

HOUGHTON AND WYTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the **Parish Council Meeting** held on Tuesday 26 November 2024, 2:00pm.

Present: Cllr P Boothman (Chair) Cllr R Baxendale
 Cllr B Gilmour Cllr R Guinea
 Cllr D Keane Cllr A Skinner
 Cllr R Southworth

<p>1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr J Rodgers.</p>
<p>2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST There were no declarations of interest.</p>
<p>3. PUBLIC COMMENT There was no public comment</p>
<p>4. CONSULTATION: HDC LOCAL PLAN UPDATE Further Issues and Options Paper Consultation RESOLVED: the attached response will be submitted to the HDC Local Plan consultation. Proposed: Cllr Boothman; Seconded: Cllr Skinner. All in favour Land Availability Assessment Consultation RESOLVED: the attached response will be submitted to the HDC Local Plan consultation. Proposed: Cllr Baxendale; Seconded: Cllr Guinea. All in favour Sustainability Appraisal Consultation RESOLVED: the attached response will be submitted to the HDC Local Plan consultation. Proposed: Cllr Gilmour; Seconded: Cllr Southworth. All in favour</p>
<p>5. CONSULTATION: A141 AND ST IVES IMPROVEMENTS SCHEME RESOLVED: The attached response will be submitted to A141 and St Ives Improvement Scheme consultation via Cambridgeshire County Council Proposed: Cllr Skinner; Seconded: Cllr Guinea. All in favour</p>
<p>6. ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED AT FUTURE MEETINGS, DELEGATED ACTION OR FOR INFORMATION ONLY The above responses will be published on the Parish Council website and made available to residents. The Mayor of the Combined Authority will be made aware of the responses of the Parish Council and questioned about the costs of the project and this consultation in particular. Cllr Keane was asked to arrange a meeting of Parish Councillors with the MP, Ben Obese-Jecty to discuss issues raised by these consultations.</p>
<p>7. DATE OF NEXT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING The next Parish Council meeting will be Wednesday 4 December 2024 at 7pm.</p>

Signature Date.....

Question 1

End date of the Local Plan Update

An end date of 2046 was the most popular choice last year. Do you agree with this? If you would prefer a different date please tell us what you think it should be.

The new Local Plan is likely to be adopted in 2028/29 and so given the National Planning Policy Framework para 22 requires strategic policies to look ahead over a minimum 15 year period from adoption then 2046 would seem sensible.

Also given that Local Plans are typically reviewed in 5 year cycles, then there is no reason to try to predict what will happen beyond 2046.

The Vision

Options - The Vision

Should we...

(Please pick one option.)

Option A: Have a Vision based strongly on the Huntingdonshire Futures Place Strategy and the Corporate Plan to 2028:

'By 2046 Huntingdonshire will be a place which people take pride in, where the economy is inclusive of everyone, health and happiness are highly valued, our local landscapes are protected and enhanced with environmental innovation welcomed, and travel is transformed to focus on transitioning away from cars.'

Option B: Have a Vision of a better future achieved through ambitious climate action and a just transition⁽¹⁾ towards more social and economic equity.

'By 2046 Huntingdonshire will be a place where our decisions about land use and planning have helped enable lasting benefits for nature and climate, enhanced the well-being of our residents and have facilitated a just transition towards a more sustainable economy.'

Option C: Retain the current Vision with minor amendments:

By 2046 Huntingdonshire's physical environment will support the health and wellbeing of all its residents, by:				
Supporting a diverse and thriving economy	Providing sufficient infrastructure to support vibrant, inclusive communities	Accelerating our climate change response actions	Meeting our changing population's needs	Protecting and enhancing our landscape and heritage

Option D: Have a Vision describing how Huntingdonshire intends to evolve focused on the three strands of economic, social and environmental sustainability:

'Huntingdonshire to be a place where high quality growth enhances our communities and supports sustainable living and a high quality of life, balanced with protecting and enhancing our landscape and open spaces for the benefit of people and nature.'

Option E: Consider an alternative Vision.

Please let us know what it should be.

Option B fits most closely to our views.

So much of the future planning in this document is quite rightly based around the concept of 'sustainable development' where done properly there need not be a trade-off between environmental sustainability and economic development.

The definition put forward in the Local Plan is well established, going back to the 1980's and still relevant – "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (United Nations General Assembly, 1987).

We welcome this definition and believe it needs to be at the heart of the Local Plan and ultimately the vision adopted for the District.

We feel that adhering to the principles behind sustainable development ultimately require us to address climate change, to limit it and its effects where we can, and mitigate it where we can't. Positioned in the driest part of the

country and at the same time increasingly vulnerable to flooding, Huntingdonshire is already more affected by Climate Change than most other parts of the U.K. This naturally provides a motivating reason for Huntingdonshire becoming the leader in terms of taking action on Climate Change.

We feel strongly that for the next plan period, more weighting should be given to the environment and mitigating climate change sooner rather than over ambitious economic and social growth.

We would like to see the target of achieving net zero across Huntingdonshire by 2040, which was approved by cabinet in 2023, given much greater emphasis within the vision, objectives and the sections of the plan which look to deliver this.

Cambridgeshire has one of the lowest proportions of land under management for nature in the UK. We would like to see Natural Cambridgeshire's target of doubling nature and natural green space across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough from 8.5% up to the national average of 17% by 2050 written into the list of objectives and plans for the District.

We would like to see existing residents valued and developed, and the area not becoming over reliant on working population growth being fuelled by better educated and skilled people from outside the area.

We want to see a healthy community at the heart of things; inclusivity; landscape protection; improving quality of life; more choices for living, employment and transport; promote more on-shore resilient and sustainable business's; better education and skilling for people already living here; higher quality and environmentally friendly housing; all building towards a climate sensitive, sustainable future.

Options - The Objectives

Should we...

(Please choose whether there is a particular group of objectives which you prefer or pick any individual suggested objectives that you support)

Option A - The objectives build on Vision Option A and are **shaped by the key 'pathways' that support the Huntingdonshire Futures Place Strategy journeys:**

Option B - The objectives build on Vision Option B and **aim to help achieve a better future through a just transition towards ambitious climate action.**

Option C - **Minor amendments to the current list of 25 objectives**

Option D - The objectives build on Vision Option D and are **focused on the three strands of economic, social and environmental sustainability:**

Option E - Consider alternative objectives - Please suggest any that you think would be appropriate.

For reasons of achieving sustainable development we prefer the objectives and vision which Option B sets out. Being one of the driest parts of the U.K whilst at the same time being one of the areas at most of risk from flooding, makes Huntingdonshire much more vulnerable to the effects of Climate Change. Therefore Sustainable Development, as defined by "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" is both essential, but can also be a rallying call and deliver a drive and ambition for the District to become a leader in this field. However achieving this cannot happen overnight and will require a just transition to ambitious climate action.

Rationale:

In terms of objectives, the list of 25 that make up the core are fairly standard but do not establish priorities between which objectives would be followed in the event of a conflict.

The list of objectives supplied via the consultation in 2023 still resonate and whilst stating that we wish to deliver sufficient new homes to meet our housing needs, the modelling used seems to take the approach that by building any number of homes we will ultimately attract sufficient people to fill the homes. This is something which cannot be assumed to be good for the District or sustainable development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the needs of the present and of future generations to meet their own needs.

We strongly agree with the objective to protect small settlements and the rural character of Huntingdonshire which has been a key characteristic and appeal for people living in the District.

Education attainment across Huntingdonshire is below average on every measure but especially in terms of further education and skills participation, hence we agree with prioritising education and developing skills locally. However whilst weak in terms of further education we would also like to see this extended to include the provision of a Higher Education establishment for the District and thereby reduce the need to import skills from outside the area.

We also agree with the objective of locating growth along transport corridors and utilising the built infrastructure which already exists rather than building new roads.

When looking at the Land Availability Assessment, there seems to be a number of sites rated as prime agricultural land but which officers are currently assessing to be acceptable for development. This is not sustainable and taking away agricultural land like this will compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

In terms of housing development, one objective could be to mainly focus on Previously developed land. On the face of it this should be preferable before considering taking away Grade 1,2 or 3 agricultural land from food production.

However it is a blunt approach, and we would like to see the objective of 'Land First' approach adopted whereby we first ask the question whether any land – previously developed or otherwise is capable of being brought up to a higher,

more valuable grade and thereby more valuable to us than simply built over. Methods such as Regenerative Farming techniques can improve degraded soils in relatively short periods of time and are worth considering before automatically assuming land is in the District acceptable to be developed.

In terms of the sustainability assessment we believe we should be using Natural England's assessment of Best and Most Versatile land which they define as grades 1 – 3a. Using this guidance we should only be promoting land for development which is not capable of achieving grade 3b or lower.

Linked to this is the role of residential development in the redevelopment of the high street/town centres. An objective to encourage more people to live in our town centres once again (often at a first floor level) gets no mention.

Elsewhere in the country this has been seen as a way to rejuvenate the centre of towns whereby under-utilised or empty retail outlets are encouraged to be converted into residential properties. Residents living in the town centre then demand goods and services, invest in the locality etc. and the cycle of prosperity begins again with shops/café's re-opening.

The role of land for different uses within the development context is also missing from the objectives. There is no objective of preventing smaller settlements being subsumed by larger ones (e.g. Hartford, Eaton Socon, protecting the individual character and patchwork of settlements that make up Huntingdonshire).

There do not appear to be any objectives regards appropriate densities of housing for healthy living.

Given how the vulnerable much of the housing around the river valleys is to flooding, we are concerned that there is no objective to require that any new development must not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere.

Following agreement by HDC cabinet in 2023, we would like to see achieving net zero across Huntingdonshire at least by 2040 continue as an objective.

Set an objective to double nature and natural green space within Huntingdonshire (as defined by Natural Cambridgeshire).

