

**Public  
Key Decision - Yes**

## **HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Title/Subject Matter:** Local Development Scheme February 2025  
**Meeting/Date:** Cabinet – 11 February 2025  
**Executive Portfolio:** Executive Councillor for Planning  
**Report by:** Chief Planning Officer  
**Ward(s) affected:** All Wards

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### **Executive Summary:**

The Local Development Scheme (LDS) sets out the scope of work for future development plan preparation. This report presents an updated LDS to replace that approved by Cabinet on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

The update has been triggered by intended Government changes to the plan-making process. The Government's response to the 'proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system' consultation has amended the transition date by which local plans prepared under the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act need to be submitted for examination in public. The date has been extended by 18 months to December 2026 making this a feasible option.

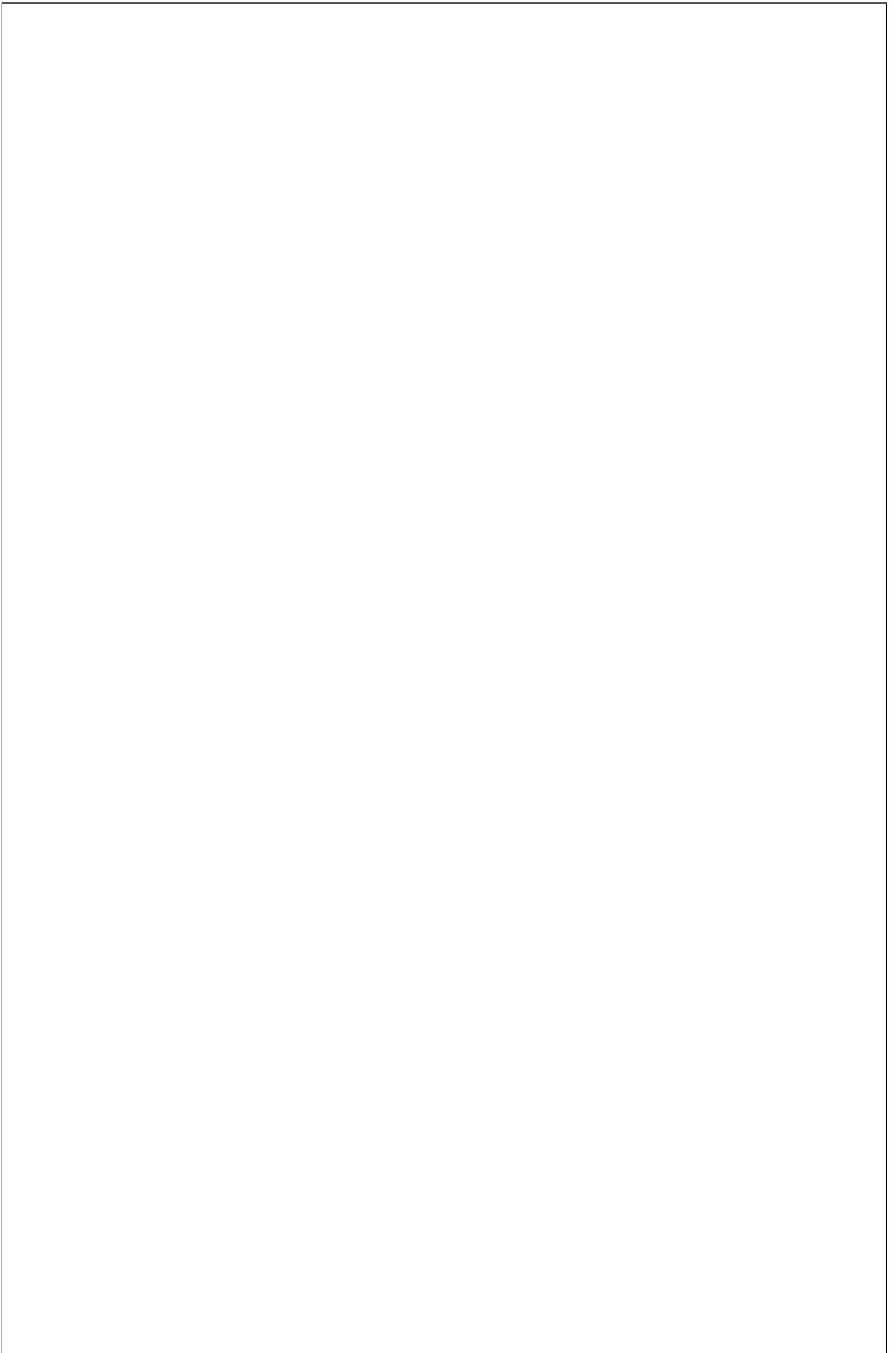
The primary purpose of the LDS is to make local communities and stakeholders aware of the phases of engagement opportunities that will be offered during preparation of the Local Plan. The LDS also illustrates the range of evidence base and supporting documents required and identifies the resources and risks involved.

