

Core Strategy 2007 - Preferred Options - Consideration of Options

Huntingdonshire District Council

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Introduction

Introduction to the Preferred Options

1 The Preferred Options have been set out in two volumes. Volume 1 takes the form of the preferred approaches for the strategy and core policy areas and their reasoned justification. Volume 2, the Consideration of Options, details the process of how each Preferred Option was decided upon. The information in volume two therefore forms the evidence base and the audit trail for the development of the Preferred Options.

2 Each topic addressed in this volume is set out in a standard format as described below.

Heading	Description
Key sources	A table setting out the key policy sources which have guided the approach taken.
Issues and Options Identified for Consultation	A statement setting out the issues, options and questions raised in the main Issues and Options consultation document.
Reasonable alternatives	Any alternatives put forward in the main Issues and Options consultation document which the Council considered could be a feasible way of approaching the topic differently.
Summary of initial Sustainability Appraisal on Issues and Options	An Initial Sustainability Appraisal was undertaken of the main Issues and Options consultation document and distributed for consultation alongside it. This is the first stage of a systematic process intended to assess the extent to which emerging policies and proposals will help to achieve relevant environmental, social and economic objectives.
Consultation responses to Issues and Options	The main Issues and Options consultation document was extensively distributed to specific and general consultation bodies ⁽ⁱ⁾ and to other interested parties. A summary of the responses is given including an indication of overall levels of support or opposition to the issues and options raised.
Towards a Spatial Strategy	Once responses had been received to the broad issues and options raised more detailed consultation material was produced concerning the spatial vision, spatial strategy and strategic growth options. These were also informed by the Housing Land Availability Study and the Employment Land Review, prepared in consultation with many landowners and agents. This material was then used to engage a number of key stakeholders, including parish and county councils, highways and environment agencies and key service providers, in further consultation. Where no further consultation was considered necessary this section is omitted.
Initial Sustainability Appraisal on Towards a Spatial Strategy	An Initial Sustainability Appraisal was undertaken of 'Towards a Spatial Strategy' to assist in selection of the preferred approaches.
Key stakeholder responses	Responses received to the detailed options presented in Towards a Spatial Strategy.

i As defined in the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004

Introduction

Heading	Description
Assessment of responses and alternative approaches	The Council's consideration of all responses received throughout the pre-submission consultation period. This includes an analysis of any alternative approaches suggested by the Council or raised through the consultation process.
Tests of soundness	Throughout the preparation of material relating to each topic attention has been paid to the need to adhere to the requirements of the tests relating to procedures, conformity and coherence, consistency and effectiveness. these are listed below. All the preferred options presented are believed to be sound at this stage. Where aspects of concern were identified in the course of preparing the preferred options these are highlighted and the remedial action taken noted.
Preferred options	Statement cross-referring to the location of the relevant preferred approach in volume 1.

3 One of the central assessments that will be made of any DPD at the Submission stage is whether the document passes the Tests of Soundness. To ensure that the document can pass the tests at Submission the Preferred Options have been assessed and modified where appropriate.

4 The Tests of Soundness are as follows:

Procedural

Test i) it has been prepared in accordance with the local development scheme;

Test ii) it has been prepared in compliance with the statement of community involvement, or with the minimum requirements set out in the Regulations where no statement of community involvement exists;

Test iii) the plan and its policies have been subjected to sustainability appraisal;

Conformity

Test iv) it is a spatial plan which is consistent with national planning policy and in general conformity with the regional spatial strategy for the region or, in London, the spatial development strategy and it has properly had regard to any other relevant plans, policies and strategies relating to the area or to adjoining areas;

Test v) it has had regard to the authority's community strategy;

Coherence, consistency and effectiveness

Test vi) the strategies or policies in the plan are coherent and consistent within and between development plan documents prepared by the authority and by neighbouring authorities, where cross boundary issues are relevant;

Test vii) the strategies or policies represent the most appropriate in all the circumstances, having considered the relevant alternatives, and they are founded on a robust and credible evidence base;

Test viii) there are clear mechanisms for implementation and monitoring; and

Test ix) the plan is reasonably flexible to enable it to deal with changing circumstances.

5 Appropriate Assessment as required by the European Directive on Habitats will be undertaken to test the Document when it is submitted to the Secretary of State.

Introduction

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1 A Spatial Vision for Huntingdonshire

National	
Regional	Draft East of England Plan Vision
Local	Huntingdonshire Community Strategy 2004 Draft Sustainable Community Strategy for Huntingdonshire
Other	

Table 1.1 Key Sources for the Spatial Vision

Issues and Options Identified for Consultation

Issue 1: The need to define a vision for Huntingdonshire to guide the overall philosophy of the Core Strategy.

Option 1: Use the vision from the Huntingdonshire Community Strategy:

'Huntingdonshire will continue to provide a good quality of life as a place which offers:

- continued economic success;
- opportunities for everyone to gain access to suitable homes, jobs and services; and
- an attractive environment which is conserved and enhanced.'

Question 1: Do you consider this an appropriate vision for the District?

Question 2: Are there other aspects it should incorporate?

Reasonable Alternatives

1.1 No alternatives were put forward.

Summary of Initial Sustainability Appraisal on Issues and Options

1.2 The vision was not appraised separately as it was taken directly from the Community Strategy which aims to promote sustainability across the district as a whole.

1 A Spatial Vision for Huntingdonshire

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Consultation Responses to Issues and Options

1.3 The majority of respondents supported the vision, however, there was some concern that it was not sufficiently locally distinctive. A number of respondents sought additions to the vision. These included increasing the emphasis on sustainable development and the need to reduce the carbon footprint of the district. One respondent was particularly concerned that the RSS vision of sustainable and inclusive communities be included, along with the vision from the Community Strategy.

Towards a Spatial Strategy

The Vision put forward was:

In 2026, Huntingdonshire will have retained its distinct identity as a predominantly rural area of villages and market towns whilst accommodating the development for the homes and jobs required as part of a major growth area, taking advantage of the economic vitality of the Cambridge Sub-Region, in a sustainable manner which respects, maintains and enhances the special characters of its towns, villages and countryside. Its residents will have an improved quality of life with increased access to local jobs, housing and high quality services, facilities and green infrastructure.

Question 1: It is considered that this vision captures all the required aspects and that it is not possible to present alternative visions. Do you agree that this vision adequately covers all aspects? If not please give details of how you think it could be changed.

Summary of Initial Sustainability Appraisal on Towards a Spatial Strategy

1.4 The Spatial Vision meets the majority of the SA Objectives and is considered to be well balanced in meeting the need to promote sustainable development. Specific commitments to accommodating growth in a sustainable manner and taking advantage of economic vitality is balanced against the need to protect the landscape character and ecology of the District.

Key Stakeholder Responses

1.5 Most key stakeholder respondents considered the vision to be appropriate and more locally specific than previous versions. Some thought that it could still be more locally specific and make reference to growth that would take place and where. Some also considered that it was important to stress that proposed growth is to be delivered in a sustainable manner and to do so appropriate solutions would need to be developed to address resulting additional environmental pressures on water supply, waste disposal facilities, greenhouse gas emissions, biodiversity and flood risk. And that an integrated approach to the development of Huntingdonshire should be emphasised, reflecting the need for different forms of environmental infrastructure.

Assessment of Responses and Alternative Approaches

1.6 The original option has been discounted because it is considered that it does not respond to the key characteristics of the district, the issues and challenges, raised through consultation on the LDF, in an appropriate manner. It is considered that the links with the vision of the East of England Plan are not sufficiently clear. It is also considered to be "placeless" and not sufficiently distinctive to Huntingdonshire.

1.7 The Vision presented in the 'Towards a Spatial Strategy' document was modified following respondents comments regarding its readability.

A Spatial Vision for Huntingdonshire 1

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1.8 The Vision is supported by the Spatial Principles, which give more detail about the issues and challenges Huntingdonshire faces during the plan period and how the Council proposes to tackle them. The Spatial Principles have been added to significantly to address the identified problem of a lack of spatial detail.

Tests of Soundness

1.9 The preferred option is considered sound.

Preferred Approach

1.10 The preferred approach is detailed in Volume 1 on page 11.

2 The Spatial Principles

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2 The Spatial Principles

National	
Regional	Draft East of England Plan
Local	Sustainable Communities Strategy
Other	

Table 2.1 Key Sources for the Objectives

Issues and Options Identified for Consultation

The original consultation did not consider spatial principles to be a key issue that would be determined later in the plan process.

Reasonable Alternatives

2.1 No reasonable alternatives were identified.

Summary of Initial Sustainability Appraisal

2.2 There was no Initial Sustainability Appraisal for the Spatial Principles carried out for the Issues and Options paper.

Consultation Responses

2.3 Many people who responded at the initial Issues and Options stage, thought that additional spatial detail was needed in or to support the Vision. The Vision was considered to not be specific enough to the character of Huntingdonshire and the issues and challenges faced over the plan period.

Towards a Spatial Strategy

The Council was concerned that to include a substantial amount of spatial detail in the vision would make the vision cumbersome and would take it away from the high level succinct statement that it should be. To tackle the requirement for more spatial detail the Council decided that it would draw up a set of Spatial Principles that would give more information about the way in which the Council thought the issues and challenges that the District faced in the plan period.

The Spatial Principles identified were:

Huntingdonshire will play a proactive role in accommodating future growth in the Cambridge-sub region. The majority of growth will be concentrated in the most sustainable locations of Huntingdon, St Neots and St Ives where there is access to existing and improving public transport, new road infrastructure and where the use of amenities and facilities can be maximised.

RAF Brampton and the industrial estate west of Huntingdon town centre will provide significant opportunities for development on previously developed land within the District. Further opportunities to maximise the use of previously developed land on a smaller scale will be encouraged within the market towns of the Cambridge-Sub region.

The visual quality, viability and vitality of the four market town centres in Huntingdonshire will be enhanced by identifying and implementing opportunities to improve the public realm. Improvements to the public realm will focus on improving the quality of place and culture in our market towns to ensure the District remains a popular location for visitors. The regeneration of run down areas will be encouraged and particular attention will be paid to areas of deprivation within St Neots, Huntingdon and Ramsey through neighbourhood management and regeneration projects.

Opportunities for retail growth will be maximised within all market towns and key service centres in order to respond to competitive pressure from other centres and further strengthen the district's economy. A large proportion of future retail growth will be accommodated within the town centre of Huntingdon, with additional, complementary development to the west of the town centre facilitated through an Area Action Plan. Further growth will be accommodated in St Neots and a lesser scale of growth in St Ives and Ramsey.

Future employment development will be located in the most sustainable locations at the market towns and will be commensurate with housing growth to ensure the creation of balanced communities. The provision of local employment opportunities will help limit levels of out commuting to London, Peterborough and Cambridge and ensure the continued success of the District's economy.