In terms of employment and economic growth, there are no objectives regards developing local skills through provision of higher education facilities within the district itself. The employment and housing growth targets rely heavily on both inward migration from other districts and internationally.

To benefit climate change, speed up construction, and to make homes more affordable in the area, we would like to see targets set between traditional build (on -site) versus pre-fabricated (off site) construction on sites above a certain size as well as greater use of timber construction rather than brick and concrete.

The objective of developing and strengthening a cultural base within Huntingdonshire is sadly lacking and does not get mentioned for example a theatre, or multi-purpose performance venue which could also enhance our tourism offer.

We also question whether sufficient recognition and emphasis is being given to the role of tourism and hospitality within the plan, both as a way of both protecting and enhancing some of the key assets of the District, as well as in driving more economic growth in the area.

Options - Settlement Hierarchy

Should we...

(You may pick multiple options)

Options A to D relate to the whole Settlement Hierarchy.

Option A - Keep the existing settlement hierarchy of Spatial Planning Areas, Key Service Centres, Small Settlements and Countryside with the same list of settlements in each

Option B - Keep the current categories in the existing settlement hierarchy but update the settlements included in the categories based on their current sustainability (informed by the Sustainability of Settlements outcomes)

Option C - Strictly reflect the Sustainability of Settlements scoring outcomes of individual settlements and apply a categorisation based on a preferred number of groupings

Option D - Remove the category of Spatial Planning Areas and group each settlement based on its individual merits

Options E to I relate to specific elements of the Settlement Hierarchy.

Option E - Put Huntingdon and St Neots in a higher category on their own, reflecting their higher level of services (with or without their associated other SPA settlements)

Option F - Have the four market towns of Huntingdon, St Ives, St Neots and Ramsey as the highest category in the settlement hierarchy so as to direct most growth to these areas.

Option G - Replace the Key Service Centres and Small Settlements categories with 3 categories to reflect the significant variation in levels of services and facilities (informed by the Sustainability of Settlements outcomes)

Option H - Recognise clusters of villages which benefit from shared services or facilities and group them together as one 'settlement'.

Option I - Move less or unsustainable small settlements into a hamlets and/or countryside category

Option J - Consider an alternative option. Please let us know.

We would like to see Spatial Planning Areas removed from the settlement hierarchy, with Market Towns being made a separate category. Within the Market Town category we would like to see Huntingdon and St. Neots being placed into a higher-level category.

We do not believe sustainability criteria scores should be used in isolation to rank settlements.

Rationale:

Whilst the sustainability criteria are a useful tool, the scores themselves cannot determine how sustainable one settlement is relative to another. The criteria are blunt using indiscriminate cut off points, such as the number of retail outlets or employment possibilities etc., assuming them all to be of equal merit in delivering sustainability. Careful judgement is required such that the quality of the assets is also used to assess each settlement and not just the numbers. Only by doing this is it possible to reflect how a settlement actually works for residents. Without this judgement, the scores should not be used to 'rank' settlements.

We have concerns that Spatial Planning Areas are already affecting how a settlement is viewed, putting pressure on settlements to merge and become extensions of the Market Towns. Making these any larger will only exacerbate the problem.

Houghton & Wyton does not wish to become an extension of the market town of St.Ives (and to a lesser extent of Huntingdon) but retain our own more rural, village identity and character as per the Neighbourhood Plan.

The examples of Godmanchester and Bury from the Sustainability of Settlements 2023 paper which forms part of this consultation was reviewed and found to be refreshing.

".....settlements such as Godmanchester or Bury have been assessed as standalone settlements. In the case of Bury this is due to the distinct historic and cultural identity of the settlement as reflected by the views of the residents and through the creation of a Neighbourhood Plan. Likewise Godmanchester demonstrates a distinct historic and cultural identity to that of Huntingdon through its history as a Roman settlement, it is also separated from Huntingdon by the River Great Ouse. Residents also consider Godmanchester to be a separate settlement which is reflected through the creation of the Godmanchester Neighbourhood Plan."

Parishioners from Houghton & Wyton have historically campaigned to protect their village identity, which has involved using petitions as well as making case law and winning a High Court action against the District Council in 2012 (CO/12732/2011). Ultimately this led to a Neighbourhood Plan for the parish which was made in 2018 and contains an anti-coalescence policy (HWNP 3). Later that year, we made representations to the Inspector at the hearing for the Local Plan 2036 asking for a green wedge policy to be introduced across the District. Despite gaining traction, the Inspector was assured by the Council that existing policies were sufficient to protect settlements throughout the District. Sadly, experience since has not reduced the fear many settlements face, including our own, and there is a growing need to develop policy to protect individual settlement identity throughout Huntingdonshire.

Unfortunately we were concerned that the new Local Plan, some of its wording, the assessment of our settlement, options and approach are in danger of positioning Houghton & Wyton more and more as an extension to St.Ives. At present there are 4 tiers making up the settlement hierarchy – Market Town/Spatial Planning Areas; Key Service Centre, Smaller Settlement and The Countryside.

As a standalone village with the facilities and services on offer to our residents we are classified as a Smaller Settlement.

These settlements have been assessed and ranked according to how well they deliver on 14 criteria e.g. proximity to GP surgeries, retail outlets, sports facilities, community buildings, bus services employment opportunities, etc. According to the Local plan Houghton & Wyton is now 11th in the league table of the most sustainable settlements of the District – ahead of Somersham, Warboys, Farcet, Great Stukeley, Buckden & Stirtloe, Alconbury Weald, which are considerably larger than our own.

We allegedly have greater employment prospects for our residents than even St.Ives. This is apparently due to proximity to RAF Wyton. This is a highly specialist employment location and the current Parish Council despite knowing a great many people in the parish are not aware of anyone living here who has employment there. We therefore feel it is grossly misleading to classify this as an opportunity for residents.

Our Community Shop is not the equivalent to Somersham's 3 food stores – Tesco, Premier and Cost Cutter and yet is judged to be so.

We do not have the equivalent sports facilities as Hemingford Grey with their indoor squash courts, gym and larger playing surfaces, two football pitches, cricket, bowls and tennis courts.

Our Bus service is rated Grade B for frequency ('A' being the top 1% in the country for frequency and 'F' the worst 1%) making us equivalent to Huntingdon, St.Neots and Yaxley which simply cannot be the case. Currently no bus goes through our villages and only 1 bus an hour can be accessed by village residents and visitors having to walk up to the main road (the A1123).

We will work to address any over estimates regarding our ratings in order for us to be judged more fairly as a small settlement and one which is far from sustainable as is currently being measured.

In light of the Sustainability of Settlements re-assessment and all of its inadequacies, we reject any option which looks to use the results of this (Option B, C, and G).

We were also fearful of Option H if it might increase the risk of coalescence or infill (hence the need for a specific green wedge policy).

Some people have argued that Spatial Planning Areas suffer from not aligning District or Parish electoral representation with the geographic spatial planning area. This is a point which further underlines the danger of expanding the SPA areas.

Option A with the Spatial Planning Areas has not worked particularly well for us thus far and also suffers from not aligning electoral representation with the geographic spatial planning area.

We decided Option D and E (without their SPA's) therefore seemed the most logical and appropriate.

In such cases the role of a policy to use land or features to help underline the position of a settlement needs to be incorporated into the Local Plan. For example introducing a green gap/wedge policy across the district to prevent the perception of coalescence.

Strategy ambitions

Options - Strategy Ambitions

Should we...

(Please pick one option.)

Option A: Plan for limited (low) employment growth to support Huntingdonshire's existing businesses. Growth guided exclusively by criteria based policies.

Option B: Plan for sustainable (medium) growth by supplying a sufficient amount of employment land/ allocations to allow for some business expansion and investment and to provide a flexible approach to changing market conditions.

Option C: Plan for ambitious (high) growth capitalising on key priority sectors of the wider economy and creating business clusters.

Option D: Consider an alternative strategy ambition. Please let us know what it should be.

With local exceptions in the far north, south and west of the District namely –Yaxley, Sibson–cum–Stibbington, St.Neots, and Molesworth, we believe Option A is the most realistic planning base to be working from. The NPPF says that planning policies should have regard to Local Industrial Strategies, other local policies for economic development and regeneration.

However the interdependencies between the different City and Districts Local Plans in terms of economic growth are so acute that simply having regard to the plans and policies of others is simply not enough. The combined authorities need to work closely together to produce a wider area Industrial Strategy which the Local Plan then follows.

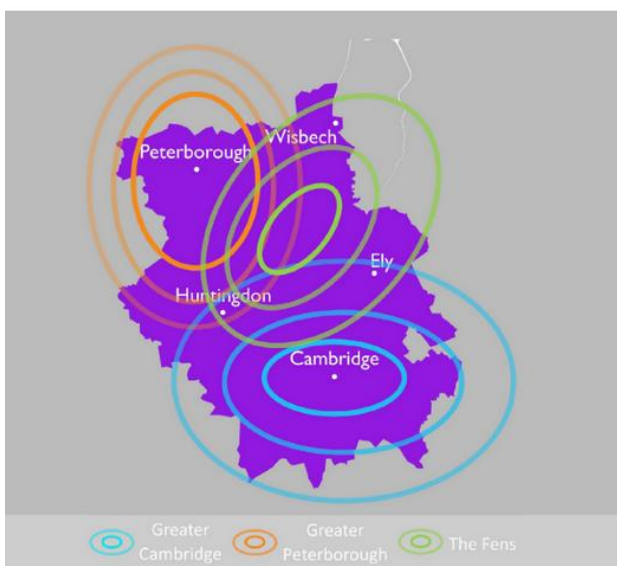
Justification:

It is clear that whilst Huntingdonshire's business and employment growth prospects are driven by the wider economy (which is forecasting limited growth for the next 10 years), they are also heavily influenced by what is happening in the sub economies of Greater Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

The Local Industrial Strategy identifies 3 sub-economies within Cambridgeshire and Peterborough focussed on Peterborough, Greater Cambridge and the Fens, shown on the map below with the bold line enveloping the area of greatest economic impact and lighter lines where this will still have influence.

