

**NEW HUNTINGDONSHIRE LOCAL PLAN
CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT PROCESS
(Report by Head of Planning Services)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet on the intended consultation and engagement process to support the preparation of the new Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 and to advise on the documents being prepared for the next consultation phase.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At its meeting on 8th December 2011, Cabinet formally confirmed the Council's intentions to roll forward the Huntingdonshire Core Strategy in the light of changing national and local circumstances, and endorsed the proposal to produce a new Local Plan in order to achieve this.

- 2.2 Since then, Cabinet has endorsed a suite of documents that underpin the process of preparing the new Local Plan, each of which was subject to public consultation, as follows:

- The Local Development Scheme (LDS) that outlines the timetable for preparing and delivering the new Local Plan, approved at Cabinet on 16th February 2012.
- The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) that outlines the ways in which the District Council will engage with stakeholders and the community on planning issues, approved by Cabinet on 19th April 2012.
- The Draft Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (SA) that outlines the sustainability issues that need to be addressed by the new Local Plan, approved by Cabinet on 19th April 2012.

3. CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

- 3.1 The new Local Plan preparation process will include a number of key stages, all of which include opportunities for consultation and engagement. The key stages in the process are set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Key Stages in the new Local Plan consultation and engagement process	
Dates	Key Stages
Stage 1: 21 st May to 24 th June 2012	Initial Issues and Options Consultation: This was a non statutory initial introductory consultation designed to raise awareness of key issues and potential options focused on housing growth.

Stage 2: 27 th July to 1 st October 2012	Strategy and Policy Consultation: This is the first consultation which will seek views on the strategy options set out in Stage 1, place-based policies, potential allocations and Development Management policies. There will also be accompanying evidence and appraisal documents.
Stage 3: January – February 2013	Draft Local Plan: The first full draft of the Local Plan will be published for consultation taking into account responses received during stage 2 and incorporating alternative sites and policies put forward where they contribute to the most sustainable option. This will be the last non-statutory stage seeking views on the content of the draft Local Plan.
Stage 4: June – July 2013	Proposed submission draft Local Plan: This is the formal publication of the Local Plan under Regulation 19 ¹ ; complemented with statutory consultation under Regulation 20 seeking representations concerned with the soundness of the Local Plan. Representations received at this stage are forwarded to the Planning Inspectorate for examination. Formal approval of this Plan will be required from the Council.
Stage 5: October – November 2013	Independent examination: Consideration by the Planning Inspectorate of the soundness of the Local Plan including, but not limited to, issues raised during the Regulation 20 consultation.
Stage 6: February – March 2014	Publication of recommendations of the Planning Inspector: Formal publication of the Inspector's recommendations for any amendments to the Local Plan.
Stage 7: May – June 2014	Adoption: Formal adoption of the Local Plan as the statutory development plan for Huntingdonshire superseding all current development plan documents.

- 3.2 Engagement with partners and local communities is obviously critical to the preparation of an effective Local Plan.
- 3.3 An extensive variety of forms of engagement will be utilised throughout the preparation of the Local Plan as appropriate to the nature of the specific consultation stages. The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 have no prescribed requirements for consultation until stage 4: proposed submission draft Local Plan. Until then consultation is expected to be ongoing and appropriate to the pertinent circumstances.
- 3.4 To ensure the widest possible participation a combination of electronic, active engagement and published material is intended to be produced.
- 3.5 As required by Regulation 35 all consultation material will be positively promoted and published on the Council's website. A database is maintained of some 5,000

¹ Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

organisations and individuals who have expressed an interest in planning policy matters. Everyone registered on this will be notified at each stage of the Local Plan preparation and invited to participate as appropriate.

