appropriate degree of enclosure to streets and spaces through the grouping, positioning and height of buildings and landscape features
  – creating variety and interest within a unified design, by using a coherent palette of materials and design features, making use of landmarks and focal points, and enabling views into and out of the scheme
  – incorporating (and/or connecting to) a network of open spaces and green corridors that provide opportunities for recreation and biodiversity
  – accommodating servicing and recycling requirements in ways which minimise visual intrusion
• Indicate that planning applications should be accompanied by sufficient supporting information to demonstrate how design-related considerations have been addressed; for major developments, or those affecting listed buildings or conservation areas, this should be communicated through a formal design statement.

Policy source(s)	
PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPG1; Draft PPS1; PPG3; PPS12
RPG6 / draft RPG14	
Structure Plan policies	Policy P1/3,
Existing LP policies	En25
Community Strategy	Specific Action - to design out crime
Best practice guidance	DETR – By Design, RTPI – From design policy to design quality, English Partnerships – Urban Design Compendium, DETR – Places, Streets and Movement, DTLR – Better Streets, Better Places
Other sources	

Reason for policy approach

In recent years the government has seen design as a key element of sustainable development and as a established material planning consideration, in the planning process. Government guidance in PPS12 requires that planning authorities have policies on design in accordance with Regulation 6 (1) (a) (ii). New development is often criticised as looking the same wherever you go. Developers often strive to establish a national profile at the expense of local character. Therefore it is essential that new development attempts to make places special and distinctive. This can be achieved in many ways for example through street pattern layout, creating landmark buildings and the use of local materials.

Extensions and alterations to buildings are equally as important as new development, as they can alter not only the character of the building but the street scene and public realm.

Alternative approaches

None as the principles of good design are derived from PPS1.

POLICY SCOPING: BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Policy area
Street scene

Policy approach

Policies in the plan will:
 • Indicate that development proposals should make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of streets and public spaces.
 • Set out criteria that will be used to assess a proposal's contribution to this objective, including:
   – creating interesting and active frontages, with building entrances and windows facing streets and other public spaces
   – retaining traditional shop fronts wherever possible, particularly within conservation areas
   – ensuring that any new shop fronts use high quality materials and respect the character and proportions of the building and its neighbours
   – minimising the visual impact of security equipment through careful positioning and design (including the use of internal security grills rather than external roller shutters)
   – using external lighting in a way that gives adequate illumination for its intended purpose, while avoiding harsh or unnecessarily widespread impacts upon buildings and public spaces
   – ensuring that street furniture, paving materials and soft landscape works are of high quality, appropriate to the character of the scheme and its surroundings, and designed to minimise visual clutter and obstructions for users
   – using works of art to provide focal points and contribute to the character and interest of public spaces
   – keeping signage and advertisements to a level and design which respects the character and appearance of buildings, streets and public spaces, and does not endanger public safety

Policy source(s)	
PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPG15; PPG19
RPG6 / draft RPG14	
Structure Plan policies	P1/3
Existing LP policies	En27, En28, En30, En32
Community Strategy	
Best practice guidance	English Partnerships – Urban Design Compendium
Other sources	

Reason for policy approach

The public realm is created by various means such as shop fronts, street furniture, soft/hard landscaping etc. The quality of the public realm created within our towns, district and village centres are strongly influenced by the quality, design and materials used. Shop fronts are frequently changed or renewed and are thus important visual components of both the individual building and the street scene. In order to promote the Council's wider aims of high quality design it is essential that the design and materials that are used in shop fronts and commercial premises relate to the scale, original features of the building and it's surrounding. Solid shutters collectively exert a negative detrimental effect on the appearance of shopping areas outside opening hours by obscuring shop displays, attracting graffiti and diminishing the quality of the building frontages and contributing to a 'fortress' effect. Internal security grilles can now provide adequate protection of most shop fronts and therefore should be used where possible. Although outdoor advertising is useful to commercial premises, it is important to avoid unsightly clutter, which obscure the details of buildings. Particular care is needed for advertisements within conservation area and which affect listed buildings. Street furniture should be sited and designed so that it enhances the appearance of streets. Poorly designed and sited street furniture can cause the street scene to seem cluttered and untidy. Bottle banks and other community bins for refuse and recycled materials should be sited so to minimise visual intrusion and allow clear passage for pedestrians and cyclists.

Alternative approaches

None

POLICY SCOPING: BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Policy area

Accessibility and security

Policy approach

Policies in the plan will indicate that the location and design of development proposals should:
- Enable ease of access to, around and within the scheme for all potential users, including those with disabilities and young children
- Incorporate appropriate and conveniently located facilities that address the needs of potential user groups
- Minimise the extent to which users feel at risk from crime by:
    - enabling passive surveillance of public spaces and parking areas
    - distinguishing clearly between public and private spaces, and maximising the extent to which spaces are controlled (or perceived to be controlled) by occupiers
    - incorporating appropriate security measures, such as lighting and hard and soft landscape treatments

Policy source(s)

PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	Draft PPS1; PPS12; Circular 5/94
RPG6 / draft RPG14	
Structure Plan policies	P1/3
Existing LP policies	En24
Community Strategy	Long-term vision of promoting opportunity for all. Desired outcomes include easy and affordable access to services and facilities, and low crime / fear of crime.
Best practice guidance	*Safer Places* (ODPM / Home Office, 2004) *Planning and Access for Disabled People* (ODPM, 1993) *Gender Equality and Plan Making* (RTPI, 2002)
Other sources	*Planning and Diversity: Research into Policies & Procedures* (ODPM, 2004)

Reason for policy approach

A key aspect of planning for sustainable development is ensuring that places are accessible and safe to use for all groups in society. Criteria are required to help guide and assess proposals in relation to this objective. In part it requires measures to minimise the risk of crime (and the fear of crime) for all users, but developments must also address any specific requirements of potential user groups, such as disabled people, women, the young, the elderly and minority ethnic communities.

Consideration of access and appropriate facilities in relation to such groups should include the mix of uses in larger schemes (such as the availability of local shops and child care facilities) as well as the design of individual buildings and the layout of external areas. All such decisions will need to be informed by early consultation with potential users.

Alternative approaches

None. Local planning authorities are required to include policies on access, while national guidance (draft PPS1) indicates that community cohesion and the needs of all groups in society should be addressed. A criteria-based policy provides the most appropriate way of indicating how these matters can be considered in the development process.

POLICY SCOPING: BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Policy area
Energy use

Policy approach

Policies in the plan will indicate that:
• All development proposals should aim to maximise the level of energy efficiency achieved through sustainable design and construction, with appropriate consideration given to siting, massing, orientation, internal design, use of materials, insulation and heat recovery (combined heat and power)
• All major developments should wherever possible:
  – achieve an energy efficiency level equivalent to at least a 10% reduction in CO_2 emissions over and above the Building Regulations target CO_2 emissions rate; or
  – provide at least 10% of their predicted energy requirement from on-site renewable energy technology

Policy source(s)	
PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPS 22
RPG6 / draft RPG14	RPG6 (policy 59); draft RPG14 (policy ENV8)
Structure Plan policies	P1/3
Existing LP policies	
Community Strategy	Specific action to promote the use of renewable energy (target of 12.5% reduction in CO_2 emissions locally by 2010, over 2000 levels)
Best practice guidance	Companion guide to PPS22 (forthcoming) *Sustainable Settlements* (University of West of England / LGMB, 1995)
Other sources	*Our Energy Future – Creating a Low Carbon Economy* (HM Government, 2003)

Reason for policy approach
The Government is committed to a 20% reduction in CO_2 emissions (over 1990 levels) by 2010, and a 60% reduction by 2050. The design and construction of new development can make an important contribution to this objective, both in terms of using energy efficiently and by making appropriate use of renewable energy technology. In this context, it is appropriate to ask that all development schemes incorporate measures to maximise energy efficiency. The specific requirement for 10% reduction in CO_2 emissions recognises that the objective of reducing reliance on fossil fuels and cutting CO_2 emissions can be addressed by energy efficiency measures that exceed minimum requirements. However, the policy approach also gives the option for 10% of energy needs in major schemes to be met from on-site renewable energy technologies reflecting the range of opportunities that now exist (such as photovoltaic panels, geothermal heating and micro-scale wind power systems).