From this it shows Huntingdonshire lies at the edges of the sphere of influence from these areas and therefore needs to be realistic in terms of growth.

Figure 1: the sub-economies and Cambridgeshire and Peterboro



In addition there are factors restricting the prospects for employment growth – particularly from the Greater Cambridgeshire sub- region.

The Local Industrial strategy states that modelling from the University of Cambridge (similar to that carried out for some of London’s bigger transport projects) has shown that, on current rates of transport infrastructure development and housing delivery, the growth of the economy will slow, before eventually going into reverse within 10 to 15 years. We believe water related issues add to this risk.

The Greater Cambridge Local Development Scheme Updated Addendum November 2024 states that uncertainties regarding water supply in both the short and long term were impacting the ability to move forward the local plan. The decision on Cambridge Water’s WRMP 2024 has continued to be delayed and further work is being undertaken with the Water Scarcity Group to understand water availability in the long term – 2040 and beyond. This is because even with the planned Fens Reservoir in place in the mid 2030’s, water abstraction licences will be further reduced at 2040 as part of the Environment.

Water scarcity and treatment impacts a huge area and affects the business and housing growth of Greater Cambridgeshire including the eastern and southern parts of Huntingdonshire supplied by Cambridge Water.

In transport terms, Transport Strategy the Making Connections proposal as part of the wider City Access programme, and to pause the Cambridge South East Transport Scheme (CSETS) due to rising programme costs also presents a challenge to delivery of the levels of growth in the GCLP

Additional factors that could affect the future growth programme for Greater Cambridgeshire are the uncertainty in terms of the scale and timing of the expansion of Cambourne and therefore the proposed Cambourne station associated with East West Rail.

Question marks exist over whether Marshall’s Aerospace will ultimately relocate from Cambridge to Cranfield to release land for housing. Marshall’s have also cancelled their relocation to Alconbury Weald of their land operations for ground defence division, which has delivered a blow to prospects there.

Likewise, the CPIER report stressed much of this growth would be driven by productivity and that in the short-term, the Combined Authority should work to raise productivity per hour to above the UK average by 2024. This is achieved by more output, being produced more quickly, with fewer inputs, by the same numbers of people. Developments in AI may be a growing factor here and if successful higher productivity growth will require fewer people to achieve the same output than currently employed.

We note that NPPF states that Local Plans need to look at and assess local business needs and wider opportunities for development to help the district to "build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future."

Education attainment and skills gaps are an important issue and holding back prospects locally. This has not been helped by the Cambridgeshire Regional College closing their skills centre (iMet) and pulling out of Alconbury Weald. Finally, there are no objectives regards developing local skills through provision of higher education facilities within the district itself.

Location of development

Options - Location of Development

Should we (subject to an Employment Land Study)...

(You may pick multiple options)

Option A: Focus employment growth within and adjacent to Established Employment Areas.

Option B: Focus employment growth strategically along major highways such as the A1.

Option C: Focus employment growth next to or within large scale housing sites promoting mixed use development aligning employment growth with housing growth.

Option D: Focus employment growth in sustainable locations such as allocating sites that are accessible by public transport and active travel.

Option E: Focus employment growth in existing economic centres which are located in market towns and larger settlements.

Option F: Consider an alternative strategy ambition. Please let us know what it should be.

Focusing employment within and adjacent to Established Employment Areas does make sense so long as it is a suitable business to operate within the EEA (Option A). Likewise locating business alongside existing major arterial routes such as the A1 and westwards along the A14 (Option B) also makes sense. Ensuring that these sites are then serviced with good public and active travel connections is also important (Option D).

At a more micro area level, an alternative dimension (Option F) may be appropriate. The Greater Peterborough area is due to benefit from a new rail service reducing times from Peterborough to London to 38 minutes. This will undoubtedly encourage more businesses and people to locate closer to this hub making the far north of the District more appealing.

The prospect of building a brand new city of up to 350,000 people at Tempsford on the A1 – just a 13 minute drive south of St. Neots will have an influence on the far south of the District. As will building the east/west rail link and making a new railway station at Tempsford, the point of intersection with the north/south east coast line. It could also be a major employment centre, especially in life sciences, helping to relieve the acute shortages of laboratory space in Oxford, Cambridge and London.

Also affecting the far south and south west of the District is the current fast tracking of the Universal Destinations and Experiences planning permissions to build their large scale movie-related resort at Kempston Hardwick, south of Bedford and link to the A421 and the new east/west railway station, although this is more likely to bring hotel and tourism benefits.

Finally, the west of the District around Molesworth is set to prosper from RAF Molesworth being chosen as the new Joint Intelligence centre for NATO creating employment, business growth and opportunity for housing with access to the A14 and connections between Kettering, Huntingdon and Peterborough.

Established Employment Areas

Options - Established Employment Areas

Should we...

(You may pick multiple options)

Option A: Remove the designation of EEA that protects and encourages use class B (general industrial, storage and distribution uses) being located within these areas.

Option B: Continue with safeguarding and enhancement of EEA accounting for changes to national policy and regulations.

Option C: Continue with safeguarding and enhancement of EEA but review the type of uses that are acceptable within them and the criteria used to assess their suitability.

Option D: Create additional and / or extended employment areas by reviewing existing employment sites or allocating new employment sites.

Option E: Consider an alternative option. Please let us know.

Logistics and construction remain examples of two of the five sectors supported by the Local Industrial Strategy. Hence Option A and the EEA designation is still applicable where the location of general industrial, storage and distribution businesses are appropriate such as in proximity to the major arterial routes.

However the industry cluster mapping background to the local plan would suggest that Option C has some merit with different types of industry clustered together in different parts of the district depending upon which sub-economic region of either Greater Cambridgeshire, Peterborough or the Fens they relate to.

The Industrial Strategy suggests that Huntingdon and North have closer links to the Greater Peterborough & Fens area and hence growth on A1 and A14 west. Meanwhile the South/South West of the District is more closely connected south of the river to Greater Cambridge and the A1307/new A14.

As stated in the Issues and Options report, the knowledge intensive sector shows a higher density of businesses in southern – St. Neots and central Huntingdonshire and a similar trend is demonstrated within the life science sector, particularly St Ives where there is clustering within and surrounding Compass Business Park potentially benefiting from being in proximity to Cambridge.

Given that the CPIER report makes the case for improved productivity, innovation and increased chances of success for businesses by operating within clusters, it would make sense to protect and prioritise these industry types by geographic cluster. Reviewing existing sites and introducing some new sites as mentioned in Option D would also be appropriate to reflect this.

By way of the location of Huntingdonshire, positioned more on the fringes of each of the sub-economic area and potentially having more space to expand, a specific opportunity lies in developing scale-up facilities closely coupled to local universities where technologies can be developed and taken through the early stages of commercialisation.

We are now asking you to input how what the housing requirement should be for the updated Local Plan.

Options - Housing Requirement

Should we....

(Please pick one option.)

Option A - Plan for the standard method number (approved current methodology = 874 new homes a year and draft proposed methodology = 1,203 new homes a year)

Option B - A 5% uplift on the standard method number to allow a small amount of flexibility in case some sites do not deliver as expected (approved current methodology = 918 new homes a year and draft proposed methodology = 1,263 new homes a year)

Option C - A 10% uplift on the standard method number to allow a some flexibility in case some sites do not deliver as expected or affordability ratios worsen (approved current methodology = 961 new homes a year and draft proposed methodology = 1,323 new homes a year)

Option D - Consider an alternative option. Please let us know.

Faced with these choices, we believe Option A continues to provide the soundest planning base to be working from. Housing growth over the last decade seems to have resulted in bland, homogenous housing estates, concentrated in the central, south/south east of the district which is 'overheating' from development, generally lacking infrastructure, threatening natural habitats, landscape and character, loss of agricultural land, contributing to a scarcity of drinking water and increased risk of flooding of its low-lying towns and villages. Overall it is difficult to argue that the needs of existing residents have not been compromised already from the growth in housing numbers experienced. Therefore the level of future housing growth chosen for the District needs very careful consideration.

The numbers put forward to choose from are largely derived from the work of the GL Hearn study Oct 2021, looking at Cambridgeshire & west Sussex.

Components of Population Change HMA 2001-19 shows a long-term decline in birth rates and that the 'natural' population growth for the Housing Market Area has been steadily declining since 2012.

Rising levels of inward migration over the last 5 – 10 years have made traditional methods (i.e. modelling births/deaths) for forecasting overall populations as well as the age profile and composition of family units much more difficult.

Hence the GL Hearn study primarily focused on house building numbers rather than population data to forecast. It uses historic house build numbers to project possible or target housing numbers which might be built in the future and which it then assumes will automatically become occupied through one of four measures:

i) Some limited formation of new households from indigenous populations; ii) Inward migration from other areas of the country (although this obviously risks de-populating the areas it is pulled from); iii) international migration to the areas; iv) or reductions in average household size (this they are assuming will reduce from the current 2.3 persons per household to 1.8).

The resulting housing growth targets are ambitious and as stated earlier rely heavily on inward and international migration which in turn result in fewer persons per household.

Deriving house building targets using this approach rather than from actual population need may be convenient and simpler, but is questionable.

At present there is some ambiguity regards how hard the government will push for a rigid pre- prescribed formula to be followed for house building, and the extent to which any additional supply will make houses more affordable. A key assumption within the model.

In the meantime, the Hearn report 2021 casts some doubt on the dependency of inward migration from elsewhere in the UK, and the level of international migration needed to deliver the population growth numbers to support the most excessive target option put forward. It is also not something that is sustainable in the longer term.

