

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Preferred Options Draft Local Plan to 2046 and supporting Sustainability Appraisal

Meeting/Date: Cabinet – 21st October 2025

Executive Portfolio: Executive Councillor for Planning

Report by: Head of Planning, Infrastructure and Public Protection

Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

The report presents the Preferred Options Draft Local Plan to 2046 and its supporting Sustainability Appraisal for approval to publish them for public engagement for 6 weeks starting on 5th November 2025.

Extensive public engagement has been undertaken through 2023 and 2024 on the issues of concern to be addressed through a revised local plan and on the many sites that were put forward as possible development site allocations. A series of technical evidence documents have also been prepared to investigate the most sustainable, viable and deliverable approaches. All responses and evidence have been drawn together to produce the Preferred Options Draft Local Plan to 2046 and its supporting Sustainability Appraisal.

The Preferred Options Draft Local Plan to 2046 sets out a vision and development strategy for the district to shape long term growth. It comprises 4 sections:

- Section A – What is this Local Plan? Explains what the plan is about and how people can get involved in shaping it
- Section B – Our Development Strategy to 2046 sets out the overall vision, approach to net zero and strategic policies on how Huntingdonshire will grow and change
- Section C – Our Development Management policies provides detailed policies to guide decision-making on planning applications
- Section D – Our Development Sites sets out a series of proposed site allocations which will deliver the development strategy and reflect the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's Local Growth Plan

It is anticipated that these will form the final non-statutory phase of public engagement under Regulation 18 and will provide local communities, organisations and stakeholders with an opportunity to put forward their opinions

on the first full draft version of the Local Plan to 2046. The aspiration is then to progress to a proposed submission Local Plan to 2046 in summer 2026. This will support the intended timetable set out in the Local Development Scheme to reach submission in December 2026.

For the avoidance of doubt, the government is clear that while councils consider their approach to local government reorganisation they should also continue to make and update their local plans.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet is

RECOMMENDED

- To approve the contents of the Preferred Options Draft Local Plan to 2046 for public engagement
- To approve the contents of the Sustainability Appraisal of the Preferred Options Draft Local Plan to 2046 for public engagement
- To grant delegated authority to the Head of Planning, Infrastructure and Public Protection to make any necessary typographical or other minor changes to the documents prior to their publication

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To seek agreement from Cabinet to publish the Preferred Options Draft Local Plan to 2046 and its supporting Sustainability Appraisal for public engagement.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Cabinet approved commencement of an update to the Local Plan on 24 January 2023. This was followed by the Local Plan Issues stage in spring/summer 2023 which included wide ranging engagement on issues and concerns to be addressed through the Local Plan along with a call for sites.
- 2.2 The Further Issues and Options stage in autumn 2024 presented another opportunity for people to engage with issues that should be covered in the Local Plan including potential growth scenarios. Extensive opportunities were also provided for engagement on assessments of all the sites that had been submitted for consideration as potential development allocations through the Local Plan. All consultation documents were supported by detailed Sustainability Appraisals.
- 2.3 In response to requests, a further call for sites was opened until 31 January 2025. Sites submitted through this were then assessed using the same methodology as the main assessments, including their Sustainability Appraisals, and issued for public engagement in spring 2025.
- 2.4 All comments received at each stage of preparation of the Local Plan to 2046 are summarised in the Statement of Consultation along with changes that have been made in response to them. Preparation of the Statement of Consultation is a statutory requirement.
- 2.5 A proposed communications strategy for the Preferred Options Draft Local Plan was considered by the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Growth and Performance) on 8 July 2025. This builds on previous approaches and includes amendments in responses to challenges experienced previously.