Growth of key service centres will be restricted to a level that will help sustain the existing facilities and amenities, without encouraging growth in these less sustainable locations. In smaller settlements future housing will be restricted to only that necessary to meet local housing needs. This will be achieved through the identification of exception sites for affordable housing in those settlements with access to higher order centres.

The further expansion of Peterborough will respect the separate identities of Yaxley, Facet, Stilton and Alwalton by maintaining an appropriate degree of green separation. However, it is important to ensure those settlements that have experienced significant growth in the past enjoy the benefits of future development within Peterborough through improved access to a greater range of amenities and facilities. The areas of greenspace around those settlements close to the boundary of Peterborough will become important areas of open space resource for the expansion of Peterborough.

The landscape and countryside of the Huntingdonshire will be protected and enhanced. Areas identified for enhancement include the wetlands along the Ouse Valley, the woodlands around Grafham Water, the wetland and woodlands that will form the Great Fen area and the limestone villages of the north west and the uplands in the west of the District. The accessibility for informal recreation these areas will be improved. Further opportunities for recreation and biodiversity/green infrastructure across the district will be identified and improved. The growth of both Huntingdon and St Neots will reinforce the need to protect and enhance areas of greenspace around them.

The proposed improvements to the new A14 may create significant opportunities for new development in the Huntingdon area. It could help solve the access problems in the town centre and facilitate the extension of the town centre in a westerly direction through the means of an Area Action Plan. Improvements to the transport network will influence the delivery of housing and employment growth in more sustainable locations, projects with particular importance in relation to delivery of development include the A14 improvement

2 The Spatial Principles

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scheme, the Cambridge to St Ives Guided Bus and the A428 road improvements and High Quality Public Transport Corridor. Further improvements to public transport will enable the promotion of sustainable travel options for the district.

The redundant military bases in Huntingdonshire will need careful consideration to ensure that any potential re-use or redevelopment maximises the benefit to the District. RAF Brampton, subject to its release by the MoD, offers the opportunity for mixed use development of an appropriate scale in a sustainable location within the plan period. Whilst the future potential for developments at Alconbury Airfield and Wyton Airfield need to be considered in the longer term in the context of the economic benefits they may bring to Huntingdonshire, if no sequentially better sustainable options are available and also in the context of the wider strategic needs of the Region through the next review of the East of England Plan.

Summary of Initial Sustainability Appraisal

2.4 The Initial Sustainability Appraisal for the Spatial Principles was carried out as part of continued engagement with stakeholders for the consultation document *Towards a Spatial Strategy for Huntingdonshire*. The sustainability appraisal process found that the Principles met the majority of the sustainability appraisal objectives however, there were some omissions, for example, no reference to managing flood risk - identified as a key sustainability issue for the District in the Scoping Report - or reducing crime. The appraisal suggested that these issues may need to be considered for the later stages of plan development.

Key Stakeholder Responses

2.5 Nine of the 17 respondents to this section supported the Spatial Principles as presented. The main areas of concern raised by other respondents were how the Spatial Principles fitted with the Spatial Vision, greater clarity was sought on the future roles of RAF bases in the District and additions were sought to address building standards, locational and infrastructure issues.

Assessment of Responses and Alternative Approaches

2.6 The Spatial Principles have been modified to give greater clarity on the role military bases would have in the Spatial Strategy. Clarification has also been made for the spatial distribution of development and for how strategic infrastructure projects would influence the strategy.

Tests of Soundness

2.7 Community Strategy links

Preferred Approach

2.8 The Preferred Approach is detailed in Volume 1 on page 12.

3 The Spatial Objectives

National	PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development, PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
Regional	Draft East of England Plan policy SS1 Sustainable Construction in Cambridgeshire - a good practice guide (Cambridge Horizons and Cambridgeshire County Council 2006)
Local	Sustainable Communities Strategy
Other	

Table 3.1 Key Sources for the Objectives

Issues and Options Identified for Consultation

Issue 2: To define a series of objectives for the Core Strategy to provide a focus for what it aspires to achieve.

Option 2: To minimise the impact on climate change by:

- enabling required development to be accommodated in locations which limit the need to travel whilst catering for local needs
- promoting developments that conserve natural resources and minimise greenhouse gas emissions

Option 3: To increase housing opportunities for people by:

- ensuring that the quantity and types of dwellings built meet the requirements of local people
- ensuring that an appropriate proportion of new housing is affordable to those in need
- enabling the specialist housing needs of particular groups to be met in appropriate locations

Option 4: To realise the economic potential of Huntingdonshire and its residents by:

- facilitating business development in sectors that have potential to meet local employment needs and limit out-commuting
- enabling business development in rural areas, in locations and on a scale which helps to provide local jobs, limits commuting and avoids adverse environmental impacts
- strengthening the vitality and viability of Huntingdonshire's town centres as places for shopping and leisure

Option 5: To improve the quality of life for local people by:

- providing a framework for securing adequate land and infrastructure to support business and community needs
- increasing opportunities for pursuing a healthy lifestyle by maintaining and enhancing recreation opportunities and encouraging walking, cycling and horse riding

Option 6: To improve and conserve Huntingdonshire's environment by:

- enhancing the distinctive identities of our villages and market towns

3 The Spatial Objectives

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- enhancing our characteristic landscapes, habitats and species
- promoting areas of strategic greenspace enhancement

Question 3: Do you agree with the suggested objectives?

Question 4: Are there any additional objectives we should include?

Reasonable Alternatives

3.1 There are an infinite number of objectives that could be proposed for the Core Strategy. However, once it is adopted the Core Strategy and the Regional Spatial Strategy will form the development plan for the district. Therefore, it is logical that the objectives of the Core Strategy form a local interpretation of the Regional Spatial Strategy's objectives.

Summary of Initial Sustainability Appraisal for the Issues and Options paper

3.2 The Initial Sustainability Appraisal for the objectives of the Issues and Options paper was omitted. This was rectified for the Initial Sustainability Appraisal for the Towards a Spatial Strategy and the draft Final Sustainability Appraisal.

Consultation Responses to Issues and Options

3.3 A significant number of respondents expressed concern that it was not sufficiently clear whether the alternative objectives were to be considered as a whole and could only be chosen as a complete group or not at all, or whether they could be selected individually.

Towards a Spatial Strategy

Objectives put forward were:

- To maintain, enhance and conserve Huntingdonshire's characteristic landscapes, habitats and species
- To conserve and enhance the special character and separate identities of Huntingdonshire's villages and market towns
- To ensure that design of new development integrates effectively with its setting and promotes local distinctiveness
- To promote developments that conserve natural resources, minimise greenhouse gas emissions and help to reduce waste
- To secure developments which are accessible to all potential users, and which minimise risks to health as a result of crime (or fear of crime), flooding or pollution and climate change
- To enable required growth to be accommodated in locations which limit the need to travel, while also catering for local needs
- To ensure that the types of dwellings built are suited to the requirements of the local population, and that an appropriate proportion of units is 'affordable' to those in need
- To enable specialist housing needs of particular groups to be met in appropriate locations
- To facilitate business development in sectors that have potential to meet local employment needs and limit out commuting

Summary of Initial Sustainability Appraisal for Towards a Spatial Strategy for Huntingdonshire

3.4 The Initial Sustainability Appraisal compared the Sustainability Appraisal objectives against the draft plan objectives. There were a number of relationships that were identified as being uncertain - these related primarily to minimising water, reducing waste generation and energy consumption and objectives concerning residential development and employment development. The relationship between these objectives was identified as uncertain as, although waste, water use and energy use will inevitably be increased by development, there are a number of mitigation measures that can be implemented to help address this issue. Nevertheless, overall the objectives were either appraised to have no relationship or a potentially positive relationship.

Key Stakeholder Responses

3.5 All but 2 respondents broadly supported the objectives put forward. Limited concerns were expressed regarding the need for more emphasis on infrastructure and provision of affordable and elderly persons housing. The ability to achieve the objectives in the face of major growth requirements was also questioned.

Assessment of Responses and Alternative Approaches

3.6 The Objectives have been expanded to better address business development, service and facilities in villages, the vitality and viability for town centres. Also added are objectives covering healthy lifestyles and recreation and infrastructure for business and community needs.

3.7 The objectives have been re-ordered to better reflect the priorities of the Spatial Strategy.

Tests of Soundness

Preferred Approach

3.8 The Preferred Approach is detailed in Volume 1 on page 14.

4 The Cornerstone of Sustainable Development

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4 The Cornerstone of Sustainable Development

National	PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development, PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, Securing the Future - UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy (HM Government) 2003
Regional	Draft East of England Plan policy SS1, Sustainable Construction in Cambridgeshire - a good practice guide (Cambridge Horizons and Cambridgeshire County Council 2006), A Sustainable Development Framework for the East of England (Sustainable Development Round Table for the East of England 2001), Sustainable Communities in the East of England (ODPM, 2003), Towards Sustainable Construction - A Strategy for the East of England (EP, CE, GOEast, PECT, 2003)
Local	Sustainable Communities Strategy (emerging 2007)
Other	

Table 4.1 Key Sources for Sustainable Development

Issues and Options Identified for Consultation

Issue 3: The requirement to promote sustainable development to ensure that the needs of our residential, business and interest communities are met whilst not compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Option 7: Policies will indicate that all development proposals should contribute to the pursuit of sustainable development.

Criteria could be set out to assess how a development proposal will achieve this. These could reflect social, economic and environmental issues including how the proposal would contribute to minimising the impact on climate change.

An assessment could be required to accompany any proposal for major development to demonstrate how these have been met.

Question 5: What criteria do you consider most important in assessing how a development proposal will contribute to sustainable development?

Question 6: Should those promoting a major development be required to complete an assessment to show how they have addressed these criteria?

Reasonable Alternatives

4.1 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.

Summary of Initial Sustainability Appraisal for the Issues and Options paper

4.2 The appraisal process identified the option as being sustainable. It did suggest that the policy would need to be carefully worded in order to address all aspects of sustainable development.

Consultation Responses to Issues and Options

4.3 Many respondents thought this was important and supported the principles identify. Some respondents considered the assessment proposed as part of this approach to be unnecessary and would be likely to duplicate information required through other established requirements.

Assessment of Responses and Alternative Approaches

4.4 Care has been taken to ensure that the criteria in the Preferred Approach represent a balance between the three areas of economic, social and environmental sustainability.

4.5 Care has also been taken to try to ensure that the criteria are straightforward and do not encroach significantly into aspects of development that are assessed or appraised by other established requirements.

