

# Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 Examination

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**Hearing Statement Matter 13:**

**Strengthening communities**

**Huntingdonshire District Council**

**July 2018**





## Issue

Whether the Local Plan is justified, effective and consistent with national policy in relation to the approach towards strengthening communities.

### 1. Affordable housing – Policy LP25

#### Question 1: What is the evidence in relation to the need for affordable housing? What does this show?

- 1.1. The Huntingdonshire Objectively Assessed Housing Need report April 2017 (HOUS/01) identified that the overall housing figure that has been identified is 20,100.
- 1.2. The total need for affordable housing over the plan period is 7,897 new homes. Therefore the required number of affordable homes is 39% of the overall housing figure (HOUS/01).
- 1.3. The affordable housing need was calculated by adding together the current unmet housing need and the projected future housing need and then subtracting from this the current supply of affordable housing stock (HOUS/01, section 4.5, pages 30-33) .

#### Question 2: What are the trends in delivery of affordable housing and how has it been delivered? How is this likely to change in future?

- 1.4. The Council transferred its housing stock to a Registered Provider (Luminus Group) in 2000. Since this time the vast majority of new affordable housing in the district has been provided by Registered Providers.
- 1.5. Since 2008/09 the annual rate of affordable housing delivery has been sporadic peaking at 367 new affordable homes delivered during 2010/11 and falling to 41 new completions during 2013/14.
- 1.6. The vast majority of new affordable housing built in recent years has been on allocated sites where a S106 agreement has required the provision of affordable dwellings.
- 1.7. The number of sites on which there will be a target to deliver affordable housing will increase as the threshold for qualifying sites will change from 11 to 15. In the emerging Local Plan there is a target to achieve 40% affordable housing on all sites of 11 or more dwellings. The previous plan had a target to deliver 40% on sites of 15 or more dwellings in towns and Key Service Centres only.
- 1.8. There are four factors which are likely to alter the profile of affordable housing delivery in the future and increase the ratio of affordable housing which is provided in addition to that required from S106 agreements on allocated sites:

- The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority has been established and has an initial £100 million available to invest and a target to deliver at least 2000 new affordable homes in Huntingdonshire, Peterborough, Fenland, East Cambs and South Cambs. This funding is not expected to fund affordable housing required from S106 agreements and therefore will be additional supply.
- Policy LP30 in the emerging Local Plan is intended to incentivise landowners to bring more rural exceptions sites forward than have been achieved to date by elimination of the time and costs involved in viability testing and providing a slightly greater financial return. The policy also now applies to towns as well as villages. Whilst the level of affordable housing will be a minimum of 60% of the site area, with more sites expected to come forward the overall effect will be an increase in the delivery of homes on rural exception sites.
- Luminus Group is the largest housing provider in Huntingdonshire and was the Council's stock transfer housing association. Luminus Group has recently merged with Places for People Housing Association which is one of the largest associations in the country. Following the merger there is a commitment that Luminus will provide 1000 new homes in the next five years and this is likely to lead to an increase in the volume of new housing provided in addition to that on allocated sites.
- The District Council is developing the Business Case for the establishment of a Housing Company to directly provide homes, and affordable homes in particular, on its own land and other land (including rural exceptions sites) in order to increase supply.

### **Question 3: What is the evidence in relation to the viability of delivering affordable housing as part of market housing schemes? What does it show?**

- 1.9. The Huntingdonshire Local Plan Viability Study (INF/04) was prepared following the principles of the guidance set out in the "Viability Testing Local Plans – Advice for planning practitioners" published in June 2012 by the Local Housing Delivery Group. The consultation and agent process (INF/04, Section 2, para 2.1, page 5) outlines the amendments made due to the responses made in the consultation to ensure the inputs and process used were appropriate to capture adequate, up-to-date and relevant requirements likely to be applied to development (NPPF Paras 158 and 173).
- 1.10. The Study (INF/04, Section 3.9, page 15) also assessed the effect of Local Plan policies to demonstrate that the Local Plan allocations and policies are viable and deliverable. The Study uses construction cost assumptions based on the BCIS median weighted for Cambridgeshire to reflect current construction costs. Taking a cautious approach, allowances were also made for contingency costs and fees, to plan for changing market circumstances (INF04, para 3.6).
- 1.11. As Huntingdonshire District Council is a CIL Charging Authority, the Study considers the proposed development sizes and the associated planning obligation requirements range of

costs in line with the Developer Contributions SPD 2011 (INF/06) and the CIL requirements (NPPF 174 & PPG Paragraph: 007 Reference ID: 10-007-20140306).

- 1.12. The Study is not site specific, as this is not a requirement for the local plan (NPPG Para: 005 Reference ID: 10-005-20140306). Testing has been undertaken for a range of development size typologies, dwelling densities, value areas and whether greenfield or previously developed land (NPPF Para 174 and PPG Paragraph: 007 Reference ID: 10-007-20140306).
- 1.13. The analysis shows that from the performance of the typologies tested, the highest value area is able to deliver 40% affordable housing across the size typology ranges; the value area below produces 35 – 40% affordable housing across the typologies for 500 dwellings plus; and 35 – 40% affordable housing viability is achievable across the strategic site typologies for 250 dwellings and above (INF/04, Para 5.3).
- 1.14. The Study concludes that the housing market in Huntingdonshire is strong with confidence of sustained market growth and that up to 40% affordable housing is viable for most typologies applicable in the District, meaning that housing delivery will not be slowed on the grounds of viability.

#### **Question 4: Is the target of 40% realistic and justified?**

- 1.15. Policy LP25 is considered to be realistic and justified. The Huntingdonshire Local Plan Viability Study (INF/04) and Local Plan Viability Study Addendum (INF/05) have demonstrated that the most popular (or “modal”) affordable housing performance category to be 35 – 40%, reflecting the general strength of the housing market in Huntingdonshire and particularly in the main locations for growth.
- 1.16. The aforementioned evidence is then linked to the justification for the need for the affordable housing identified in the Huntingdonshire Objectively Assessed Housing Need report April 2017 (HOUS/01). As noted in Question 1 response, this shows that the total need for affordable housing over the plan period is 7,897 new homes. Therefore the required number of affordable homes is 39% of the overall housing figure.

#### **Question 5: Is the threshold for the number of homes/floorspace justified?**

- 1.17. The LP25 threshold is required for sites where 11 homes or 1,001m<sup>2</sup> residential floorspace (gross internal area) or more are proposed. The Huntingdonshire Local Plan Viability Study (INF/04) and Local Plan Viability Study Addendum (INF/05) have assessed sites from 11 homes to meet this policy threshold.
- 1.18. This approach is justified as it is in accordance with the written ministerial statement of 28 November 2014 which states that contributions for affordable housing should not be sought from developments of 10 units or less and which have a maximum combined gross floorspace of no more than 1,000 square metres gross internal area (PPG Paragraph: 031 Reference ID: 23b-031-20161116).

## **Question 6: Is the approach to the mix of tenures justified?**

- 1.19. Table 10 in Chapter 10 of the SHMA (HOUS/07) provides an assessment of the affordability of housing of different tenures in Huntingdonshire. It evidences that 37% of households are unable to afford lower quartile market purchase; 34% of households are unable to afford average private rent; 24% of people are unable to afford lower quartile private rent and 22% of households are unable to afford shared ownership (50% share).
- 1.20. The SHMA (HOUS/07) indicates that only 76% of households have a sufficient income to enable them to afford to secure market accommodation for rent and only 63% for sale. Accordingly for those households whose needs cannot be met by the market there should be a mixed and balanced provision of affordable housing to reflect their different degrees of need and aspiration as some households will be able to afford shared ownership and others on the lowest income levels will only be able to afford housing association rented housing.
- 1.21. The Local Plan viability Assessment 2017 (INF/04) concluded that an affordable housing target of 40% is viable and deliverable on the majority of sites based on 70% affordable rent tenure and 30% shared ownership.

## **Question 7: Is the policy sufficiently flexible, particularly in terms of the effect on viability and the potential for off-site contributions?**

- 1.22. The policy is sufficiently flexibility to allow for specific circumstances to be considered. If the exceptional circumstances arise on a specific development whereby it can demonstrate through an open book approach viability assessment that it cannot provide 40% affordable housing, the Council will negotiate to reach a viable solution to enable the development proceed (PPG Paragraph: 007 Reference ID: 23b-007-20150326). This may be achieved by simply agreeing to an alternative dwelling or tenure mix.
- 1.23. In exceptional circumstances it may be more appropriate to accept an off-site contribution and this is permitted through the policy.