Alternative approaches

The emerging Regional Spatial Strategy requires DPDs to include policies seeking energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy technology in new developments. For the latter, it sets a threshold of 50 dwellings rather than 10 (the threshold for non-residential developments is the same). This higher threshold could be adopted, but would limit the number of schemes required to utilise renewable technologies. Moreover, the alternative option of a specific level of energy efficiency offered by the policy approach gives flexibility to developers, and should ensure that an unreasonable (and unviable) burden is not being imposed, particularly where residential schemes involve fewer than 50 units.

POLICY SCOPING: BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Policy area

Listed Buildings

Policy approach

Policies in the plan will indicate that:
- Development proposals affecting the fabric or setting of a listed building should:
  - demonstrate a clear understanding of the building's architectural and historic importance; and
  - not harm the overall condition of the building or any features that contribute to its special interest; and
  - where appropriate, support the long-term preservation of the building and its setting through sensitive restoration, adaptation and re-use
- Proposals for the total or partial demolition of a listed building should not be permitted unless:
  - the building is structurally unsound (for reasons other than deliberate damage or neglect) and is beyond reasonable repair; or
  - it cannot continue in its present use, no viable alternative uses exist, and redevelopment would bring wider public benefits; and, in all cases:
  - detailed proposals for reconstruction or redevelopment have received planning consent

Policy source(s)

PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPG15, PPG16
RPG6 / draft RPG14	ENV5 – The Historic Environment (RPG14)
Structure Plan policies	P7/6
Existing LP policies	En1, En2, En3, En4,
Community Strategy	
Best practice guidance	Conservation Issues in Local Plans
Other sources	

Reason for policy approach

Listed buildings are nationally important because they represent the best of our historic and architectural built heritage. There is a presumption in favour of preserving listed buildings and their features of architectural or historic interest. The best way of securing the upkeep of historic buildings and areas is to keep them in active use. As listed buildings are more sensitive to change than other buildings, any alteration, extension or change of use needs to be sensitively designed to ensure that the features that make them special are maintained.

There is rarely a good reason to allow the demolition of a listed building, therefore the Council will resist the demolition of listed buildings unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Alternative approaches

None. This approach is required by national and strategic guidance.

POLICY SCOPING: BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Policy area
Conservation Areas

Policy approach

Policies in the plan will indicate that:
• Development proposals within or affecting a Conservation Area should:
   – use building forms, materials and details that are characteristic of the area's historic or architectural quality, or which provide a successful contrast with it
   – retain, and where possible restore, traditional features such as original fenestration, boundary walls, street furniture and paving materials
   – re-use existing structures of historic or visual value wherever possible, in preference to demolition
• Proposals to demolish buildings within conservation areas should be assessed against the same criteria as apply to the demolition of listed buildings

Policy source(s)	
PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPG15
RPG6 / draft RPG14	ENV5 – The Historic Environment (RPG14)
Structure Plan policies	P7/6
Existing LP policies	En5, En6, En7, En8, En9
Community Strategy	
Best practice guidance	Conservation Issues in Local Plans
Other sources	

Reason for policy approach
Government advice for conservation areas is contained in PPG 15–Planning and the Historic Environment and within Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. This legislation indicates that development proposals that are within or would effect the setting of a conservation area should seek to preserve and enhance their special architectural or historic character or appearance. The purpose of conservation areas is to ensure that changes that take place do so in a manner that preserves and enhances the areas particular architectural or historic character. The character of the conservation area is often an amalgam of different elements such as style of building, the extent of open space, or the amount of tree cover, therefore it is important that these elements are recognised and protected. The demolition of buildings within conservation areas can have a damaging effect on the area's character and appearance by leaving unsightly gaps in the street frontage, which can remain for long periods of time. Where a building makes little of no contribution to the street scene, demolition should only be permitted where a full set of plans for the sites redevelopment have been submitted and are considered acceptable. Demolition of existing buildings should only be considered if it could be shown that the redevelopment of the site would make a greater contribution to the street scene.

Alternative approaches
None. This approach is required by national and strategic guidance.

POLICY SCOPING: BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Policy area
Sites of archaeological interest

Policy approach
Policies in the plan will indicate that development proposals that could affect a site or area of archaeological interest should: • Be accompanied by a suitable assessment of the nature and significance of any remains, so that their implications for the scheme can be considered • Not cause harm to remains or their settings which are recognised or identified as being of national importance, and allow for their preservation in situ • Make satisfactory arrangements for the preservation, recording or removal of other remains, as appropriate to their condition and significance, prior to development taking place

Policy source(s)	
PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPG16
RPG6 / draft RPG14	RPG6 (policy 40); draft RPG14 (policy ENV5)
Structure Plan policies	P7/6
Existing LP policies	En11, En12, En13
Community Strategy	Specific action to improve access to the countryside and archaeological sites
Best practice guidance	
Other sources	

Reason for policy approach
Archaeological remains/sites are a finite non-renewable resource, which should be protected from damage wherever possible.

Alternative approaches
None. This approach is required by national and strategic guidance.

POLICY SCOPING: HOUSING

Policy area

Location of housing development

Policy approach

Policies in the plan will indicate that:
- Housing development on unallocated sites should be limited to the following:
  - within the defined limits of Market Towns and Key Centres (Potential Growth): major and minor housing schemes, and residential infilling
  - within the defined limits of Key Centres (Limited Growth): minor housing schemes and residential infilling
  - within the built-up framework of Smaller Settlements: residential infilling
  - within the countryside: limited and specific forms of housing development, as provided for elsewhere in the plan
- The scale of housing development of different types is defined as:
  - Major schemes: 10 or more dwellings
  - Minor schemes: up to 9 dwellings
  - Residential infilling: development of a small plot within the built-up framework (or defined limits) by up to two dwellings, or by up to three dwellings in smaller settlements provided an appropriate mix of unit sizes is secured.

Policy source(s)

PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPG3; PPS7
RPG6 / draft RPG14	RPG6 (policies 4, 22); draft RPG14 (policies SS1, SS9, CSR1, GPSR1)
Structure Plan policies	P1/1, P5/5, P9/4, P10/3
Existing LP policies	STR1, STR2, HL8, HL9
Community Strategy	Specific actions of developing policies to promote sustainable communities and achieve targets to meet housing need in a sustainable manner
Best practice guidance	*Reducing Transport Emissions Through Planning* (DoE / DoT, 1993) *PPG13: A Guide to Better Practice* (DoE / DoT, 1995) *Sustainable Settlements* (University of West of England / LGMB, 1995) *Planning for Sustainable Development* (DETR, 1998)
Other sources	*Are Villages Sustainable?* (Countryside Agency, 2001)

Reason for policy approach

This policy approach allows an appropriate scale of residential development in settlements of different types, in line with the settlement hierarchy and national / strategic guidance. It enables the widest range of housing development to occur in the Market Towns and Key Centres (Potential Growth), these being the places that offer the best access to shops, services and employment opportunities.

The allowance for 'infilling' in smaller settlements to comprise up to three dwellings reflects that fact that schemes for just two dwellings on infill sites may not always make the best use of land or sit comfortably within the surrounding built form. However, it is subject to the important condition that an appropriate mix of housing units is provided. This reflects the particular need for smaller units in villages, and the fact that such units are more likely to make good use of the land (and suit the character of the surroundings) on small infill sites.

The policy approach does not cover housing intended specifically for agricultural and related workers, the elderly, those in need of institutional accommodation, gypsies and travelling showpeople; policies covering these groups will be included elsewhere in the Housing chapter.

Alternative approaches

A greater amount of development could be permitted in Key Centres (Limited Growth) and Smaller Settlements by allowing major housing schemes in the former, and minor housing schemes in some or all of the latter. Alternatively, the definitions of major and minor housing development could be changed to increase the quantity of development permissible in these locations.

Either approach would lead to a more dispersed form of development contrary to strategic policies which require most new housing to be located in larger settlements. There is no evidence that greater dispersal would have a significant effect in retaining village facilities, and it would be likely to increase the need to travel. The definitions of major and minor housing development proposed above are consistent with those employed nationally by ODPM.