From the justification and evidence put forward for our choices in section 5 dealing with Employment growth it is clear that our housing needs are heavily influenced by what is happening especially in the sub economies of Greater Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

By only sitting on the edge of the three big sub-economy regions of Peterborough and Cambridgeshire limits the Districts housing needs. Plus major growth in these sub-regions – especially Greater Cambridge is far from guaranteed. Modelling work from the Local Industrial Strategy shows that continued pressure and problems with water supply, treatment, plus delays and cut backs to transport infrastructure would cause the Greater Cambridgeshire economy to stall. Coupled with a primary focus on productivity to drive growth, made even more relevant with rising costs of employing people and sluggish national growth forecasts, all point to business's aiming for smaller workforces and less need for housing.

For all of the reasons above, sticking with the existing methodology would seem sensible.

Question - Design Characteristics

We will be using the [National Design Code](#) to shape what aspects of design we will include in our future design policies. Are there any specific design characteristics that are important to you and that you think we should include in the Local Plan Update?

We would particularly welcome the master planning exercise for development sites being subject to a separate community engagement exercise. Including sustainability measures.

We believe policies to reduce/limit household water usage need to be included in the design code.

Stricter building requirements need to be set to make homes net carbon zero and climate resilience.

Policies should prevent building on the flood plain or contributing to flooding risk. However, where essential development will contribute to flooding risk, the flood plain needs to be extended to the point where the increased risk is eliminated. Where appropriate, policies should also ensure the long-term management and maintenance of SUDS and incorporate requirement to capture and reuse water on-site together with much more focus on natural flood prevention and mitigation.

The need to retro fit homes should be avoided by ensuring all new houses are fitted with solar panels and low carbon, energy heating systems when built.

To benefit climate change, speed up construction, and to make homes more affordable in the area, we would like to see targets set between traditional build (on -site) versus pre-fabricated (off site) construction on sites above a certain size as well as greater use of timber construction rather than brick and concrete.

There should be greater consideration and acceptance of Park Homes for development sites. These can speed up availability, improve affordability, can result in very strong communities, and are non- permanent should situations change e.g. flooding risks for a given site increases.

On larger projects policies are needed to require the introduction of neighbourhood energy systems.

The use of a density code which recognises edge of village settlements as being different from edge of town is also required along with limits on height of properties on the edge of the countryside.

Within greenspace definitions policies need to recognise, value and treat rural green space as distinct from natural spaces (more managed greenspace) within and around built environments.

Options - Approach to Strategic Growth

Should we....

(You may pick a combination of options or parts of options)

Option A - Continue with the existing growth strategy set out in our current Local Plan (Policy LP2 Strategy for Development). This currently focusses on 75% growth in Spatial Planning Areas and 25% elsewhere e.g. Key Service Centres and Small Settlements.

Option B - Focus on **strategic expansions to existing towns**

Option C - Focus growth on **public transport corridors**. This corridors would be located around the A428/A421, the guided bus route and future ambitions to provide East West Rail, the proposal to reroute the A141, a public transport corridor from Cambridge to Alconbury Weald and a possible railway station at Alconbury Weald.

Option D - Concentrate development around the **strategic road network** i.e. The A1, A14, A428

Option E - Distribute growth across many settlements in Huntingdonshire and limit growth in our towns creating **dispersed growth**.

Option F - Provide **1 one or more new community/ies plus some dispersed growth**.

Option G - Consider an alternative option. Please let us know.

Presented with the choices as they are, we believe a mix of all Options A to E is the best way to achieve growth.

Given that the current Local Plan is only 5 years old, Option A has merit but for those reasons argued earlier, with the Spatial Planning Areas excluded.

We have suggested Huntingdon and St. Neots be singled out as the two principal towns in the District and directing some growth towards these as in Option B also has merit. However we believe that St.Ives has now reached capacity and apart from in the town centre, expansion would not be seen as beneficial to the town, or sustainable, only putting pressure on already stretched infrastructure, traffic movement and services, so undermining needs of current residents.

Considering Option C and D, utilising the valuable built infrastructure that exists, rather than rushing to build new roads etc. must be a consideration. The A1 north and south, as well as the A14, all offer opportunities. For example

the cost at the time of the new A14 link at £1.4bn points to the value of these sorts of assets and that arguably should be utilised before adding significant new infrastructure.

Option E offering a level of dispersed growth would also be beneficial. To date we have arguably seen too much development located in the south/east of the District and which has resulted in it overheating, whilst elsewhere – particularly the north and west has been starved of development. This has exacerbated the inequalities that exist across the District – across housing supply, employment opportunities, incomes, educational attainment. A dispersal strategy both in terms of spreading development across the district not just from establishing new towns in those more deprived areas, but also within smaller settlements may also counter depopulation of the villages and enable them to maintain services they currently have or in some cases improve them.

Given the scale of the challenge, if considerably higher growth is demanded by government for the District then Option F and the idea of a new settlement would need to be considered.

The new city proposed for Tempsford and east west rail approved in the latest budget, plus upgrade to the A421, as well as the Theme Park south of Bedford, all offer further opportunities for development particularly in the far south of the district plus where commuting to London is faster and easier.

The creation of a Joint Forces Intelligence for NATO at Molesworth on the A14 as well as being an opportunity for business/employment, is also an opportunity for a new town further west.

To avoid creating a sprawling conurbation, any new town/settlement should not be located within only a short distance of an existing town. Linking to the point above and when considering accessing this infrastructure, as well as looking to Cambridge as the main draw for employment and economic growth, then either south of the river, north along the A1 (e.g. the Sibson Garden Community project) or west along the A14 would make most sense geographically to relieve pressure and assist in balancing development away from the established towns within the central, south and south/east parts of the district.

Options - Green and Blue Infrastructure

Should we...

(You may pick multiple options)

Option A - Retain the existing four Green Infrastructure Priority Areas

Option B - Retain the existing Green Infrastructure Priority Areas and also designate additional areas identified within the Interim Huntingdonshire Nature Recovery Network

Option C - Allocate sites for new green and blue infrastructure and/or additional land for existing green and blue infrastructure to expand

Option D - Consider an alternative option. Please let us know.

Option B and C are preferred.

The long list of suggestions put forward during the consultation held in 2023 are still relevant. In particular we would like to see the Local Plan policies helping deliver a National Landscape designation for the Great Ouse Valley.

Options - Decarbonisation Scenarios

Should we....

(Please pick one option.)

Option A - Business as usual with electric vehicle uptake reflecting recent trends

Option B - Maximise reductions by 2040 using current technologies

Option C - Follow the national Climate Change Commission's 'Balanced pathway' approach

Option D - Consider an alternative option. Please let us know.

The Climate crisis is real and with dire consequences especially for drought prone, for low lying areas of the country. We are already being warned that our current approach is falling short of delivering our net zero goals, hence we need to aim higher and do more, more quickly.

If we are genuinely committed to sustainable development then Option B is preferred.

Options - Renewable Energy

Should we....

(Please pick one option.)

Option A - Business as usual with renewable and low carbon energy meeting 39% of expected demand by 2046 and 41% by 2050

Option B - Ambitious approach meeting national targets with renewable and low carbon energy meeting 79% of expected demand by 2046 and 80% by 2050

Option C - Consider an alternative option. Please let us know.

The Climate crisis is real and with dire consequences especially for drought prone, for low lying areas of the country. We are already being warned that our current approach is falling short of delivering our net zero goals, hence we need to aim higher and do more, more quickly.

If we are genuinely committed to sustainable development then Option B is preferred.

Options - Integrated Flood and Water Management 1

Should we....

(You may pick multiple options)

Option A - Meet national requirements only.

Option B - Require natural flood management techniques as part of an integrated approach to flood risk management and impact on water quality on all developments (excluding minor householder extensions).

Option C - Require natural flood management techniques as part of an integrated approach to flood risk management and water quality on all developments in high and medium risk areas (excluding minor householder extensions).

Option D - Consider an alternative option. Please let us know.

The Climate crisis is real and with dire consequences especially for drought prone, for low lying areas of the country. We are already being warned that our current approach is falling short of delivering our net zero goals, hence we need to aim higher and do more, more quickly.

The Integrated Water Management Strategy for Huntingdonshire, which already exists, needs to be carried forward and where appropriate strengthened in the development of the new Local Plan.

If we are genuinely committed to sustainable development then Option B is preferred.

Options - Integrated Flood and Water Management 2

Should we....

(You may pick multiple options)

Option A - Ask that developments do not increase flood risk elsewhere

Option B - Ask that all developments (excluding minor householder extensions) seek a betterment of existing flood risk both within the site and in surrounding areas.

Option C - Ask that developments (excluding minor householder extensions) in high or medium risk areas seek betterment of existing flood risk both within the site and in surrounding areas.

Option D - Require developments to provide surface water management plans where applicable, addressing run off rates.

Option E - Consider an alternative option. Please let us know.

The Climate crisis is real and with dire consequences especially for drought prone, for low lying areas of the country. We are already being warned that our current approach is falling short of delivering our net zero goals, hence we need to aim higher and do more, more quickly.

The Integrated Water Management Strategy for Huntingdonshire, which already exists, needs to be carried forward and where appropriate strengthened in the development of the new Local Plan.

If we are genuinely committed to sustainable development then Option A and D are preferred.

Options - Water Efficiency in Residential Development

Should we...

(You may pick multiple options)

Option A - Have no policy, meaning that **all development would meet existing and future Building Regulations Standards of 125 litres per person per day** (possible future equivalent of 105 l/p/d) for residential buildings.

Option B - Ask that **all residential developments meet Building Regulations optional standards or future equivalent and require 110 l/p/d** (possible future equivalent of 100 l/p/d) as in the current Local Plan.