3. PREFERRED OPTIONS DRAFT LOCAL PLAN TO 2046

- 3.1 This Preferred Options Draft Local Plan is intended to form the final stage of the non-statutory Regulation 18 phase of engaging on the preparation of the Local Plan. The aspiration is to publish this, and its supporting Sustainability Appraisal, for public engagement as an opportunity for people to see the whole Local Plan together.
- 3.2 The Preferred Options Draft Local Plan is presented in Appendix 1. Section A includes an introduction in chapter 1 to help people understand what the role of a Local Plan is and details how to engage in its preparation in chapter 2.
- 3.3 Section B sets out our strategy for Huntingdonshire to 2046. It includes chapter 3 'Our vision and approach to net zero' which emphasises the connections between the Huntingdonshire Futures Place Strategy, the

Corporate Plan to 2028 and the Draft Local Plan. It includes a vision for Huntingdonshire to 2046 and strategic objectives which align with the 5 journeys of the Place Strategy. It also sets out net zero carbon aspirations which look to follow the national Climate Change Commission's 'Balanced pathway' approach. Chapter 4 focuses on 'How Huntingdonshire will grow and change'. This reflects the amount of growth expected, and how and broadly where it should be delivered. This is complemented by strategic policies regarding health, blue and green infrastructure, flooding and water, renewable energy, transport and connectivity and how infrastructure will be provided.

- 3.4 In terms of growth, the Draft Local Plan sets out policies and proposed allocations that will meet our needs for housing and employment in full within the district. The government's standard methodology for calculating housing requirements indicates that we need to provide at least 29,251 new homes between 1/04/2021 and 31/03/2046. Once completions since 1/04/2021 and existing commitments are deducted, and a 10% buffer applied to allow flexibility at least 14,587 new homes need to be found through the Draft Local Plan. To ensure there is some further flexibility the proposed allocations set out in the Preferred Options Draft Local Plan, if delivered in full are expected to provide 15,447 new homes by 2046. The largest strategic sites are expected to continue to deliver on into the 2050s meaning that in total the plan supports additional homes beyond the required number while taking a realistic approach to delivery and market absorption rates.
- 3.5 In terms of employment growth, the Economic and Employment Needs Assessment indicates a requirement for 14,400 additional jobs. In terms of sectoral needs, the assessment shows a requirement for 16.8ha of and for office use, 5.6ha for research and development, 22.1ha for light industrial, 74.6ha for general industrial and 110.9ha for storage and distribution uses. Employment in services, healthcare, retail etc is additional to this.
- 3.6 Section C presents the development management policies. Chapter 5 addresses how we will create well designed places, chapter 6 focuses on how we will support a strong local economy, chapter 7 covers how we will support homes for all including a requirement for 30% affordable homes within all schemes for 10 or more new homes and chapter 8 sets out how we will conserve and enhance the environment.
- 3.7 Section D illustrates all the proposed development site allocations. These state the land area, proposed uses and requirements for development for each to provide a clear steer for prospective investors, developers and local communities on the scale and nature of development that is proposed.
- 3.8 The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is presented in Appendix 2. This includes sustainability testing of the growth strategy options against all the sustainability objectives agreed during previous engagement phases on the methodology. This has been undertaken in two phases: firstly, SA of the six strategy options put forward in the Further Issues and Options engagement document, and secondly SA of the four refined strategy

options that have been tested through the evidence base documents that have informed preparation of the Preferred Options Draft Local Plan.

- 3.9 The SA also presents appraisals of all proposed strategic and development management policies and all proposed site allocations. It also sets out proposals for how the significant effects of the policies would be monitored. SA is an iterative process and will be updated at each subsequent stage of preparation of the Local Plan.

4. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND NEXT PHASES

- 4.1 Engagement is proposed to run for 6 weeks from 5 November to 17 December 2025. Engagement at this stage will focus on two documents: the Preferred Options Draft Local Plan to 2046 and its supporting Sustainability Appraisal. These will be available on our consultation portal. Videos are being prepared to guide people on how to make comments on the consultation portal.
- 4.2 Engagement will include a Member briefing, two briefing sessions for Town and Parish Councils, 8 public exhibitions, and smaller exhibitions at other events such as the annual climate conference and a business CEO's breakfast. Posters and leaflets will be available for Town and Parish Councils, site notices will be displayed near proposed allocations and large banners displayed on our refuse freighters and at parks to extend the reach of publicity.
- 4.3 Extensive evidence supports the Draft Local Plan. As this is completed it is being published on [Evidence Library for Local Plan Update - Huntingdonshire.gov.uk](https://evidence.libraryforlocalplanupdate-huntingdonshire.gov.uk).
- 4.4 Following completion of the Preferred Options engagement phase all responses received will be analysed and further amendments made before the plan is finalised. More refined testing will be carried out through the technical evidence base to complete preparation of a Proposed Submission Local Plan to 2046 for summer 2026. This will form the first statutory phase of the Local Plan's preparation under Regulation 19. The engagement arrangements for this will be different, with responses being required by Regulations to focus on aspects of legal compliance and the soundness tests set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 4.5 By adherence to this timetable, the aspiration is to be able to submit the Local Plan to 2046 in December 2026 to allow the examination in public to be undertaken under the current legislation. The anticipated timetable is set out in full in the [Local Development Scheme](#). This is intended to help ensure we continue to move forward with preparation of an up-to-date local plan in line with the government's ambitions while councils consider their approach to local government reorganisation.