POLICY SCOPING: HOUSING

Policy area
Affordable housing

Policy approach

Policies in the plan will:
- Define affordable housing as that available at a significant discount below market values, so as to be affordable to households who cannot either rent or purchase property that meets their needs on the open market
- Set out the types of housing that may contribute towards the provision of affordable properties, as follows:
    - social rented housing: housing provided, normally by Registered Social Landlords, at below market rents and at levels controlled by the Housing Corporation
    - intermediate housing: housing for people who may not qualify for social rented properties but whose incomes are insufficient to enable them to access market priced housing. This includes:
        a) intermediate rented housing, where rents should not exceed 30% of net median household incomes in Huntingdonshire (except where provided specifically for key workers, in which case rents should not exceed 30% of the net median household income for the target group)
        b) low cost home ownership, where housing costs (mortgage and rent) should not exceed 30% of gross median household incomes in Huntingdonshire (except where the properties are provided specifically for key workers, in which case costs should not exceed 30% of the gross median household income of the target group). Low cost home ownership includes both shared equity and discounted market housing
- Indicate that the type of affordable housing most needed within Huntingdonshire is social rented housing

Policy source(s)	
PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPG3, Circular 6/98
RPG6 / draft RPG14	RPG6 (policy 10); draft RPG14 (policy H2)
Structure Plan policies	P5/4, P9/1
Existing LP policies	AH1, AH2
Community Strategy	Priority action to promote social inclusion by ensuring everyone has access to a decent home
Best practice guidance	*Local Housing Needs Assessment: A Guide to Good Practice* (DETR, 2000)
Other sources	

Reason for policy approach

It has become increasingly difficult for local people on low to modest incomes to gain access to suitable housing. A growing gap between average earnings and housing costs, a limited supply of new affordable properties and the loss of existing social housing through 'right to buy' / 'right to acquire' provisions have all contributed to this problem. The planning system has a key role to play in making more affordable properties available, through securing contributions from market housing schemes and by enabling rural 'exceptions' sites to come forward.

The purpose of this policy approach is to define the scope of what constitutes 'affordable housing' in Huntingdonshire. Housing needs surveys have shown that the primary requirement in this area is for social rented housing. However, there is a growing number of households who are not eligible for such properties (as their needs are not sufficiently acute), but at the same time cannot afford housing on the open market. Hence the policy approach also allows for 'intermediate' housing, suitable for this group, to contribute to the supply of affordable properties. This will allow a wider needs to be addressed in the interest of creating balanced and sustainable communities, and will also maximise the viability of providing affordable housing (given the limited funds available for supporting the provision of social rented properties).

It is important to set cost ceilings for intermediate housing to ensure that it is accessible to those in need. In principle, it is also reasonable to expect those purchasing such properties to pay slightly more than those who will be renting, as purchasers stand to gain over time from any appreciation in property values. For this reason the cost ceiling for intermediate rented housing is based on <u>net</u> incomes, whereas that for low cost home ownership is based on <u>gross</u> earnings. In both cases the threshold level of 30% is in line with that suggested in the DETR's good practice guidance.

Alternative approaches

None in terms of the broad approach to defining affordable housing: national guidance requires that plans define what constitutes 'affordable housing' within a local authority's area, while proposed changes to PPG3 (issued in 2003) indicate that this should be expressed in terms of the relationship between local income levels and house prices.

An alternative approach to the definition itself would be to make no distinction between net and gross household incomes in relation to intermediate housing for rent or purchase. Indeed, the proposed changes to PPG3 also suggest that affordable housing should not normally be defined in terms of tenure, unless this allows a need to be met that could not be addressed in other ways. However, this would not allow recognition of the fact that some tenures offer the prospect of long-term capital accumulation through increases in the value of the property.

A further variation would be to set the 30% threshold at a higher level, but this would limit the number of households able to access intermediate housing, and not accord with best practice guidance.

POLICY SCOPING: HOUSING

Policy area

Housing density

Policy approach

Policies in the plan will indicate that housing schemes should:
- Have a minimum net density of 30 dwellings per hectare
- On sites within or close to the town centres, or in locations with good access to high quality public transport, have a minimum net density of 40 dwellings per hectare
- On all sites, achieve the maximum density possible consistent with:
    - the settlement hierarchy
    - the character of the site and its surroundings
    - the need to accommodate other uses and residential amenities (such as open space and parking areas)

Policy source(s)

PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPG3
RPG6 / draft RPG14	RPG6 (policy 3); draft RPG14 (policy SS16)
Structure Plan policies	P5/3
Existing LP policies	HL6
Community Strategy	Priority action of producing guidance and promoting good practice in support of sustainable communities
Best practice guidance	
Other sources	

Reason for policy approach

Building at moderate to high densities enables best use to be made of development sites, and helps safeguard the countryside from unnecessary development. Where building occurs on a large scale, dense forms of development can also support the 'critical mass' of people that may be needed to support local facilities.

Relatively high minimum densities are appropriate in locations that have good access to a range of services, facilities and employment opportunities, as this will help to limit the need to travel (by maximising the amount of housing in relatively sustainable locations).

However, there may be instances where applying the minimum density requirement is not appropriate due to the character of the site and its surroundings; this is a material consideration but would need to be justified through a design statement submitted with a planning application.

Alternative approaches

None. This approach is required by national and strategic guidance.

POLICY SCOPING: HOUSING

Policy area
Mix of property sizes

Policy approach
Policies in the plan will indicate that: • Housing developments should incorporate a range of unit types to reflect the economic and social needs of the district, and taking into consideration the changing composition of households • On major and minor housing schemes (of 3 units or more), at least 40% of the market housing should comprise 1 or 2 bedroom units, and at least 60% of the market housing should comprise units of no more than 3 bedrooms • Where market housing is proposed on residential infill sites within smaller settlements, schemes for 2 dwellings should include at least 1 unit of no more than 3 bedrooms; and schemes for 3 dwellings should include at least 2 units of no more than 3 bedrooms

Policy source(s)	
PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPG3
RPG6 / draft RPG14	RPG6 (policy 10); draft RPG14 (policy H2)
Structure Plan policies	P5/4
Existing LP policies	HL5, HL10
Community Strategy	Desired outcomes include a balanced housing market. Priority action to promote social inclusion by ensuring that everyone has access to a decent home
Best practice guidance	
Other sources	

Reason for policy approach
To ensure the private housing market meets the needs of as wide a section of the community as possible, it is important that new development begins to address a significant undersupply of smaller properties within the available the housing stock. One and two-bed units have on average comprised fewer than a quarter of completions during recent years; this contrasts with a general trend towards decreasing average household size, and the identified requirements of local people who wish to move house. This problem is particularly acute in the Smaller Settlements, and for this reason infill sites in such locations will be expected to make a contribution towards improving housing mix. In Market Towns and Key Centres, schemes of three units or more will be required to include some smaller units.

Alternative approaches

The mix of housing provided could be left to the market, or an appropriate mix could be 'encouraged' by policies. However, experience to date has shown that a lack of intervention, or mere 'encouragement', will be insufficient to secure a significant increase in the supply of smaller units in line with local requirements.

Lower percentage targets for smaller unit provision, or higher site thresholds (e.g. limiting the requirement to major sites only) could be employed. However, these alternatives would not secure the degree of change required to address the identified imbalance in supply: the 40% and 60% targets are well below the requirements identified by the Council's Housing Needs Survey, while many minor and infill housing schemes will occur in rural locations where the need for smaller units is particularly acute.

POLICY SCOPING: HOUSING

Policy area

Alteration or replacement of existing dwellings in the countryside

Policy approach

Policies in the plan will indicate that proposals to alter, extend or replace an existing dwelling in the countryside should:
- Not result in a significant increase in the height or massing of the existing dwelling
- Not entail development where only the site of a previous dwelling remains

Policy source(s)

PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPS7
RPG6 / draft RPG14	
Structure Plan	
Existing LP policies	H26, H27, H28
Community Strategy	Desired outcomes include a high quality built and natural environment
Best practice guidance	
Other sources	

Reason for policy approach

To help conserve the character of the countryside, limits need to be placed upon the extent to which existing dwellings may be enlarged. Otherwise, the ability to create much larger properties on existing plots could increase the intrusiveness of built development in countryside locations. For the same reason, new dwellings will be resisted where a previous residential use has in effect been abandoned, such that only the site of the previous dwelling remains.