Option C - Ask that **all residential developments go above current/future Building Regulations standards and require up to 80 l/p/d** if practicable, investigating opportunities for efficient fixtures and fittings, rainwater harvesting and greywater recycling⁽⁴⁾

Option D - Consider an alternative option. Please let us know.

The Climate crisis is real and with dire consequences especially for drought prone, for low lying areas of the country. We are already being warned that our current approach is falling short of delivering our net zero goals, hence we need to aim higher and do more, more quickly.

If we are genuinely committed to sustainable development then Option C is preferred.

Options - Water Efficiency in Non-Household Development

Should we....

(You may pick multiple options)

Option A - Have no policy.

Option B - Ask that all 'non-household' development be required to achieve 'outstanding' for category Wat 01 of BREEAM unless demonstrated impracticable

Option C - Ask that all 'non-household' development be required to achieve 'excellent' for category Wat 01 of BREEAM unless demonstrated impracticable

Option D - For larger employment developments, ask that all 'non-household' developments achieve 'excellent' or 'very good' for WAT 03 on water leak detection and prevention unless demonstrated impracticable.

Option E - Consider an alternative option. Please let us know.

The Climate crisis is real and with dire consequences especially for drought prone, for low lying areas of the country. We are already being warned that our current approach is falling short of delivering our net zero goals, hence we need to aim higher and do more, more quickly.

If we are genuinely committed to sustainable development then Option B is preferred.

Question - The Cambridge Water Area

Would you support even stricter restrictions on water efficiency standards for residential and non-residential buildings for settlements that fall within the Cambridge Water Area? What would they be? Or would you suggest a different approach?

The Cambridge Water Area is particularly stressed in terms of water supply being primarily serviced from chalk streams/aquifers. The environmental impact of excessive water extraction has been very negative and therefore also needs to achieve the highest standards of efficiency in order to aid the recovery of this rare and precious source.

Options - Affordable Housing Proportion

Should we...

(You may pick multiple options)

Option A - Try to maximise the proportion of affordable housing within each site of 10 or more new homes

Option B - Ask for the same proportion of affordable housing in all schemes for 10 or more new homes

Option C - Ask for a lower proportion of affordable housing in very large schemes which need to provide substantial infrastructure such as a new bridge or major road improvements

Option D - Ask for a lower percentage than we do now in all schemes, accepting that this may mean we have to build more homes overall to meet the level of need for affordable housing

Option E - Consider an alternative option. Please let us know.

Housing targets are designed to improve the affordability ratio for all. It is therefore useful to have a prescribed 'ideal' proportion of affordable homes within a given development. However we recognise that some schemes, but for the fact of not being able to deliver the required number of affordable homes, may otherwise be desirable. Therefore a combination of Option A and B is preferred as well as the need to recognise that the type of affordable homes making up any given proportion is also important.

We feel that acceptance of Park Home developments should not be ruled out to achieve this measure.

Options - Affordable Housing Location

Should we...

(Please pick one option)

Option A - Only allow affordable housing to be built in towns and villages with existing services, such as a shop, primary school or village hall, as appropriate to the likely needs of expected occupiers

Option B - Allow affordable housing to be built in all towns and villages to support existing communities

Option C - Consider an alternative option. Please let us know.

Shops are increasingly being replaced by home delivery but shouldn't negate the aim of to improving infrastructure, active travel and public transport to all towns and villages. It is important that affordable housing is available in all types of settlement therefore Option B is preferred.

Options - Size and Type of Housing

Should we...

(Please pick one option)

Option A - Allow the market to entirely decide what size and type of housing to build reflecting what there is most demand for at the time

Option B - Allow a flexible approach as long as the site promoter can show how the mix of homes they want to build will contribute towards a mixed and inclusive local community

Option C - Specify percentage ranges for each number of bedrooms that a mix might comprise on any scheme to allow limited flexibility, accepting the mix might date as new evidence comes forward

Option D - Require all schemes of 10 or more homes to show how they will widen the range of housing types and sizes available reflecting our latest evidence on housing need and demand supplemented by any local assessments of need and demand

Option E - Consider an alternative option. Please let us know.

Option B is preferred so long as it leads to the delivery a balanced mix of housing in each location. The example used in the Hearn paper is where a development primarily delivers 3-4 bed homes, the next application would need to deliver a higher proportion of 1-2 bed homes in order to be approved.

Options - Supported and Specialist Housing

Should we...

(You may pick multiple options)

Option A - Only allow self-contained supported and specialist housing to be built in towns and villages with existing services, such as a shop, village hall, and regular public transport services as appropriate to the expected occupiers

Option B - Support provision of one or more larger scale integrated retirement communities to include purpose designed homes supported by a range of communal facilities and support services

Option C - Allow schemes for up to 20 self-contained retirement homes to be built in any town and village

Option D - Consider an alternative option. Please let us know.

Options A, B and C are acceptable.

Options - Residential Care and Nursing Homes

Should we...

(Please pick one option)

Option A - Expect that all residential care and nursing homes be built in towns and villages with regular public transport services to provide access to the wider community for residents able to travel with or without support, and to make sure people working in the homes have a choice or means of transport

Option B - Allow residential care and nursing homes to be built in all towns and villages, and in countryside locations where this would benefit the specific care needs of intended residents

Option C - Consider an alternative option. Please let us know.

The greatest growth in housing need is predicted to be amongst the 65+ age group, hence option B suffices.

Options - Self and Custom Build Homes

Should we...

(You may pick multiple options)

Option A - Allocate small sites for groups of less than 10 self and custom build homes within and on the edges of towns and villages

Option B - Expect all developments for 50 or more homes to include 5% of plots for self and custom build at a fair market price with a mechanism included to allow any plots which no self or custom builder is interested in buying after at least one year of marketing to revert to being built by a housebuilder

Option C - Treat proposals for self and custom build homes exactly the same as we would any other housing proposal in the same type of location

Option D - Support community led group self and custom build projects in locations where other housing might not be supported provided that there is clear evidence of community support for the scheme

Option E - Consider an alternative option. Please let us know.

Self and custom build homes provide a greater degree of variety, distinctive design and choice for people. They help distinguish housing from the bland off the shelf design of larger scale house builders.

Agree with all options.

Gypsy, Traveller, and Boat-dweller Accommodation

Options - Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs

Should we...

(You may pick multiple options)

Option A - Look for additional sites to allocate to meet needs for private and/ or social rented pitches

Option B - Allow for extensions to existing sites which already have permanent planning permission

Option C - Allow existing temporarily permitted sites to remain permanently subject to adequate flood management

Option D - Continue to rely on a criteria-based policy approach specifying elements such as proximity to primary schools and GP surgeries to indicate what land may be suitable

Option E - Consider an alternative option. Please let us know.

Option D as per the current approach is still appropriate.

Options - Boat Dwellers Accommodation

Should we...

(You may pick multiple options)

Option A - Look for sites to allocate for new permanent residential moorings with access to basic facilities including water provision, waste disposal and electric hook-ups as well as being close to a safe walking or cycling route to local shops and services

Option B - Allow a proportion of moorings within existing leisure marinas to be used as permanent residential moorings

Option C - Work with partners to ensure access to basic facilities for boat dwellers who prefer to continuously cruise

Option D - Consider an alternative option. Please let us know.

Option A, B and C are acceptable but with emphasis on needing to have access to basic facilities such as waste disposal.

We would like to know what you think about transport issues and options.

Options - Approach to Individual Developments

Option A - Change transport provision within new developments to focus on high quality and plentiful infrastructure for active travel and public transport rather than prioritising road users. To help deliver this, a high proportion of developer contributions to transport and travel issues would be spent on active travel and public transport infrastructure.

Option B - Continue with the current approach of encouraging active travel and public transport through some provision of infrastructure within new developments but carry on trying to limit the impact of cars and lorries from them by building roads and upgrading junctions. To help deliver this, a high proportion of developer contributions to transport and travel issues would be spent on road and junction upgrades.

Option C - Consider an alternative option. Please let us know.

Each individual development needs to be assessed on its own merits. For example if taking an approach to utilising the existing built infrastructure to direct development then a greater proportion of the developer contributions can be placed upon active travel and public transport infrastructure.

Question - Place based Approach to Net Zero Transport

Place based approach to net zero transport

Using the previous illustration for reference - which of the suggestions for substituting trips, shifting modes and switching fuels do you think could work either where you live at the moment or in new developments that might be built during the next 25 years?

Cycle and Pedestrian friendly modes; home delivery; home working; broadband.
EV Charging on street

Options - East West Rail

Option A - Rely on the prospect of East West Rail coming forward and plan for new growth nearby to be delivered in the late 2030s and 2040s that could connect well with this.

Option B - Wait until there is greater certainty about the timing of delivery for East West Rail before planning for growth that might benefit from being nearby even if this means the growth is delivered some years after the railway.

Option C - Consider an alternative option. Please let us know.

We believe Option A needs to be included in the development of the Local Plan.

Please find below comments from Houghton & Wyton Parish Council to the Sustainability Appraisal Consultation – 27th November 2024

Huntingdonshire contains some of the best and most productive land for food production in the country.

Unfortunately the Sustainability Assessment criteria used in SA 4 to assess all of the sites coming forward from the Call for Sites does not match the guidance issued by Natural England in their Guide to assessing development proposals on agricultural land Updated 5 February 2021.

Natural England uses these policies to advise on development proposals as a statutory consultee in the planning process and aims to protect:

- the best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land from significant, inappropriate or unsustainable development proposals
- all soils by managing them in a sustainable way

Natural England define the Best and Most Versatile agricultural land as graded 1 – 3a.

HDC SA4 currently reads ‘promotes development in locations that are grade 3 agricultural land or lower (including urban and non-agricultural land) in preference to higher grades?’

