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2. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (ENVIRONMENTAL WELLBEING)	12 TH OCTOBER 2011
3. DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PANEL	17 TH OCTOBER 2011
4. CABINET	20 TH OCTOBER 2011

**ST IVES WEST URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK
(Report by Head of Planning Services)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet regarding the recent consultation about the draft St Ives West Urban Design Framework (Draft UDF) and, taking any appropriate additional comments from the Overview and Scrutiny (Environmental Wellbeing) Panel and the Development Management Panel into account, recommend its approval as planning guidance to inform the development of Council policy and the consideration of potential planning applications.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The Draft UDF seeks to establish positive planning, urban design, and development principles for the potential development at the St Ives West area in line with the principles established in the adopted Huntingdonshire Core Strategy (2009). In particular, the Draft UDF provides a framework to enable the delivery of high quality new housing and an opportunity to create a substantial area of accessible strategic green space.
- 2.2 At the Core Strategy Examination in Public, an independent Planning Inspector examined the principle of development in this area and found it to be sound. The following extract from the Planning Inspector's report, dated 29th July 2009, confirms the basis on which the St Ives West area was selected from a range of other potential development areas at St Ives:

3.44 St Ives is also a sustainable location for development and will become more so with the introduction of the Cambridge Guided Bus route. However, it has less opportunity for growth other than to the west where it can link with other allocations and commitments. From my visits I agree with the Council that separation between St Ives and Houghton should be retained. There are also flood risks constraints to the south and south east making land unsuitable for housing development, and land to the north and north-west is remote from the town centre. Nevertheless 500 homes are proposed during the plan period and 17ha is available for employment generation uses. If there is any imbalance relating to inward and outward commuting advantage can be taken of the guided bus provision between Cambridge and St Ives.

- 2.3 The Draft UDF was subject to extensive public consultation between 29th July 2011 and 23rd September 2011. The consultation was well publicised in the local press, on posters, and through the District Council's website. Consultation exhibitions were held at Houghton Pavilion and at St Ives Library. These were staffed by Planning Services officers on 1st and 2nd September 2011. As a result of the consultation, 126 respondents made a range of comments on the Draft UDF.
- 2.4 For planning purposes, within the adopted Core Strategy, the whole St Ives West area is identified as a strategic direction of growth (area for development) within the St Ives Spatial Planning Area. This is not based on individual Parish or Town Council administrative boundaries and was identified through rigorous testing of the most appropriate locations for new development at the Core Strategy Examination in Public. The draft UDF (page 2, paragraph 1.2) states that the St Ives West Area is partly within both St Ives Town Council and Houghton and Wyton Parish Council boundaries.
- 2.5 The Draft UDF preferred option sets out urban design principles, highlights the size of a green separation area between St Ives and Houghton and Wyton, identifies a large area of accessible strategic green space, and enables the introduction of additional measures to strengthen conservation designations in the area. It is considered that these principles will ensure that development at St Ives West will be of the highest quality and will not erode the character of Houghton and Wyton.
- 2.6 With regard to the capacity of development at St Ives West, as identified in the Draft UDF, some 300 dwellings would be within the Parish boundary of Houghton and Wyton (including 90 dwellings at Houghton Grange), and some 190 dwellings within the town boundary of St Ives. Two housing development sites in the vicinity at Slepe Meadow and Green Acres (part of the former golf course) are currently under construction and the combined capacity of these is some 230 dwellings.
- 2.7 The Draft UDF preferred option does not promote development related to the built-up area of Houghton village and a substantial physical green separation area will remain, between Houghton and Wyton and St Ives.
- 2.8 Other parallel processes are ongoing to formally allocate land through the emerging Planning Proposals Development Plan Document. The Draft UDF informs this emerging policy and provides a framework to enable consideration of any planning applications that may be submitted prior to the adoption of formal planning allocations.

