



St Neots  
Neighbourhood  
Plan  
Consultation  
Statement

# Introduction

This Consultation Statement (hereafter 'the report') complies with Regulation 15(1)(b) of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

The report includes the following information as required by Regulation 15(2)(a)-(d):

- (a) Details of the persons and bodies who were consulted about the proposed neighbourhood development plan;
- (b) an explanation of how they were consulted;
- (c) a summary of the main issues and concerns raised by the persons consulted; and
- (d) a description of how these issues and concerns have been considered and, where relevant, addressed in the proposed neighbourhood development plan.

## Details of consultation prior to Neighbourhood Plan

St Neots Town Council represents the community and also has a strong history of consultation with the community. Many recent reports and initiatives in St Neots, which have been prepared with the input of the community, have helped to shape the Neighbourhood Plan.

In 2008 Huntingdonshire District Council commissioned consultants to prepare a Healthcheck of St Neots. The Healthcheck included extensive consultation with the community. Many recommendations were made to improve the vitality of St Neots, however few actions were taken. The Healthcheck has formed an important part of the evidence base for the Neighbourhood Plan and the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to build on the vision set out in the Healthcheck.

Another example is the St Neots Town Centre Initiative, which was compiled by local people. The initiative sets out a range of environmental and transport issues. It identified five land use planning recommendations for the Huntingdonshire Local Plan, which have all been addressed in the Neighbourhood Plan. These were:

1. Mixed use development in the Town Centre will increase vitality and minimise the need to travel.

2. Major residential schemes should concentrate on improved access to the Town Centre.
3. Emphasis to be placed on non-car modes of travel.
4. The allocation of a car park to the south of the Town Centre.
5. A review of river based development.

The Town Council recognise that fair and equal treatment must apply to all. Through the various consultation events, as detailed in this report, the Town Council has tried to reach a wide cross-section of the community to ensure that no-one is disadvantaged by the Neighbourhood Plan.

# Neighbourhood Plan survey

The Town Council prepared a survey with the aim of finding out what people like and dislike about St Neots and what changes people would like to see. A copy of this survey is included in appendix 1. The survey was first made available on x and comments were requested by 30 November 2013.

However, the Town Council agreed that any comments received after this date would be presented to and considered at the next Development and Growth Committee meeting to ensure that everyone in the community has a chance to shape the Neighbourhood Plan.

A copy of this survey was made available on the Town Council's website and the Shape Your Place website. Throughout autumn/winter 2013 the Town Council made a concerted effort to reach as many people in St Neots as possible to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan was drafted with an understanding of the community's views.

## Neighbourhood Plan survey findings

The key findings from the Neighbourhood Plan survey are set out below under different themes.

### Rejuvenation & Development:

Residents

- Too many houses and little free parking or road parking for new residents.
- Negative feeling towards Wintringham Park idea.
- Cars parked on Monarch Road so close to bumps causes more damage than good. Remove bumps.
- People are requesting a greater attention to graffiti, litter and dog fouling around residential areas. Beatty Wood in Eaton Socon is a through path from Tesco express so many people are dropping a lot of litter and left over food. This isn't safe for the dogs that get walked there.

### Aesthetics:

- Improve roads and paths.

- High Street needs a good clean while preserving the history and character of the town.
- Need more bins in parks and town centre.

#### Development

- The Old Falcon needs to be utilised. Perfect location with it having a river front view. Ideas for this have been: Riverside Café, Restaurant & Bar, Night Club, and Cocktail Bar.
- Cycle paths need improving. Causing serious issues for drivers due to less experienced cyclists causing traffic build up. Also wheelchair and experienced cyclists have limited paths.
- Road markings need improving.
- Better secondary education and adult education.
- Offer better seating areas on the market square, perhaps extend Café Nero to support this.
- Better street lights along main roads and in parks.

The overall quality of our roads and paths has been a recurring issue mentioned in the surveys. People want the history and character preserved while updated the overall appearance of the High Street aesthetically. Majority have also commented on the increasing amount of houses that are being built. Their main argument is that existing infrastructure issues must be dealt with first before building anymore houses. Lastly, the old falcon pub is on many people's minds with regards to it being in a perfect location and it not being utilised appropriately.

#### **Entertainment & Leisure:**

Leisure ideas and improvements

- Better or additional swimming pool. Partnered with the return of the outdoor pool.
- More health and fitness events.
- Crazy golf
- More social groups; Mums & Children groups. Community groups need greater support.
- Improve Priory Centre: Permanent Theatre.
- Add a roof onto the ramps at the park. This allows usage all year round. Better CCTV at the ramps so that children feel safer.
- Parking at the cinema has been a big concern. How much for a standard 2.5 hour film?