## **Question 8: Are the policy requirements justified and is the policy effective and consistent with national policy?**

- 1.24. To meet the affordable housing requirement of 7,897 new homes, 36% of the (in excess of) 22,000 new homes specifically provided for in the Plan would need to be affordable. This does not however take account of the additional affordable homes that would be expected to come forward on windfall sites and on exceptions sites. The target of 40% affordable homes on sites of 11+ homes has been shown to be viable and is justified in order to help ensure that the delivery of affordable homes can meet local need.
- 1.25. The policy is in accordance with the written ministerial statement of 28 November 2014 which states that contributions for affordable housing should not be sought from developments of 10 units or less and which have a maximum combined gross floorspace of

no more than 1,000 square metres gross internal area (PPG Paragraph: 031 Reference ID: 23b-031-20161116).

## 2. Housing mix – Policy LP26

### Question 9: What is the evidence in relation to the requirements for accessible and adaptable homes in terms of need and viability? Is the approach justified?

- 2.1. Evidence with regard to the need for accessible and adaptable homes is set out in the Huntingdonshire Accessible & Specialist Housing Evidence Paper 2018 (HOUS/04). The Paper estimates that 181% of the Council’s objectively assessed housing need (HOUS/04, Para 6.36) would be required to meet M4(2) accessible and adaptable dwellings standard. The Paper also estimates that 10% of new market homes and 32% of affordable homes should meet M4(3) Wheelchair User Dwellings requirement (HOUS/04 para 6.41 & Table 22).
- 2.2. Evidence for accessible and adaptable dwellings assesses the accessibility and adaptability of existing housing stock (HOUS/04 Paras 6.9-6.11, 6.33), how needs vary across different tenures (HOUS/04 Para 6.12 & Table 13), and the likely future need for housing for older (HOUS/04, Para 6.32) and disabled people (HOUS/04, Para 6.26) is in line with National Planning Practice Guidance (What evidence should local planning authorities use to demonstrate a need to set higher accessibility, adaptability and wheelchair housing standards? Paragraph: 007 Reference ID: 56-007-20150327).
- 2.3. Data has been drawn from a variety of sources as recommended in the Department for Communities and Local Governments (DCLG) *Guide to Available Disability Data 2015* including the English Housing Survey, Local Authority population estimates, Census data, household projections and the number of households on the Huntingdonshire Housing Need Register that self-identify as requiring a home with additional accessibility features (HOUS/04, Para 6.28).
- 2.4. The evidence base is therefore considered proportionate and justified as it follows guidance within the NPPG and DCLG data guide.
- 2.5. The policy requires a 100% of new dwellings to meet Building Regulation requirement M4(2) (this will meet some of the required need for accessible and adaptable homes in the District) and a ‘proportion’ of homes are required to meet M4(3) standards.
- 2.6. The Local Plan Viability Study Addendum 2017 looked at the viability assessment of Part M requirements in more detail applying exact established policy requirements. The Addendum uses updated cost analysis from the Government’s EC Harris cost analysis reports (EC Harris – DCLG Housing Standards Review - Potential Cost Impacts, September 2014) which was used to inform the Government’s Housing Standards Review Consultation. The report concludes that the proposed policy for M4(2) is generally shown to be viable on most typologies without requiring an offset against affordable housing requirements.

- 2.7. A policy requirement of 9% of dwellings to meet M4(3) standard was also assessed. The Addendum concluded that the policy is acceptable, but sensitive to the strength of different market areas across Huntingdonshire, therefore the Council concluded that a more proportionate approach to M4(3) was necessary allowing for the assessment of viability on a site by site basis.

### **Question 10: Are the overall policy requirements justified and is the policy effective and consistent with national policy?**

- 2.8. The overall policy requirements are considered justified. Major scale housing development should provide for a mix of sizes types and tenures and respond to the latest evidence such as the Cambridge Sub-Region and Peterborough Strategic Housing Market Assessments (SHMA) and local housing need and strategies. The SHMAs take into account quantitative and qualitative predicted need across the Cambridge Sub-Region and Peterborough housing market areas and were commissioned and guided through partnership working with the relevant Local Authorities, and draw on a variety of data sources. The Cambridge sub-region SHMA also included input from registered social landlord representatives and the Homes and Communities Agency. By referring to up-to-date evidence the policy ensures that the most appropriate strategy is employed in line with local demand and settlement type and location, or proximity to the most appropriate housing market area. This is consistent with Paragraph 50 of the NPPF and NPPG Housing and economic development needs assessments.
- 2.9. More specific tenure requirements are dealt with in Policy LP 25 Affordable Housing Provision, LP 26 Specialist Housing and LP 28 Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople.

## **3. Specialist housing – Policy LP27**

### **Question 11: Is the policy justified, effective and consistent with national policy?**

- 3.1. The evidence base to inform Policy LP27 is set out in the Huntingdonshire Accessible & Specialist Housing Evidence Paper 2018 (HOUS/04). The evidence base is proportionate and consistent with requirements set out in the NPPG (How should the needs for all types of housing be addressed? Paragraph: 021 Reference ID: 2a-021-20160401) in that it draws on population-based forecasts by age and projects the future need for specialist accommodation for older people (75+ years) (HOUS/04, Section 4 – Specialist housing for older people in Huntingdonshire: Evidence of Need) by tenure and type using the SHOP@ toolkit/methodology. The methodology takes into account the current supply of specialist housing in Huntingdonshire and establishes future need to 2036 by tenure.
- 3.2. The paper concludes that there is an indicative need to 2036 for 4,177 specialist housing units and 2,313 care home beds for older people (HOUS/04, para 4.11).

- 3.3. With regards to specialist housing for people aged 65 or under, the data is less robust in terms of District specific needs. Sub-regional work to identify specialist housing provision in more detail is currently underway.
- 3.4. However, evidence is available from the Cambridgeshire County Council Adult Social Care Market Position Statement, which draws on information from POPPI, PANSI<sup>1</sup> and ONS Sub National Population Projections. The evidence establishes a growth rate for social care in those under 65 in line with population growth. Given this projected lower growth in need for social care, the rough nature of this data, and the Cambridgeshire policy goals (HOUS/04, para 3.6) of supporting independent living, it is not currently considered helpful to identify a specific requirement for specialist housing for the population aged under 65.
- 3.5. Policy LP 27 takes into account guidance to accommodate more independent living by supporting the provision of self-contained specialist housing so long as it is accessible to local services, facilities, public transport and integrated into the wider community<sup>2</sup>. The provision of more accessible and adaptable homes is also addressed through policy LP 26, which will also help to facilitate independent living. The policy also supports the provision of residential institutions based on the aforementioned criteria.
- 3.6. Due to the significant need for specialist accommodation for older people (identified through the Huntingdonshire Accessible & Specialist Housing Evidence Paper 2018) evidence will not be required to demonstrate need. In the case of specialist accommodation for those more specialist groups, evidence of need will be required due current evidence shortfalls.

**Question 12: What is the situation regarding the Council's obligations under S8 of the 1985 Housing Act (as amended by the Housing and Planning Act 2016) in terms of the needs of people residing in or resorting to the District with respect to the provision of sites on which caravans can be stationed or places on inland waterways where houseboats can be moored? Have such needs been identified and what is the approach to meeting them?**

- 3.7. The Government issued draft guidance in March 2016 on housing needs for caravans and houseboats. The draft guidance has not been updated or finalised since it was first published.
- 3.8. The Cambridgeshire Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2016 (HOUS/03) identified the needs of those gypsies and travellers that meet the revised definition of Gypsy or Traveller based on the draft guidance. The assessment also identified needs of those who did not meet the revised definition in Appendix B under the definition 'non-travelling Travellers'. A need for 38 pitches for households who do not meet the new definition (HOUS/03, para. 1.18 and Figure 66, page 121) was identified made up of 9 pitches from

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<sup>1</sup> Projecting Older People Population Information (POPPI) and Projecting Adult Needs and Service Information both developed by the Institute for Public Care.