- 3.6 Active engagement performs a useful role in facilitating discussion and responding to individual queries. In particular seminars are beneficial in engaging parish and town councils and will be offered throughout stages 1-4. Seminars will also be ongoing with key stakeholders such as neighbouring authorities, community and environmental organisations and infrastructure providers. To reach our wider communities exhibitions will be held across the district, particularly in areas of potential growth, giving people the opportunity to discuss their concerns on an individual basis.
- 3.7 A variety of published material will be provided at each stage of the Local Plan preparation. In accordance with Regulation 36 printed copies of all documents will be available on request but may be charged for as appropriate.
- 3.8 At the next stage of strategy and policy consultation a leaflet will be produced and delivered to all residential and commercial properties in Huntingdonshire to try to engage as wide a range of residents and businesses as possible at an early stage.
- 3.9 Local media, particularly the Hunts Post and News & Crier, will be engaged at each main stage of the Local Plan preparation to provide widespread cost-effective dissemination of proposals. Exhibitions or posters will be placed in libraries and information points providing headline information and signposting people to more detailed sources at stages 2-4 as appropriate.
- 3.10 Within the Council the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-being), Development Management Panel and Cabinet will be engaged at all stages of the Local Plan's preparation. The Development Plan Policy Advisory Group (DPPAG) will provide detailed advice on the draft content of the Local Plan and be actively engaged in its preparation.
- 3.11 A statutory 'duty to co-operate' on plan preparation issues was introduced by the Localism Act 2011. This reflects the requirement to co-operate, although not necessarily agree, with key stakeholders such as neighbouring authorities and infrastructure providers. Seminars and electronic communications will be used along with joint working on production of evidence material as appropriate.

4. INITIAL ISSUES AND OPTIONS CONSULTATION – STAGE 1

- 4.1 Stage 1 of the consultation and engagement process (from 21st May to 24th June 2012) was a non-statutory consultation seeking views on initial issues and options for the new Local Plan. The consultation material included a concise document that summarised the key issues and particularly focused on potential options for additional housing growth based on possible low, medium and high growth scenarios. These differing potential scenarios were based on official statistics obtained from Cambridgeshire County Council and the Office of National Statistics.

- 4.2 As well as being widely publicised through the District Council's consultation portal, the process involved a series of briefings and seminars for 'Duty to Co-operate' stakeholders, District Council Members, Parish and Town Councils, developers and environmental / community groups and newspaper articles and public notices in the Hunts Post and News & Crier. The consultation seminars held as part of this process are listed in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Initial Issues and Options Consultation Seminars	
Date	Briefing Seminar
25 th April 2012	Statutory 'Duty to Co-operate' seminar on plan preparation process for key stakeholders, agencies, infrastructure providers and neighbouring authorities held at the HDC Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, Huntingdon
16 th May 2012	Member briefing on the plan preparation process and the Initial Issues and Options by the Head of Planning Services following Full Council held at the HDC Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, Huntingdon
21 st May 2012	Parish and Town Council Seminar hosted by the Strategic Planning and Housing Portfolio Holder and held at the Priory Centre, St Neots
22 nd May 2012	Parish and Town Council Seminar hosted by the Strategic Planning and Housing Portfolio Holder and held at the HDC Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, Huntingdon
23 rd May 2012	Parish and Town Council Seminar hosted by the Strategic Planning and Housing Portfolio Holder and held at the Abbey College, Ramsey
23 rd May 2012	Developers and Agents Seminar held at the HDC Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, Huntingdon
24 th May 2012	Environmental and Community Groups Seminar held at the HDC Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, Huntingdon

- 4.3 A total of 114 written consultation responses have been received on this initial consultation. The key outcomes of these are presented within the Strategy and Policy consultation material and further analysis will be incorporated in the statement of consultation provided to the Planning Inspector at the examination stage. A summary of the consultation themes that were raised during the Stage 1 Initial Issues and Options consultation is set out in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Summary of themes arising from Stage 1 Initial Issues and Options Consultation responses