### **Recommendation(s):**

The Cabinet is

### **RECOMMENDED**

- to approve the contents of the Local Development Scheme February 2025 and bring it into immediate effect following this meeting and its call-in period
- to delegate further revisions of the Local Development Scheme for this Local Plan Update to the Chief Planning Officer in conjunction with the Executive Councillor for Planning



## **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The Local Development Scheme (LDS) is a short, high level project plan that sets out what development plans the Council is going to prepare, the area covered and the timetable for producing them. This report sets out the purpose and content of the proposed replacement LDS relating to preparation of the Local Plan update. It seeks agreement to the content of the LDS and for it to be brought into effect immediately.

## **2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY**

- 2.1 The requirement to produce a Local Development Scheme (LDS) is set out in Regulation 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended). The Council's adherence to the LDS is one of the legal compliance checks applied to Local Plans at examination in public.
- 2.2 The LDS is a project plan which sets out the details of the planning policy documents, including the Local Plan that the Council will prepare, along with a timetable for their preparation and adoption. The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in December 2024 makes it clear that the planning system should be genuinely plan led, with succinct and up to date plans providing a positive vision for the future of the area, providing a framework for meeting housing needs and addressing other economic, social and environmental priorities.
- 2.3 The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) (December 2024) states that local planning authorities must keep communities informed of plan making activity, by publicising and keeping up to date their timetable for producing their Local Plan in a Local Development Scheme (LDS). The LDS should be published on the authority's web site.

## **3. ANALYSIS**

- 3.1 The replacement LDS is being brought forward now in response to reforms to the planning system outlined in the NPPF. The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government has requested that all local planning authorities produce an updated LDS and submit a copy to MHCLG by no later than 6th March 2025.
- 3.2 The updated LDS should be made publicly available and include clear, realistic and specific dates for each consultation phase, and for submission of the Local Plan Update for examination. This report seeks agreement to adopt and bring into effect a revised LDS and submit it to MHCLG within the deadline set.
- 3.3 The LDS was prepared anticipating submission of the Local Plan Update in autumn 2027. This recognised that it might be under a new plan-making system as the transition arrangements at that time for examination under the current plan-making system necessitated submission by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025 which was unachievable.

- 3.4 The Government's response to the 'proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system' consultation has amended the transition date by which local plans prepared under the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act need to be submitted for examination in public. The date has been extended by 18 months to December 2026. It is recognised that a significant number of Councils will be revising their LDSs to try to achieve this deadline and there is a risk of a backlog at examination stage arising from the capacity of the Planning Inspectorate to handle the resultant examinations.
- 3.5 The implications of the extended period and the level of uncertainty over the shape of a future plan-making system are reflected in the updated LDS which seeks to accelerate preparation and submission on the Local Plan Update by approximately 9 months. It is acknowledged that this will be very challenging and factors outside the Council's control such as the availability of consultants to prepare essential evidence may impact on the ability to achieve this. This LDS does not preclude switching over to a future plan-making system should this be considered a preferable course of action for Huntingdonshire.
- 3.6 The amended LDS includes a project plan setting out the different stages of preparation of the Local Plan update and the timetable at which each will need to be achieved to meet the submission deadline of December 2026.
- 3.7 The LDS also provides information on the risks that may be faced during preparation of the Local Plan update and indicates mitigation actions that may be taken to help minimise the risks occurring and their impact.
- 3.8 There is already a requirement to monitor progress of plan preparation against the timetable set out in the LDS and to update the LDS accordingly if the anticipated programme is not being met. To ensure rapid response to this the second recommendation is to allow future amendments to the LDS for the Local Plan Update to be agreed by the Executive Councillor for Planning in conjunction with the Chief Planning Officer.

#### **4. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN**

- 4.1 Subject to approval, the replacement LDS will be submitted to MHCLG by 6<sup>th</sup> March 2025 and published on the Council's website. Town and parish councils and other stakeholders will be notified by email with a link to the document.

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

- 5.1 The production of the LDS aligns with both priority 1 'Improving quality of life for local people' and priority 2 'Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations' as set out in the Corporate Plan 2023-2028.

## **6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The Council is required to publish an LDS which must be reviewed at least once every five years under section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended). The LDS must be publicised and kept up to date.

## **7. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 There are no direct equalities implications arising from the LDS beyond it highlighting to communities when opportunities are likely to arise to engage in preparation of the updated Local Plan. However, the Local Plan update will be accompanied by an equalities impact assessment to ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010.

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

- 8.1 The amended LDS is the Council's response to the requirement by the Deputy Prime Minister for all local planning authorities to produce an updated LDS by 6<sup>th</sup> March 2025 in light of the changes to the NPPF. The second recommendation is to allow for a rapid response to any future need to amend the LDS either in response to Local Plan Update preparation progress or further national changes.

## **9. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED**

Appendix 1 – Local Development Scheme February 2025

## **10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- [Local Development Scheme – Cabinet 21 March 2023](#)
- [Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004](#)
- [National Planning Practice Guidance](#)

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