Tests of Soundness

Preferred Approach

4.6 The Preferred Approach is detailed in Volume 1 on page 16

5 The Spatial Strategy

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5 The Spatial Strategy

Strategic Housing Growth

National	PPS3: Housing, PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, PPS25: Development and Flood Risk Development and Flood Risk: A Practice Guide Companion to PPS25 A 'Living Draft' consultation paper
Regional	Proposed Changes to the East of England Plan - policy CRS1, Cambridge Sub Region Strategic Housing Market Assessment (forthcoming), Saved policy P9/4 Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003
Local	The Housing Land Availability Study (HLAS), Huntingdonshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2004), Settlement Hierarchy Background Paper Update (2007)
Other	

Table 5.1 Key Sources for Planning for Housing

Issues and Options Identified for Consultation

We need to make fundamental choices on whether the district should pursue a very intense urban focus for new growth or a more dispersed approach; whether priority should always be given to re-use of brownfield land or whether in some circumstances developing greenfield land with very good access to services and facilities is preferable. Rather than put forward a particular choice the options are deliberately left wide open to incorporate a number of possible alternatives.

Issue 6: The need to identify strategic directions of growth to guide where sites will be allocated for development.

A series of maps follows in this section which indicate possible directions of growth from each of the larger settlements in the district. These are coded alphabetically and provide an indication of the possible scale of development that could be accommodated. The maps indicate a wide range of alternatives not all of which will be needed to achieve the scale of growth required in the Regional Spatial Strategy. They show possible directions for housing, employment and mixed use development.

It is likely that many growth areas will accommodate a mixture of housing and employment uses to help develop balanced, sustainable communities and provide viable transport choices. However, to best ascertain people's preferences housing, employment and retail are discussed separately below.

Huntingdon and St Neots Areas

Option 10: Policies could propose that the Huntingdon area should get most of the growth.

Option 11: Policies could propose that the St Neots area should get most of the growth.

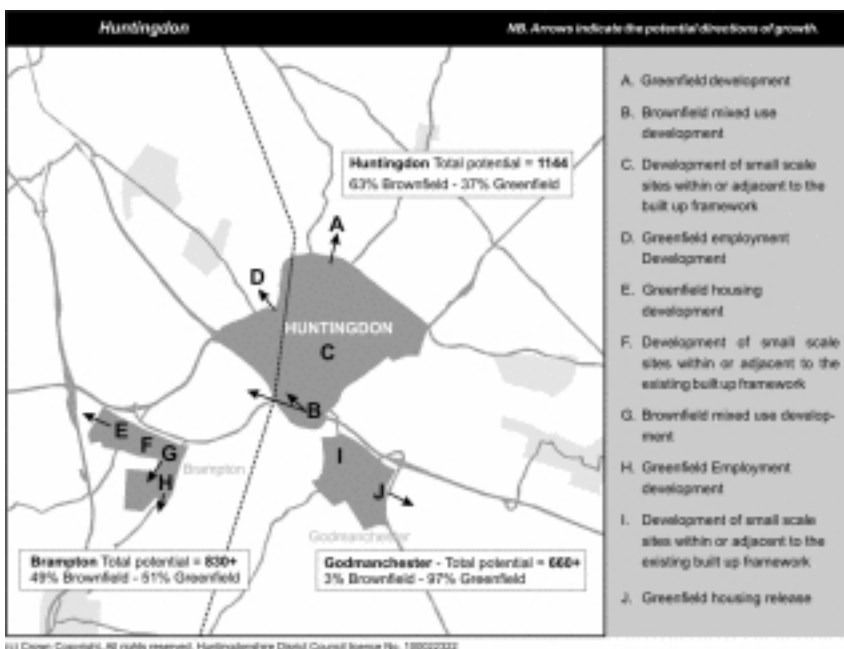
Option 12: Policies could propose both areas to grow at a similar rate.

Question 11: What proportion of growth should be focused in the two main urban areas?

Question 12: Which of these options would you prefer and why?

Question 13: Are there any other options which should be considered?

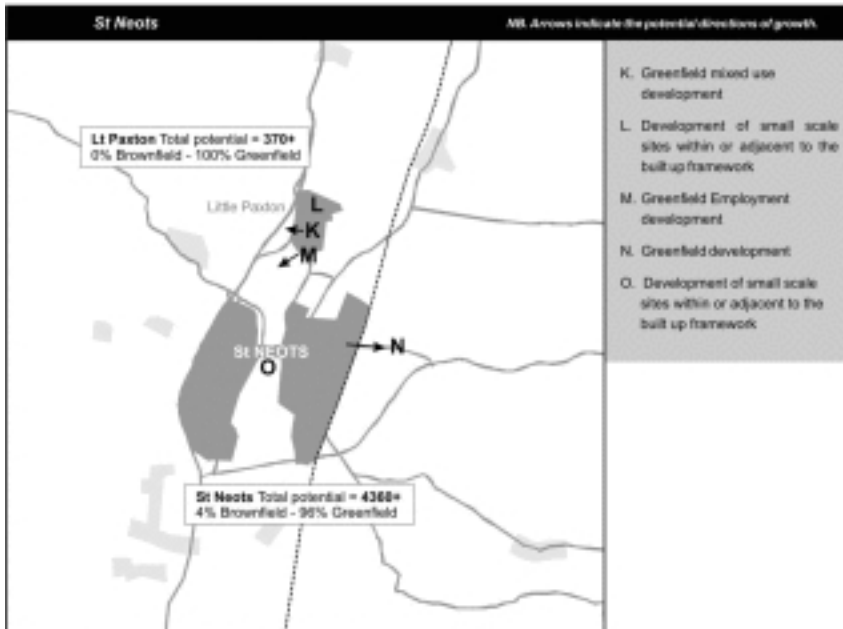
Question 14: To achieve your chosen option which of the directions of growth shown on the maps would you rather see developed?



Map 5.1 Huntingdon Area

5 The Spatial Strategy

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Map 5.2 St Neots Area

St Ives and Ramsey

Strategic guidance indicates that St Ives and Ramsey should receive a smaller level of growth. When considering development in these two locations the following options have been identified.

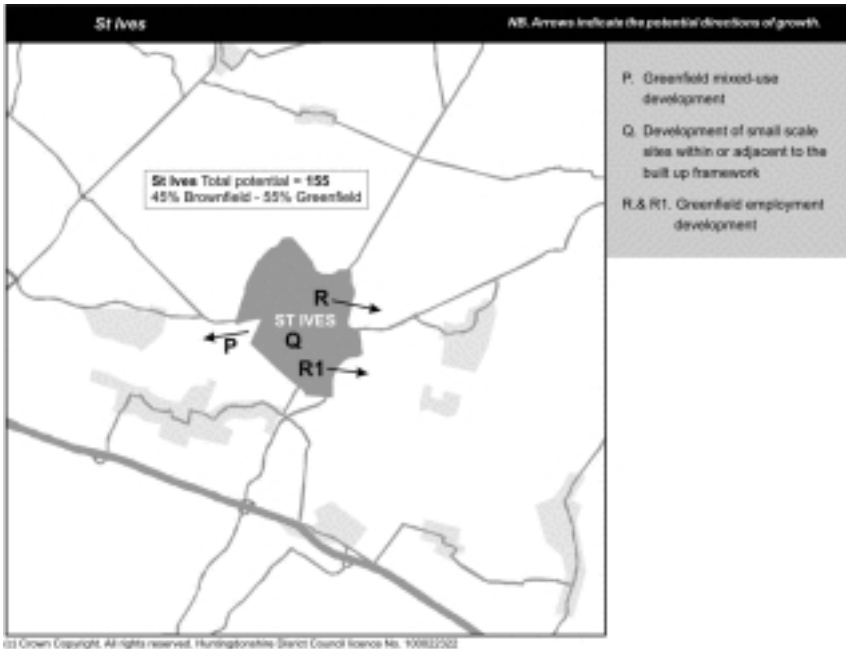
Option 13: Strategic directions of growth could allow growth only within the existing built framework in Ramsey and/ or St Ives.

Option 14: Strategic directions of growth could allow growth within small-scale extensions to Ramsey and/ or St Ives.

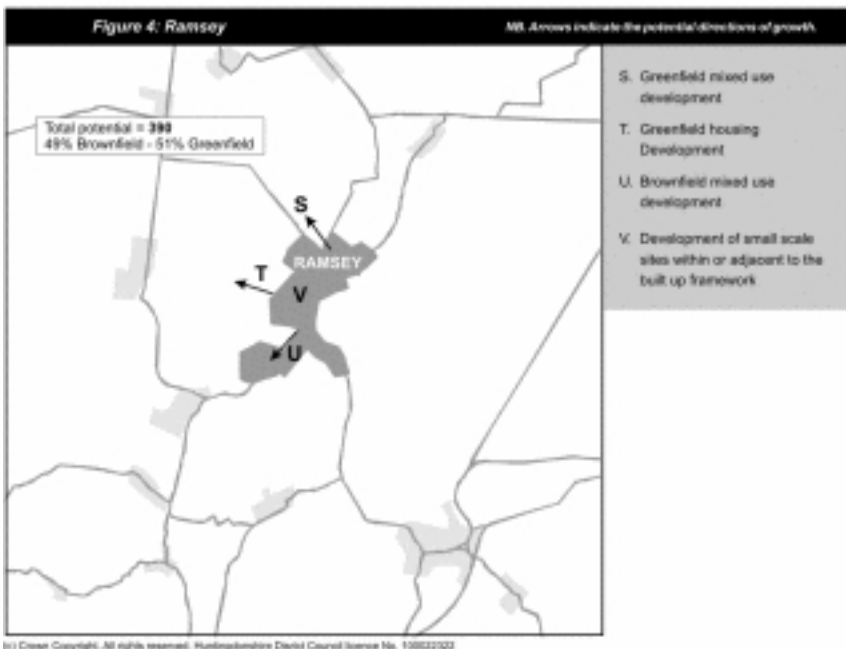
Question 15: Which of these options would you prefer and why?

Question 16: Are there any other options which should be considered?

Question 17: Which of the directions of growth shown on the maps would you rather see developed?



Map 5.3 St Ives



Map 5.4 Ramsey

Key Service Centres

When considering development in possible Key Service Centres that are not closely linked with a Market Town the following options have been identified.