Alternative approaches

Significant increases in the height or massing of existing dwellings in the countryside could be permitted, as could residential development on plots where a house once stood (but has since been demolished or has collapsed). However, either approach would enable a greater degree of residential development in the countryside; this would be contrary to national guidance (in PPS7) that development in such locations should be strictly controlled, so as to protect the character of the countryside for the sake of its intrinsic character and beauty.

POLICY SCOPING: HOUSING

Policy area
Re-use of buildings in the countryside

Policy approach
Policies in the plan will indicate that proposals to re-use existing buildings in the countryside for housing should: • Be limited to situations where a business use would either not be viable, or would generate a significantly greater number of vehicular movements in a location remote from existing settlements • Not necessitate the substantial reconstruction of the building concerned • Conserve the character of any buildings of historic or visual interest • Employ landscape and boundary treatments that minimise the impact of domestic use upon the building's setting

Policy source(s)	
PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPS7
RPG6 / draft RPG14	
Structure Plan policies	
Existing LP policies	H29
Community Strategy	
Best practice guidance	
Other sources	

Reason for policy approach
Huntingdonshire contains large numbers of buildings in the open countryside associated with agriculture and related industries. Changing farming and commercial practices have made some of these buildings redundant, while there is considerable demand for converting the more attractive structures to housing. In general a re-use for employment purposes is preferable, as residential conversions can cause more harm to the character of historic structures, conflict with the objective of limiting residential development in the countryside and utilise premises that might otherwise provide local employment opportunities. Nevertheless, there are limited circumstances in which converting a building in the countryside to a dwelling is not possible, or is undesirable due to the volume of traffic that might be generated. This policy approach sets out appropriate criteria for judging proposals in those limited circumstances where a residential re-use may be acceptable. Applicants will be required to demonstrate that re-use or redevelopment for business purposes is not viable or would generate significantly more vehicle movements than a residential use. Where a building is in a ruinous condition, or only its site remains, rebuilding for residential purposes will not be permitted (as this would be tantamount to constructing a new house in the open countryside).

Alternative approaches

The plan could make no allowance for converting buildings in the countryside to residential use, but this could inhibit the productive re-use of buildings that are worthy of retention (where a business use is not viable), or result in an undesirable level of vehicle movements in some situations.

Conversely, re-use for residential purposes could be allowed without restriction, but this would be more likely to harm the character of historic buildings and their setting, and increase the amount of residential development in locations that are remote from employment and services. It would also restrict the supply of premises potentially available for business use in rural areas.

POLICY SCOPING: HOUSING

Policy area
Housing for agricultural and related workers

Policy approach

Policies in the plan will:
• Indicate that development in the countryside to meet the accommodation needs of full-time workers in agriculture, horticulture, forestry or equestrian activities may be allowed, where an essential need for a dwelling to support the business is demonstrated
• Set out the criteria that will be used to assess such proposals, including the requirements that:
   – provision on-site (or in the immediate vicinity) is necessary for the operation of the business
   – no suitable accommodation exists (or could be made available) in established buildings on the site or in the immediate vicinity
   – the proposal does not involve replacing a dwelling disposed of recently as general market housing
   – the dwelling is no larger than that required to meet the operational needs of the business
   – the siting and landscaping of the new dwelling ensure that any impact upon the character and appearance of the countryside is minimised
• Indicate that a temporary dwelling may be permitted where these circumstances apply, but the activity has been established recently and needs time to demonstrate that it is financially sound.

Policy source(s)	
PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPS7
RPG6 / draft RPG14	RPG6 (policy 10)
Structure Plan policies	
Existing LP policies	H23, H24
Community Strategy	
Best practice guidance	
Other sources	

Reason for policy approach
The construction of new dwellings in the countryside to meet the housing needs of workers in agriculture and related land-based occupations requires special justification; it is important to avoid sporadic development in the countryside, and often it will be possible for such workers to live in a nearby town or village. This policy approach sets out the criteria to be employed where a new dwelling in the countryside is claimed as being necessary. The requirements for clear evidence of need and an appropriate size of dwelling are there to prevent possible abuse of the policy, and comply with national guidance in PPS7. Annex A of the latter gives additional information on how the criteria should be applied.

Alternative approaches
None. This approach is required by national guidance.

POLICY SCOPING: HOUSING

Policy area
Rural exception sites

Policy approach

Policies in the plan will:
- Indicate that development to meet a local need for affordable housing may be permitted in locations, or on a scale, that would not otherwise be allowed by the plan.
- Set out the criteria that will be used to assess such proposals, including the requirements that:
  - the site is within, adjoining or well-related to a Key Village (Limited Growth) or a Smaller Settlement
  - the village concerned offers at least a basic range of services appropriate to the form of housing to be provided
  - the impact on adjoining countryside is minimised through careful siting, design and landscaping
  - a local need for the scale and nature of development proposed is demonstrated
  - occupation of the affordable dwellings is controlled to ensure that the benefits of affordable housing are enjoyed by subsequent as well as initial occupiers

Policy source(s)	
PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPG3
RPG6 / draft RPG14	RPG6 (policy 10); draft RPG14 (policy H2)
Structure Plan policies	P5/5
Existing LP policies	AH5
Community Strategy	Desired outcomes include a balanced housing market. Priority action to promote social inclusion by ensuring that everyone has access to a decent home
Best practice guidance	
Other sources	

Reason for policy approach

Although the settlement hierarchy steers most new housing towards the Market Towns and Key Centres (Potential Growth), it is important to have a mechanism for addressing affordable housing needs that arise within the district's rural areas. Consequently this policy approach allows exceptions to be made to the normal limits on development in such locations.

The criteria to be applied will ensure that sporadic development in the countryside is prevented, that occupants of the new properties have access to at least a basic level of facilities appropriate to their needs (helping to limit the need to travel), and that the properties remain as part of the 'affordable' housing stock. The supporting text will make clear that a 'basic range of services' should include a food shop in all cases, and also a primary school where the houses will occupied by families.

Alternative approaches

No allowance could be made for rural exception sites, but this would not enable identified needs for affordable housing in rural areas to be addressed.

Exception sites could be allowed at all rural settlements, regardless of the level of facilities available within them. However, this would mean that some residents of the new properties would not have easy access to a basic level of services and facilities, increasing their need to travel (and contrary to the need to promote a more 'sustainable' pattern of development).

POLICY SCOPING: HOUSING

Policy area
Retirement and sheltered housing

Policy approach
Policies in the plan will indicate that proposals for retirement and sheltered housing schemes should: • Be located within the defined limits of the Market Towns and Key Centres (Potential Growth and Limited Growth) • Comprise solely of housing for the elderly if a major scheme (10 or more units) is located within a Key Centre (Limited Growth) • Enable at least a basic range of services (including a food shop, public house, community hall and place of worship) to be reached on foot along routes that are reasonably level and safe to use • Enable primary care services to be reached easily for those without access to a car

Policy source(s)	
PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPG3
RPG6 / draft RPG14	RPG6 (policy 10)
Structure Plan policies	P5/4
Existing LP policies	H43
Community Strategy	Priority actions to promote social inclusion by ensuring that everyone has access to a decent home, and to support initiatives which support older people at home. Specific action to ensure that older people and those with disabilities have access to facilities that promote an active, healthy life
Best practice guidance	*Planning for Retirement Housing* (POS / Retirement Housing Group, 2003)
Other sources	*Planning and Diversity: Research into Policies & Procedures* (ODPM, 2004)

Reason for policy approach
The number of elderly people is expected to increase significantly in the period to 2021, and provision needs to be made to help meet their specialist housing needs. Retirement and sheltered housing comprises the following categories of accommodation: • Developments designed and marketed at the 'early retired', intended to appeal to reasonably active people of 55 years and over • Sheltered housing designed for less active elderly people, and comprising grouped, self-contained accommodation with an emergency alarm system, usually with communal facilities and a resident warden • Extra care / very sheltered accommodation for people with higher levels of dependency but who do not require the full nursing care of a registered care home The policy allows for retirement and sheltered schemes to be developed in Key Centres (Limited Growth) on a scale that would not otherwise be allowed for general housing. This recognises that residents of such developments are more likely to shop locally (and are less likely to travel by car) than other occupiers. Allowing such schemes in all the Key Centres will give opportunities for elderly people to maintain a relatively rural lifestyle, while benefiting from access to a range of essential services and limiting the likely number of car-borne trips. It is also recognised that the provision of communal facilities and support services requires development on a sufficient scale to be viable, so the lack of restriction on unit numbers in the Key Villages (Limited Growth) will enable appropriate provision in these locations.