<sup>2</sup> Amongst other criteria.

concealed households/doubling-up/over-crowding; 12 pitches from older teenage children (5 year need) and 17 from new household formation (Figure 66, Appendix B).

- 3.9. Against this background of policy evolution at national level and locally in response to national changes the planning authority granted permanent planning permissions for 29 pitches from 2011 to 31st January 2016. Total provision from 2011 to the present is 38 pitches with permanent planning permission. On this basis the approach of providing pitches through the application of criteria based policy is clearly working. There is clearly sufficient justification for not allocating sites. Further detailed information regarding the approach to this need and how the council is addressing this is explained in the Council's response to Policy LP28 questions 13, 14 and 17.
- 3.10. The Council's approach to inland waterways where houseboats can be moored is addressed in Policy LP 40 Water Related Development. Consultation on this policy has been undertaken at various stages of the Local Plan preparation including:
- Stage 2: Strategic Options and Policies
  - Stage 3: Draft Local Plan to 2036 (CORE/05, page 292)
  - Stage 5: Further Regulation 18 Consultation (CORE/05, page 76)
  - Stage 6: Further Regulation 18 Consultation (CORE/05, page 103)
- 3.11. Policy LP 40 places a 20% limit on leisure to residential berths conversions based on the total mooring provision on-site. This is based on recommendations from the Canals and Rivers Trust.
- 3.12. Further proposals for moorings will be assessed through LP40 on a case by case basis taking into account potential impacts on the environment, water quality, flood conveyance capacity, biodiversity and provision of adequate servicing. This allows for suitable site and impact assessment based on up-to-date information.
- 3.13. The Council recently approved application 17/02406/FUL at the Huntingdon Boathaven for 10 residential moorings: 9 on the western/south-western area of the boathaven site and 1 to the south-east. The area was previously used for mooring recreational boats. The proposal met the criteria of policy LP40 and no objections were raised from statutory consultees. The moorings provide additional residential units in an accessible location convenient for shops and services in Godmanchester and Huntingdon. It was concluded that the principle of permitting year-round residential moorings on this site was acceptable. This demonstrates that the Council can meet its obligations under S8 of the 1985 Housing Act (as amended by the Housing and Planning Act 2016) through the implementation of Policy LP 40.
- 3.14. The policy allows assessment to be undertaken on a site-by-site basis ensuring the conservation and protection of areas of conservation importance in line with section 11 of

the NPPF. It also ensures that the assessment of need is based on up to date evidence and reflects current market conditions in conformity with paragraph 158 of the NPPF.

## 4. Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople – Policy LP28

### Question 13: What is the evidence in terms of need for additional provision? Was the methodology for the assessment appropriate and robust? What does it show?

- 4.1. The evidence of need for additional provision is set out in the Cambridgeshire (excluding Fenland), Kings’s Lynn & West Norfolk, Peterborough and West Suffolk Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2016 (GTAA) (HOUS/03). The baseline date for the GTAA is 1 February 2016 and the document was published in October 2016. The GTAA superseded the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment (2011) (GTANA). It takes into account the revised version of the government’s Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) of August 2015 which changed the definition of Gypsies and Travellers used for planning purposes. Fenland District did not participate in the GTAA because it had undertaken its own update to the GTANA in 2013 (HOUS/03 para. 5.109)
- 4.2. The key findings for Huntingdonshire are a need for 9 additional pitches for households that meet the new definition in PPTS 2015, made up of 6 concealed adult households, 1 older teenage child in need of a pitch of their own in the period 2016-21 and 2 from new household formation. There was also a need for up to 19 additional pitches for ‘unknown’ households made up of 7 unauthorised pitches and new household formation of 12 pitches.
- 4.3. The methodology for the GTAA is explained in Chapter 3 (HOUS/03, pp 31-38). The assessment was carried out by Opinion Research Services (ORS), consultants with a proven track record in carrying out research for the public and other sectors. The company’s methodology had been developed over 10 years and updated to take into account the national Planning Practice Guidance 2014 (PPG) and PPTS (2015).
- 4.4. The government’s Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) (2015) Policy A says that local planning authorities’ evidence base to support their planning approach should, in summary:
  - a) have early and effective community engagement with the travelling etc. and settled communities;
  - b) cooperate with travellers etc, other local authorities and interest groups to understand permanent and transit accommodation need;
  - c) use a robust evidence base to establish accommodation needs;

The GTAA methodology is set out in Chapter 3. It met all of these requirements by taking the following steps (para 3.6, page 31):

- desk based review of secondary data ;

- stakeholder engagement;
- collaborative working with neighbouring authorities;
- interviews when possible with all households on authorised and unauthorised sites/yards and encampments.

4.5. In particular measures taken to make the stakeholder engagement robust included:

- attempting to interview households on all pitches which ORS's experience had shown was more reliable than sampling which tends to lead to an under-estimate of need (para. 3.10);
- all pitches and plots in Huntingdonshire were visited by dedicated, experienced interviewers (para. 3.11);
- the information collected was specifically designed to take account of the new definition in PPTS 2015 (para. 3.11);
- semi-structured interviews captured current demographics, current or future accommodation needs, overcrowding, concealed households and travelling characteristics (for the revised definition), contacts for people living in bricks and mortar (para. 3.11) and the tenure type of pitches required in the future (para 3.12);
- a rigorous approach to making contact with households in bricks and mortar and using data by: trying to identify them from a wide range of sources and publicity (para. 3.14); not extrapolating the findings from the households who made contact to the total estimated population in bricks and mortar to avoid over-estimation (para. 3.15); using public site waiting lists to identify households in bricks and mortar to interview whilst avoiding double counting (para.3.17). Despite these efforts it was not possible to interview any households in bricks and mortar in Huntingdonshire (para. 7.60);
- timing the fieldwork interviews during the non-travelling season, November 2015 to February 2016 (para. 6.2) and avoiding dates of known local and national events (para. 3.16);
- making up to three attempts to contact each household (para. 6.2), the number of interviews carried out in Huntingdonshire was 32 out of 59 pitches which is 54% (Figure 32, para. 6.3);
- working collaboratively with neighbouring authorities (para. 3.8);
- a stakeholder engagement programme of telephone interviews to supplement the interviews with members of the travelling community (paras 5.1 to 5.6);

4.6. Current unmet need and future need to 2036 was calculated taking into account the revised definition in PPTS (2015) then comparing it with the supply (para. 3.19).

4.7. Existing supply in Huntingdonshire is set out in Figure 26, para. 4.9 (HOUS/03), it is detailed in Chapter 6 and Appendix C. The total number of pitches for gypsies and travellers is 55. This is made up of 20 pitches on 1 public site and 35 pitches on 12 private sites.

4.8. The basis for calculating the current and future need for pitches is households that fall within the new definition in PPTS 2015 and those who may meet the definition. Together their

needs are assessed separately from those of the wider settled population (para 7.4). The methodology (para. 7.10) takes into account:

- household growth rates for each authority based on demographic evidence from interviews;
- households in current need (concealed households, 5 year need from older teenagers, movement from bricks and mortar and those on waiting lists);
- households on tolerated unauthorised pitches;
- birth and death rates;
- inward and outward migration.

These factors were used to adjust up or down the national net household growth rate based on best available evidence which is 1.5% per annum. To comply with PPTS the overall need has been broken down into four 5-year bands through the 20 year plan period (HOUS/03, para. 7.14).