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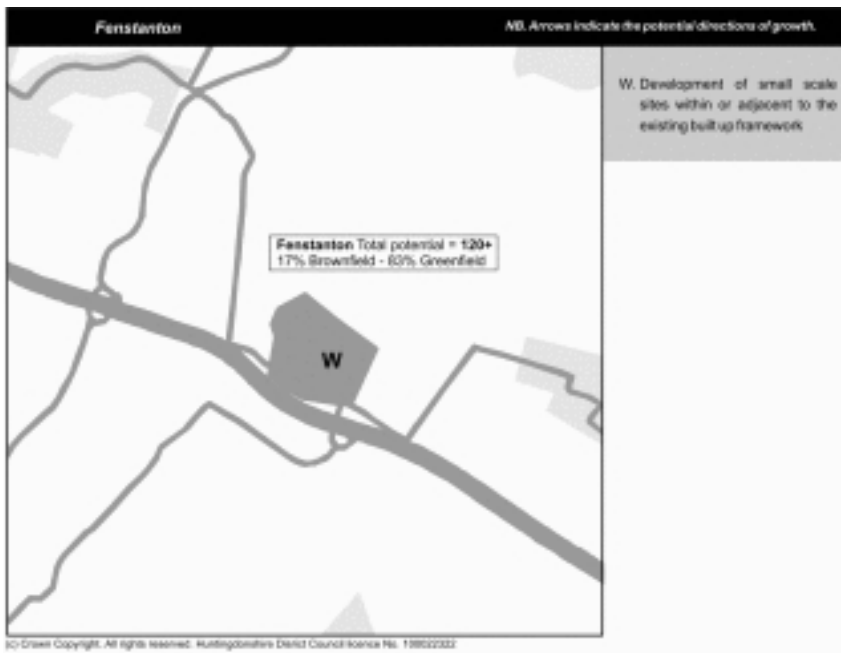
Option 15: Development could be distributed across all Key Service Centres broadly in proportion to their existing size and level of facilities.

Option 16: Development could be more limited in those settlements which have recently received high levels of growth.

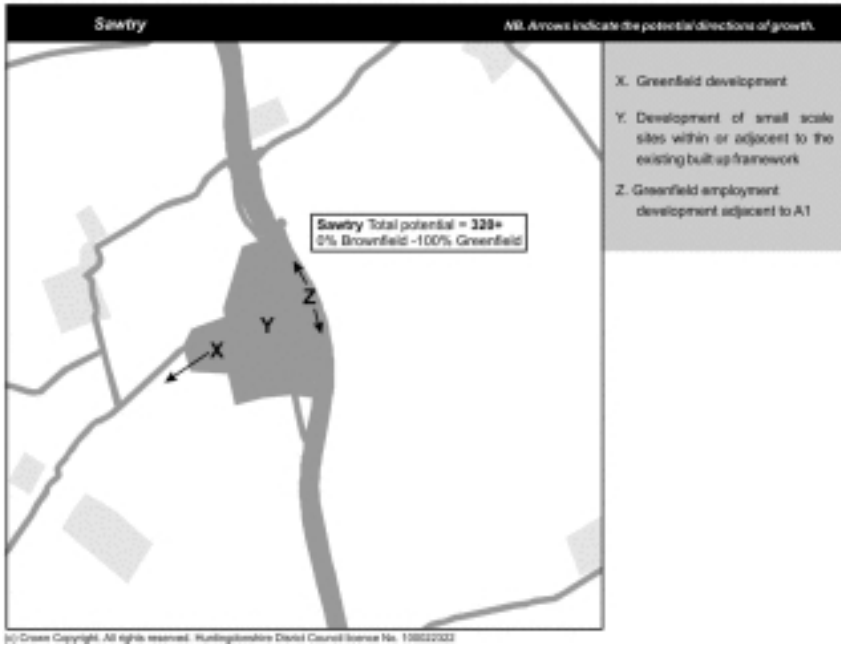
Question 18: Which of these options would you prefer and why?

Question 19: Are there any other options which should be considered?

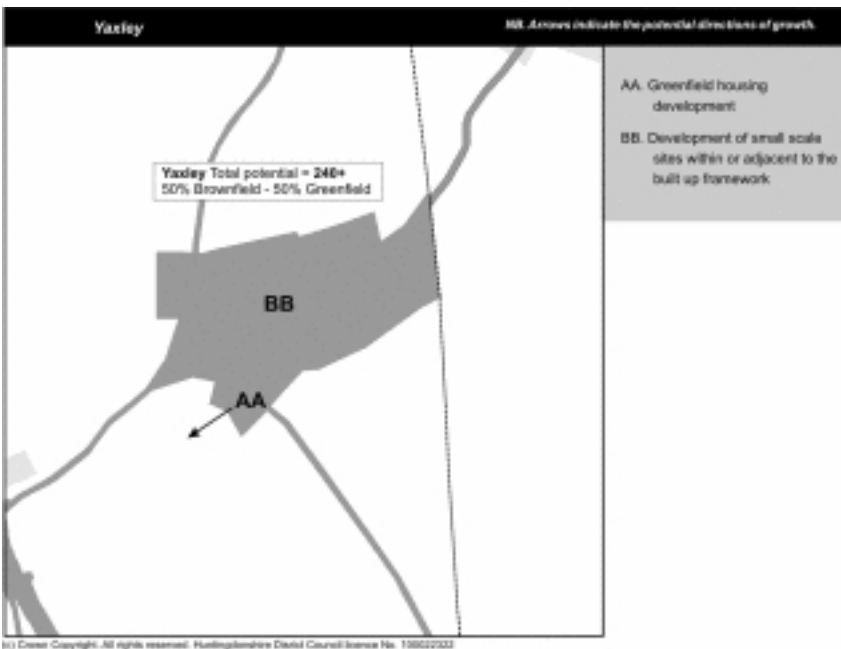
Question 20: Which of the directions of growth shown on the maps would you rather see developed?



Map 5.5 Fenstanton



Map 5.6 Sawtry



Map 5.7 Yaxley

5 The Spatial Strategy

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Summary of Initial Sustainability Appraisal for the Issues and Options paper

5.1 Huntingdon and St Neots areas: all three options were identified as being sustainable. However, Option 11 was considered to be less sustainable than Option 10 as it would result in increased Greenfield development which is contrary to Government guidance. Concern was also noted for the impact of development on one settlement. Option 12 was identified as being a good way to distribute growth across the two settlements, although the use of Greenfield land was recognised.

5.2 St Ives and Ramsey: both options were identified as being sustainable as they direct growth towards market towns. However, it was suggested that option 14 may reduce the need to direct further growth to less accessible settlements and improve accessibility to services and facilities.

5.3 Key service centres: Option 15 was identified as being the most sustainable as it helps ensure development is located in areas where services and facilities are available and reduces the need to travel. It also maximises the use of brownfield land compared to option 16.

Consultation Responses to Issues and Options

5.4 There was strong support for clear indication of the preferred directions of growth although obviously many differing opinions on where growth should be focused with many representations promoting specific sites for development. A number of representations stressed the general principle of making best use of previously developed land irrespective of its location.

5.5 There was an equal balance between support for concentrating growth in Huntingdon or St Neots with most respondents favouring a reasonably equal distribution. Of greater concern to many was the capacity of the infrastructure to absorb significant growth, particularly with regard to the transport impacts.

5.6 A number of respondents sought a greater level of growth in St Ives citing its greater sustainability than Ramsey. Others however, were concerned over flooding and environmental capacity issues in St Ives.

5.7 There was general support for provision of some development in all Key Service Centres to help reinforce their roles as focal points for surrounding villages.

Towards a Spatial Strategy

Four options considered for overall distribution of growth including housing.

Cambridge Sub-region Focused Growth

This option sought to concentrate growth in the towns and key service centre villages of the Cambridge Sub-region. The housing growth was to be distributed roughly equally between the Huntingdon and St Neots Areas with a significant amount in St Ives. This is illustrated in Figure 1 and in Table 1.

Huntingdon Area Focused Growth

This option sought to concentrate growth mainly in the Huntingdon Area. There was to be most of the housing growth in the Huntingdon Area of Brampton, Godmanchester and Huntingdon, with St Neots a lesser, although still significant amount. St Ives would see less housing while other settlements would have some growth. This is illustrated in Figure 2 and in Table 2.

St Neots Area Focused Growth

This option sought to concentrate growth mainly in the St Neots Area. There was to be most of the housing growth in the St Neots Area of Little Paxton and St Neots, with the Huntingdon Area having a lesser, although still significant amount. St Ives would see less housing while other settlements would have some growth. This is illustrated in figure 3 and in table 3. This option was considered to have significant merits not least of all for the potential to master plan a significant extension to the town and the opportunities to ensure comprehensive service provision. However following detailed consideration

Dispersed Growth

This option sought to distribute growth throughout the district. The housing growth was to be distributed roughly equally between the Huntingdon and St Neots Areas with a significant amount in St Ives but a significant amount was to be distributed to Ramsey and Bury and key service centre villages. This is illustrated in figure 3 and in table 3.

Towards a Spatial Strategy - Options for Additional Growth

Recent government guidance has urged local planning authorities to consider going beyond the level of growth advocated in the emerging RSS where need and demand for housing are high. Towards a Spatial Strategy considered three options for additional growth. these focused on provision of extra housing assuming that commensurate growth in employment and retailing would follow.

Enhanced Growth in the St Neots Area

This option supplemented the St Neots Area Focused Growth option with a further 1,000 homes to the east of the town.

Enhanced Growth in the Cambridge Sub-region

This option supplemented the Cambridge Sub-region focused growth option with a further 1,800 homes in the Huntingdon and St Neots areas and in the Key Service Centres within the Cambridge sub-region.

A New Eco-town

This option saw growth in any one of the spatial options considered coupled with a new eco-town at either Alconbury or Wyton airfields. Use of Wyton airfield could result in an increase from 5,450 new homes in the district to 12,000. Use of Alconbury could see an increase to 15,000 new homes. both choices would involve delivery of homes extending beyond the 2026 plan period.

Summary of Initial Sustainability Appraisal for Towards a Spatial Strategy for Huntingdonshire

5.8 Both the Huntingdon Area focused growth and St Neots Area focused growth scored consistently well in the appraisal process. Although the St Neots Area focused growth directed large scale growth towards Greenfield land, this was in the most sustainable location and would facilitate the provision of social and physical infrastructure. These options were also less affected by flood risk than the other options.

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Key Stakeholder Responses

5.9 The Cambridge sub-region focused growth option gained qualified support from 5 out of 17 respondents who thought it offered the most balanced option and would maximise the use of existing infrastructure and services. The main concerns expressed over this option were flooding, especially in St Ives, and the spread of development resulting in contributions to infrastructure being diluted.

5.10 The Huntingdon area focused growth option received qualified support from 8 out of 21 respondents. They considered it to offer a central location in the district with good and improving communication links and to best respond to market preferences for employment and retail growth. The main concerns expressed were over the environmental capacity of the local area to absorb more growth and congestion implications.

5.11 The St Neots area focused growth option received qualified support from 7 out of 18 respondents who thought it was most likely to deliver a sustainable new neighbourhood with good local services, employment and infrastructure. The main concerns were the high reliance on use of greenfield land and the limited scope for additional development in St Neots town centre.