Alternative approaches

Retirement and sheltered schemes of 10 units or more could be restricted to the Market Towns and Key Centres (Potential Growth), in accordance with the scale of development permitted for general housing under the settlement hierarchy. However, not extending this provision to the Key Centres (Limited Growth) would limit unnecessarily the scope for meeting the housing needs of elderly people wishing to retain a relatively rural lifestyle (given the relatively 'sustainable' nature of retirement and sheltered housing schemes).

Conversely, major retirement or sheltered housing developments could be allowed in all settlements with at least a basic level of services and facilities. However this would not give residents access to as wide a range of facilities as are available in the Key Centres, increasing the likelihood that they would need to travel elsewhere to meet their needs. The scale of development required to ensure that communal / support services are viable could also be incompatible with the form and character of many Smaller Settlements.

POLICY SCOPING: HOUSING

Policy area
Nursing and care homes

Policy approach
Policies in the plan will indicate that proposals for nursing and care homes should: • Be located within the defined limits of the Market Towns and Key Centres, or within the existing built-up areas of the Smaller Settlements • Enable shopping, community and medical facilities to be reached easily for those without access to a car, as appropriate to the needs and level of mobility of potential residents

Policy source(s)	
PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPG3
RPG6 / draft RPG14	RPG6 (policy 10)
Structure Plan policies	P5/4
Existing LP policies	H43
Community Strategy	Priority action to promote social inclusion by ensuring that everyone has access to a decent home. Specific action to ensure that older people and those with disabilities have access to facilities that promote an active, healthy life
Best practice guidance	
Other sources	*Planning and Diversity: Research into Policies & Procedures* (ODPM, 2004)

Reason for policy approach
Nursing and care homes entail the provision of specialist residential accommodation and care to people in need. This can cover a range of uses such as nursing homes, centres for those with severe disabilities and hostels for social rehabilitation purposes. The nature and mobility of occupiers of varies greatly, so it is inappropriate to specify in any detail the level of access to facilities that may be required. Nonetheless, it is important that nursing and care homes are directed towards locations that are 'sustainable', enabling access by non-car modes to relevant facilities and contributing to the best possible quality of life for future residents. The policy allows for nursing and care homes to be developed in Key Centres (Limited Growth) and Smaller Settlements on a scale that would not otherwise be allowed for general housing. This recognises that specialist accommodation often requires a minimum number of units to be viable, and that a rural location may sometimes be appropriate in addressing the care needs of residents.

Alternative approaches
Nursing and care homes could be restricted to the Market Towns and Key Centres (Potential Growth and Limited Growth). However, this would not enable appropriate forms of development where a rural location is required, and would not necessarily have much impact upon the need to travel by car (given that many residents will have limited mobility or not be drivers). Hence it would limit unnecessarily the scope for meeting these specialised housing needs in suitable locations.

POLICY SCOPING: HOUSING

Accommodation for gypsies and travelling showpeople

Policy approach

Policies in the plan will:
- Indicate that development in the countryside to meet the accommodation needs of gypsies or travelling showpeople may be allowed, where a local need for the scale and nature of development proposed is demonstrated
- Set out the criteria that will be used to assess such proposals, including the requirements that:
  - the intended occupants pursue a travelling lifestyle for a significant portion of the year, for the purpose of making their living
  - adequate schools, shops and other community facilities are within reasonable travelling distance, and can be reached by foot, cycle or public transport
  - the site is served (or can be served) by adequate water and sewerage connections
  - there would be no significant adverse effect on the amenity of nearby residents or operations of adjoining land uses
  - the siting and landscaping ensure that any impact upon the character and appearance of the countryside is minimised, and the development can be assimilated into its surroundings

Policy source(s)

PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	Circulars 22/91; 1/94
RPG6 / draft RPG14	RPG6 (policy 10)
Structure Plan policies	P5/4
Existing LP policies	H44
Community Strategy	Promote good opportunities for learning. Promote social inclusion by ensuring everyone has access to a good home. Promote vibrant, confident and effective communities.
Best practice guidance	
Other sources	*Local Authority Gypsy / Traveller Sites in England* (ODPM, 2003)

Reason for policy approach

National guidance indicates that authorities should allocate sites to meet the identified accommodation needs of gypsies, as well as setting out appropriate criteria for making decisions about sites where allocations have not been made. The need for allocations will be considered in the context of preparing an allocations DPD; the policy approach outlined above provides the necessary criteria for dealing with any proposals in the meantime.

The criteria reflect those suggested by Circular 1/94, including the test that applicants must be pursuing a nomadic way of life to qualify for gypsy status. It is recognised that gypsy sites may have to be located in the countryside, but decisions about the acceptability of particular locations need to take into account access to essential services, the impact on the settled community in the vicinity and the need to minimise visual intrusion.

Organised groups of travelling showpeople are specifically excluded from the definition of 'gypsies' used by Circular 1/94, but their way of life and accommodation requirements are similar. Hence it is appropriate to address their requirements within the same policy approach.

Alternative approaches

None. The approach to meeting gypsies' accommodation needs is required by national and strategic guidance, and it would be unreasonable not to make any similar allowance for the needs of travelling showpeople.

POLICY SCOPING: ECONOMY & TOURISM

Policy area
Location of office development

Policy approach

Policies in the plan will indicate that:
• Proposals for large office developments (of at least 500m^2 gross floorspace, or a site area of 0.5 ha+) on unallocated land should be:
   − limited to sites within the defined limits of the market towns; and
   − situated within the town centres where capacity exists, provided the scale of development is consistent with the function and character of the centre
• Where large office developments cannot be accommodated within a town centre, it should be demonstrated that:
   − no sequentially preferable site is suitable or available (starting with edge of centre sites and locations with good access to high quality public transport, then out-of-centre locations); and
   − the site offers potential to maximise accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport
• Proposals for minor office developments (of less than 500 m^2 gross floorspace, or a site area of less than 0.5 ha) will be allowed within the defined limits of the Market Towns and Key Centres (Potential & Limited Growth), and within the existing built-up framework of smaller settlements.

Policy source(s)	
PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPG4; PPG6; draft PPS6
RPG6 / draft RPG14	
Structure Plan	
Existing LP policies	
Community Strategy	
Best practice guidance	
Other sources	

Reason for policy approach
National guidance requires the focus on town centres for further office development to promote their vitality and viability, to maximise the opportunities for people to access such facilities by a choice of means of transport and to reduce social exclusion.