4.9. For Huntingdonshire the evidence and assessment shows:

- a need for 9 additional pitches for Gypsy and Traveller households that meet the new definition (para. 7.55) made up of 6 concealed households/doubling-up/over-crowding, 1 from 5 year need from older teenage children and 2 from new household formation (Figure 46, para. 7.65);
- this need is broken down into 7 pitches in the first 5-year period from 2016 to 2021 and 0, 1, and 1 pitches over the following three 5-year periods from 2021 to 2036 (Figure 47, para 7.65);
- a need for up to 19 additional pitches for 'unknown' households that may meet the definition (para. 7.55) calculated as 7 pitches on unauthorised sites and 12 from new household formation (para. 7.70);
- a need for 38 pitches for households who do not meet the new definition (para. 1.18 and Figure 66, page 121) made up of 9 pitches from concealed households/doubling-up/over-crowding; 12 pitches from older teenage children (5 year need) and 17 from new household formation (Figure 66, Appendix B).
- there are no travelling showpeople's yards in the District so no current or future identified need (para. 7.55)

**Question 14: Will the identified need (as defined in the PPTS) be met up to 2021 and 2036? How will this be achieved and is this an appropriate approach? Is there sufficient justification to not allocate sites?**

4.10. The need as defined in PPTS 2015 is for pitches for households who meet the revised definition of a Gypsy and Traveller that is now used for planning purposes. The need has been identified as 9 pitches. Since the base date of the GTAA (1st February 2016) permanent planning permissions have been granted for 9 Gypsy and Traveller pitches on 5 sites:

- 15/00273/FUL Middle Drove, Ramsey Heights - 1 pitch (Granted 22.02.2016)

- 16/00821/FUL Brington Gorse, Catworth, Huntingdon - 1 pitch (Granted 30.09.2016)
- 17/00017/FUL Hilltop Orchard, St Ives Road, Somersham – 3 pitches (Granted 14.05.2018)
- 17/01874/FUL South of South View, Harpers Drove, Ramsey Heights, 2 pitches. (Granted 26.10.2017)
- 17/01626/FUL Rosefield, Parkhall Road, Somersham – 2 pitches (Granted 08.06.2018)

1.11 Both the need for 7 pitches in the first five years of the plan period to 2021 and the need for a total of 9 pitches by the end of the plan period in 2036 have already been met. Since 1<sup>st</sup> February 2016 pitches have been granted at a rate of approximately 3.5 pitches per year. If this rate were to continue for the remaining 17.75 years of the Local Plan period (from the beginning of the third quarter of 2018) around 64 further pitches could be delivered. This is around three times the number of pitches which may be required to meet the need for unknown households. The delivery of a further 19 pitches could be achieved if only around 1 pitch per year is granted through the remainder of the Local Plan period.

4.11. The delivery of pitches since 1<sup>st</sup> February 2016 is a continuation of a response to evolving planning policy since 2008.

- Policy H3 of the East of England Plan (2008) required 25 pitches to be provided in Huntingdonshire by 2011. This figure was made up of 20 pitches proposed in the Draft Plan's policy H3 (which was the mid-point of the 2006 GTAA range of 15 – 25 pitches) and an additional 5 pitches proposed by the EiP Panel 'to increase local opportunity in an area convenient to sub-regional need'.
- Policy CS6 of the Huntingdonshire Core Strategy 2009 set out criteria for Gypsy and Traveller sites.
- Both of these development plans took into account national policy in Planning Circular 01/2006 - Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites which was that sites were acceptable in principle in the countryside.
- In July 2010 the Secretary of State revoked Regional Strategies with immediate effect. His decision was challenged in the Courts and quashed. The East of England Plan was however ultimately revoked leaving the District Council with no development plan policy setting out the scale of need for new Gypsy and Traveller pitches.
- Prior to July 2010 the Council had made progress on the preparation of a Gypsy and Traveller Sites DPD. Following consultation on an Issues Report in January 2009, the process continued with engagement with those on the Council's Local Development Framework (LDF) database in June 2009. Submissions for potential sites for consideration were invited in a forthcoming revised Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). As part of this process publicly owned land was also considered.
- Consultation on Part C of the SHLAA: Site Assessments for Gypsy and Traveller Sites was undertaken from May to July 2010. The Council had emphasised that the sites on which consultation was taking place were those which had been proposed by

others as part of the SHLAA technical exercise. They were not proposed allocations and the Council had no commitment to them.

- With the announcement in August 2010 that Circular 01/2006 was to be replaced and with the indication of a fundamental change in national policy on Gypsy and Traveller sites the Council considered that it could not sensibly proceed with policy formulation, including any decision about the number or location of pitches, until national policy had been clarified. None of the 17 sites under consideration was ultimately found to be appropriate for allocation.
- Policy LP12 of the Draft Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036: Stage 3 2013 (PREP/05) was used for Development Management purposes from May 2013. It set out criteria for the selection of Gypsy and Traveller Sites. From July 2017 it ran in parallel with the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 – Consultation Draft (PREP/02). It was fully superseded in December 2017 by the Submission Draft Local Plan (PREP/01).
- The Government issued new national policy in Planning Policy for Traveller Sites in 2012
- Planning Policy for Traveller Sites was revised in August 2015.

4.12. Against this background of policy evolution at national level and locally in response to national changes the planning authority granted permanent planning permissions for 29 pitches from 2011 to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2016. Total provision from 2011 to the present is 38 pitches with permanent planning permission. On this basis the approach of providing pitches through the application of criteria based policy is clearly working. There is clearly sufficient justification for not allocating sites.

#### **Question 15: Will there be an adequate supply of specific deliverable sites to provide 5 years' worth of sites?**

4.13. The answer to this question has been provided in response to Question 14. The identified need for the whole plan period has been met. The identified need for 9 pitches is being treated as a target to be met but it is not a ceiling on the number of pitches that can be granted planning permission.

#### **Question 16: How is the potential additional "unknown" need quantified and is the approach to this need justified?**

4.14. As explained in the response to Question 13, robust steps were taken to interview as many households as possible. A particular feature of ORS's approach was their belief that doing so would lead to a more accurate assessment than scaling up from a sample. That technique was used to derive the need for households who meet the new definition. Inevitably not all households could be reached, some refused to be interviewed and others were not present to be interviewed. For the hard to reach 'unknown' households the GTAA adopts the approach of estimating the potential need for pitches for households which may meet the new definition and treating this as a maximum additional need (para. 3.21-3.27). This estimate was arrived at by identifying potential current and future need from temporary and

unauthorised pitches and through new household formation. The estimate is not derived by scaling up from the number of households where interviews were carried out for the following reason. ORS's findings from interviews conducted since the change in the definition are that out of 1,500 interviews carried out nationally by the time the report was compiled only about 10% met the new definition. This suggests that only a small proportion of the need identified from the unknown households will be for Gypsy and Traveller pitches. The approach to meeting this need is, for the reasons explained above, to continue to grant planning permission for pitches on appropriate sites

**Question 17: What is the scale of need for people not meeting the definition in the PPTS? How will this be addressed? Is the approach justified? (see also Q12 above)**

- 4.15. The GTAA identifies needs in three categories. Firstly, the need for pitches for those who meet the new definition in the PPTS identified and statistically derived from information gathered in Gypsy and Traveller households who were interviewed. Secondly, need estimated statistically for those households who were not interviewed to derive a figure for those who may meet the definition. This question addresses the third category, households who do not meet the new definition. Pre-August 2015 permissions for Gypsy and Traveller pitches included conditions referring to the previous definition, and those who meet that definition can occupy those pitches. The needs of others in this third category will be met in the same way as those of members of the settled community wanting to live in caravans, namely on new development sites within or adjacent to settlements which are granted planning permission under the normal housing policies and by the existing stock of this type of accommodation. Whilst households who do not travel fall outside the new definition of a Traveller, Romany Gypsies and Irish and Scottish Travellers may be able to demonstrate a right to culturally appropriate accommodation under the Equalities Act 2010. In addition provisions set out in the new Housing and Planning Act (2016) now include a duty (under Section 8 of the 1985 Housing Act that covers the requirement for a periodical review of housing needs) for local authorities to consider the needs of people residing in or resorting to their district with respect to the provision of sites on which caravans can be stationed, or places on inland waterways where houseboats can be moored. The housing needs of any Gypsy and Traveller households who do not meet the new 'planning' definition of a Traveller need to be assessed as part of the wider housing needs of the area. They will form a subset of the wider need arising from households residing in caravans. This approach is in line with Government policy and therefore entirely appropriate.

**Question 18: Are the criteria in Policy LP28 appropriate?**

- 4.16. Paragraph 11, Policy B of PPTS 2015 says that criteria should be set to guide land supply allocations where there is identified need and to provide a basis for decisions on applications where there is no identified need. It says that criteria based policies should be fair and they should facilitate the traditional and nomadic life of travellers while respecting the interests of the settled community. The over-arching guidance in paragraph 25 is that new traveller site development in the open countryside that is away from existing settlements should be

very strictly limited. The criteria in Policy LP28 have been designed to accord with the general and specific policies in the PPTS and to strike an appropriate balance between being fair, i.e. achievable, and strictly controlling development.