5.12 The Dispersed growth option received qualified support from 7 out of 19 respondents who generally believed it would reduce the impact of development on any one existing settlement. The main concerns expressed were that this option offered a more or less sustainable approach to development depending on the respondents viewpoint and that the shortage of rural employment opportunities would result in this option giving rise to greater dependency on car transport.

5.13 Regarding the options for additional growth that proposing enhanced growth in the St Neots area obtained qualified support from 7 out of 13 respondents. The option proposing enhanced growth in the Cambridge sub-region was only supported by 2 out of 11 respondents. 5 out of 12 respondents considered there to be some merit in exploring the option of a new eco-town either in addition to or instead of other options with Alconbury being favoured over Wyton. However, concerns were expressed about this being progressed outside the RSS process.

Assessment of Responses and Alternative Approaches

The Cambridge Sub-region option was considered to have significant merits however following detailed consideration locations in St Ives were discounted due to unacceptable risk of flooding. As a result this option could not be implemented fully.

The Huntingdon Area option was considered to have significant merits however following consideration of the environmental capacity of the local area to cope with more growth and congestion it was considered that the option could not be implemented fully.

The St Neots Area option was considered to have significant merits not least of all for the potential to master plan a significant extension to the town and the opportunities to ensure comprehensive service provision. The concerns expressed by respondents about reliance on a small range of greenfield locations were not considered to be insurmountable, but would affect phasing of the strategy if this option were selected.

The Dispersed Option was considered to be generally less sustainable than other options considered, mainly due to greater dependency on car transport. As detailed above for the Cambridge Sub-region, locations in St Ives were discounted due to unacceptable risk of flooding. The Dispersed Option could not be implemented fully and as there were concerns about how sustainable the option would be, it was discounted.

It was considered that aspects of all options except the Dispersed Option would, if carefully phased, be the best combination in terms of sustainability, impact on infrastructure and the environmental capacity of the District.

Tests of Soundness

Preferred Approach

5.14 The Preferred Approach is detailed in Volume 1 on page XX.

Scale and Location of Unallocated Housing Development

National	PPS3: Housing, PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
Regional	Proposed Changes to the East of England Plan policies SS1, SS2, SS4
Local	The Housing Land Availability Study (HLAS) Corporate Plan Objective: to ensure an appropriate supply of new housing Community Strategy Objectives: 1) ensure the availability of a range of decent housing to meet local needs, 2) realise the benefits to economic, social and environmental well being from housing and employment development, Development Control Policies DPD (Issues and Options Paper), Settlement Hierarchy Background Paper Update (2007)
Other	

Table 5.2 Key Sources for the Scale and Location of Unallocated Housing Development

Issues and Options Identified for Consultation

Issue 9: To identify the appropriate scale of housing permissible on unallocated sites to ensure development is concentrated in sustainable locations.

Option 28: Policies will define the scale of housing development of different types. This could be defined as:

- Major development: 60 or more dwellings
- Moderate development: 10-59 dwellings
- Minor development: up to 9 dwellings
- Residential infilling: development of a small site within the built-up framework or defined limits of a settlement by up to three dwellings.

Option 29: Policies need to define the location of development of differing scales. This could be that housing development on unallocated sites could be limited to the following:

- within the defined limits of Market Towns: major, moderate and minor housing development, and residential infilling

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- within the defined limits of Key Service Centres: moderate and minor housing development, and residential infilling
- within the built-up framework of Smaller Settlements: residential infilling
- within the countryside: limited and specific forms of housing development with an essential need to be in the countryside

Question 32: Do you agree with the four categories suggested for scale of housing growth?

Question 33: Should any other categories be considered and if so, what should these be

Question 34: Do you agree with the level of development permissible in:

- a. Market Towns;
- b. Key Service Centres;
- c. Smaller Settlements; and
- d. the countryside?

Question 35: Should minor development proposals of up to 9 dwellings be permitted in Smaller Settlements where it can be demonstrated that the settlement concerned offers at least a basic range of services and public transport appropriate to the form of the housing to be provided and it secures the most sustainable solution for the site?

Question 36: Are there any other options that should be considered?

Reasonable Alternatives

5.15 In the previously submitted Core Strategy just three categories of housing development were proposed: major - 10 or more dwellings, minor - up to 9 and infill up to 3. This could be simpler to interpret, but allows less flexibility. A significant number of representations opined that the major category was too broad and the minor category too restrictive. However, the definitions of each category could be changed in many different permutations.

5.16 The previously submitted Core Strategy proposed two categories of Key Centre and allowed for major development proposals in the larger of these. This made no distinction between the scale of development permissible in Market Towns and the six largest Key Centres. A greater amount of development could be permitted in Key Service Centres by allowing major housing schemes and in Smaller Settlements by allowing minor housing schemes in some or all of them. Either approach would lead, particularly in the case of allowing major development in KSCs, 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, particularly for minor development that greater dispersal would have a significant effect in retaining village facilities, and it would be likely to increase the need to travel. Encouragement of greater levels of development in the countryside would be contrary to national guidance.

Summary of Initial Sustainability Appraisal

Consultation Responses

5.17 There was a considerable amount of uncertainty about this topic. A number of respondents did not see a distinction between the scale of growth that is allocated and that which would be considered acceptable from windfall development. It was thought by a number of respondents that the levels were arbitrarily drawn up. Others

raised concerns about situations that might arise where sites that would generally be considered suitable for a level of development just above that which was proposed as appropriate for the location. Although the responses were varied there was support for the principle of setting levels of development for different locations

Assessment of Responses and Alternative Approaches

5.18 It was considered that the variation in responses to consultation indicated that the levels identified were about right. The uncertainty, however showed that it would be important to explain more clearly how this policy would work with the other parts of the Spatial Strategy. To facilitate a clearer explanation it was decided to combine this with the Settlement Hierarchy.

5.19 Additionally for particular circumstances it was considered that there should be the potential to allow development where particular criteria were met, sites could be considered suitable for a level of development above that which was proposed as appropriate for the location.

Tests of Soundness

Preferred Approach

5.20 The Preferred Approach is detailed in Volume 1 on page XX.

Spatial Planning Areas

National	PPS3: Housing, PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
Regional	Proposed Changes to the East of England Plan - policies H1, CSR1 and CSR2
Local	The Housing Land Availability Study (HLAS), Employment Land Review (forthcoming)
Other	

Table 5.3 Key Sources for the Spatial Planning Areas

Issues and Options Identified for Consultation

Issue 4: Identification of areas where development could be focused to promote sustainable opportunities for access to jobs, services and facilities.

Huntingdon area: this includes Huntingdon, Brampton and Godmanchester and had 31,000 residents in 2005. The area is a key driver of the local economy. The Housing Land Availability Assessment (HLAA) recently undertaken by the Council identified that this area offers significant opportunities for development. The realignment of the A14 could have implications for development opportunities, particularly post 2015.

St Neots area: this includes St Neots and Little Paxton and had a population of 31,200 in 2005. Coupled with land in Bedfordshire around Wyboston, the area is also a key driver of the local economy. The HLAA identified that this area offers significant opportunities for development.

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St Ives: is smaller in scale than Huntingdon and St Neots with a population of just under 16,000 in 2005. It offers fewer opportunities for sustainable development options. The HLAA identified a limited number of suitable sites with flooding being a major constraint. However, St Ives is within the prosperous Cambridge sub-region and will see significant changes in accessibility with the completion of the guided bus route.

Ramsey area: this includes Ramsey and Bury, but excludes Ramsey Forty Foot, Ramsey Heights, Ramsey Mereside and Ramsey St Marys, and had a population of around 8,000 in 2005. Major housing growth was discounted by the Inspector during the 2002 Local Plan alteration due to Ramsey's poor sustainability. It has relatively poor transport infrastructure and, despite previous allocations, has limited employment opportunities.

Option 8: To use the spatial planning areas described above when identifying strategic directions of growth. These would be used for assessing potential development sites for allocation within the Planning Proposals DPD or the Huntingdon West AAP.

Question 7: Do you agree with the approach of considering potential Market Towns in conjunction with the adjoining settlements identified above solely for the purposes of assessing strategic development allocations?

Reasonable Alternatives

5.21 Strategic growth allocations could be focused only within the four largest towns in the district. However, the HLAA (Now the HLAS) has identified limited brownfield land availability in some of these settlements. Limiting allocations only to sites within and around these settlements would limit the opportunity to maximise the re-use of brownfield sites which are located within the spatial planning areas but outside the market towns.

Summary of Initial Sustainability Appraisal of Issues and Options

Consultation Responses to Issues and Options

5.22 There was some opposition to this approach with some people thinking that the smaller settlements would merge with the towns and lose their identity. Others, however, supported the concept of spatial planning areas as a pragmatic way of achieving sustainable development. In particular, a number of respondents considered that greater emphasis should be given to growth around Huntingdon and St Neots. Concern was expressed over the relationship between the spatial planning areas and the settlement hierarchy.

5.23 It was suggested that Buckden should be considered as part of either the Huntingdon Area or the St Neots Area and that Needingworth, Hemingford Grey and Houghton should be part of a St Ives strategic planning area. There was also the suggestion that another spatial planning area should be designated to the north of the district close to Peterborough which would include Yaxley, Stilton and Farcet on the basis that development close to Peterborough would be more sustainable than more remote locations.

Assessment of Responses and Alternative Approaches

5.24 Although a number of variations to the original Spatial Planning Areas were suggested there was no consistent justification for any of the suggestions. It was therefore decided that the Spatial Planning Areas should remain unchanged, however it was considered important to be clearer about the implications of the designations.

Tests of Soundness

Preferred Approach

5.25 The Preferred Approach is detailed in Volume 1 on page 18.

Settlement Hierarchy

National	PPS3: Housing, PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
Regional	Emerging East of England Plan (Proposed Changes 2006)
Local	The Housing Land Availability Study (HLAS), Settlement Hierarchy background Paper Update (2007)
Other	

Table 5.4 Key Sources for the Settlement Hierarchy

Issues and Options Identified for Consultation

Issue 5: The need to define an appropriate settlement hierarchy to manage non-allocated growth in different types of location.

Option 9: The Core Strategy will need to identify a settlement hierarchy for use in determining the scale of non-allocated development appropriate in different locations.

The hierarchy could:

- identify Huntingdon, St Neots, St Ives and Ramsey and Bury as 'Market Towns'
- identify Brampton, Buckden, Fenstanton, Godmanchester, Kimbolton, Little Paxton, Sawtry, Somersham, Warboys and Yaxley as 'Key Service Centres'
- List other villages as 'Smaller Settlement'

Question 8: Do you agree with the overall approach taken to the settlement hierarchy?

Question 9: Do you agree with the identification of Huntingdon, St Neots, St Ives and Bury as 'Market Towns'?

Question 10: Do you agree with the identification of Brampton, Buckden, Fenstanton, Godmanchester, Kimbolton, Little Paxton, Sawtry, Somersham, Warboys and Yaxley as 'Key Service Centres'?