Alternative approaches

POLICY SCOPING: ECONOMY & TOURISM

Policy area
Location of industrial and warehouse development

Policy approach

Policies in the plan will indicate that:
• Proposals for large industrial or warehouse developments (of at least 500m^2 gross floorspace, or a site area of 0.5 ha +) on unallocated land should be limited to:
  − sites within the defined limits of the Market Towns and Key Centres (Potential & Limited Growth)
  − sites within established industrial estates, distribution and business parks
  − situations where an existing firm requires additional space in order to expand
  − the conversion or redevelopment of suitable existing buildings in the countryside, as provided for elsewhere in the plan
• Proposals for minor industrial or warehouse developments (of less than 500 m^2 gross floorspace, or a site area of less than 0.5 ha) will be allowed in the same locations, and additionally:
  − within the existing built-up framework of Smaller Settlements
  − as part of farm diversification schemes provided for elsewhere in the plan

Policy source(s)	
PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPG4, PPS7
RPG6 / draft RPG14	
Structure Plan	
Existing LP policies	E11
Community Strategy	
Best practice guidance	
Other sources	

Reason for policy approach
Directing employment growth to the most sustainable locations will ensure that people have good access to jobs by a choice means of transport. Urban areas can often be the most sustainable location for new employment as they provide more opportunities for people to access them by public transport. However, landowners in rural areas are seeking to re-use redundant buildings and diversify their existing activities. In order to support farmers and landowners it is important that the Council ensures that rural areas are able to provide these opportunities whilst protecting the countryside. Small-scale employment uses within rural areas may prevent out commuting and help rural area maintain their vitality

Alternative approaches

POLICY SCOPING: ECONOMY & TOURISM

Policy area

Redevelopment of office, industrial and warehouse sites

Policy approach

Policies in the plan will indicate that development proposals should not entail the loss of identified industrial estates, distribution and business parks, or of other large sites used (or last used) for such purposes, unless it can be demonstrated that:
- Continued use of site for B1, B2 or B8 purposes is no longer feasible, taking into account the site's characteristics and existing / potential market demand; or
- Use of the site for B1, B2 or B8 purposes gives rise to unacceptable environmental or traffic problems; or
- An alternative use or mix of uses offers greater potential benefits to the community in meeting local business and employment needs

Policy source(s)

PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPG3, PPG4
RPG6 / draft RPG14	
Structure Plan policies	
Existing LP policies	
Community Strategy	Desired outcomes include a sustainable, buoyant and balanced local economy. Specific action to ensure that the plan provides sufficient land to meet the needs of existing business and for sustainable business growth
Best practice guidance	
Other sources	*Planning for Economic Development* (ODPM, 2004)

Reason for policy approach

Government guidance encourages the re-use of industrial and commercial land for housing and mixed-use development, in circumstances where an oversupply of land for business purposes exists, or sites are no longer appropriate for business use. At the same time, the priority given to previously-developed land within larger settlements in finding sites for housing can lead to pressure for re-using industrial and commercial sites even when they are in active use. The premature loss of business land can harm local firms (who may find it difficult to find suitable replacement sites), lead to a loss of local employment, create pressure for development at the edge of settlements, and increase the need to travel to work. The availability of local employment that is suited to the skills of the local workforce is particularly important given high levels of net out-commuting from Huntingdonshire.

This policy approach puts reasonable checks in place to ensure that industrial and commercial sites are not lost prematurely. As well as applying to identified industrial estates, distribution and business parks, it also covers other large employment sites and buildings (where the site area exceeds 0.5ha or the floorspace is greater than 500m^2). Where the continued viability of the site for B1, B2 or B8 use is in question, applicants will be required to demonstrate that the site has been marketed at a realistic price for a period of time, or show that physical / operational constraints make it no longer suitable for business use.

Alternative approaches

No restrictions could be placed on the re-use of industrial and commercial land for other purposes, but this could be harmful to local firms and employment opportunities, increase the pressure for development outside urban areas, and increase the need to travel to work.

POLICY SCOPING: ECONOMY & TOURISM

Policy area
Location of tourist facilities

Policy approach

Policies in the plan will indicate that:
- Proposals for large tourist facilities (of at least 500m^2 of floorspace, or a site area of 0.5ha +) on unallocated land should be limited to:
  - sites within the defined limits of the Market Towns and Key Centres (Potential & Limited Growth)
  - situations where an existing business requires additional space in order to expand
  - the conversion or redevelopment of suitable existing buildings in the countryside, as provided for elsewhere in the plan
- Proposals for minor tourist facilities below this threshold will be allowed in the same locations, and additionally:
  - within the existing built-up framework of Smaller Settlements
  - as part of farm diversification schemes provided for elsewhere in the plan
  - in association with strategic greenspace enhancement projects
  - in association with navigable waterways, provided the location adjoins or is well-related to an existing settlement
- Proposals for touring caravan and camp sites should be limited to locations that:
  - adjoin or are well-related to an existing settlement
  - enable the visual impact of development on the surrounding landscape to be minimised
- Visitor attractions that could attract large numbers of people should be accessible by a choice of means of transport, and offer good access by non-car modes
- Self-catering tourist accommodation should be restricted to holiday and seasonal occupation, to prevent permanent residential use becoming established

Policy source(s)	
PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPG21 PPG13 PPG25 PPS7
RPG6 / draft RPG14	E13
Structure Plan	P4/1
Existing LP policies	T07 T06 T09 T08
Community Strategy	
Best practice guidance	
Other sources	Planning for Tourism (National Planning Forum), HDC Tourism Strategy

Reason for policy approach

Visitor accommodation is a vital way of increasing tourist spending in the local economy in both urban and rural areas, as well as playing a useful role in farm diversification. The growing market for short breaks means that there is a steady increase in the number of visitors to Huntingdonshire, as well as a rise in the business visitor market. Accommodation takes many forms, from hotels and bed and breakfast establishments to caravan sites, and business is affected by seasonal variations.

Caravan sites should not be permitted in areas at risk from flooding, nor where they will be visually intrusive in the landscape.

Alternative approaches

POLICY SCOPING: ECONOMY & TOURISM

Policy area
Re-use and redevelopment of rural buildings

Policy approach
Policies in the plan will indicate that: - Proposals to re-use existing buildings in the countryside for business purposes (including tourist accommodation and retailing) should conserve the character of any buildings of historic or visual interest   - Proposals to redevelop existing buildings in the countryside for business purposes (including tourist accommodation and retailing) should: - be limited to situations where the existing building is substantially intact   - not involve a significant increase in the scale of built development   - not entail the loss of a building of historic or visual interest   - Any proposals to re-use or redevelop an existing building in the countryside for retail purposes should be limited to projects forming part of a farm diversification scheme, and should not exceed 500m^2 of floorspace

Policy source(s)	
PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPS7
RPG6 / draft RPG14	
Structure Plan policies	P2/6
Existing LP policies	E10, To3
Community Strategy	
Best practice guidance	*Planning for Rural Diversification – A Good Practice Guide* (DoE, 1995)
Other sources	

Reason for policy approach

Many buildings in the countryside used for farming and other activities can be re-employed for a variety of purposes, but it is important to ensue that any proposal is appropriate both for the building itself and for the area in which it lies. Huntingdonshire contains large numbers of old farm buildings, mills and other structures that are of historic or visual interest and make an important contribution to the character of the area; any schemes for their re-use should ensure that these qualities are conserved, whether the building is listed or not.

Many proposals for the conversion of modern farm buildings are also received. In such cases particular regard will be had to other policies in the plan concerning the impact of development on its surroundings, including the scale and nature of traffic generated. These considerations apply to all proposals, but are particularly relevant to the re-use of modern buildings in the countryside, as most are large and of utilitarian appearance.

The redevelopment of existing buildings in the countryside may also be permitted – this can range from partial reconstruction to their complete replacement. Given the need to protect the character of the countryside, additional safeguards are needed to ensure that this does not result in an increased scale of development or the loss of buildings that should be retained. Nor will redevelopment be permitted where a building is in a ruinous condition or only its site remains, as this would mean allowing building in locations where the previous structure has, in effect, disappeared (or is in the process of doing so).

Strict limits on re-use or redevelopment for retail purposes are appropriate, given the need to limit unnecessary car-borne trips and sustain the vitality and viability of existing village services. However, farm shops can make a useful contribution to farm diversification schemes and will be permitted provided their scale is limited and there is no conflict with other policies in the plan.

Alternative approaches

None. The re-use or redevelopment of existing buildings in the countryside for business purposes is encouraged by national guidance, subject to appropriate criteria being included in plans or supplementary guidance. The criteria suggested above are appropriate given the need to avoid adverse impacts upon buildings of historic or visual importance, or upon the wider character of Huntingdonshire's rural areas.