- 4.17. Criterion a. - the location is within 1.5 miles of a primary school and 2 miles of a GP surgery. Paragraph 13 of PPTS 2015 says that sites should be sustainable economically, socially and environmentally. Policy B, paragraph 13 of PPTS 2015 says that local planning authorities should ensure that their policies: b) promote, in collaboration with commissioners of health services, access to appropriate health services and c) ensure that children can attend school on a regular basis. For context, although no longer Government policy, paragraph 74 of the now revoked PPG13 – Transport (revised 2011) stated that walking is the most important mode of travel at the local level and offers the greatest potential to replace short car trips, particularly under two kilometres (1.25 miles). The distances in this criterion have been selected because they are considered to be reasonable walking distances for access to these facilities. They reflect the needs and abilities of young children attending primary school on a daily basis during term time and the less frequent need for people of all ages to visit a GP surgery. The distances relate to walkable routes rather than as the crow flies distances.
- 4.18. In practice what this means can be seen from the information in the Huntingdonshire Infrastructure Delivery Plan (INF/01). As stated in its paragraph 6.2.3, there are 56 state funded primary schools in Huntingdonshire, mainly in the market towns but also in the larger villages. Their locations are shown on the map in that paragraph.
- 4.19. Figure 27 in paragraph 8.2.2 of the Huntingdonshire Infrastructure Delivery Plan (INF/01) lists the locations of GP surgeries in Huntingdonshire. There are 30 surgeries (including 11 branch surgeries) in 12 villages in addition to all the market towns. This criterion's requirement for pitches to be within 1.5 miles of a primary school and 2 miles of a GP surgery provides an appropriate level of accessibility to these facilities in the interests of sustainability.
- 4.20. Criterion b. the character and appearance of the wider landscape is not significantly harmed. Huntingdonshire's countryside is not subject to any of the national designations for landscape protection or constraint. The District does however contain a number of landscape types in terms of topography, the degree of natural enclosure and screening provided by existing landscape features and the density and location of built development. The presence of Gypsy and Traveller sites will inevitably have some effect on the landscape. Policy CS6 of the adopted Core Strategy requires that gypsy sites should not have a significant adverse impact on the character of the landscape. Policy LP28 is similar in its requirement that the character and appearance of the wider landscape should not be significantly harmed. This is in accordance with paragraph 7 of the National Planning Policy Framework which defines the environmental role of sustainability as 'contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural environment' and with paragraph 17 which gives as one of the key planning principles 'recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside'.

- 4.21. Since 2011 planning permission has been refused for two sites on landscape grounds. The westernmost of two appeal sites at Chatteris Road, Somersham was set back from the road frontage. The Inspector found that the six pitches proposed, accommodating up to 12 caravans, would be poorly related to existing development along neighbouring roads, and they would represent a significant encroachment into the open landscape away from these roads. In this position the pitches would be prominent in views from the south-west and from the southeast and south. (Application reference 0900550FUL, Appeal reference APP/H0520/A/09/2108476) Planning permission was granted by the Inspector for two pitches on the road frontage which he found did not harm the landscape. The other site to be refused planning permission is at St Ives Road, Woodhurst where planning permission was refused for 4 pitches on land behind 8 pitches which did have permission (Application reference 1200601FUL). The decisions on these sites illustrate the need for a criterion of this type and the reasonable way in which the Council applies it to the determination of applications. Proposals which do not have an adverse impact on the landscape are approved.
- 4.22. Criterion c. the location and scale of sites does not dominate the nearest settled community, when the proposal is considered collectively with other nearby traveller sites. This criterion directly embeds in local policy the requirement in Policy C, paragraph 14 of PPTS 2015 'When assessing the suitability of sites in rural or semi-rural settings, local planning authorities should ensure that the scale of such sites does not dominate the nearest settled community.' The requirement is repeated in Policy H, paragraph 25 in respect of determining planning applications. This authority's interpretation is that it is mainly the visual impact of a different form of development which can lead to domination. Gypsy and Traveller sites tend to contain mobile homes, caravans, dayrooms and outbuildings and there is generally a greater use of outdoor space than is found in bricks and mortar housing in settled communities.
- 4.23. Criterion d. the proposed boundary treatment provides a good balance between minimising the development's impact on surrounding countryside and its integration into the local community. This criterion embodies specific guidance in PPTS 2015. Policy H, paragraph 26 says that in decision making local planning authorities should attach weight to a number of matters: point b) that sites should be being well planned or soft landscaped in such a way as to positively enhance the environment and increase its openness; point d) not enclosing a site with so much hard landscaping, high walls or fences, that the impression may be given that the site and its occupants are deliberately isolated from the rest of the community.
- 4.24. The Chatteris Road, Somersham appeal decision also illustrates this point. The Inspector was concerned that the extent of planting likely to be required to break up the form of mobile homes extending along the site would itself appear as a feature unsuited to the openness of this tract of fenland between the two roads.
- 4.25. Criterion e. there will not be a significant adverse effect on the amenity of nearby residents or the effective operation of adjoining uses. This criterion addresses Policy B, paragraph 13 criteria a) promote peaceful and integrated co-existence between the site and the local

community; and e) provide for proper consideration of the effect of local environmental quality (such as noise and air quality) on the health and well-being of any travellers that may locate there or on others as a result of new development. It also reflects the point made in respect of criterion c.

- 4.26. Criterion f. the site provides a high level of residential amenity for the proposed residents, for example in relation to protection from noise and provision of play facilities; the health and safety of occupants is not put at risk, including through unsafe access to sites, poor air quality, contamination or unacceptable flood risk. This criterion directly reflects Policy B, paragraph 13 point g) which says that policies should ensure local planning authorities do not locate sites in areas at high risk of flooding, including functional floodplains, given the particular vulnerability of caravans. It adds a consideration related to the safety of the access which is a standard development management requirement.
- 4.27. Criterion h. there is adequate space for operational needs, including the parking and turning of vehicles. This is a normal functional requirement of all development. It is particularly important for Gypsy and Traveller sites in open countryside when on road parking or vehicles with trailers reversing out onto fast rural roads could be a danger to highway safety.
- 4.28. Criterion i. there are appropriate management arrangements in place, where the site may have multiple owners or tenants or be used for transit purposes. Most of the sites in the district are small family sites. There are two larger sites both with 11 pitches. In both cases once planning permission had been obtained and the site had been developed the pitches were transferred into individual ownerships. It is unlikely that any communal areas on sites will be adopted so in order to safeguard the amenity of the area and the residents on the site it is important to ensure, by planning condition or obligation, that there are the necessary measures in place for the management of street lighting, roadways and communal areas.
- 4.29. Criterion j. the site can be safely and adequately serviced by infrastructure. This criterion addresses Policy B, paragraph 13 criteria f) avoid placing undue pressure on local infrastructure and services. Mains water and electricity are essential for modern living. Sites in open countryside are unlikely to have access to the public foul sewerage system. It is important to ensure that foul drainage is properly disposed of. The preferred means of disposal being a package sewage treatment plan in accordance with paragraph 020 of the section of the Planning Practice Guidance on Water Supply, Waste Water and Water Quality.

#### **Question 19: Is the overall approach to this issue and Policy LP28 justified, effective and consistent with national policy?**

- 4.30. The Council's overall approach follows its tried, tested and demonstrably effective practice of delivering Gypsy and Traveller pitches in appropriate sustainable locations in accordance with Government policy by the use of criteria to determine planning applications. Since 2011 a total of 38 pitches have been granted permanent planning permissions at an average

rate of around 5 pitches per year. The total includes 5 pitches on two sites near Somersham which have been granted under the current Draft Plan's policy criteria. Almost all the pitches which have been approved in this way are or have been occupied. For the reasons set out above the policy is entirely consistent with national policy.

