

**HUNTINGDON TOWN CENTRE VISION –  
FEEDBACK FROM PUBLIC CONSULTATION  
(Report by Head of Planning Services )**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to outline the feedback received in respect of the Vision Exhibitions and to agree a set of general principles to guide the evolving work on the economic and car parking strategies, future MTP bids relating to the town centre, and the Local Development Framework.

**2. SUPPORTING/BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 2.1 Exhibitions were held in Huntingdon and Godmanchester on five days in the middle of September to provide an opportunity for the public to comment on the document. They were well attended and nearly 200 questionnaires were completed. The analysis of the data is set out below and a copy of the questionnaire is included in the appendix.

**3. PROFILE OF THOSE COMPLETING QUESTIONNAIRES**

- 77% live in Huntingdon or Godmanchester
  - 29% work in Huntingdon or Godmanchester
  - 57% were males and 43% females
  - 25% were under 50 years old
  - 43% were between 50-64years
  - 41% worked full time and 41% were retired
- 3.1 The highest percentage of people came from the Hinchingsbrooke area, Ermine Street, Mill Common, Hartford Road and Post Street. This may indicate that the main point of interest was the potential removal of the viaduct for those in Post Street, Mill Common and Ermine Street. The issues relating to the future of the Riverside Park and the car parking proposal may have attracted those living in the Hartford Road area. It may also have been the pertinent issue regarding the future of the hospital that attracted those from the Hinchingsbrooke area.

**4. MAIN ISSUES EMERGING FROM THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

- 84% supported or strongly supported the provision of more shops and places to eat and drink
- 41% supported or strongly supported the provision of more houses
- 74% supported or strongly supported more car parking
- 90% supported or strongly supported improved public transport services and hubs at the station and town centre

- 89% supported or strongly supported the removal of through traffic from the ring road in association with the viaduct coming down
- 95% supported or strongly supported further environmental improvements and protection of heritage
- 90% supported or strongly supported better access into and within the town for pedestrians and cyclists
- 86% supported or strongly supported improvements to green spaces and better linkages between them
- 78% supported or strongly supported the idea of removing the A14 viaduct

4.1 There appears to be overwhelming public support for more shops and places to eat, improved public transport, removal of through traffic from ring road, environmental improvements and protection of heritage, better access for pedestrians and cyclists and, improvements to green spaces.

4.2 Car parking and the viaduct were the principal issues on which counter arguments were raised resulting in a lower support than the average.

4.3 In carrying out a cross tabulation between those who live and those who work, with how strongly they feel the need for more car parking to serve the town centre it is interesting to note that 71% of those living in the towns supported more car parking but only 63% of those working in the towns supported more car parking.

4.4 Several written comments have also been received in addition to the comment boxes that were filled in. The principal comments are summarised below.

- Losing the flyover will make straightforward journeys to Peterborough more difficult for those living in Godmanchester. The road configuration when the viaduct comes down and resulting congestion may make it more difficult for residents of Buckden, Brampton and other villages in the west to reach the Hinchingsbrooke area and the town centre
- There must be more suitable places to put car parking than the Riverside Park which should be protected as open space. Has Mill Common and Stanton Way been considered?
- Has a scheme for Park and Ride or park and walk for long stay vehicles been considered?
- Improve traffic routing to Chequers Court car park and increase the car park by decking it with 2-3 decks
- Relocate ATS from the ring road as other uses in this area would be more appropriate

- Ensure that a successful redevelopment takes place in the town centre before development is allowed to take place beyond the ring road

4.5 From the comment boxes the following comments have been gleaned:-

**Car parking:** 56 people commented on parking, with a total of 91 comments:

- 35 comments were requests for more car parking. As well as 5 general requests for more parking there were a wide range of options given for how and where this should be done. These were multi-storey car parks (8 comments in favour), out-of-town car parking (5), town centre parking (2), underground parking (2), more short-stay parking (1), residents-only parking (1), shoppers-only parking (1), workers-only parking (2), car parks on brownfield sites (1), increased parking at the train station (1), ensuring new developments include sufficient parking (3), out-of-hours car parking at Pathfinder House (2) and using the redundant A14 as a car park (1);
- 29 comments said car parks should not be built at the Riverside or green spaces generally, although many of those saying this also wanted more car parking;
- 18 comments relating to Park & Ride schemes. Of these 16 were in favour and 2 were against. The reasons for these two comments were that 'people like to park in the town, not out of town' and that 'big name shops' were needed before a Park & Ride scheme would be used to get into Huntingdon.