3. CONSULTATION THEMES

- 3.1 A summary of the consultation comments and the District Council responses can be found at Appendix 1. The main consultation themes that emerged were as follows:
- Principle, scale and location of proposed development
 - Traffic and transport
 - Maintaining the separation of St Ives and Houghton
 - Affordable housing

- Landscape and green space
- Social infrastructure
- Environmental infrastructure
- Proposed shop
- Process issues

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 A range of comments were received on the proposals set out in the Draft UDF. It is clear that there is both support for and objection to the proposals. The main objections derive from the residents of Houghton Village and have been voiced by individuals, members of the local SHED action group, Houghton and Wyton Parish Council, and some of the Parish, District and County Councillors on the St Ives West Working Group. In part, these objections have questioned the legitimacy of the District Council's approach to preparing the Draft UDF, and also its legality.
- 4.2 On balance, it is considered that the principles set out in the Draft UDF continue to establish a robust framework for the delivery of the District Council's adopted Core Strategy policies for new housing in this area. The Draft UDF secures the opportunity to create a high quality of development set within a large and accessible area of strategic green space, and a substantial separation area which will continue to effectively separate the settlements of St Ives and Houghton and Wyton.
- 4.3 It is intended that the UDF will be used to inform the emerging Planning Proposals Development Plan Document as it moves through its formal processes through to adoption, and to provide a robust framework for the consideration of any planning applications received in the interim.

5. RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 It is recommended that Cabinet authorises the Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning and Housing, in conjunction with the Chairman of the Development Management Panel and the Head of Planning Services, to finalise and approve the St Ives West Urban Design Framework to inform Council policy and Development Management decisions on potential planning applications.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Draft St Ives West Urban Design Framework August 2011
Adopted Huntingdonshire Core Strategy 2009

Contact Officer: Paul Bland – Planning Services Manager (Policy)

☎ 01480 388430

APPENDIX 1

St Ives West Urban Design Framework Summary of Consultation Comments and District Council Responses

Principle, scale and location of proposed development	
Summary of Consultation Comments	District Council Responses
<p>There is general support from respondents from St Ives relating to the proposed development, safeguarding the amenity of those living along Westwood Road in particular, and helping to link all of the housing with the town centre. Conversely there is general opposition from respondents from Houghton and Wyton who consider this location to be unsustainable and are opposed to the principle, scale and location of the proposed development.</p> <p>The proposals would double the size of the Houghton village.</p> <p>There are some suggestions that the development should instead take place to the north and north east of the town, close to the Rainbow Store and employment areas, and some suggest a more limited amount of development in this current location.</p> <p>Ribbon development will be created along the A1123.</p> <p>Support for principle of no development on the 9th fairway of the former golf course and for limited development in the garden of The How. Conversely, representations from the representations of specific landowners seeking inclusion of the 9th Fairway and related land within the Draft UDF.</p> <p>The driveway to the How and How Lodge contribute greatly to character of this part of Houghton Road and should be retained.</p>	<p>The District Council must deliver its adopted Core Strategy, which seeks to provide 400 new dwellings on a sustainable green field site to the west of St Ives. The principle, scale and location are set out in the Core Strategy. This Draft UDF has no policy making role in relation to principle, scale and location of development.</p> <p>This is a western extension to the town of St Ives, not an eastern extension to the village of Houghton.</p> <p>These options were dismissed at the Core Strategy Examination.</p> <p>This will not be ribbon development. It is relatively compact and will be screened by a deep landscape corridor along the A1123 and set within an extensive area of strategic green space.</p> <p>The Draft UDF seeks to protect the 9th Fairway area as an important part of the new area of accessible strategic green space for the benefit of local communities. Development on this area would therefore be inappropriate.</p> <p>The Draft UDF seeks to achieve this as a positive outcome.</p>