## 5. Community planning proposals – Policy LP29

### Question 20: Is it justified to allow community based development proposals as an exception to other policies?

- 5.1. The policy meets the requirements of paragraph 70 of the NPPF, promoting healthy communities. It enables the provision of community developments, as and when they arise, in situations where there is no available land to meet that need.
- 5.2. The historic development of Key and Local Service Centres and Small Settlements does not always allow for the incorporation of new services and facilities within the built up area. This is especially true when considering the amount of land required for development proposals such as, community facilities, playing fields, sports facilities and open space. For example Kings Ripton Parish Plan (Appendix 1) references inadequate play areas and facilities for young children; Sports England has recommended a 'recreation ground' may be suitable for the village. Although no location has currently been identified, the policy allows flexibility for a suitable site to be acquired which well-related to the built up area if no suitable locations within it can be identified.
- 5.3. In addition, there are instances where solutions may be required to remedy existing pressures on settlements as a result of a growth. These solutions will enhance the quality of life of residents and enable settlements to maintain a 'village feel' for its residents. An example of this is evidenced in the Houghton and Wyton Neighbourhood Plan (a Small Settlement) which notes that:  
  
"Car parking in the village is a major issue for residents, shoppers and visitors alike, and solutions need to be found which avoid the heart of the village being clogged up with parked cars." (See Appendix 1, Matter 8)
- 5.4. In addition, the policy allows for the approval of schemes to meet local need that naturally lend themselves to development well related to the built up area, such as open space or playing field provision.

### Question 21: Would the policy allow for housing as enabling development on sites where it would not otherwise be permitted? If so, is this justified?

- 5.5. Yes, the policy would allow for enabling housing development on land where housing would not otherwise be permitted provided that the quantity of housing sought is proportionate to

the costs of the scheme proposed and the location is sustainable in terms of the effect on the character of the immediate locality and the settlement as a whole.

- 5.6. The need for additional community infrastructure and challenges in funding its provision have been identified through engagement with Town and Parish Councils during the preparation of the plan as set out in the Statement of Consultation (CORE/05), in discussions during the preparation of Neighbourhood and Parish Plans, as well as wider project based work undertaken by the Council working in partnership with Parish Councils.
- 5.7. It is considered to be justified as a positive, pragmatic response to helping to deliver the NPPF's core planning principle of delivering sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.

### **Question 22: Is the overall policy approach justified, effective and consistent with national policy?**

- 5.8. Policy LP 29 is informed by The Huntingdonshire Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2017 (IDP). The IDP identifies that there is an ongoing requirement to plan for communities as a result of a growing population. The study draws on evidence from a variety of sources such as:
  - Growing Our Communities, Huntingdonshire Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2028 with regard to community facilities (INF/01, 10.1.1 Evidence Base and Strategic Issues, Page 123);
  - Huntingdonshire Sports and Leisure Facilities Strategy 2016-21 for sports facilities (INF/01, 11.1.1 Evidence Base and Strategic Issues, Page 131); and
  - Needs Analysis of Green Space & Play Provision 2016 – Development Priorities to ascertain future need for open space, provision for children and young people, allotments and community gardens and cemeteries and church yard (INF/01, 12.1.1 Evidence Base and Strategic Issues, Page 151).
- 5.9. The IDP identifies a variety of infrastructure interventions required to support growth in Spatial Planning areas, Key Service Centres (such as Sawtry, Yaxley and Somersham) and Local Service Centres. A variety of stakeholders were consulted (INF/01, Appendix A – List of Stakeholders) including NHS England, and The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire & Northamptonshire.
- 5.10. The need for additional community infrastructure and challenges in funding its provision have been identified through engagement with Town and Parish Councils during the preparation of the plan as set out in the Statement of Consultation (CORE/05), in discussions during the preparation of Neighbourhood and Parish Plans as well as wider project based work undertaken by the Council working in partnership with Parish Councils.
- 5.11. The policy meets the requirements of paragraph 17 and 70 of the NPPF, promoting healthy communities. It enables the provision of community developments, as and when they arise, in situations where there is no available land to meet that need. The policy positively

supports local community development, whilst allowing priorities to be shaped at community level.

## **6. Rural exceptions housing – Policy LP30**

### **Question 23: Is Policy LP30 and the approach to rural exceptions housing justified, effective and consistent with national policy?**

- 6.1. Huntingdonshire has a high level of affordable housing need; the policy is considered to be justified and effective as it represents a positive and balanced response to the local challenges. Analysis of recent permissions indicates that inclusion of an average of 29% market housing has been required to make delivery of the sites viable.
- 6.2. The policy aims to incentivise landowners to bring more rural exceptions sites forward than have been achieved to date by eliminating the time and costs involved in viability testing and providing a slightly greater financial return. It should also providing opportunities for limited organic growth around settlements providing a choice of housing tenures whilst being limited to a scale of development which responds to local need.
- 6.3. The approach to rural exceptions housing is consistent with national policy as the definition in the NPPF (page 55) allows for inclusion of small numbers of market homes at the local authority's discretion. The approach is consistent with NPPF paragraph 54 actively promotes consideration of allowing some market housing where it would facilitate significant additional affordable housing to meet local needs. It is also consistent with NPPF paragraph 50 which seeks to provide sustainable, mixed and inclusive communities.

## **7. Health impact assessment – Policy LP31**

### **Question 24: What is the basis for the different requirements for large scale major development and is this justified based on the definition of such development?**

- 7.1. The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment on Housing and Health 2012-2013 (JSNA) (SOC/04, Section 5.2) notes that it is especially important to plan for good quality homes and support residents' health and wellbeing on large sites. The Assessment particularly focussed on sites of 50 or more homes (SOC/04, Section 5.2.13).
- 7.2. The council considers that the different requirements for large scale and large scale major development are proportionate to the size of development. The JSNA focusses on the importance of the assessment of large developments over 50 which the Council have taken on board and applied the requirement for a rapid Health Impact Assessment to large scale development. The Council also takes its lead from paragraph 26 of the NPPF which sets a default threshold of 2,500sqm with regard to impact assessments; This approach was taken with large scale major developments.

- 7.3. The Council also took on board comments at Further Regulation 18 consultation stage (CORE/05, Policy LP 10: Health and Wellbeing, Page 70), which placed the requirement for a Health impact Assessment on large scale major developments only. Cambridgeshire County Council noted that this threshold was set too high and the policy was revised accordingly to include large scale developments, but to also require an assessment proportionate to the size of development.

### **Question 25: Is Policy LP31 justified, effective and consistent with national policy?**

- 7.4. Policy LP31 has been informed by a number of evidence base documents that identify the importance of assessing the negative health impacts that could result from new developments. These documents include the Cambridgeshire Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2012-17 (SOC/01) and the Cambridgeshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) Housing and Health 2012-13 (SOC/04).
- 7.5. Together the documents identify current and future health related impacts of housing and housing development and identify a strategy to achieve better health and wellbeing outcomes for our communities.
- 7.6. The Policy works towards delivering Priority 5 (SOC/01, Pages 11&20-21) of the Cambridgeshire Health & Wellbeing Strategy ensuring that “housing, land use planning and development strategies for new and existing communities consider the health and wellbeing impacts for residents”.
- 7.7. As required through paragraph 171 of the NPPF and NPPG Paragraph: 003 Reference ID: 53-003-20140306<sup>3</sup> these documents have been jointly commissioned by the Health and Wellbeing Board and Network who bring together those who buy and run services across the NHS, public health, social care and children’s services, district services, elected representatives and representatives from Health Watch to plan services for Cambridgeshire.
- 7.8. The policy is consistent with NPPG Paragraph: 004 Reference ID: 53-004-20140306<sup>4</sup> as it requests a health impact assessment alongside planning applications for large scale and large scale major development. These development sizes are considered to represent the development thresholds where impacts upon health and well-being will be more significant, as evidenced in the JSNA (SOC/04, Section 5.2- Facts, Figures and Trends, page 19).
- 7.9. The policy allows for pre-emptive assessment of the impacts on existing and future residents to enable changes to be made if necessary prior to the submission of a planning application and for developers to identify appropriate mitigation measures where necessary.

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<sup>3</sup> Who are the main health organisations a local authority should contact and why?

<sup>4</sup> How should health and well-being and health infrastructure be considered in planning decision making?

# Appendix 1: Kings Ripton Community Led Plan

## Kings Ripton Community Led Plan

Adopted November 2017

<http://www.kingsriptonpc.org.uk>

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### 1 Purpose

This plan sets out a strategy for the future of Kings Ripton, along with specific ideas and recommendations. It is the result of consultation with and by the community and has been produced by parish residents. The Plan is to inform future decision making by volunteer groups within the village including the Parish Council. All ideas within the Plan are subject to approval of specific proposals.