**Green spaces:** there were 42 comments about these. More than three-quarters of these also related to car parking (32). All 42 comments wanted green spaces left alone or improved.

**Retail:** 16 people commented on retail in Huntingdon. 5 comments requested more shops generally, 6 were for more independent shops, 1 was for more 'big name' shops, 1 was for new shops as long as Huntingdon remains a 'market town' and 1 was for less estate agents. There were also two comments against a new shopping area away from the town centre and two comments blaming closure of shops on increasing rents and rates.

**Public transport:** 15 comments related to public transport (excluding Park & Ride schemes). 3 comments requested general improvements to public transport, 5 related to improvements to bus services, 5 comments were about encouraging use of public transport and 2 were about integrating rail and bus services. There were 8 comments about the Guided Bus scheme, all opposed to it. Reasons given for this were cost, expected use and loss of green space.

**Cycle paths/pedestrian footpaths:** A general comment was that the town centre needs to be more cycle and pedestrian friendly and better links between the town centre and outlying housing areas. 11 comments were made requesting more cycle paths or footpaths: 1 requesting better lighting for footpaths; 1 requesting improved access

for cyclists and pedestrians at the train station; 1 comment highlighting the 'downside' of reduced green spaces by providing paths, and; 1 requesting split cycle paths and footpaths due to the 'danger' of mixing cyclists and pedestrians. Several comments were made regarding this issue if the viaduct came down. 1 saying access around busier Hinchingsbrooke junction would have to be improved and 1 saying the old bridge at Godmanchester should be pedestrianised.

**Housing:** there were 7 comments about housing. 6 of these said too much housing was proposed or infrastructure/parking needs to be in place before additional housing is built.

**Removal of viaduct:** There were 28 comments which were generally positive about the scheme, most of which stated that they supported the removal of the viaduct. 3 comments were against the viaduct being removed. 2 people commented that their journey times/distances would increase. There were 2 comments saying that the plans will lead to disruption. 29 comments were made about congestion. 3 said that there would be less congestion as a result of the viaduct being removed and the new link roads while 21 thought that the congestion would remain the same or get worse. 4 said that the scheme must ensure that congestion is reduced. 7 comments (which relate to appearance) all support removal of viaduct. There were 7 comments about noise. 5 of these said that noise will get worse, 1 said it will get better. There were 5 comments about pollution, with 3 saying the problem will stay the same or get worse, 1 saying the scheme should aim not to lead to more.

## 5. POINTS OF PRINCIPLE

5.1 The following points of principle have been distilled from the written comments and verbal comments made at the exhibition venues. If supported they will help the Council to develop and direct its policies and to come to decisions in a number of areas of current involvement:

- acceptance that car parking for long stay (commuter parking) should generally be provided outside the existing defined town centre
- charging regime suggested for free car parks as there needs to be a control mechanism
- park and ride/walk must be considered particularly as County Council and HDC offices will have less car parking in the future – some loss provided for by additional public space provided at Godmanchester depot July 2007. Are the County considering options?
- more attention given to targeting of specific improvements to walking and cycling routes with particular reference to routes from car parks and housing areas and crossings of the ring road to link with the town centre
- need for more short stay in existing town centre to maintain economic viability ( shoppers and visitors) and better access to them from the ring road – this points to Chequers court and Princes' Street and the need to increase car park capacity in

those areas . Sainsbury control their own car park and therefore phasing of any redevelopment must avoid loss of spaces during construction

- urgent discussions needed with train operating company as there is concern over station car parking and the spill over of car parking into residential streets
- important that ATS situated at the junction of the ring road and Hartford Road is relocated and this land included as part of the retail development strategy for the town centre
- other options for locating car parks need to be considered before a decision on extending the car park at Riverside Park
- must have clear budget arrangements for improvement to Riverside Park before any alterations to that open space
- in short-term work to develop west of town centre master plan to ascertain quantum of development and impact on junctions. Impact of existing parking on Ermine Street also to be considered
- acceptance of the benefits that will accrue with the viaduct coming down and assistance it will give in the implementation of vision and improved access to and from Huntingdon centre
- acceptance that the town centre needs larger retail spaces and must happen in existing town centre in next three years otherwise pressure on other sites beyond ring road will materialise

## **6. RECOMMENDATION**

- 6.1 That members note the comments made regarding the Vision and endorse the points of general principle as outlined in Section 5.

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