

Huntingdonshire District Council | Additional Preferred Sites May 2026 Consultation

Houghton & Wyton Parish Council Object to the Inclusion of Reserve Site A: Sapley Park Garden Village.

We object for the following reasons:

1. Incomplete evidence base:

Whilst the consultation document describes the site as providing "resilience" and flexibility, the evidence presented demonstrates that the site remains highly speculative and is dependent upon a substantial number of unresolved infrastructure, environmental and deliverability issues.

The District Council's own Land Availability Assessment identifies numerous constraints including:

- Major transport infrastructure requirements and uncertainty regarding delivery of the proposed A141 realignment.
- Dependence on a future railway station at Alconbury Weald that is currently aspirational rather than committed.
- Significant requirements for new schools, health facilities, utilities and community infrastructure.
- Flood risk, drainage and water management challenges.
- Potential impacts on heritage assets, conservation areas, landscape character and biodiversity.
- The need for extensive mitigation relating to the East Coast Main Line, overhead power lines, gas infrastructure and the nearby crematorium.
- A build-out period estimated at approximately 25 years.
- The requirement for substantial further masterplanning, modelling and technical assessment before deliverability can be demonstrated.

The consultation document itself acknowledges these uncertainties by requiring future transport assessments, water strategies, flood risk assessments, wastewater agreements, ecological assessments, heritage assessments and comprehensive masterplanning before development could proceed.

In effect, the proposed reserve site is not being supported by a completed evidence base; rather, it is being promoted on the basis that much of the evidence will be produced later.

2. Water Infrastructure Concerns Remain Unresolved:

The proposal is particularly concerning given the conclusions of the recently published Stage 2 Water Cycle Study – Final Report February 2026.

Whilst described as a final report, the study identifies significant uncertainty regarding:

- Wastewater treatment capacity.
- Storm overflow performance.

- River water quality impacts.
- Future investment requirements.
- The timing and funding of infrastructure upgrades.

The report confirms that further engagement, modelling, planning and investment decisions are still required before the full implications of growth can be understood.

The Local Plan therefore continues to rely upon infrastructure solutions that have not yet been fully defined, funded or programmed.

Adding a reserve site capable of delivering a further 7,000 homes only increases those uncertainties.

3. Reserve Site Inclusion Undermines the Spatial Strategy:

The District Council's stated justification for the reserve site is to provide flexibility should allocated sites fail to come forward.

However, this raises an obvious question:

If there is already concern that existing allocations may not be deliverable, why is the Local Plan progressing before those concerns have been resolved?

The proposed reserve site is effectively being used as an insurance policy against uncertainty within the preferred strategy.

Rather than demonstrating confidence in the Plan, its inclusion suggests that significant risks remain.

4. Agricultural Land Quality and Food Security:

The proposal would result in the loss of a substantial area of agricultural land which the promoter's own evidence identifies as predominantly Grade 2.

Grade 2 land forms part of the Government's definition of **Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land**, a nationally important resource for food production.

National planning policy recognises that where significant development of agricultural land is necessary, poorer quality land should be preferred to higher quality land wherever possible.

Whilst the proposal references the economic benefits of growth, there is insufficient evidence that:

- development on this area of BMV land is necessary;
- lower quality alternatives have been fully considered; or
- the loss of productive agricultural land has been appropriately balanced against the claimed benefits of the proposal.

This issue is particularly relevant given that Sapley Park Garden Village is proposed as a reserve site rather than a primary allocation.

The inclusion of a reserve site capable of delivering approximately 7,000 homes should not be used to justify the premature loss of a nationally important agricultural resource in the absence of compelling evidence that such development is required and that reasonable alternatives are unavailable.

5. Infrastructure Delivery and Soundness Concerns:

The concerns surrounding Sapley Park Garden Village are not limited to transport and water infrastructure.

The proposal provides insufficient evidence to demonstrate how the full range of supporting infrastructure would be delivered, including healthcare provision, secondary school places, SEND provision, utilities and emergency services. Whilst the consultation material refers to infrastructure being delivered alongside growth, there remains little certainty regarding funding, governance arrangements, delivery mechanisms, phasing or accountability.

Experience elsewhere in Huntingdonshire demonstrates why these issues matter. Communities have previously been assured that essential infrastructure would accompany major housing growth, only for delivery to lag significantly behind occupation. This has placed increasing pressure on schools, transport networks and local services and has understandably reduced public confidence in assurances that infrastructure will simply "follow later".

The proposal therefore risks repeating a pattern whereby housing growth proceeds ahead of the infrastructure required to support it.

In addition, the cumulative impacts of creating what is effectively a new settlement north of Huntingdon have not been adequately demonstrated. Whilst the proposal references landscaping, biodiversity net gain and green infrastructure, there remains a significant risk of harm to countryside character, settlement separation and the setting of nearby villages.

Taken together, these concerns raise serious questions as to whether the proposal can currently satisfy the tests of soundness required by national policy. In particular, it has not yet been demonstrated that the proposal is:

- **Positively Prepared** through realistic and deliverable infrastructure planning;
- **Justified** by proportionate evidence demonstrating deliverability;
- **Effective** in terms of infrastructure provision and transport mitigation; or
- **Consistent with National Policy**, which requires sustainable development to be supported by adequate infrastructure.

6. Need for a Pause and Review:

The inclusion of Sapley Park Garden Village strengthens the case for pausing the Local Plan process.

The District Council now proposes:

- Additional preferred sites.
- A reserve settlement of up to 7,000 homes.
- Continued concentration of development within the North Huntingdon Growth Cluster.

Yet fundamental questions remain unanswered regarding:

- Water supply.
- Wastewater treatment.
- Road capacity.

- Infrastructure funding.
- Development phasing.
- Cumulative impacts.
- Environmental carrying capacity.

The District Council's own evidence repeatedly identifies the need for further studies, future agreements and additional modelling before deliverability can be confirmed.

It would therefore be prudent and proportionate to:

- Extend the Regulation 18 process.
- Review the evidence base in full.
- Undertake comprehensive cumulative impact assessment.
- Reconsider the scale and concentration of growth.
- Re-consult on revised Preferred Options before progressing to Regulation 19.

This would strengthen the Plan, reduce the risk of challenge at Examination, improve public confidence and ensure that development is based upon demonstrated infrastructure capacity rather than future assumptions.

Conclusion:

The Council should not rely on the existence of a reserve site to compensate for uncertainty elsewhere in the strategy. Rather, uncertainty regarding deliverability should be addressed directly through further evidence gathering and review before allocations are fixed.

- 1. Reserve Site A: Sapley Park Garden Village needs to be excluded from the Local Plan.**
- 2. The District Council needs to pause progression of the Local Plan and undertake a review of the Preferred Options strategy.**
- 3. Further evidence needs to be gathered on water infrastructure, wastewater treatment, transport capacity, cumulative impacts and funding before housing allocations are finalised.**

A short pause now is likely to reduce risk, improve deliverability and result in a more robust and defensible Local Plan than continuing on the current trajectory.