Therefore this should be adjusted to ask the question ‘promotes development in locations that are grades **3b** agricultural land or lower (including urban and non-agricultural land) in preference to higher grades?’

In fact, on the grading system which covers 1 – 5 only grade 4 and 5 are considered poor or very poor, and to set our assessment standard as high as grade 3 or lower only promotes a myth that the land is worse and less valuable for essential food production than in fact it is.

Also under SA-4. We believe the Sustainability Assessment needs to include a ‘Land First’ approach.

By simply taking at face value that land put forward for assessment is poor is a blunt approach, and may unwittingly lead to mistakes.

Under a ‘Land First’ approach we would like to see the question asked whether the land in question is capable of being rejuvenated and brought back to a higher standard? This is particularly true where for example HDC mapping data might show the site and neighbouring areas as wholly grade 2 agricultural lands. However, the site promoter may supply a site-specific soil assessment which indicates a lower grade. There may be site specific reasons for this, but equally it could point to the opportunity where certain techniques could improve the soil and versatility.

Methods such as Regenerative Farming techniques can improve degraded soils in relatively short periods of time and are worth considering before automatically assuming land is in the District acceptable to be developed for other purposes purely because it is deemed to be poor. This also links to Natural England’s aim to protect soils by managing them in a sustainable way.

SA- 3. In addition to assessing the risk of flooding from all sources, the assessment needs to consider the impact on the risk of flooding by a proposed development of other areas outside of the vicinity of the site.

Please find below comments from Houghton & Wyton Parish Council to the Land Availability Assessment Consultation – 27th November 2024

So much of the future planning in this document is quite rightly based around the concept of ‘sustainable development’ where done properly there need not be a trade-off between environmental sustainability and economic development.

The definition put forward in the Local Plan is a well-established one going back to the 1980’s and still relevant – “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (United Nations General Assembly, 1987).

The call for sites attracted a huge number of proposals from prospective groups and land owners. These have been assessed quite thoroughly through the Land Availability Assessment and a verdict as to the development potential for each site put forward, i.e. its suitability, availability and achievability of each site within a given plan period. The Officers have subdivided the district into 7 areas and taking the results for each proposal they deem to be suitable, available and achievable it shows a total potential for 52,395 homes to be built.

Area	Homes
1. Northern Huntingdonshire - Stilton, Folksworth & Washingley; Yaxley wards	5248
2. North Eastern Huntingdonshire - Ramsey; Somersham; Warboys wards	1935
3. Northern Central Huntingdonshire - Alconbury; Sawtry; the Stukeley’s wards	15879
4. Western Huntingdonshire - Great Staughton; Kimbolton wards	492
5. Central Huntingdonshire - Brampton; Godmanchester & Hemingford Abbots; Huntingdon wards	7522
6. Eastern Huntingdonshire - Fenstanton; Hemingford Grey & Houghton; Holywell-cum-Needingworth; St Ives wards	16565
7. Southern Huntingdonshire - Buckden; Great Paxton; St Neots wards	4754
Total	52395

The call for sites does not align well with the strategic growth options set out in the Further Issues and Options consultation paper and it is questionable whether some of the 6 choices on offer could be delivered. It is currently dominated by an offer for sites in the central/South east area of the District.

Furthermore the concentration and density of housing deliverable from these sites is staggering, over 35,000 homes or nearly 70% of all the housing offered and assessed to be acceptable sitting within a 5-mile radius of Houghton & Wyton and surrounding the Great Ouse Valley in this area.

Most of the sites and the greatest concentration of housing offered lies north of the river. The impact on traffic movements from concentrated development placing further stresses on transport infrastructure needs to be taken into account, as does the increase risk of flooding to what is an already an increasingly vulnerable area.

An important consideration and evidence put forward with the application for AONB status of the Great Ouse Valley was its peaceful and quiet tranquillity. This particular area of the Great Ouse Valley is one of the jewels in the crown and now seeking protection through the National Landscapes Designation which the Local Plan also proposes. Were a number of the sites put forward for the surrounding area actually developed, the impact of such intensive development could seriously threaten this very delicate landscape and hence chances of National Designation. If this landscape is genuinely valued, then given the Local Plan’s definition of sustainable development it begs the question of whether such a concentration of development into this area of the District would be considered truly sustainable or whether it would undermine present needs and compromise future generations.

Roughly half of this area is serviced by Cambridgeshire Water which has reached the limits of its capacity to supply and treat water in the area without untold environmental damage. This begs the question whether sufficient caution has been applied in the assessments.

This area lies on the fringes of the economic sub regions of the two main drivers of growth – namely Greater Peterborough and Greater Cambridge. Greater Peterborough is more logically related to areas located further north in the District and Greater Cambridge to areas from south of the river. Most of the sites assessed as being acceptable are located north of the river which realistically would require a further river crossing. Following extensive study and assessment this was ruled out on cost but mainly on the environmental damage it would inflict on this part of the Great Ouse valley.

Wyton on the Hill 1: Wyton Airfield 4,491 homes

RAF Wyton is put forward as a new ‘garden village’, although at 4,500 homes would make it the 4th biggest town after St.Neots (14,400), Huntingdon (10,700) and St.Ives (7,500).

On its own it would be bigger than Yaxley (3,900), Godmanchester (3,300), nearly twice the size of Brampton (2800) and Ramsey (2,700), Warboys (1,900), three times the size of Somersham (1,500), Kimbolton (470).

However combined with Wyton -on – the Hill (550) would make it (5,050) over two thirds the size of St.Ives (7,500). More worryingly, this newly created 4th largest town would sit roughly equidistant but less than 2 miles away from what are already the 2nd and 3rd largest towns in the District. Even without linking up completely with the neighbouring towns, it is likely to produce the same effects as conurbation of the three towns nearly two thirds bigger again than St.Neots.

There is a strong argument for adopting a green wedge policy, similar to that proposed for smaller settlements, but to prevent towns themselves from merging together. Compared to smaller settlement, towns would require a far larger

wedge (many more than just 1-2 miles) to prevent merging together into an amorphous mass. When, as in this case, the risk is that not just two, but three towns could start to merge together (Huntingdon, St.Ives and a new RAF Wyton town), then without a great distance between them, the only realistic way to prevent it from happening is not to build at all, especially if the proposed new town were to be positioned in the centre ground between them.

RAF Wyton occupies an area of land from which water flows into Marley Brook, contributing to flooding problems in St.Ives. Being north of the river with its resulting bottlenecks, the resulting traffic, congestion, pollution, pressure would not contribute to meeting the needs of the present, let alone protect the choices available for those in the future.

The Impact of the Sustainability Appraisal on the Assessment: wrongly states that

'The Sustainability Appraisal has identified the following key issues in bringing forward the site:

- It is wholly classified as previously developed'
-

The National Planning Policy Framework 2023 defines Previously Developed land as:

Previously developed land

Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or was last occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill, where provision for restoration has been made through development management procedures; land in built-up areas such as residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape. (emphasis added)

Using this definition, over the last 80 years much of the hardstanding and taxiways has blended into the grassland landscape and therefore under NPPF guidance would not be wholly classified as previously developed land.

The site is not well situated to gain access to publicly open and natural green space. The closest area is to parts of the Great Ouse Valley via access points such as nearby Houghton & Wyton. However, these access points are already considered to be over-capacity, and the potential scale of development and population of this new town could give rise to significant recreational pressure and planning harm to both these access points, as well as on already pressurised area of the Great Ouse, and one requiring national designation.

This site needs be considered as more suitable for non-housing development because as a town it is not sustainable and as officers already state in the Sustainability Appraisal of Hungary Hall, directly opposite 'the development of the site in isolation would give rise to a wholly detached area of development that would not relate well to the existing landscape character or settlement hierarchy of Huntingdonshire'.

It was looked at seriously and considered as one of just two sites on the shortlist for Marshall's Aerospace (Cambridge) to relocate, narrowly missing out to Cranfield. The attraction Marshall's saw in this site for appropriate industrial purposes should not be lost.

It would be ideally suited for solar power generation, where siting panels on the hardstanding areas is not a problem plus any landscape impact bearing in mind the relative elevation of the site and its long-distance visibility would be minimised. This form of development also overcomes the potential contamination issues which parts of the site may have. Finally it also provides flexibility for the growing Joint Forces Intelingence based there to expand should the need arise.

If a 'Land First' approach was incorporated into the Sustainability Appraisal, whereby we first ask the question whether any land – previously developed or otherwise is capable of being brought up to a higher, more valuable grade and thereby more valuable and sustainable to us than simply bult over, a significant proportion of the site should also be considered against the opportunity to regenerate the land for agriculture.

Indeed where land was acquired at the time by, or under threat of compulsory purchase, and the Crichel Down Rules apply, the MOD is already obliged to consider the likely cost of restoring the land back to its original use.

Developing the site in other ways rather than housing protects both Huntingdon and St.Ives from the risks of merging into a sprawling conurbation and losing their own identities whilst helping spread the population load wider across the District and not all into the same small area.

Wyton on the Hill 2: Hungary Hall, West of A141, Wyton on the Hill 4,061 homes

This is a greenfield site comprises Grade 2 agricultural land. It offers no benefits in terms of reuse of previously developed land or regeneration.

Taken on its own, the scale of development would make it a sizeable town for Huntingdonshire. It would have a significant impact and cause landscape harm to the site as well as the rural character of the surrounding area. It would be at risk of coalescence with Broughton and Kings Ripton to the north. We agree with the Sustainability Appraisal which states it would significantly detrimentally impact on Broughton and its significant heritage assets.

We also agree with the conclusion that development of the site in isolation would give rise to a wholly detached area of development that would not relate well to the existing landscape character or settlement hierarchy of Huntingdonshire. In short building a town in this location it is not be considered sustainable development.