Reasonable Alternatives

5.26 The hierarchy could be changed in a number of ways to facilitate a wider or more restricted distribution of growth. This was an issue which raised significant responses to consultation on the original submitted Core Strategy (April 2006). Various suggestions have been raised involving more or less different categories within the hierarchy. A significant alternative is the previously proposed distinction between two categories of Key Centre in an attempt to distinguish further between additional growth and ease of access to shops, services and employment facilities.

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5.27 A further alternative is to base the settlement hierarchy 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 regional policies to reduce the need to travel are being addressed most effectively.

Summary of Initial Sustainability Appraisal of Issues and Options

Consultation Response to Issues and Options

5.28 There was general support for the preferred approach and a recognition of the need to include a settlement hierarchy in the Core Strategy. Most objections related to requests to move particularly villages into the potential Key Service Centres category. Examples cited include Stilton, Farcet and Earith. There was also support for suggestion of a single category of Key Service Centre, removing the previous distinction between potential and limited growth.

Assessment of Responses and Alternative Approaches

5.29 The Settlement Hierarchy Background Paper was updated as part of the preparation of the Preferred Options. Through this update those settlements that were put forward as potential Key Service Centres were considered, however no changes to the proposed designations was found to be necessary.

Tests of Soundness

Preferred Approach

5.30 The Preferred Approach is detailed in Volume 1 on page 21.

Affordable Housing in Development

Affordable Housing

National	PPS3: Housing, Delivering Affordable Housing Good Practice Guide (DCLG), PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, Circular 05/2005 (Planning Obligations), Homes for the future, more affordable, more sustainable - Housing Green Paper (DCLG, 2007)
Regional	Proposed Changes East of England Plan - policies SS4, H3, Cambridge Sub Region Strategic Housing Market Assessment (forthcoming)
Local	The Housing Land Availability Study (HLAS) Corporate Plan Objectives: 1) to ensure an appropriate supply of new housing, 2) to enable the provision of affordable housing, 3) to achieve a low level of homelessness Community Strategy Objectives: 1) ensure the availability of a range of decent housing to meet local needs, 2) realise the benefits to economic, social and environmental well being from housing and employment development

National	PPS3: Housing, Delivering Affordable Housing Good Practice Guide (DCLG), PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, Circular 05/2005 (Planning Obligations), Homes for the future, more affordable, more sustainable - Housing Green Paper (DCLG, 2007)
	Developer Contributions Towards Affordable Housing SPD - Consultation Draft (June 2007), Huntingdonshire Housing Strategy 2006-2011, Huntingdonshire Housing Needs Survey 2002 and Housing Needs Assessment Update 2006-2011, Local Plan Alteration 2002 policy AH4
Other	

Table 5.5 Key Sources for Affordable Housing

Issues and Options identified for Consultation

Issue 10: The need to set target(s) and thresholds for affordable housing that reflects local circumstances.

Option 30: Policies will set a target of 40% of all housing on eligible sites throughout the district to be provided as 'affordable housing'.

Option 31: Thresholds could be set only requiring the provision of affordable housing on sites for 15 or more houses wherever they are located.

Option 32: Thresholds could be set requiring the provision of affordable housing on sites categorised as major or moderate development wherever they are located.

Option 33: Policies could set a threshold for seeking affordable housing on development sites of less than 15 houses in Smaller Settlements.

Question 37: Do you agree that a target should be set of seeking 40% of all housing on eligible sites throughout the District to be provided as 'affordable housing'?

Question 38: Which option do you prefer and why?

Question 39: Do you think a threshold should be included for seeking affordable housing on sites of less than 15 houses in Smaller Settlements? If so what should be the minimum site size eligible for seeking affordable housing?

Reasonable Alternatives

5.31 Targets could be set at 40% within the Cambridge sub-region and 30% within the rest of the district of the total number of dwellings on eligible developments. The average target of 35% included in the Regional Spatial Strategy could be used but this is an average for the region and within Huntingdonshire the need for affordable homes is greater than elsewhere in the region. A further variation would be to increase the target to 50% for the Cambridge sub-region and 40% elsewhere. This would bring Huntingdonshire in line with the targets sought in

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South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City and have the advantage of promoting a consistent approach throughout the wider area. However, the housing market in Huntingdonshire differs from that in South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City and this approach would not reflect the variation in house and land prices.

5.32 PPS3 sets a national indicative minimum site size threshold of 15 dwellings. Policies are required to set thresholds to determine whether sites should be eligible to provide affordable housing. The higher the threshold is set the lower the potential for achieving affordable housing because fewer sites will be eligible to contribute. However, the need for affordable housing has to be balanced with the viability of its provision.

5.33 Many permutations could be developed of site size threshold and different types of location. In particular, it may be appropriate to relate the thresholds for seeking affordable housing to the scale of development permissible in different categories within the settlement hierarchy. Option 31 above adheres strictly to PPS3 guidance with no recognition of local circumstances. Option 32 attempts to respond to the high level of local need for affordable housing and the concentration of housing development in Market Towns and Key Service Centres as the only locations where it is suggested that developments of 10 or more houses will be permitted.

5.34 PPS3 also states that lower thresholds can be set where viable and practicable, including in rural areas. This would be in addition to any affordable housing from 'rural exceptions' sites allowed solely for affordable housing in small rural communities. Policies could set a threshold for seeking affordable housing on development sites of less than 15 houses in Smaller Settlements. The previously submitted Core Strategy suggested a minimum site size threshold of 3 dwellings to try to generate provision of some affordable housing on infill sites within Smaller Settlements. A number of concerns were expressed over the viability and management implications of providing affordable housing at such a low threshold. However it is considered that this will be both viable and practical.

Summary of Initial Sustainability Appraisal of Issues and Options

Consultation Responses to Issues and Options

5.35 Respondents' opinions on the provision of affordable housing within development schemes were very diverse. Some supported the 40% target, others wanted it tempered with considerations of site specific conditions and viability. A number of respondents proposed a target of 35% arguing that this would be in line with the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy. A few respondents thought the target should await completion of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment. Seeking affordable housing provision within any developments over the threshold of 15 dwellings was broadly accepted. However, provision at a lower threshold within Smaller Settlements provoked a split in responses between parish councils who were keen to see affordable housing provided within any developments in their villages and developers/ landowners who objected to the lower threshold citing concerns over viability.

Assessment of Responses and Alternative Approaches

5.36 A number of respondents sought a target of 35% affordable housing provision arguing that this would be in accordance with the emerging RSS. The emerging RSS looks for 35% of housing coming forward to be affordable. However, affordable housing cannot be sought on all developments as some are below the appropriate site size/ numbers threshold. Therefore, to achieve 35% of all development as affordable housing a higher proportion needs to be achieved on eligible sites to counter-balance the lack of provision on ineligible sites.

Tests of Soundness

Preferred Approach

5.37 The Preferred Approach is detailed in Volume 1 on page 22.

Rural Exceptions Affordable Housing

National	The Housing Act 1996, Statutory Instrument 1997/623, PPS3: Housing, Delivering Affordable Housing (DCLG 2006), PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (ODPM 2004)
Regional	Proposed Changes to the East of England Plan - policy H1
Local	The Housing Land Availability Study (HLAS), Corporate Plan Objectives: 1) to ensure an appropriate supply of new housing, 2) to enable the provision of affordable housing, 3) to achieve a low level of homelessness, Community Strategy Objectives: 1) ensure the availability of a range of decent housing to meet local needs, 2) realise the benefits to economic, social and environmental well being from housing and employment development, Huntingdonshire Site Assessment (LDA Design, 2006)
Other	

Table 5.6 Key Sources for Rural Exceptions Housing

Issues and Options Identified for Consultation

Issue 11: The need to provide affordable housing in Smaller Settlements to meet local needs.

Option 34: Policies will set out criteria to assess proposals in locations or on a scale that would not otherwise be acceptable where the development is solely to provide affordable housing to meet local needs

Question 41: Should the provision of affordable housing be allowed in locations and on a scale that would not otherwise be permitted for general housing where it is solely to provide for local needs?

Question 42: Should 'rural exceptions' housing be concentrated in settlements with at least a basic level of services or should it be encouraged wherever there is need?

Question 43: Should sites for 'rural exceptions' housing be allocated in the Planning Proposals DPD?

Reasonable Alternatives

5.38 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.

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5.39 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 which would be contrary to the need to promote a more sustainable pattern of development.

Summary of Initial Sustainability Appraisal of Issues and Options

Consultation Responses

5.40 General support was expressed for allowing rural exception sites of a scale appropriate to respond to identified local needs. However, concern was expressed over the sustainability implications of allowing rural exceptions housing to be built in any settlement. A balance was generally sought between the desirability of responding to identified local needs with the need for future residents to be able to access services.

Assessment of Responses and Alternative Approaches

5.41 In response to the consensus of responses the Preferred Approach sets out the criteria for affordable housing development on exceptions sites. It seeks a balance between ensuring that there are a basic level of services and allowing exceptions development in a broad range of locations that would benefit from an appropriate level of affordable housing.

Tests of Soundness

Preferred Approach

5.42 The Preferred Approach is detailed in Volume 1 on page 23.

Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

5.43 This issue was originally raised as part of the Development Control Policies DPD, however due to recent national policy it has been moved to the Core Strategy. This is the only change and no alternatives have been considered.

National	PPS3: Housing, Circular 01/06, SS25 Housing Act 2004
Regional	Proposed Changes to the East of England Plan - policy H4, Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (2006) (Sub Regional), RSS Single Issue Review - Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation in the East of England (Issues and Options) (May 2007).
Local	The Housing Land Availability Study (HLAS), Local Plan 1995 policy H44

National	PPS3: Housing, Circular 01/06, SS25 Housing Act 2004
Other	

Table 5.7 Key Sources for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

Issues and Options Identified for Consultation

Issue 20: The need to ensure identified accommodation needs of gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople are adequately met.

Option 22: Policies will set out criteria to ensure sites are provided which meet the identified accommodation needs of gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople.

Question 23: Do you think a criteria based approach will adequately meet the identified accommodation needs of gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople? (Please give reasons)

Question 24: What criteria would you like to see included in this policy?

Reasonable Alternatives

5.44 None. The provision of sites to meet identified accommodation needs of gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople is a requirement of national and strategic guidance. The above option represents the most appropriate means to meet the identified accommodation needs of this group. The need for allocations will be considered in the context of preparing a separate SPD.