With regards to the crazy golf, it may be worth approaching the Ambiance Café and see whether the council can support them in developing the old crazy golf area. It could offer something really special to our already thoroughly enjoyed parks. The roof on the ramps could allow children to use them all year round; this seemed like a view by majority of the children that took the survey. Parking at the new cinema needs to be looked at. Are they going to charge hourly, or offer half/ full day rates. Huntingdon has been accused of issuing fines of £100 for people staying over 3.5 hours. This isn't enough for people that may want to enjoy a meal then a film afterwards.

### **Shops and Services:**

#### Retail

- There is an excellent variety of restaurants.
- More supermarkets are needed.
- Desperately need new men's and children's wear stores; not from independent boutiques as many residents cannot afford the products. Ideas being; Peacocks, Matalan, TK Maxx. Tesco does not count as a retailer for men's and children's wear. We need something in the town centre.
- Need better variety in stores that are affordable franchises. We need to actively seek occupants; Wilkinson's and Poundland.
- The High Street appears dated, with too many card shops, opticians and charity shops. There are also far too many empty stores.
- Overall stores that are needed: Men and children clothing, Job centre, better library, registry office and butchers.

#### Services

- Pay council tax by cash
- Better policing on the street and in vehicles. Need to be actively seen along the High Street and in residential areas; especially on a Friday and Saturday night.
- Better bus service is desperately needed. Direct routes to town, Tesco and train station. Sunday services are also needed.
- Regular shuttle bus from villages to town could be very beneficial especially as many people have issues with parking costs.
- Better service in the doctors. People are arguing that they wait up to an hour after their appointment time to actually be seen. This is very poor service especially when people usually have to take time off work to get an appointment.

Many people have requested a greater variety of shops in the town. Shops have been a recurring issue especially seeing as Burtons has now left. Menswear and children's wear shops have been requested by many residents, however independent traders appear to have higher prices than what majority of our residents can afford. So it would require sourcing franchises that can provide affordable clothing. Other convenience stores; such as Wilkinson's or Poundland have also been requested. This offers residents a greater variety on a smaller budget. The main objective is to attract residents to shop within our town rather than going elsewhere, which seemed to be the case for almost all survey participants. Offering 1 or 2 shops which caters for the above needs would definitely attract people to shop within the town.

### **Parking:**

- Parking costs are far too high. Many residents are asking for free parking or at least the first 30 minutes to an hour free.
- Road parking has now been taken away from many residents due to yellow lines, or poor road markings.
- Permit schemes for residents and visitors may be a positive solution.
- Better CCTV in every car park.

### **Traffic:**

- Too many traffic lights. Many are requesting that the High Street is pedestrianised.
- A428 needs dualling.
- Priory road needs re opening.
- Safer cycle tracks to prevent the inexperienced cyclists causing a build-up of traffic.
- New car parks to support all of the new houses and infrastructure in the town.

Parking and Traffic has been one the biggest concerns of the residents. With all the last remaining free parking areas completely eliminated and with parking prices having almost doubled over the years this has been a very prominent problem whilst reviewing the surveys. With offering the first 30 minutes free this would allow the people that only need to run into one shop the chance to park for free, rather than paying for time that they don't use. Some residents have suffered with the use of double yellow lines being put down in front of their homes causing them real issues when they need additional parking. The idea for permits where residents that require additional parking could purchase a yearly household permit or visitor permits could offer residents the choice,

rather than simply restricting them. This would also mean a source of income for the council. Some are requesting bigger car parks to cater for the large amount of new houses that have been built.

With regards to traffic there only seems to be issues with the High Street and the A428. The amount of traffic lights seems to be a big problem and many people have requested that the High Street be pedestrianised or open Priory Lane. Reducing the amount of traffic lights and having them sync together would create a better flow of traffic.

### **Parks:**

- Litter especially around the skate park and kids play areas, we must invest in more bins.
- Desperately needs better street lighting, which clearly lights paths in and around the parks.
- The cows on the common are believed to be dangerous, preventing people walking dogs.
- Too much dog fouling in the parks and on the streets.
- Beautiful parks and river overall.
- To decrease the chance of flooding cleaning and digging out the river bed would be a definite solution.
- Utilise the excellent river fronts by having more cafes, bars, eateries along the river.
- Riverside events are considered to be thoroughly enjoyed by majority of the residents and they have asked for more events to increase community spirit.

The parks have received the most positive feedback, with them being the most enjoyed and appreciated areas in St Neots. Residents are asking that we preserve the green spaces and our river while having more events to bring the community together. We are very fortunate that we have excellent river fronts so it has been proposed that there are more riverfront bars, restaurants, cafes or eateries along the river to showcase one of the town's best assets. Children that answered the survey stressed their concerns that the ramps have become very unwelcoming for children that don't participate in drugs and alcohol, and that they want somewhere that is safe for them to go. They have requested better CCTV and policing of those areas on Friday-Sunday. By mentioning in the Neighbourhood Plan about the residents' concerns for flooding which ruins our green spaces, this could be used to approach the Environment Agency that the river needs attending to.