<p>Some support for lower density housing on western edge, others would like lower density facing onto Houghton Road.</p> <p>Concern that the housing should meet the needs of all age groups, especially the elderly.</p> <p>The capacity of sewage and storm water infrastructure will need to be upgraded for a development of this size.</p> <p>Some members of the St Ives West Working Group propose that the number of houses in the development area should be reduced by approximately 200 and a strategic gap created at 'C' on the plan at page 15 of the UDF – this will also reduce the traffic exiting on to the A1123 Houghton Road.</p>	<p>The deep landscaped buffer along Houghton Road will effectively screen development in this location.</p> <p>This will be addressed in the finalised UDF and in the consideration of future planning applications.</p> <p>Upgrades will be needed to the foul water infrastructure. Storm water will be discharged by sustainable drainage systems. This will be dealt with in conjunction with relevant infrastructure providers at planning application stage.</p> <p>This proposal by some members of the Working Group does not enable the delivery of the adopted Core Strategy that has already established the principle of the scale of development for this area, as set out in Core Strategy Policy CS2. The draft UDF sets out a framework for delivering a high quality development in this area, along with large areas of accessible green space. The principle of this scale of development, and its potential impacts on the A1123, was accepted by CCC as highways authority as part of the EiP into the Core Strategy. Such a departure from established principles could lead to the District Council having to determine a set of planning applications for the full scale of development established in the Core Strategy that may fail to deliver the qualities and facilities set out in the UDF.</p>
Traffic and transport	
Summary of Consultation Comments	District Council Responses
<p>Not enough information provided relating to whether the plans will improve, worsen or be neutral for the existing traffic.</p>	<p>It will be responsibility of developers to undertake transport assessments of their scheme at planning application stage. If these are not to the satisfaction of the local planning authority, then a planning application could be refused.</p> <p>Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC), as highways authority, has been involved in the development of the Draft UDF and has commenced the provision of improved highways infrastructure including a new junction serving the area from the A1123.</p>

<p>Concern over the effect of the development on highways access to Houghton and Wyton, and the A1123 is at full capacity.</p> <p>Impact of cancellation of proposed new A14, and the role of the A1123 as a relief road when the A14 is closed due to accidents.</p> <p>Assertion by some that development will increase traffic along A1123 by 30%.</p> <p>Some concerns from new residents of Green Leas development in St Ives about the potential loop road and effect on their amenity, not knowing about this when they bought their houses this year, and some concerns and alternative suggestions over proposals to close off High Leys.</p> <p>How can bus services be improved to be more beneficial to residents of Houghton and Wyton?</p> <p>Useful contributions reminding HDC and CCC of other junctions improvements that will need to be made, such as Wyton on the Hill / Houghton Road</p>	<p>The transport assessments that accompany any future planning applications may take into account and enable improvements to highways access to Houghton and Wyton. CCC has confirmed that the A1123 is not at full capacity.</p> <p>The A1123 already partially serves this function through dissipation and diversion across the wider highways network. The proposed development will not affect this and the principles of development at this location were accepted following the Core Strategy EiP. Amended proposals are being developed by the DfT and the HA for improvements to the A14.</p> <p>This is incorrect. A 30% increase in traffic does not relate to this proposal. A 30% increase is the CCC assessment of increase over time other things being equal.</p> <p>The alternatives suggested by local residents will be investigated in conjunction with CCC as highways authority.</p> <p>This will be investigated with CCC as highways authority.</p> <p>Welcome these suggestions, and will be made clearer on the framework document.</p>
Maintaining the separation of St Ives and Houghton	
Summary of Consultation Comments	District Council Responses
<p>Concern from those in Houghton and Wyton about green separation between St Ives and Houghton and Wyton, and the village and town merging.</p>	<p>They will not merge. There is a significant green separation between the two settlements west of Houghton Grange. There will also be a significant green backdrop along Houghton Road, and this will provide a softer edge along this road. The whole development will also be set within an accessible area of strategic green infrastructure. Conservation designations within these areas will be strengthened.</p>