Summary of Initial Sustainability Appraisal of Issues and Options

Consultation Responses

5.45 Responses were supportive of a criteria based approach based on sustainability issues.

Towards a Spatial Strategy

The Option put forward was:

The Core Strategy policy will have to take account of the need to ensure that Gypsies and Travellers are accommodated in sustainable locations where essential services such as water and sewerage are provided and with good access by foot, cycle or public transport to services such as education and health. It will also need to take account of the rural nature of Huntingdonshire where the availability of public transport is limited. Providing sites in appropriate locations will also help prevent the social exclusion of Gypsies and Travellers. At the same time it will need to take into account that Gypsies and Travellers often prefer a rural location with a degree of separation from the settled community.

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The criteria will also need to guide the provision of sites into areas where the health and safety of occupants are not put at risk. This will mean, for example avoiding areas close to trunk roads where access may be unsafe, air quality is poor and there is unacceptable noise constraint. Similarly there should not be an unacceptable flood risk.

However, it will be important to ensure that the criteria include protection for the environment, so that sites do not harm other interests such as the character of the landscape and wildlife, nor have an unacceptable adverse impact on the settled community.

Summary of Initial Sustainability Appraisal of Towards a Spatial Strategy

Key Stakeholders Responses

Assessment of Responses and Alternative Approaches

5.46 The Preferred Approach takes forward the option presented in the 'Towards a Spatial Strategy' document with minor amendments.

Tests of Soundness

Preferred Approach

5.47 The Preferred Approach is detailed in Volume 1 on page 24.

Employment

National	PPG 4: Industrial, commercial development and small firms, PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, Employment Land Review Guidance Note, PPS25: Development and Flood Risk, Flood Risk: A Practice Guide Companion to PPS25 A 'Living Draft' consultation paper
Regional	Proposed changes to the East of England Plan - policy CSR2
Local	The Employment Land Review (forthcoming), Housing Land Availability Study (HLAS)

National	PPG 4: Industrial, commercial development and small firms, PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, Employment Land Review Guidance Note, PPS25: Development and Flood Risk, Flood Risk: A Practice Guide Companion to PPS25 A 'Living Draft' consultation paper
Other	

Table 5.8 Key Sources for Employment Growth

Issues and Options Identified for Consultation

Overall scale

There are a number of ways in which the overall scale of employment land need can be calculated. One approach is to project recent trends - in effect as 'business as usual' approach. The most significant alternative is to take into account the impact of changing economic, social and environmental conditions and try to help develop a 'low carbon future'. The following options allow for a 15 year supply of employment land from the anticipated adoption date of the DPD (2009).

Option 17: The Core Strategy could plan for a net requirement of 110 ha. This is based on a projection of development trends over the five years from 2002. It assumes continued relatively high rates of economic growth, no constraints on the availability of labour and no concessions to climate change.

Option 18: The Core Strategy could plan for a net requirement of 80 ha. This lower figure reflects the constraints to growth that could arise from the limited availability of local labour to work in additional businesses. It also reflects higher priority being given to reducing our impact on climate change by concentrating large scale warehouses at multi-modal locations and the replacement of buildings which are energy inefficient with new zero carbon buildings.

Question 21: Which of these of options would you prefer and why?

Question 22: Are there any other options which should be considered?

Overall distribution

There are many ways that the additional employment land could be distributed across the district. We need to consider how much of the total should be located to follow population growth and how much should be located in accordance with market demand for locations in the Huntingdon area, the St Neots area and St Ives as opposed to other areas where a number of allocations remain either undeveloped.

Option 19: Development could be distributed in locations to follow population growth.

Option 20: Development could follow the market preference for location in the Huntingdon area, the St Neots area and to a lesser extent St Ives.

Question 23: Which of these options would you prefer and why?

Question 24: Are there any other options which you think we should consider?

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Question 25: To achieve your chosen option which of the directions of growth shown would you rather see developed?

Summary of Initial Sustainability Appraisal

Consultation Responses to Issues and Options

5.48 There was confusion expressed between the two options based on the draft Employment Land Review. The differences between the two scenarios were not expressed sufficiently clearly. Many respondents thought that in order to redress the balance between jobs and homes and tackle out-commuting it would be necessary to provide a high level of employment land and so expressed a preference for the business as usual option. It has been argued that with a high level of people travelling outside the district for work that we are currently in a high carbon scenario and the best way to reduce this level would be to address the high numbers of out commuters by providing a broad range of employment sites suitable for jobs suitable for those people who currently travel out of the district.

Towards a Spatial Strategy

All options in Towards a Spatial Strategy proposed a figure of 110 ha based on calculations from the draft Employment Land Review. This assumed continued relatively high rates of economic growth, no constraints on the availability of labour and no concessions to climate change.

Cambridge Sub-region Focused Growth

An equal distribution of 50ha each was ascribed to the Huntingdon area and St Neots area, a further 8ha to St Ives and 2 ha to Ramsey and Bury.

Huntingdon Area Focused Growth

In line with the extra housing growth proposed for the Huntingdon area in this option 65ha of employment land was proposed. 40ha were proposed in the St Neots area with 3 ha in St Ives and 2ha in Ramsey and Bury.

St Neots Area Focused Growth

In line with the extra housing growth proposed for the St Neots area in this option 65ha of employment land was proposed. 40ha were proposed in the Huntingdon area with 3 ha in St Ives and 2ha in Ramsey and Bury.

Dispersed Growth

This option proposed a more dispersed distribution of employment in line with the more dispersed housing distribution proposed. An equal distribution of 46ha each was ascribed to the Huntingdon area and St Neots area, a further 8ha to St Ives and 10 ha to Ramsey and Bury.

Key Stakeholder Responses

Stakeholders considered the options as a package of housing, employment and retail growth with responses typically considering the implications of growth as a whole rather than the individual elements.

The Cambridge sub-region focused growth option gained qualified support from 5 out of 17 respondents who thought it offered the most balanced option and would maximise the use of existing infrastructure and services. The main concerns expressed over this option were flooding, especially in St Ives, and the spread of development resulting in contributions to infrastructure being diluted.

The Huntingdon area focused growth option received qualified support from 8 out of 21 respondents. They considered it to offer a central location in the district with good and improving communication links and to best respond to market preferences for employment and retail growth. The main concerns expressed were over the environmental capacity of the local area to absorb more growth and congestion implications.

The St Neots area focused growth option received qualified support from 7 out of 18 respondents who thought it was most likely to deliver a sustainable new neighbourhood with good local services, employment and infrastructure. The main concerns were the high reliance on use of greenfield land and the limited scope for additional development in St Neots town centre.

The Dispersed growth option received qualified support from 7 out of 19 respondents who generally believed it would reduce the impact of development on any one existing settlement. The main concerns expressed were that this option offered a more or less sustainable approach to development depending on the respondents viewpoint and that the shortage of rural employment opportunities would result in this option giving rise to greater dependency on car transport.

Assessment of Responses and Alternative Approaches

5.49 The main Issues and Options consultation document suggested two alternatives: planning for either 110ha or 80 ha of employment land. The higher figure is a 'business as usual' approach; the lower figure took into account the impact of changing economic, social and environmental conditions and sought to help develop a 'low carbon future'. Both of these have been superseded by further refinement to the Employment Land Review which has given rise to a further alternative as the preferred option seeking 82ha of employment land. This looks to reflect the desire for a low carbon future with the need to target the stimulation of employment growth and address out-commuting in St Neots.

Tests of Soundness

Preferred Approach

5.50 The Preferred Approach is detailed in Volume 1 on page 26.

Retail

National	PPS6: Planning for Town Centres
Regional	Proposed Changes to the East of England Plan policies - SS6, E5
Local	Huntingdonshire Retail Assessment Study (2005) and Update (2007)

5 The Spatial Strategy

Huntingdonshire District Council | Core Strategy 2007 - Preferred Options - Consideration of Options

National	PPS6: Planning for Town Centres
Other	

Table 5.9 Key Sources for Planning for Retail

Issues and Options Identified for Consultation

Overall scale

The Retail Assessment Study Update (2007) suggested that the Core Strategy should endeavour to increase the proportion of available expenditure which is spent locally. One way of encouraging this is to provide a greater quantity and choice of shops for people to use which has the added benefit of reducing the need to travel further afield for certain purchases. A target is suggested of 20,000 sq m net of additional comparison retail floorspace and a further 3,900 sq m net of convenience floorspace in the district for the period 2006-2021. This is based on the aspiration of a slow, steady increase in the proportion of expenditure being retained locally.

Option 21: The Core Strategy could plan for a target of 20,000 sq m net additional comparison retail floorspace and 3,900 sq m net additional convenience floorspace.

Option 22: The Core Strategy could plan for a higher target.

Option 23: The Core Strategy could plan for a lower target.

Question 26: Which of these options do you prefer and why?

Question 27: If you prefer a lower or higher target what should it be and why?

Overall distribution

A target of 20,000m² net additional comparison floorspace is suggested above. The Retail Assessment Study identified comparatively strong demand from retailers wishing to open in Huntingdon and an encouraging level of interest in St Neots which has traditionally been considered less attractive by investors. The distribution given in the option below was suggested by the Retail Assessment Study. Government guidance dictates that new retail facilities should be in town centres and edge of centre and out of centre locations only considered where this cannot be reasonably achieved. The Retail Assessment Study suggested that although the level of quantitative need for convenience floorspace appears low there may be opportunities for provision based on qualitative grounds in order to increase the range of facilities available. In particular it noted the need for a discount foodstore in Huntingdon town centre. Compared with other centres Huntingdon is the higher order centre where pressure for further retail development is greatest. It also has more opportunities to regenerate and thus strengthen the range of uses on the back of retail expansion with sites in the town centre and sites beyond the town centre.

Option 24: Development could follow the market preference resulting in around 12,000m² net of comparison retail growth in Huntingdon, around 6,000m² net in St Neots and 2,000m² net in other settlements.

Option 25: Development could be distributed equally between St Neots and Huntingdon and a lesser amount allowed in St Ives and Ramsey

Question 28: Which of these options would you prefer and why?

Question 29: Are there any other options which you think we should consider?

Summary of Initial Sustainability Appraisal

Consultation Responses to Issues and Options

5.51 There was general support for the provision of 20,000 sq m of retail floorspace in accordance with the recommendations of the Retail Study to help Huntingdonshire's town centres compete with other surrounding towns. Some consultation responses questioned the bias towards Huntingdon in the Retail Study and considered that St Neots should have higher figures but others recognised the greater likelihood of delivery of retail development in Huntingdon due to market preference and potential availability of sites. There was some concern that the targets would not be achievable although most people were supportive of trying to keep local spending in the local area. An alternative was put forward of a large scale district centre on land adjacent to current residential development to the east of St Neots.

Towards a Spatial Strategy

All options in Towards a Spatial Strategy proposed a figure of 20,000 sq m of comparison retail floorspace provision based on the recommendations of the Huntingdonshire Retail Study. The figure recommended for convenience retail floorspace was considered to be too low to justify identification of strategic directions of growth.