### 2 Kings Ripton and Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC)

HDC has historically consisted of small towns and villages, in a largely agricultural area. Considerable development is planned within HDC, including a major ‘new town’ at Alconbury and possibly one at Wyton Airfield, and further development in existing communities close to Kings Ripton as

Huntingdon, St Ives, Upwood and Warboys. These could amount to 20,000 houses in HDC over the next 20 years. This will increase economic activity within the District and contribute to the UK's housing needs, increasing traffic volumes in the district and putting pressure on facilities and amenities. It will also change the character of Huntingdonshire. Kings Ripton's Plan must be set within the context of Huntingdonshire district.

HDC's Local Plan Vision is as follows:

By 2036 Huntingdonshire's physical environment will support the health and wellbeing of all its residents, by:

- Supporting a diverse, thriving economy
- Providing sufficient infrastructure to support healthy communities
- Meeting the needs of a changing population
- Working with our climate and landscape

HDC's Plan has 25 objectives but the strategy for development is summarised as follows.

### **HDC Strategy for Development**

The development strategy for Huntingdonshire is to:

- Concentrate development in locations which provide, or have the potential to provide, the greatest access to services and facilities;
- Direct substantial new development to two strategic expansion locations of sufficient scale to form successful, functioning new communities;
- Provide opportunities for communities to achieve local development aspirations for housing, employment, commercial or community related schemes;
- Support a thriving rural economy;
- Protect the character of existing settlements and the surrounding countryside; and
- Provide complementary green infrastructure enhancement and provision to balance recreational and biodiversity needs

It is within the context of this development that this Plan sets out a strategy for the village.

## **2.1 Summary of Kings Ripton's future within HDC's Local Plan**

The views of residents of Kings Ripton are broadly in line with HDC's strategy.

**The community believes that the character of Kings Ripton, a traditional village surrounded by working farmland, should be maintained. Without villages maintaining their historic nature, the character of HDC will be lost to widespread development. The village should encourage small scale development but maintain its current nature and boundaries, not encroaching significantly on agricultural land for residential or industrial building.**

## **3 Planning and Development**

Development in the parish should be within the vision for the village described above, Section 2.1.

Maps setting out possible areas for development are provided as an appendix to this document. As well as the areas indicated on the map, in-fill housing alongside existing housing within the current developed area is likely to be appropriate. Identification of an area in this plan does not indicate that development there is to be encouraged or appropriate. Decisions on whether development

should be proposed are down to individual landowners. Decisions on whether any particular planning application is appropriate will depend on the detail of the planning application.

Residents need to be able to access accurate and up-to-date information so that they can make informed representations to the Parish Council when applications are made. There must be up-to-date and accurate information available from the District Council. HDC provides this on the planning section of its website. The Parish Council will encourage residents to read the HDC planning website and to express their views on any development affecting the parish to the PC and to HDC direct.

### **3.1 Residential**

Residential development should be limited to a small number of houses to preserve its character and should be within the current village boundary, not on current green space and agricultural areas. It should be consistent with the existing character of the village, recognising that the village includes a range of types of residential property built over many years. Any development within the Conservation Area should be in accordance with maintaining its character. Outside the Conservation Area, we welcome development within the agreed envelope, particularly buildings of architectural and design merit.

There are very few houses to rent and little affordable housing at present in Kings Ripton. It was clear from the survey that the provision of such housing was not considered as a high priority by respondents. However, the lack of such housing could result in difficulties for younger people to find a foothold on the property ladder and affect the future make-up of the village. The Parish Council will welcome the provision of affordable housing and, if there are multi home developments, encourage affordable housing to be included in plans.

### **3.2 Businesses and employment**

Without sustainable farming businesses, the character of Kings Ripton, a village surrounded by and supporting agriculture, will be lost. Agriculture, and associated processing of crops into added value products, is the largest use of employment in the area. The Plan supports local farming and the development and diversification necessary to maintain its profitability, provided it does not change the essential character of the village.

The plan supports the use of existing buildings or appropriate building on brownfield land for light industrial use or office space.

Home working for all or part of a working week is not uncommon in Kings Ripton. The Plan recognises that this is an important part of working life and supports the connectivity which makes home working and rural businesses possible.

### **3.3 Renewable energy**

Renewable energy is an essential part of building a sustainable future. The consultation identified a strong feeling against large scale wind turbine development but also that many people were in favour of renewable power with a lower visual impact. The Plan encourages renewable energy wherever it can be installed without a major adverse impact on the character of the village, especially schemes to generate and distribute power within the village.

## **4 Amenities**

Kings Ripton is a small community. The village needs amenities to improve quality of life and community cohesion but these must be on a scale appropriate for the population size and the resources available. Current amenities consist of St Peter's Church and the Village Hall. The Village Hall is run by a charity (Kings Ripton Village Hall Trust) and supported by the Parish Council.

The Plan encourages further use of these community amenities and improvements to facilities, provided any changes include sound business plan for longer term management.

Many of the residents of Kings Ripton are retired, but there are a significant number of young families living in the village. The small courtyard behind the Village Hall is paved and is not equipped in any way as a play area, but the eastern end of School Lane often acts as an informal area in which many of the children in the village are able to ride bicycles and play in relative safety. As this area provides access to Glebe Farm and the sewage works, it is not ideal. However, it is a cul-de-sac, and is popular with those children who have easy access to the area.

The consultation showed strong support for a playground or provision of some form of children's amenities. Identification of a suitable site would need to take account of the concerns regarding safety, access and noise. It has been suggested by Sports England that a "recreation ground" rather than a playground might be more suitable and viable.

The Plan encourages the provision of further facilities. The Parish Council would welcome a costed proposal and suggestion for funding from any group of residents who wish to extend children's amenities.

## **5 Transport, lighting and signage**

The District Council Plans for development of Alconbury, Wyton and Upwood airfields are a major concern to Kings Ripton. Their close proximity to the village has seen a major increase in the volume of traffic passing through the village, with the resulting potential risk for pedestrian safety. It is considered imperative to improve the provision of safety measures and traffic calming in order to manage this. The speed of the traffic is a major concern, particularly at the north end of the village near the bridge over Bury Brook on which there is no footpath.

Residents are very clear that there is an urgent need further to calm traffic throughout the village. Much of the traffic slows at the road narrowings at either end of the village and at the calming measures in the village. It speeds up considerably in between where school buses pick up and drop children off at the start and end of the school day.

The children in the village are collected and returned on school buses which pick up from the junction of School Lane and Ramsey Road, and drop off at the bus shelter near the exit of Walden Close onto Ramsey Road. There is no lay-by for the buses (one for senior children and one for primary school children) on either side of the road within the village. Nor is there a safe road crossing in either position, and in addition the narrow footpath on the east side of Ramsey Road near the bus shelter means parents and children have to walk in single file and parents cannot hold small children's hands.

There is a popular public footpath crossing the road at the north end of the village next to the bridge over Bury Brook. This lies some yards from the existing road narrowing. Approaching the road from the west (Abbots Ripton), pedestrians cannot see traffic approaching the bridge from the south (village) side and on many occasions traffic has driven over the road edge where the path crosses the road as it speeds up to leave the village prior to going through the road narrowing. There is no safe footpath over the bridge; it is not safe for pedestrians to cross. Traffic calming at the road bridge, reducing the bridge traffic to single file and marking a clear route for pedestrians, is a high priority.

There is a current restriction of 7.5 tons on the road which is regularly ignored by large lorries.

Living in Kings Ripton without a car, or access to a car, is very difficult. The current bus service is extremely limited, provided by the community bus, which goes to Huntingdon at 9.45 on Thursday morning, and returns at 12.15 from the bus station. It is likely that, as the village is populated by a significant number of retired people, the demand could increase over the next decade. Ideally, this could include a service to St Ives to connect with the Guided bus-way to Cambridge and should also include an aim to organise some form of more regular service.

School children are collected and dropped off in the village by designated School Buses. To provide a regular service at the beginning and end of the day would also assist by reducing the need for this service.

The street lighting in the village is limited to a single lamp on Ramsey Road opposite the exit to Quaker Close, and within Quaker Close. The lack of lighting is part of the existing character of the rural village and a good view of the night sky is appreciated. Many residents do not want to see further lighting installed. Some concern was expressed in the survey that the lack of lighting is dangerous, given the very variable quality of footpaths in the village, although there is little pedestrian traffic within the village. Traffic calming again would improve the village for pedestrians. The current footpaths and lack of light pollution are elements of the character of the village.