<p>Concern that HDC is proposing to build on strategic green space.</p> <p>Concern that part of this development will lie within Houghton and Wyton, therefore not separating the town and village, and land is precious to people of Houghton and Wyton.</p> <p>Concern that proposed green gap in the grounds of Houghton Hill House is insufficient in scale and will be difficult to enforce. Perceptions that the proposed green gap is just houses and gardens and not an obvious gap.</p> <p>The rural nature when driving through Houghton Hill will be lost forever.</p>	<p>To the contrary, the District Council is seeking to create a large accessible area of strategic green infrastructure as part of the wider community benefit of this proposal.</p> <p>For planning purposes, the scale and location of the St Ives West development area have been established as part of the St Ives Spatial Planning Area identified in the adopted Core Strategy. This relates to land partly in St Ives and partly in Houghton and Wyton.</p> <p>The proposed green gap is a significant area (340-425 metres wide), and has the full weight of planning policy that prevents building in the countryside. Proposals to extend the Conservation Area will further protect this area by reducing the amount of extensions and other domestic building work that homeowners will be able to undertake and will also protect significant trees not currently protected by TPO from being removed. In planning terms, the few properties that lie within extensive grounds in the green gap are houses in the countryside, that lie outside of the built-up settlement area of Houghton and Wyton.</p> <p>A significant landscaping belt along the A1123 will prevent views of the housing development from the road, and will help to provide a more landscaped entrance to the town.</p>
Affordable housing	
Summary of Consultation Comments	District Council Responses
<p>Concern over the amount and percentage of social housing that will be delivered by the development, and that this will increase crime, vandalism and anti social behaviour and the risk of creating a sink estate.</p>	<p>The target of 40% affordable housing is established with the adopted Core Strategy (Policy CS4). The District Council fundamentally disagrees with comments relating to the potential anti social impact of affordable housing on an area.</p>
Landscape and green space	
Summary of Consultation Comments	District Council Responses
<p>Support for increased landscaping screen along A1123 and creation of areas of public green space.</p>	<p>Support welcomes as this is considered to be an important element in the quality design required for this area.</p>

<p>Concern over loss of green space, green space has always existed.</p> <p>Needs to highlight allotment provision.</p> <p>Concern over views into the site from meadows and river valley to the south.</p> <p>There are some errors on the nature conservation designations map.</p> <p>Some concern that there is already significant public access in the area, and that extensive and unrestrained public access will compromise objective of preserving and enhancing the natural environment.</p> <p>Issues relating to future maintenance and management of any open space.</p>	<p>The UDF will help to deliver a large accessible area of strategic green infrastructure. Land currently in private ownership is not accessible to the public.</p> <p>The potential for allotments provision will be noted in the UDF.</p> <p>The long views out are very long distance. There are very few short views into the site from public footpaths. More evidence of protection of views into the site can be added to the UDF, and developers will be required to address this point specifically.</p> <p>These will be rectified.</p> <p>Disagree. The Core Strategy has a fundamental objective to improve access to identified areas of green space, providing opportunities for healthy and active lifestyles. The level of accessibility to particular areas of nature conservation value will be managed appropriately.</p> <p>These issues will be addressed at a later stage, and potential partners have already been identified.</p>
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Social infrastructure

Summary of Consultation Comments

District Council Responses

Concern over the capacity of the schools, particularly St Ivo school.

The County Council is currently undertaking a review of primary school provision in St Ives. Decisions about the investment of developer contributions and other resources will be made once the review is completed. This site will be within the catchment of St Ivo Secondary School, as students will be within easy walking distance. The County Council may look at reviewing catchment areas for St Ivo school.

Needs to clarify medical provision requirements.

This issue will be clarified in conjunction with the PCT.

No community central hub, therefore lack of community cohesion.

There may be a possibility to consider linkages to / provision of community facilities relating to the proposals and the locality.