Cambridge Sub-region Focused Growth

Reflecting market demand 12,000m² of floorspace was ascribed to the Huntingdon area and 6,000m² to the St Neots area with a further 2,000m² to St Ives.

Huntingdon Area Focused Growth

Reflecting market demand 12,000m² of floorspace was ascribed to the Huntingdon area and 6,000m² to the St Neots area with a further 2,000m² to St Ives.

St Neots Area Focused Growth

To balance market demand with recognition of the level of housing growth proposed in the St Neots area this option proposed 9,000m² floorspace in each of the St Neots area and the Huntingdon area. Again 2,000m² was proposed in St Ives.

Dispersed Growth

This option again looked to market demand for a lead in distribution of retail floorspace proposing 12,000m² in the Huntingdon area, 6,000m² in the St Neots area then proposing 1,000m² in each of St Ives and Ramsey and Bury.

Key Stakeholder Responses

Stakeholders considered the options as a package of housing, employment and retail growth with responses typically considering the implications of growth as a whole rather than the individual elements.

5 The Spatial Strategy

Huntingdonshire District Council | Core Strategy 2007 - Preferred Options - Consideration of Options

The Cambridge sub-region focused growth option gained qualified support from 5 out of 17 respondents who thought it offered the most balanced option and would maximise the use of existing infrastructure and services. The main concerns expressed over this option were flooding, especially in St Ives, and the spread of development resulting in contributions to infrastructure being diluted.

The Huntingdon area focused growth option received qualified support from 8 out of 21 respondents. They considered it to offer a central location in the district with good and improving communication links and to best respond to market preferences for employment and retail growth. The main concerns expressed were over the environmental capacity of the local area to absorb more growth and congestion implications.

The St Neots area focused growth option received qualified support from 7 out of 18 respondents who thought it was most likely to deliver a sustainable new neighbourhood with good local services, employment and infrastructure. The main concerns were the high reliance on use of greenfield land and the limited scope for additional development in St Neots town centre.

The Dispersed growth option received qualified support from 7 out of 19 respondents who generally believed it would reduce the impact of development on any one existing settlement. The main concerns expressed were that this option offered a more or less sustainable approach to development depending on the respondents viewpoint and that the shortage of rural employment opportunities would result in this option giving rise to greater dependency on car transport.

Assessment of Responses and Alternative Approaches

5.52 An alternative was suggested through the consultation responses of a large scale district centre on land adjacent to current residential development to the east of St Neots. The preferred option for growth puts forward a major new neighbourhood to the east of St Neots which would incorporate a mixture of uses, including an appropriate scale of retail development to promote its sustainability, although not necessarily on the specific site put forward.

Tests of Soundness

Preferred Approach

5.53 The Preferred Approach is detailed in Volume 1 on page 28.

Areas of Strategic Greenspace Enhancement 6

Huntingdonshire District Council | Core Strategy 2007 - Preferred Options - Consideration of Options

6 Areas of Strategic Greenspace Enhancement

National	Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, PPS9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation, Planning for Biodiversity and Geological Conservation a Good Practice Guide.
Regional	Proposed Changes to the East of England Plan - policy ENV1 , Green Infrastructure Strategy for the Cambridge Sub-Region (2006), Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Action Plan (2004)
Local	Corporate Plan Objectives: 1) to lower carbon emissions, 2) to protect and improve wildlife habitats Community Strategy Objectives: 1) improve the diversity of our natural environment, 2) improve access to the countryside, 3) improve the understanding of the countryside and the heritage of the landscape, 4) support communities in protecting and valuing open spaces and historic sites, 5) improve access to opportunities for physical and cultural enrichment that promote good health and mental well-being, 6) develop the tourist product
Other	

Table 6.1 Key Sources for Areas of Strategic Greenspace Enhancement

Issues and Options Identified for Consultation

Issue 7: The need to identify areas of 'strategic greenspace enhancement' and to promote environmental, economic and social gains within these areas.

Option 26: Policies will define areas of Strategic Greenspace Enhancement and identify green corridors connecting them and indicate how development proposals could contribute to improving their biodiversity, landscape and recreational value.

Reasonable Alternatives

6.1 None. The Identification of areas for large-scale habitat enhancement is required by strategic guidance, while ensuring that development proposals contribute positively to its achievement is necessary if the objective is to be achieved.

6 Areas of Strategic Greenspace Enhancement

Huntingdonshire District Council | Core Strategy 2007 - Preferred Options - Consideration of Options

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal

Consultation Responses to Issues and Options

6.2 The majority of respondents were supportive.

Assessment of Responses and Alternative Approaches

6.3 It was considered appropriate to concentrate on the core areas and the corridors connecting them so that funding and enhancement work can be targeted to the areas where it will be most effective. As such the list proposed at Issues and Options has been reduced.

Tests of Soundness

Preferred Approach

6.4 The Preferred Approach is detailed in Volume 1 on page 31.

7 Access to Services and Facilities

Infrastructure Requirements

National	PPS3: Housing, Circular 05/2005 - Planning Obligations, Planning and Compensation Act 1991
Regional	
Local	Corporate Plan Objectives: 1) to support more opportunities for residents to walk, cycle and use public transport, 2) to make town centres and key settlements accessible, 3) to enable residents to take an active part in their communities, 4) improve access to and the provision of services in rural areas, Community Strategy Objectives: realise the benefits to economic, social and environmental well being from housing and employment development Planning Contributions SPD (forthcoming), Developer Contributions Towards Affordable Housing SPD - Consultation draft June 2007, Huntingdonshire District Council Open Space, Sport and Recreation Needs Assessment and Audit (2006), Local Plan Alteration 2002 policies OB1 and OB2
Other	

Table 7.1 Key Sources for Infrastructure Requirements

Issues and Options Identified for Consultation

Issue 12: The need to ensure appropriate, timely provision of any infrastructure requirements associated with new development.

Option 35: Policies will require development proposals to 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.

Criteria will be proposed to allow assessment of the scale and nature of development proposals where contributions are likely to be required.

Question 44: What criteria should be used to determine if contributions are necessary?

Reasonable Alternatives

7.1 None. Existing national guidance (Circular 5/2005) requires development plans to set out policies indicating the circumstances in which planning obligations will be sought and indicates that formulae and standard charges may be used where appropriate.

7 Access to Services and Facilities

Huntingdonshire District Council | Core Strategy 2007 - Preferred Options - Consideration of Options

Summary of Initial Sustainability Appraisal

Consultation Responses to Issues and Options

7.2 Most respondents considered this to be an important area of policy coverage, although there was only limited consensus on what should be included.

Assessment of Responses and Alternative Approaches

7.3 It was considered appropriate to include a list of areas that contributions are likely to be sought for. While it is not a comprehensive list it does cover the most likely areas. The Council is committed to producing SPD to support this policy area that will give more information.

Tests of Soundness

Preferred Approach

7.4 The Preferred Approach is detailed in Volume 1 on page 34.

8 A Strong, Diverse Economy

Re-using Military Sites

8.1 This is an interesting one as there is no policy. Do we just say that following consultation we thought it was covered sufficiently by other policies? Is this the place to go into more detail about the TSSS extra growth options

National	PPS3: Housing, PPG4: Industrial, commercial development and small firms PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, Eco Towns Prospectus (DCLG 2007)
Regional	East of England Plan December 2004, Examination in Public, Report of the Panel Volume 1
Local	The Housing Land Availability Study (HLAS) Corporate Plan Objectives: 1) to encourage a strong business community which supports new enterprise, 2) to support town centres to be economically viable and vibrant, 3) to encourage the provision of a wide range of jobs appropriate for existing and future residents, 4) to promote development opportunities in and around the market towns, Community Strategy Objectives: 1) maintain business confidence to increase investment which creates opportunities to work locally and reduces out commuting, 2) ensure an appropriate provision of land for business, 3) development and promote the market towns, 4) develop the rural economy, especially the Ramsey area, 5) realise the benefits to economic, social and environmental well being from housing and employment development, Core Strategy 2007 Issues and Options; Towards a Spatial Strategy for Huntingdonshire
Other	

Table 8.1 Key Sources for Reusing Military Sites

Issues and Options Identified for Consultation

Issue 13: The need to identify the most appropriate future use of military sites which are, or become, redundant.

Option 36: Policies could set out the strategic approach to re-use of military sites and include criteria against which to assess potential suitability of different types of use.

Option 37: The Core Strategy could state that due to the potential scale of development that could be accommodated consideration of the future of Alconbury Airfield should await consideration at the first review of the Regional Spatial Strategy.

Question 45: What uses would you like to see RAF Upwood put to?

8 A Strong, Diverse Economy

Huntingdonshire District Council | Core Strategy 2007 - Preferred Options - Consideration of Options

Question 46: Should the Future of Alconbury Airfield await consideration at the first review of the Regional Spatial Strategy?

Question 47: Disregarding the potential timing of any redevelopment, what uses would you like to see Alconbury Airfield put to?

Question 48: What uses would you like to see the airfield part of RAF Wyton put to?

Question 49: If it becomes available, what uses would you like to see RAF Brampton put to?

Reasonable Alternatives

8.2 No alternatives were identified.

Summary of Initial Sustainability Appraisal

Consultation Responses to Issues and Options

8.3 Most respondents thought that while it was important to be sure of achieving the housing and other growth requirements of the East of England Plan and that having regard to potential ways to achieve higher levels of growth this was not an essential element to build into the Core Strategy.

Towards a Spatial Strategy

In consideration of options for further growth in the 'Towards a Spatial Strategy' document the airfields at Alconbury and Wyton were identified as possible locations for Eco-town development. These airfields are both significant brownfield sites within the District. As two potential sites were identified the option was considered in two parts considering these two locations for the new settlement.

A New Settlement at Wyton Airfield would potentially give rise to an estimated 6,700 homes. An Eco-town at Alconbury Airfield would potentially give rise to an estimated 9,500 homes. Both would require significant development of employment, shops, infrastructure, services and facilities to ensure that they are sustainable. It is estimated that development would continue well beyond the end of the extended plan period of 2026 even if these options were taken forward at this time.

It was emphasised that the future of Alconbury Airfield could only be considered through review of the Regional Spatial Strategy.

Key Stakeholder Responses

Assessment of Responses and Alternative Approaches

8.4 The approach to redevelopment of military sites is incorporated into the Spatial Strategy where this is appropriate. Redevelopment at RAF Brampton will form part of allocations to achieve the growth strategy once it becomes redundant for military use.

8.5 Due to the potential scale of development that could be accommodated consideration of the future of Alconbury Airfield will await the review of the Regional Spatial Strategy.

Tests of Soundness

Preferred Approach

8.6 The Preferred Approach is incorporated into the Spatial Strategy in Volume 1.