POLICY SCOPING: ECONOMY & TOURISM

Policy area
Farm Diversification

Policy approach

Policies in the plan will indicate that developments forming part of farm diversification schemes should:
• Make an ongoing contribution to sustaining the farm business as a whole
• Not involve built development on previously undeveloped sites unless:
   – the re-use or redevelopment of existing buildings on the holding for the intended use is not feasible, or an opportunity exists to demolish an existing structure and re-build in a more appropriate location; and
   – the proposed floorspace does not exceed 500m^2; and
   – the siting and landscaping ensure that any impact upon the character and appearance of the countryside is minimised, and the development can be assimilated into its surroundings
• Not involve residential development unless it complies with all other policies in the plan

Policy source(s)	
PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPS7
RPG6 / draft RPG14	
Structure Plan policies	P2/6
Existing LP policies	Policy To11, E10
Community Strategy	
Best practice guidance	Planning for Rural Diversification – A Good Practice Guide
Other sources	

Reason for policy approach
There is a need to facilitate the diversification of farm-based operations in order to support agricultural businesses and sustain the rural economy. Farm diversification can entail various types of enterprise, such as food processing, farm shops, tourist accommodation, creating workshops for letting to local firms and providing recreation facilities. It is important to ensure that diversification schemes bring long-term and genuine benefits to individual farm operations and the wider rural area. Diversification will in most cases involve changing the use of land and/or re-using (or redeveloping) existing buildings. Development on new sites will be discouraged unless it is the only feasible option, or enables the clearance and replacement of a badly-sited structure. The policy approach outlined above sets out necessary criteria to ensure than any building on previously undeveloped sites is small in scale and carried out in the most environmentally sensitive manner.

Alternative approaches
Any building on previously undeveloped land in association with farm diversification schemes could be prohibited in order to maximise protection of the countryside from further development. However, this would place a more stringent limitation on the ability of farm businesses to diversify, which in itself could harm the character of the countryside (as healthy farm businesses are necessary if farmers are to be able to maintain their holdings).

POLICY SCOPING: SERVICES & FACILITIES

Policy area

Town centres and primary shopping frontages

Policy approach

Policies in the plan will:
- Define town centres within the Market Towns of St Neots, Huntingdon, St Ives and Ramsey. The town centre boundaries will relate to the areas where relevant commercial activities are concentrated (in terms of floorspace and employment in retail, service, culture and office uses)
- Define primary shopping frontages within the town centres of St Neots, Huntingdon, St Ives and Ramsey where the concentration of A1 retail uses exceeds 70% of ground floor premises
- Indicate that within primary shopping frontages development proposals should:
  - not result in more than 30% of ground floor premises in the primary frontage being in other (non-A1) uses
  - not create an over-concentration of other uses within a particular section of the frontage (measured as a continuous frontage of three or more units in non-retail use)

Policy source(s)

PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPG6, draft PPS6
RPG6 / draft RPG14	RPG6 (policy 13); draft RPG14 (policies SS5, E9)
Structure Plan policies	P3/1
Existing LP policies	S1, S12, S13
Community Strategy	Priority action to improve the collective benefits of the town centres (their facilities, competitiveness and appeal)
Best practice guidance	*Vital and Viable Town Centres: Meeting the Challenge* (DoE, 1994)
Other sources	*Huntingdonshire Retail Study* (HDC, 2001) *Producing Boundaries and Statistics for Town Centres: Interim Report* (ODPM, 2004)

Reason for policy approach

Huntingdonshire's town centres perform a variety of functions. As well as providing a wide range of shops and services, they are centres of employment, entertainment and tourism, and a focus for public transport routes. They also offer opportunities for providing housing in locations where the need to travel is minimised. Maintaining the vitality and viability of these centres is important if these functions are to be retained and enhanced.

Defining the town centres provides a clear basis for the operation of policies to guide the location of retail, leisure and business development, and to promote higher residential densities in places with good access to facilities. Identifying primary shopping frontages within the town centres is an important tool in maintaining their attractiveness as shopping destinations, as a concentration of retail facilities contributes strongly to the vitality and viability of a centre. It also helps to ensure the continued availability of a wide range of shops that can be accessed by a choice of transport modes.

A concentration of non-retail uses in primary frontages can have an adverse impact upon their appearance and role as core shopping areas. However, the policy approach does allow for a limited amount of non-retail use within primary frontages, in recognition of the fact that complementary activities (such as food and drink outlets and financial services) can support the attractiveness of these areas so long as they do not come to dominate them.

Alternative approaches

The identification of town centres is required by national and strategic guidance, and it is appropriate to draw their boundaries so as to reflect the role that they perform.

There could be no attempt to designate primary shopping frontages, allowing instead a greater diversity of employment, service and facilities to be located throughout the town centres without distinguishing any particular locality where retail uses should predominate. However, this could reduce the concentration of A1 uses within the core shopping areas, thereby having a detrimental impact on the vitality and viability of both these areas and the town centres as a whole.

POLICY SCOPING: SERVICES & FACILITIES

Policy area

Location of retail and leisure development

Policy approach

Policies in the plan will indicate that:
- Proposals for large retail or leisure developments (of at least 500m^2 gross floorspace, or a site area of 0.5 ha+) on unallocated sites should be:
    - limited to land within the defined limits of the market towns
    - situated within the town centres where capacity exists, provided the scale of development is consistent with the function and character of the centre
- Where large retail or leisure developments cannot be accommodated within a town centre, it should be demonstrated that:
    - a need exists for the scale and nature of development proposed
    - no sequentially preferable site is suitable or available (starting with edge of centre sites, then out-of-centre locations)
    - the proposal will not have a significant adverse impact upon the vitality and viability of existing town centre retail or leisure facilities
    - the site offers potential to maximise accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport
- Proposals for minor retail or leisure developments (of less than 500m^2 gross floorspace, or a site area of less than 0.5 ha) will be allowed within the defined limits of the Market Towns and Key Centres, and within the existing built-up framework of Smaller Settlements, provided:
    - the development would not have an adverse impact upon the range of shopping or leisure facilities within the settlement
    - the site offers potential to maximise accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport

Policy source(s)

PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPG6, draft PPS6
RPG6 / draft RPG14	RPG6 (policy 13); draft RPG14 (policies SS5, E10)
Structure Plan	P3/1, P3/2
Existing LP policies	S1, S3, S4, S7, S9, S16
Community Strategy	Priority action to improve the collective benefits of the town centres (their facilities, competitiveness and appeal). Specific action to promote each of the market towns, including the provision of suitable premises for larger retailers and enhancing the choice and variety of evening activities
Best practice guidance	*Vital and Viable Town Centres: Meeting the Challenge* (DoE, 1994)
Other sources	*Huntingdonshire Retail Study* (HDC, 2001)

Reason for policy approach

Directing large retail and leisure developments to the town centres helps to underpin their vitality and viability, limits the need to travel by car, and means that services and facilities are accessible to those who do not have access to private transport. Where suitable sites within the town centres do not exist, and there is a need for the development, the policy approach requires schemes to be located in the most sustainable locations possible in terms of accessibility. The requirement that any such proposals should not have an adverse impact upon town centre facilities is an important safeguard against harm to the centres of Huntingdonshire's market towns.

Greater flexibility can be allowed in locating smaller retail and leisure developments that are unlikely to have a detrimental impact upon the town centres, will attract fewer numbers of people, and which will in some cases provide for neighbourhood or village shopping needs. Nevertheless, it is still important to locate these facilities where the best opportunities exist to reach them by non-car modes.

Alternative approaches

None. This approach is required by national and strategic guidance.

POLICY SCOPING: SERVICES & FACILITIES

Policy area
Retention and enhancement of village facilities

Policy approach
Policies in the plan will indicate that development proposals should not entail the loss of the last remaining shop, post office, public house, petrol station or village/church hall in a settlement unless it can be demonstrated that: • there is no reasonable prospect of the established use being retained or resurrected • there is little evidence of public support for the retention of the facility

Policy source(s)	
PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPG6; draft PPS6; PPS7
RPG6 / draft RPG14	RPG6 (policy 12); draft RPG14 (policy SS9)
Structure Plan policies	P3/4
Existing LP policies	S17
Community Strategy	Priority actions to promote social inclusion
Best practice guidance	
Other sources	

Reason for policy approach
Retention of the last remaining shop, post office, public house, petrol station and or meeting place in settlements is important for maintaining access to services (particularly for those without the use of a car), limiting the need to travel and promoting the overall vitality and sustainability of village communities. This policy approach prevents the unnecessary loss of such facilities in cases where a demand for them still exists.