When considering the site as a large scale residential led scheme alongside Wyton Airfield as part of a consolidated strategic site, the scale might initially suggest initially that it could support a more sustainable new town. However in practice, even as a joint venture, the town would be divided for its entire length by the busy A141, which at the entrances and exits to the site is likely to behave as a 4-lane highway, keeping the communities apart rather than joining them together.

Development with RAF Wyton would still mean the loss of prime grade 2 agricultural land (together with the agricultural land at RAF Wyton) which is hardly sustainable. It would still not relate well to the existing landscape character and combined would make an even greater significant impact and cause landscape harm to the site as well as the rural character of the surrounding area.

One half of the town would still be at risk of coalescence with Broughton and Kings Ripton to the north and have limited access to green infrastructure.

Taken together the town would be situated close to the edge of Huntingdon to the south/southwest and to St.Ives to the south east.

Were this to be developed it would be comprising nearly 8,500 homes – not far off the size of Huntingdon a mile away and much bigger than St.Ives a mile away in the opposite direction.

This new town would be so close as to be in full view from the edges of Huntingdon and St.Ives and the potential and temptation over time for the whole area to become a sprawling conurbation is great.

Once again, being situated north of the river creates potential traffic movement problems, depending who exactly the town would be housing or employment areas it would be serving.

In conclusion the movements and activity generated from what would be 3 out of 4 of the biggest towns in Huntingdonshire, all located within a mile of each other, taking prime agricultural land out of production, stressing the existing infrastructure, together with the damaging impact on the landscape, environment and surrounding area is not sustainable development. It would detract from the needs of the present as well as protecting the needs of future generations.

Wyton on the Hill 3: Lodge Farm, North of A141, Huntingdon (Wyton on the Hill) 4,989 homes

The whole site is greenfield and classified as mixture of grade 2 and 3 agricultural land.

The site abuts the northern edge of Huntingdon, although we can see that the A141 and existing tree screening belt does form a barrier to integration with the existing community (bird estate) and Huntingdon's existing services and facilities. This would need to be addressed to avoid it being a freestanding site in the countryside.

This is a huge development and would make Huntingdon a bigger town than St.Neots. The scale of the site and rising nature of the landform along the southern section mean that it would have significant landscape impact and therefore we would prefer to see a scaled down expansion.

That said, if Huntingdon needs to expand, then expanding northwards in this way would not carry the same risk of coalescence with other settlements and the urban sprawl that comes with joining communities.

Whilst this would break the existing boundary edge of the town, if integration measures can be found then we would support a modest development of the southern flanks.

Wyton on the Hill 4: Land North of Houghton Road (southern portion), St Ives (Wyton on the Hill) 217 homes

The proposed development is certainly contrary to current adopted planning policy.

Housing situated at this location has been assessed and rejected in the past over many years for reasons of adverse impact on visual amenity, issues of sustainability, coalescence with surrounding settlements, loss of good quality agricultural land, and representing un-necessary building in the countryside.

The site is a Greenfield location situated in the countryside within Wyton on the Hill Parish. It would not contribute to reuse of previously developed land or regeneration. It abuts and overlooks the largest continuous conservation area in Huntingdonshire.

The development would sit on the boundary of Houghton & Wyton Parish and join the newly developed village extension of Houghton Grange phase 1. At circa 200 houses this would represent a built mass equivalent of nearly a quarter of the existing number of dwellings of the village as it currently stands.

It occupies high ground towards the north eastern edge of Houghton & Wyton and the concentration of housing with ridge heights of 10m on such a flat, open and exposed site, will contribute significantly to the perception of and actual coalescence between town and village and goes against policy HWNP 3. A landscape assessment conducted this year and submitted as part of the outline planning application 23/00627/OUT for the Houghton Grange field site (BBSRC field), concluded that this location operated to form an important countryside extension to the gap maintaining separation of the two very different settlements of St.Ives and the village of Houghton & Wyton.

Redevelopment of the Houghton Grange site for residential use is already changing the character of this area. Development of this site would alter the form of the local area further by introducing development on both sides of the A1123 and increasing the perception of coalescence of St Ives with Houghton and Wyton.

Housing and massing extending west along the A1123 would essentially constitute ribbon development of St Ives. This would be exacerbated by the fact that a portion of the western boundary adjoins Houghton Hill Industries hence with development of the site effectively making this contiguous with St Ives. Development would affect the character of the local area by spreading the perception of the outskirts of St Ives along Sawtry Way and ultimately even the perception of linking with Wyton -on-the-Hill.

Looking north, this large, concentrated mass of housing, begins to envelope the current softer edge of the town afforded by the recreation and sports grounds and creates an extended harder edge between Wyton on the Hill in open countryside and St Ives. The -SA7 asks the question whether development can 'Make efficient use of land whilst also protecting the form and character of the local area?' and agrees by stating that the 'majority of the land is surrounded by open space leisure uses or agricultural land; introducing built development would significantly impact on these by enclosing them into the built environment rather than the edge of settlement character they currently have'.

The Sustainability Assessment considered a density of 35 dph, which given the above seems too high for an edge of town development a long way from the centre and which would form a buffer with very open countryside beyond and extending to Wyton-on-the-hill.

The site relates poorly to Wyton on the Hill, Houghton & Wyton and St Ives in terms of position and sustainability.

Occupying the high ground in the area also raises concerns in respect of greater light pollution.

In relation to St Ives, the site is situated outside its Western boundary and suffers from long distances to the town centre services. It is the opposite side of the town to the established employment areas as defined in the current Local Plan.

The site is also on the wrong side of town to access the principal transport routes and main direction of commuting.

In relation to Wyton on the Hill and Houghton & Wyton, experience shows that it would be difficult for this community to be embraced by the villages because the extremely busy A1123 already acts as a major impediment to those living north of it and it is isolated from the residential hub of Wyton on the Hill.

In terms of traffic generated by the site, way back in 2011 Cambridgeshire County Council stated that based on background growth, the A1123 would be over capacity by 2017.

Pollution levels particularly from queuing vehicles at peak times most mornings and evenings on Houghton Hill have been the source of serious complaints to the Council and such a development would only exacerbate this.

At the Local Plan Hearing in 2018 for the current Local Plan - Matters 8, CCC stated that the highways modelling work had already highlighted significant impacts from housing situated west of St.Ives. They had assessed 15 junctions and found that no less than 8 were anticipated to operate over capacity in the future year scenarios and that traffic generated from such a development would require strategic solutions to the road network for projected traffic flows to be acceptable.

1) The B1090/A1123 Houghton Road/Houghton Hill Road junction; 2) A1123 Houghton Road/Garner Drive signalled junction; 3) A1123 Houghton Road/Hill Rise/High Leys signalled junction; 4) A1123 Houghton Road/Ramsey Road/St Audrey Lane signalled junction; 5) A1123 St Audrey Lane/Somersham Road roundabout ; 6) Stocksbridge Lane/Harrison Way roundabout; 7) B1514/The Avenue signal junction;

We note that the current A141 & St.Ives improvement scheme is not considered to deliver any strategic solutions to traffic congestion problems in St.Ives.

Historic transport studies have all raised the point that St.Ives has some of the highest levels of net outward commuting of any town in Cambridgeshire.

The strategic transport routes to and from St.Ives run east (along the segregated guided bus route to Cambridge) and south east (towards the A14). Next busiest is the A1123 which takes traffic east/west through the town to link with these routes, hence a development of this scale situated to the west is on the wrong side of the town.

Likewise much has been made of the fact that the guided buses would run past the site entrance, however this is along the un-segregated road section and it is only upon reaching the other side of town, some three kilometres away, that the route emerges free of car traffic, hence once again west is not best.

In a bid to reduce net outward commuting, Employment Areas have been designated to encourage businesses to locate and employ more people locally. These are situated on the eastern side of St Ives and are set to expand further east with Giffords Farm already being an allocated site for business and employment growth.

Therefore another large-scale housing development on the western fringes puts the town in the way of people travelling to work is not to be welcomed and will only contribute to the congestion already seen in the town.

Whilst development might relate well to modern housing on Garner Drive this only comprises a small element of the site's boundaries.

Wyton on the Hill 5: Land North of Houghton Road (larger site), St Ives (Wyton on the Hill) 357 homes

The proposed development is certainly contrary to current adopted planning policy.

Housing situated at this location has been assessed and rejected in the past over many years for reasons of adverse impact on visual amenity, issues of sustainability, coalescence with surrounding settlements, loss of good quality agricultural land, and representing un-necessary building in the countryside.

The site is a Greenfield location situated in the countryside within Wyton on the Hill Parish. It would not contribute to reuse of previously developed land or regeneration. It abuts and overlooks the largest continuous conservation area in Huntingdonshire.

The development would sit on the boundary of Houghton & Wyton Parish and join the newly developed village extension of Houghton Grange phase 1. At circa 400 houses this would represent a built mass equivalent of nearly half the existing number of dwellings of the village as it currently stands.

It occupies high ground towards the north eastern edge of Houghton & Wyton and the concentration of housing with ridge heights of 10m on such a flat, open and exposed site, will contribute significantly to the perception of and actual coalescence between town and village and goes against policy HWNP 3. A landscape assessment conducted this year and submitted as part of the outline planning application 23/00627/OUT for the Houghton Grange field site (BBSRC field), concluded that this location operated to form an important countryside extension to the gap maintaining separation of the two very different settlements of St.Ives and the village of Houghton & Wyton.

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Therefore another large-scale housing development on the western fringes puts the town in the way of people travelling to work is not to be welcomed and will only contribute to the congestion already seen in the town.

Houghton and Wyton 1: Tir na Nog, Sawtry Way, Houghton - demolition for commercial floorspace

This is currently the site of a house and garden positioned on a 1 ha plot on elevated ground within the open countryside. The residential dwelling existed as building in the countryside for an essential worker and as such we can see no reason to demolish this property.