Environmental infrastructure	
Summary of Consultation Comments	District Council Responses
<p>Early infrastructure should be provided, landscaping, footpaths etc.</p> <p>Some residents of Houghton and Wyton are concerned over upgrading the Thicket path to a cycleway and concern that the Thicket path floods and therefore is unsuitable for upgrading. Conversely there is support for upgrading the path to encourage increased usage for cyclists and pedestrians.</p>	<p>This will be considered in detail as part of the implementation of the proposals.</p> <p>For most of its route the Thicket path is a tarmac lane, and people cycle along this route all the time. This is the historic low road between St Ives and Houghton and Wyton and is a safe and flat route. It may need to be upgraded in places and access can be managed when it is flooded.</p>
Proposed shop	
Summary of Consultation Responses	District Council Response
<p>Some concern that a potential shop within the site will have an adverse impact on the viability of the existing village shop.</p> <p>Some support for the shop, and need to encourage early provision.</p>	<p>A site for a potential shop was identified to help reduce traffic flows in the wider St Ives area, such as Hill Rise, as these developments were not provided with shop facilities when they were built. The shop in Houghton and Wyton is some distance away from this potential development and is unlikely to be adversely affected.</p> <p>Will investigate how this can be achieved.</p>
Process issues	
Summary of Consultation Comments	District Council Responses
<p>The preparation and consultation processes for the adopted Core Strategy itself (from 2006 to 2009) were insufficient and the residents of Houghton in particular were unaware of or only partially engaged in those processes.</p>	<p>The Huntingdonshire Core Strategy was adopted in 2009 following extensive consultation, an Examination in Public, and a binding Inspectors Report. Along with the East of England Plan, the Core Strategy forms the statutory Development Plan for Huntingdonshire. The process was open, transparent, and well publicised. The District Council does not accept the suggestion from particular objectors that they did not have sufficient opportunity to be involved in the Core Strategy process. The adopted Core Strategy clearly identifies directions of growth for strategic housing and other development on a Key Diagram and describes the spatial locations of development types in its policies. The St Ives West area is identified as a strategic housing</p>

<p>The Draft UDF should not be referred to as a Supplementary Planning Document, and should have been prepared only after the formal confirmation of site allocations through the adoption of a formal district wide Planning Proposals Development Plan Document (PP DPD).</p> <p>The change to the administrative boundary of Houghton and Wyton Parish, after the adoption of the Core Strategy, should mean that the identified level of development would relate to and impact on Houghton rather than St Ives.</p>	<p>development location both on the Key Diagram and in Policy CS2 “Strategic Housing Development”, which states:</p> <p><i>In the St Ives Spatial Planning Area where at least 500 homes will be provided. Of these, at least 100 homes will be on previously developed land, about 400 homes will be on Greenfield land and about 200 will be affordable. Provision will be in the following general locations:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>In a significant Greenfield development to the west of the town;</i> • <i>In the redevelopment of previously developed land within the built-up area of the town.</i> <p>The District Council’s purpose in preparing the Draft UDF is to establish the planning, urban design, and development principles that will apply to the area described in the Core Strategy, to ensure the delivery of a high quality development. This is an important stage in the planning process as the Core Strategy has established the principle of development in this location. The adopted Core Strategy is the key element of the Local Development Framework that provides the basis for the District Council preparing focused and positive planning framework for identified strategic development areas. The Draft UDF is not being promoted as a Supplementary Planning Document, and any reference to such a definition will be removed from the final document. Once approved, the UDF will provide the District Council’s development guidance for the area. It is not necessary to delay the production of such guidance until the Planning Proposals DPD is completed. The Draft UDF informs the development of Local Development Framework policy deriving from the adopted Core Strategy, and this includes the emerging Planning Proposals DPD which deals with specific land allocations.</p> <p>The Parish boundary between Houghton and Wyton and the Town Council boundary of St Ives was amended in 2010. The nature of the objections on this matter suggest that this means an element of the</p>
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<p>The process of engaging with and informing elected councillors during the preparation of the Draft UDF was ineffective.</p>	<p>St Ives West development is proposed on green field land to the east of the built up settlement area of Houghton village and that this should not be allowed. However, the spatial strategy of the Core Strategy (adopted in 2009) and in particular Policy CS2 relates to the St Ives Spatial Planning Area. This is not based on the administrative boundaries of individual parishes and towns, and this is a consistent spatial planning approach that has been applied across the District.</p> <p>In preparing the Draft UDF the District Council has been able to engage with a range of stakeholders including the relevant landowners and developers, partner organisation such as Cambridgeshire County Council, elected Councillors, and local communities. The purpose of the St Ives West Working Group was to inform elected Councillors from the Town, Parish, District and County Councils. The Working Group has met on a number of occasions throughout the process of developing the Draft UDF, and also undertook two visits to the St Ives West area. It has been an effective group and, whilst its members have not always agreed on matters of principle, their individual views have been heard and have been formally stated through the recent consultation process.</p>
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