Alternative approaches
National guidance (PPS7) requires local planning authorities to have policies for supporting the retention of key village facilities. The requirement to satisfy the criteria set out in the policy approach could in principle be extended to the proposed loss of any facility of this type in a Smaller Settlement or Key Centre (regardless of whether it is the last remaining). However, this would not be reasonable where several facilities of a particular type exist; the underlying purpose of the policy approach (and the justification for it) is to ensure that people living in rural areas do not suffer the unnecessary loss of key facilities.

POLICY SCOPING: TRANSPORT & UTILITIES

Policy area
Highway access and capacity

Policy approach
Policies in the plan will indicate that development proposals should: • Be capable of being served by safe and convenient access to the highway network • Not give rise to traffic volumes that exceed the capacity of the local or strategic highway network • Not cause harm to the character of the surrounding area as a result of the amount or type of traffic generated

Policy source(s)	
PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	
RPG6 / draft RPG14	RPG 14 – Policy T1: Regional Transport Strategy Objective 6: Improve safety and security
Structure Plan	P8/1 – Sustainable Development – Links between land use and transport
Existing LP policies	T18
Community Strategy	
Best practice guidance	
Other sources	

Reason for policy approach
The safety of people using the highway is very important when considering access to new development. It is essential that access to new developments is planned and designed to be safe for all types of user. Road traffic can have a significant effect on the environment of both rural and urban areas. If the level of traffic generation continues unchecked it can have detrimental social, economic and environmental effects. It is therefore important that the impact on the highway network of traffic generated by new development is considered.

Alternative approaches
None. This approach is required by national and strategic guidance.

POLICY SCOPING: TRANSPORT & UTILITIES

Policy area
Car and cycle parking

Policy approach
Policies in the plan will indicate that: • Development proposals should limit the amount of car parking provided to the levels set out in the Council's parking standards • Indicate that those maximum standards will be broadly in line with the interim standards that accompany the existing Huntingdonshire Local Plan • Developments requiring public car parking should share facilities where their location and patterns of use permit • Minimum levels of cycle parking and car parking for people with impaired mobility will be required

Policy source(s)	
PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPG3; PPG13
RPG6 / draft RPG14	RPG 14: Policy T16: Parking
Structure Plan policies	Policy P8/5
Existing LP policies	Appendix 3: Car Parking Standards, Interim Guidance
Community Strategy	
Best practice guidance	
Other sources	

Reason for policy approach
Availability of car parking can have a significant impact on people's choice of transport. Limiting car parking spaces in new developments alongside encouraging more sustainable forms of transport can reduce car use. Car parking also takes up a lot of space and therefore reduces densities on development. It is important to set minimum cycle parking standards because the availability of a secure place to park cycles is a key determinant in whether people choose to use this method of transport. Encouraging the sharing of car parking spaces, particularly in town centres, for uses where the peak demands do not coincide will help reduce the overall number of spaces required.

Alternative approaches
None. This approach is required by national and strategic guidance.

POLICY SCOPING: TRANSPORT & UTILITIES

Policy area

Public paths and cycle ways

Policy approach

Policies in the plan will indicate that development proposals should:
- Maintain the existing network of rights of way and other public paths / cycle ways
- Exploit opportunities to extend, link or improve the quality of existing path and cycle networks where this enables one or more of the following:
  - improved access to the countryside
  - new circular routes and connections between local and long-distance footpaths / cycle ways
  - the provision of safe and convenient links to services and facilities
  - improved connections with public transport interchanges

Policy source(s)

PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPG13
RPG6 / draft RPG14	RPG6 (policy 27); draft RPG14 (policy T12)
Structure Plan policies	P4/2, P8/1, P8/2, P8/8, P8/9
Existing LP policies	R15, T19, T20
Community Strategy	Specific actions of maintaining, improving and expanding routes for pedestrians, cyclists and those with mobility difficulties; improving access to the countryside; and promoting exercise in schools and our communities
Best practice guidance	
Other sources	CROW Act. CCC to produce Rights of Way Improvement Plans. Countryside Agency to publish guidance on improving access to the countryside for disabled people late 2004.
	The British Horse Society "Ride UK" – creation of the National Bridleroute Network.
	Sustrans (National Cycle Network)
	CCC Walking & Cycling Strategy, Huntingdonshire Cycling Strategy - aim to increase cycle use, and encourage initiatives such as 'Safer Routes to Schools'

Reason for policy approach

Public paths and cycle ways are key assets, linking residential areas to services, facilities and places of employment, and providing a wide range of informal recreation opportunities. There is considerable scope for their use to increase. Within Huntingdonshire, 72% of all trips are fewer than five miles in length, and 50% fewer than two miles in length, suggesting that car-borne trips could be reduced if the quality and convenience of routes is improved (along with improvements to associated facilities such as secure cycle parking). In addition, the growing interest in healthier lifestyles and outdoor pursuits places increasing demands upon the existing rights of way and cycle networks, especially in popular parts of the countryside.

Against this background it is important to prevent any adverse impact on the existing Rights of Way and cycle networks, unless very good reasons exist for closure or diversion (and suitable alternative routes are provided). Equally, opportunities should be taken to link, extend or improve the quality of footpaths and cycle ways where possible.

Alternative approaches

POLICY SCOPING: TRANSPORT & UTILITIES

Policy area
Telecommunications

Policy approach
Policies in the plan will indicate that proposals for telecommunications development should: • Ensure that any impact upon the character and appearance of the surrounding landscape or townscape is minimised through careful siting and design, and by sharing a mast or site where feasible • Not give rise to significant interference with other electrical equipment in the locality

Policy source(s)	
PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPG 8
RPG6 / draft RPG14	
Structure Plan policies	P6/5
Existing LP policies	
Community Strategy	Desired outcomes include improved and sustainable infrastructure for communities, easy and affordable access to services and facilities, and a high quality built and natural environment
Best practice guidance	
Other sources	

Reason for policy approach
Modern telecommunications are an important part of life for local communities and make a significant contribution to the national economy. They have a specific role in promoting sustainable communities, by helping to counteract the effects of relative remoteness in rural areas, and limiting the need to travel for work, information/learning and shopping. It is government policy facilitate the growth of new and existing telecommunications systems whilst keeping the environmental impact to a minimum. This policy approach reflects this advice by setting out appropriate criteria to guide the location and design of necessary development.

Alternative approaches
None. This approach is required by national guidance.

POLICY SCOPING: TRANSPORT & UTILITIES

Policy area
Renewable Energy

Policy approach
Policies in the plan will indicate that proposals for generating energy from renewable sources such as wind, biomass and solar systems will be supported in principle, but should (whether individually or cumulatively with other schemes): • Minimise any adverse impacts upon the environment and amenity through careful siting and design • Not cause harm to sites or areas of national importance for conservation[1], unless it can be shown that the overall value of the site/area would not be compromised, and that any significant harm is outweighed by the wider social, economic and environmental benefits of the scheme • Not cause harm to sites of international importance for conservation[2], unless no alternative sites exist and development is imperative in the public interest • Where adverse impacts are unavoidable, make provision for appropriate mitigation and compensation measures, such as landscape works and habitat enhancement or relocation [1] In Huntingdonshire, these include Sites of Special Scientific Interest, National Nature Reserves, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings [2] In Huntingdonshire, these include Special Areas of Conservation and RAMSAR sites

Policy source(s)	
PPGs / PPSs / Circulars	PPS 22
RPG6 / draft RPG14	Draft RPG 14 Policy ENV8 – Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency
Structure Plan	Policy P7/7 – Renewable Energy Generation
Existing LP policies	None
Community Strategy	Headline target to reduce CO2 emissions and increase the amount of energy generated from renewable sources
Best practice guidance	
Other sources	

Reason for policy approach
Government policy set out in PPS 22 encourages the development of renewable energy developments and encourages local planning authorities to grant permission for these schemes unless the environmental impacts would outweigh the social and economic advantages. A range of matters will need to be considered, including the effects upon amenity such as noise generation, shadow flicker and electromagnetic disturbance, as well as the impact upon the natural and built environment.

Alternative approaches
None. This approach is required by national and strategic guidance.