Consultation Response Theme	Details
Infrastructure provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure is already failing to keep pace with growth - better planning in advance of growth is essential. • Pressure on roads, public transport, hospitals, water supply/sewerage, drainage, schools (especially secondary school capacity) - all major issues already and will be exacerbated by more development. • No more houses should be built until the A14 is upgraded. • A lower rate of house-building is now required to allow communities to assimilate the recent high rates of growth. • Concept of strategic green space is supported.
Dispersal of growth to around Key Service Centres and larger villages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt a more balanced spatial approach across the district. • Too much development in the east of the district – send more to the west and north west. • Would allow other areas to develop and attract new businesses and families. • Would relieve traffic bottlenecks. • Would increase choice of housing. • Smaller sites are easier to build out. • Would respect rural nature of district. • More growth in villages would protect local services/facilities and provide new homes for local young people who want to stay near their families. • Should not allow urban sprawl around villages.
Our urban areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth should be concentrated around existing conurbations – most sustainable option. • Build where employment and transport links exist and minimise development in small settlements. • Development within market towns/key service centres will maintain their prosperity. • Don't build new conurbations like Wyton – should infill around towns and key service centres. • Protect rural nature of district.
Meeting housing need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More explanation needed of how the growth scenarios have been derived. • Need a mix of housing types / tenures and sizes. • Maintain a balance between jobs and housing.

Developing brownfield sites	<p>Alconbury:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development should be focused here – a brownfield site with good transport links. • Would reduce disruption to rest of district. • Has been an employment commitment for some time and no development has occurred – unlikely to change with designation of Enterprise Zone • Don't put all the eggs in one basket i.e. Alconbury. <p>Wyton:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only suitable for limited development. • Not a sustainable location. • Don't merge Wyton on the Hill with St Ives. <p>Look at other brownfield sites also such as RAF Upwood – in need of redevelopment.</p>
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5. STRATEGY AND POLICY CONSULTATION – STAGE 2

5.1 Stage 2 of the consultation and engagement process on the new Local Plan is now planned for the period between 27th July and 1st October 2012. As part of the iterative process of consultation on the Local Plan, more information will be made available for comment than at Stage 1. Widespread involvement in the Stage 2 consultation will be encouraged responses through publicity, exhibitions and seminars, as per section 3 of this report.

5.2 Table 4 below summarises the proposed consultation documents for Stage 2 of the Local Plan process which consists of a consultation on Strategy and Policy matters.

Table 4: Stage 2 Strategy and Policy Consultation documents	
Document	Summary
Introduction and Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This document will set out the overall context for the consultation. • The potential strategic options presented at the Stage 1 are presented again together with a summary of the comments received to date to inform further debate. • Consultation responses, together with further research and evidence, will enable analysis of the scale of growth to be considered at Stage 3 of the consultation process. • Additional evidence will be prepared, in co-operation with Cambridgeshire County Council, the Joint Strategic Planning Unit and others. It is expected that the East of England Regional Plan and its targets will be revoked during this consultation stage.

Place-based policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This document will set out draft place based policies to indicate how the need for sustainable development will be addressed in the Huntingdon, St Neots, St Ives and Ramsey Spatial Planning Areas, the Key Service Centres, the smaller settlements and the countryside. • Issues related to planning for Gypsy and Traveller sites will be identified recognising the new Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, which is to be read in conjunction with the National Planning Policy Framework. It is anticipated that no site allocations will be considered necessary for this specific use.
Potential allocations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential allocations will be identified and a draft allocation policy will be included for each potential site. • Landowners will be particularly interested in responding to this material, which builds on previous Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments. • An Environmental Capacity Study providing more detailed evidence onsite selection matters will also be available as part of the consultation process. • Additional sites put forward during the Stage 1 and Stage 2 consultations will be considered for inclusion as potential allocations in the draft Local Plan.
Development Management policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft policies to manage development will be provided for consultation. • These draft policies will build on those in the Development Management DPD: Proposed Submission 2010, and they also reflect new national planning policy (NPPF and related documents) and changes in circumstances.

6. RECOMMENDATION

6.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Notes the progress made to date on preparing the new Local Plan, the nature of the summarised responses to the initial non-statutory Local Plan Issues and Options consultation, and the anticipated next steps in the consultation and plan making process.
2. Agrees to move on to the Strategy and Policy consultation stage, using appropriate consultation material (as set out in Table 4), the exact content of which to be agreed by the Head of Planning Services and Housing Strategy in consultation with the Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Housing.

Background Papers:

Cabinet Report and Minutes, 8 December 2011, 16 February 2012, 19 April 2012
Initial Issues and Options consultation paper, May 2012

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