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

- 5.1 The Preferred Options Draft Local Plan to 2046 aligns strong with priority 2 of the Corporate Plan 2023-2028 which seeks to create a better Huntingdonshire for future generations. It specifically supports delivery of the key action to “Continue the update to the Local plan, including updating evidence bases in line with National Planning Policy, particularly where it relates to Economy, Environment and Housing.” It also supports all aspects of ‘Improving housing’, ‘Forward thinking economic growth’ and ‘Lowering our carbon emissions’. Additionally, it aligns with priority 1 on improving the quality of life for local people through creating well-designed places that people are proud to call home, providing affordable homes to help those who need them and attracting employers and visitors.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are limited financial resource implications directly for the engagement work, primarily for exhibition hall hire and board production, publicity materials and printing. Staffing for the exhibitions will be drawn from across the wider Planning department. The Local Plan has a rolling budget for preparation to cover the costs of specialist evidence preparation by consultants and legal representation for the examination in public stage.

8. HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 A strategic policy on how we will promote health and well-being has been included along with policies regarding responses to climate change implications and pollution management to promote positive health outcomes. A series of development management policies are also focussed on facilitating healthy lifestyle choices through design and active travel aspects.

9. ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Paragraph 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) requires that ‘planning policies and decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area.’ This includes ensuring that the Local Plan and its policies meet the principles of sustainable development; achieving net gains from an economic, social and environmental perspective defined in NPPF paragraph 8 as follows:

- a) 'an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
- b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and
- c) an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.'

9.2 The Preferred Options Draft Local Plan to 2046 sets out the approach to net zero alongside the vision for the district in chapter 3. Delivery of this will be achieved through policies in chapter 4 through the development strategy, chapter 5 through detailed design policies and chapter 8 through conservation and enhancement of the environment.

10. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

10.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment will form part of the supporting evidence for the Preferred Options Draft Local Plan to 2046.

11. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

11.1 Public engagement is an integral part of local plan preparation to ensure that when adopted the Local Plan reflects the aspirations and priorities of the community.

11.2 The recommendations are therefore:

- To approve the contents of the Preferred Options Draft Local Plan to 2046 for public engagement
- To approve the contents of the Sustainability Appraisal of the Preferred Options Draft Local Plan to 2046 for public engagement
- To grant delegated authority to the Head of Planning, Infrastructure and Public Protection to make any necessary typographical or other minor changes to the documents prior to their publication

12. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 - Preferred Options Draft Local Plan to 2046

Appendix 2 – Sustainability Appraisal of the Preferred Options Draft Local Plan to 2046

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- [Cabinet report 18 April 2023 – Local Plan Issues Engagement Papers](#)
- [Cabinet report 24 January 2023 – Huntingdonshire Local Plan Review and Proposed Update](#)
- [Cabinet report 24 January 2023 – Statement of Community Involvement 2023](#)
- [Cabinet report 10 September 2024 – Further Issues and Options 2024 engagement paper](#)
- [Cabinet report 10 September 2024 – Land Availability Assessments](#)
- [Cabinet report 10 September 2024 – Sustainability Appraisal for the Local Plan Update Further Issues and Options and Land Availability Assessments](#)
- [Cabinet report 11 February 2025 – Local Development Scheme February 2025](#)
- [Cabinet report 15 April 2025 – Land Availability Assessments and Sustainability Appraisal for additional sites submitted between 1 August 2024 and 31 January 2025](#)
- [Overview & Scrutiny Panel \(Performance and Growth\) 8 July 2025 – Local Plan communications](#)
- [Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004](#)
- [Environment Assessment of Plans and Programmes 2004](#)
- [Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#)
- [National Planning Policy Framework](#)

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