The surrounding land is classified as agricultural land grade 2 land which really needs to be protected as per HWNP 7 Protection of best and most versatile agricultural land in the parish.

The area is relatively small site, rural and isolated.

It is not an area identified within the existing Development Plan for commercial development.

Indeed the Neighbourhood Plan highlights concerns over sprawling development along routes surrounding the built-up area of the parish. The B1090 is such a route and location. We note that the Sustainability Appraisal also mentions Sawtry Way having a series of ribbon development along it up to the neighbouring village of Wyton-on-the-Hill. However it still concludes that As such the site is more closely related to the countryside than any settlement.

The Neighbourhood Plan imposes restrictions on new businesses along this road specifically, as it is not considered to represent the most appropriate location for development and it seeks to protect the rural setting in this area.

It does not fit the pattern of development currently prescribed in the Development Plan.

We do not believe the situation pertaining to this site has changed since the Neighbourhood Plan was made in 2018 hence an allocation for industrial and commercial purposes should not be included in the new Local Plan.

Houghton and Wyton 2: Land at New Manor Farm, Sawtry Way, Wyton 3 additional large commercial units on the site + café/shop

The site is wholly classified as grade 2 agricultural land.

Broadly flat but the site is elevated with landscape dropping to the west, there is therefore greater risk of landscape impact of development to the west and south west towards the Great Ouse Valley.

The scale and massing of the existing development is altering the landscaping of the wider site and located on elevated ground is becoming very visible from the village below. There is additional committed development which has yet to come on board which we believe will make the situation worse.

The Neighbourhood Plan highlights concerns over sprawling development along routes surrounding the built-up area of the parish. The B1090 is such a route and location. We note that the Sustainability Appraisal also mentions Sawtry Way having a series of ribbon development along it up to the neighbouring village of Wyton-on-the-Hill. However it still concludes that As such the site is more closely related to the countryside than any settlement.

The Neighbourhood Plan imposes restrictions on new businesses along this road specifically, as it is not considered to represent the most appropriate location for development and it seeks to protect the rural setting in this area.

The further loss of good quality agricultural land, visual impact from the village and wider area, industrialisation and urbanisation of the particular area runs contrary to the H& W Neighbourhood Plan. It is not nor should be an allocated employment area and has long been argued that together with the development yet to be delivered, the site has reached its full potential. To expand further would risk creating a ribbon development along Sawtry Way, breach existing policy and constitute planning harm to the countryside.

Houghton and Wyton 3: Land between Houghton Hill Road and Sawtry Way, Wyton Woodland Burial ground

We agree with the conclusions of the Land Availability Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal.

Houghton and Wyton 4: Land off Old Houghton Road, Hartford, Huntingdon (Houghton and Wyton) Moorings/Flood mitigation.

We agree with the conclusions of the Land Availability Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal.

Houghton and Wyton 5: Land North of 6 Old Houghton Road, Hartford, Huntingdon (Houghton and Wyton) Moorings/Flood mitigation.

We agree with the conclusions of the Land Availability Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal.

Please find below comments from Houghton & Wyton Parish Council to the A141 & St.Ives Improvement Scheme Consultation – 27th November 2024

Active Travel

A general observation is that the Active Travel routes does appear to have been more of a paper exercise than from on the ground knowledge of the area.

We would argue that route A and B are not necessary and serve little purpose.

Route A would only replicate Route E which already largely exists. Route E simply requires completion of the missing section of between the end of Wyton and Hartford Marina. In this section the route crosses the A1123 back and forth before reconnecting near Hartford Marina but does have space to change this for a much safer and pleasant continuation on the south side of the road either by utilising a board walk on top of the flood bank or built on slightly raised legs or earth outside of it.

Route A does not exist at present and would follow open countryside cutting through and dividing prime agricultural land. It would be situated on the northern side of the A1123 which is away from the main populous who would use it and lives on the south side until reaching St.Ives. It provides few access points to join it along its length other than at the start and near to the finish.

Route B appears to follow the route of the dismantled railway line across the flood plain. This again goes through open countryside and again has few access points.

It would need to cross water by our own calculations at least 6 times - requiring new bridges.

This is a very sensitive and delicate area. The river and meadow are all conservation protected. The route would cut through two SSSI sites which are already being threatened by public accessibility.

The embankments may need to be strengthened or replaced and because the meadow floods for several weeks each year flood free escape routes would need to be added to get people on and off this route. The flood plain is actually our natural defence helping to prevent our towns and villages from flooding. Maintaining the correct flow of water is critical. Hence we are very concerned that any new infrastructure such as bridges, escape routes and embankments do not put us at greater risk than we otherwise are.

We are also concerned that the routes (A; E and F) for some reason all appear to start or end at the Hartford roundabout north of Huntingdon. We are wondering why this is such a fulcrum and where the modelling suggests people have come from or will go to.

This brings us on to another point the existing active travel routes in the area. We would prefer that rather than new routes being established, better value for money could be achieved by generally improving the existing routes which service this area and that people need to use.

For example,

- filling in the existing gap in the pedestrian and cycle route between Houghton and Wyton and Hartford by creating a southern section which avoids the highly dangerous and inconvenient double crossing of the A1123. Several deaths have occurred already.
- Likewise, when cycling from Hemingford Abbot and entering Godmanchester onto Cow Lane near the exit road from the A1307, the route seems to suddenly disappear and place people onto the busy road rather than safely behind the protective crash barrier at that point.
- The guided bus route to Cambridge is flooded and impassable for several weeks each year and know that people, despite it being un-lawful and highly dangerous, actually use the guided bus carriageway itself to navigate past certain sections.

The examples above are on routes which are already well used and we believe serve active travel in and around our area well, hence maintaining, and ideally improving them for the user should be the priority.

Public Transport

With new buses added rather than acting as replacements, the Public Transport option is more logical.

However we are concerned that it builds capacity and focuses services away from the A1123 with Route 1 going along Sawtry Way to RAF Wyton and back down the A141 through Huntingdon – missing out Houghton & Wyton, whilst a southern route Guided Bus Route 3 links Huntingdon and St.Ives utilising the A1307, leaving only the CGB 1 the Alconbury Weald guided bus extension coming past Houghton & Wyton.

We would like to know if additional busses are being put on Route CB1 whether that will produce a more frequent service, or whether it is purely to continue with the same frequency but cover a longer route?

Unfortunately the additional routes do nothing to help us link Pinehill Park with the village. Therefore is a feeder bus system of smaller sized vehicles being considered to link poorly serviced parts of the area to the main network?

We are struggling to understand the locations for the Park and Ride locations. For example, we question why people would leave their cars at the racecourse to catch a bus into Huntingdon, St.Ives or beyond, unless the bus route had priority rights and made it quicker, or if parking in the towns was removed or made prohibitively expensive. Please will you share your modelling data and assumptions in the change of behaviours justifying the logic of the Park & Ride locations.

Road

The road option whilst claimed to relieve HGV traffic travelling from the north, seems to be chosen to open up development around RAF Wyton and north of the A141 around Huntingdon. Once again we would be keen to see the modelling data and assumptions that lie behind this.

If it is for HGV's travelling through the District as well as potentially more private vehicles then a single carriageway road with 7 roundabouts (i.e. junctions), does seem under specified and potentially very slow. Whilst supporting the fact that regional and national policy is about first trying to utilise existing infrastructure, and to limit road building as we progress towards net zero, presumably the emissions from slow moving or blocked traffic due to this being proposed as a single carriageway also needs to be taken into account.

The very latest Local Plan consultation from Huntingdonshire District Council puts forward 6 different strategic options for delivering growth in the District – including housing, employment and even possible new towns in the District. It is at quite an early stage and no decisions have been made in respect of how or where this growth will be delivered. It is therefore disappointing to learn via this consultation that Cambs County Council having produced 5 different road scheme options for consideration, have already rejected 4 of them before the latest Local Plan consultation on Issues and Options has even finished.

The one remaining road option for a new A141 link road running west from RAF Wyton around the north of Huntingdon may in of itself may be a good idea. The problem is, that without first knowing where exactly the new Local Plan is going to be expanding business and housing, it is impossible for anyone to say whether this is the best let alone only option of where we should be investing so much public money.

Furthermore what is very troubling is the fact that at the webinar run as part of this consultation, the facilitators said that despite the title of the study, the option they are putting forward will not deliver improvements for St.Ives.

Following an Fol request (ref) we have learnt that the cost of the study so far is already £1.65 million, with a total budget for the study (to undertake the Outline Business Case) set at £6,000,000.

According to the consultation brochure, the study was predicated on aiding delivery of the housing and employment growth targets set out in the current Local Plan. Continuing on to make the business case for this road now seems to be justified by 'other potential new developments' and 'anticipated growth' presumably emanating from the answer to questions 35 and 37 of the Q & A sent out.

Q & A 35) Does the A141 and St Ives Improvements Scheme align with Huntingdonshire District Council's development plans?

We have been working with Huntingdonshire District Council planners as we move the scheme forward. We are aligning the scheme with their development plans as well as other potential development areas.

Q & A 37) How would the scheme incorporate changes to the new Local Plan?

To date the package has been developed based on a modelled Core Growth Scenario (reflects committed Local Plan growth and considers Covid-19 impacts following an approach compliant with DfT guidance) that aligns with the adopted Local Plan. Further transport modelling will be taking place as the Business Case develops, with consideration of a range of growth scenarios including a High Growth Scenario (reflecting Huntingdonshire context and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Economic Review growth aspiration). We engage regularly with Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) as local planning authority and this includes representatives from HDC sitting on the A141 & St Ives Project Board.

We feel that if the brief for this study has changed and it is now trying to achieve something other than delivering the existing Local Plan then this needs to be stated publicly and a re-set needs to take place to bring it into line with the Districts Planning process before more public money is spent.