There are quite a number of road signs at the boundary and within the village. However, it is clear that these are not as effective as they could be and it is considered that advice and financial help should be sought from the Local Highways Improvement Initiative (LHII). The Parish Council will comply with LHII regulations.

Street parking within the village is very limited, usually to the area at the entrance to School Lane and near the village hall in School Lane. This has encouraged off-road parking in certain other areas of the village. There is very little alternative to this situation, but the Parish Council will keep this situation under review, particularly if there is any housing development within the village

The existing rights of way provide recreational facilities for many residents. There are no obvious additional potential footpath routes or desire lines which need to be considered.

Many grass verges suffer from traffic erosion and their maintenance in certain areas, preventing vehicles encroaching onto grass e.g. near Thatcher's Rest, driveway entrances and by the bus stop at the entrance to Walden Court. This could be achieved by installing posts or using other preventive measures

## **6 Utilities and services**

The Parish Council will liaise with all service providers, including the District and Country Councils as appropriate on behalf of the village

The electricity supply in the village is subject to fairly frequent outages lasting from a few seconds to a few minutes. The supply lines are over-ground. Liaison with suppliers to improve the service should be undertaken.

Access to the new Superhighway is now available. Further improvements will be monitored to ensure connection speeds are sufficient to support business, home working and leisure use of the internet.

The treatment works at the north-east corner of the village are serviced by Anglian Water, and are currently adequate. However, if future developments of any sizable housing developments are considered, the capacity of current system may be inadequate and the Parish Council will need to monitor this carefully.

Mobile phone reception in the village is generally poor. The Parish Council may undertake negotiations with suppliers to consider installation of an aerial at a suitable location in the village.

## **7 Crime and safety**

The principal concern regarding crime within the village relates to excessive speeding through the village. A Speedwatch team has performed regular checks, which are fed through to the District Council, and their data provide useful statistics to inform proposals for traffic calming. There is otherwise very little crime.

Offences committed by attendees at the Abbots Ripton Estate Secret Garden Party have, in the past, been attributed to Kings Ripton, and the Parish Council should ensure that this does not recur. The effect on household insurance rates, and statistics for the village could be adversely affected if this was allowed to happen again.

There is some demand for a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme in the village but volunteers have not come forward to organise one in recent years.

## **8 Village appearance and litter**

Since the start of the process of putting together the Community Led Plan, there has been a lot of activity regarding the issues raised in the survey. It is much to the credit of individuals in the village who have worked hard and invested time to improve several of the areas in the village that had attracted comment.

The principal problem within the village is that of littering from through traffic. There are litter bins by the Village Hall and the telephone box. These could be placed on or near the footpath along the brook and near the steps next to Manor Cottages leading up onto the footpath across the field to the east of Ramsey Road. The Parish Council will investigate cost and suitable sites.

The Parish Council have attempted to liaise with fast food providers locally who do what they can to encourage customers to take their litter home, but essentially this is not something they can do very much about. The Parish Council organise litter picks as and when required.

## **9 Major events**

Major events, such as music festivals, open air cinema, garden shows, food festivals, etc are often important activities for business diversification on rural areas. The consultation showed that residents believe the number of events is appropriate for the area, provided they are well planned.

## **10 Communications**

The Riptons Area News is published monthly and provides an effective mechanism for the Parish Council to Communicate with residents. There is also a Village web site <http://www.kingsriptonpc.org.uk>, but the survey results showed that very few people access it. Ways of improving the “hit rate” will be considered, bearing in mind that some residents in the village do not have computers. There is no regular collective use of digital social media by the village as a whole, although many do use social media.

The proposal to establish a form of “Village Directory” met with some endorsement in the survey. This proposal requires consideration, particularly as it could serve as a directory of people who might be willing to provide help or services to assist elderly or disabled residents, such as lifts to the Doctor or hospital. It could also include a “business” section for those running businesses. The directory would be made available only within the Village and could form part of a “Welcome” pack for new residents moving in. At present the Riptons Area News contains phone numbers of those who head clubs and organisations.

## **11 Plan production and adoption**

On behalf of all the residents of Kings Ripton, The Parish Council thanks everyone who has responded to consultations and particularly those volunteers who have given their time to consult the community, analyse and summarise views and write this Plan.

The Plan was adopted by the Parish Council at its meeting on 20 November 2017.

<http://www.kingsriptonpc.org.uk/>

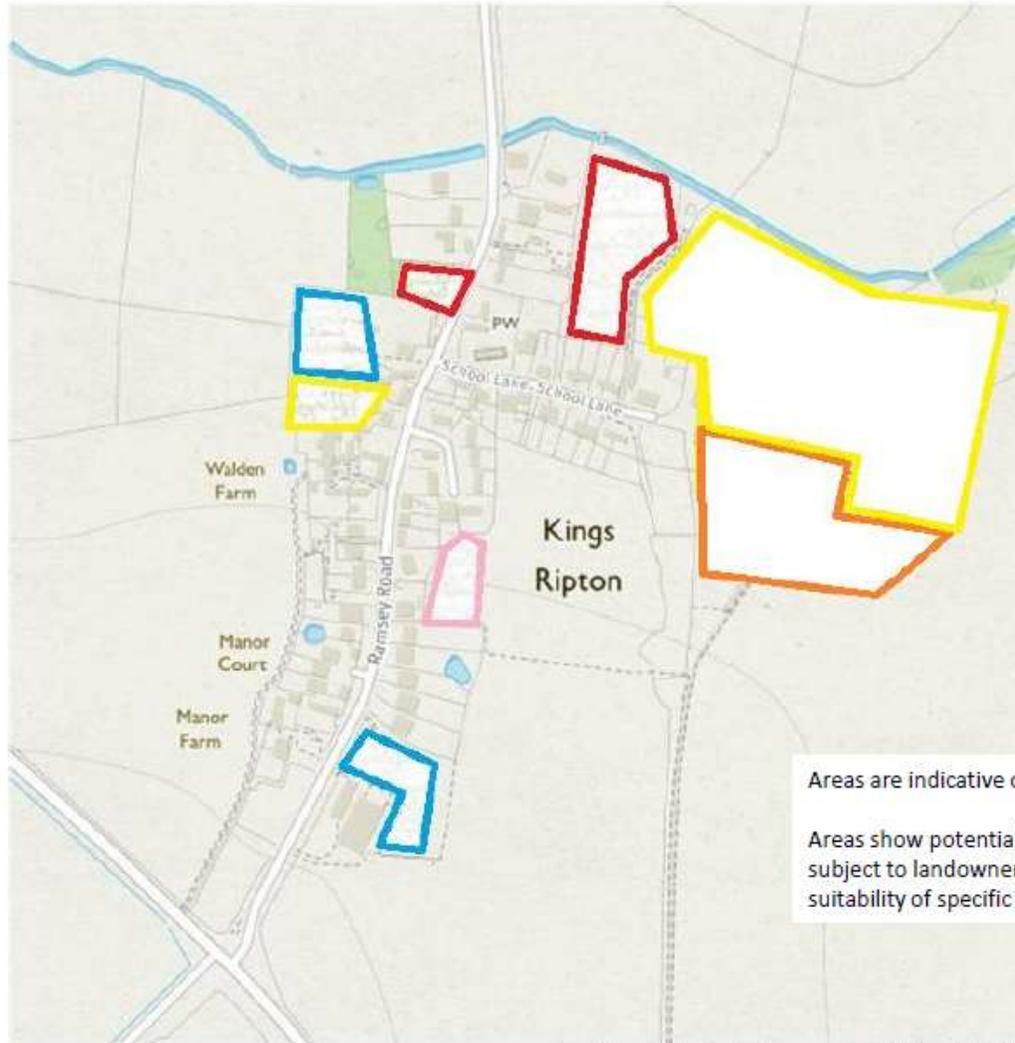
## Appendix 1 Parish map



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## Appendix 2 Village map

Yellow =  
employment  
Pink = amenity  
Blue = housing or  
employment  
Red = Amenity or  
housing  
Orange =  
Amenity or  
employment



Areas are indicative only .

Areas show potential options but are  
subject to landowner wishes and the  
suitability of specific proposals.

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