Table 1 below shows the results from the Neighbourhood Plan survey under the question: for each of the following list of things in St Neots please tick the box which you think best describes the current provision. Table 2 shows this as a percentage.

|          | Inadequate | Poor | Average | Good | Excellent |
|----------|------------|------|---------|------|-----------|
| Housing  | 9          | 15   | 58      | 54   | 12        |
| Jobs     | 22         | 51   | 61      | 10   | 0         |
| Leisure  | 12         | 32   | 55      | 61   | 13        |
| Traffic  | 43         | 66   | 50      | 4    | 0         |
| Schools  | 9          | 30   | 70      | 43   | 4         |
| Shopping | 19         | 50   | 60      | 41   | 3         |

Total 215 surveys

**Table 1.** Neighbourhood Plan survey findings of current provision.

|          | % | Inadequate | Poor | Average | Good | Excellent |
|----------|---|------------|------|---------|------|-----------|
| Housing  |   | 8%         | 6%   | 16%     | 25%  | 38%       |
| Jobs     |   | 19%        | 21%  | 17%     | 5%   | 0%        |
| Leisure  |   | 11%        | 13%  | 16%     | 29%  | 41%       |
| Traffic  |   | 38%        | 27%  | 14%     | 2%   | 0%        |
| Schools  |   | 8%         | 12%  | 20%     | 20%  | 13%       |
| Shopping |   | 17%        | 20%  | 17%     | 19%  | 9%        |

**Table 2.** Neighbourhood Plan survey findings of current provision as a percentage

## Integrating the survey findings into the Neighbourhood Plan

The Neighbourhood Plan survey findings identified the issues that are important to the local community. The Town Council considered it essential that these were taken forward into the Neighbourhood Plan to ensure that it reflects the wishes and aspirations of the community.

The following tables outline how the survey findings have been addressed in the Neighbourhood Plan. Some of the issues identified are non-planning issues and so cannot be included in the main body of the Neighbourhood Plan. However, to show the community that their comments have been taken into account all non-planning issues are included in a section of the Neighbourhood Plan along with how these ideas can be addressed and by whom.

### Rejuvenation & Development: Residents

| Survey finding  | How NP can address issue   |
|---|--|
| Too many houses and little free parking or road parking for new residents.  | Policy on minimum car parking spaces. NP cannot address issue of too many houses as NPs cannot promote less development than set out in District Local Plan. |
| Negative feeling towards Wintringham Park idea.   | NP cannot promote less development than set out in District Local Plan. NP can help to promote social cohesion.  |
| Cars parked on Monarch Road so close to bumps causes more damage than good. Remove bumps.   | Include in non planning section.   |
| People are requesting a greater attention to graffiti, litter and dog fouling around residential areas. Beatty Wood in Eaton Socon is a through path from Tesco express so many people are dropping a lot of litter and left over food. This isn't safe for the dogs that get walked there. | Include in non planning section.   |

**Table 3.** Findings from Neighbourhood Plan survey and how they are addressed in the Neighbourhood Plan in relation to Residents.

### Aesthetics

| Survey finding   | How NP can address issue  |
|--|---|
| Improve roads and paths.   | Sustainable travel policy supporting improvements to roads & footpaths where new development would exacerbate existing problems.                                      |
| High Street needs a good clean while preserving the history and character of the town. | NP recognises the importance of history & character of the town & need for an improved public realm. Non planning section to include a good clean of the High Street. |
| Need more bins in parks and town centre.   | Include in non planning section.  |

**Table 4.** Findings from Neighbourhood Plan survey and how they are addressed in the Neighbourhood Plan in relation to Aesthetics.

## Residents

| Survey finding   | How NP can address issue  |
|--|---|
| The Old Falcon needs to be utilised. Perfect location with it having a river front view. Ideas for this have been: Riverside Café, Restaurant & Bar, Night Club, and Cocktail Bar.     | River setting policy supports making the most of the river front and support for the redevelopment of The Old Falcon. |
| Cycle paths need improving. Causing serious issues for drivers due to less experienced cyclists causing traffic build up. Also wheelchair and experienced cyclists have limited paths. | Sustainable travel policy requires improvements to cycle paths as part of new development.                            |
| Road markings need improving.  | Include in non planning section.  |
| Better secondary education and adult education.  | Policies on school provision and training and also included in non planning section.                                  |
| Offer better seating areas on the market square, perhaps extend Café Nero to support this.   | Policy requiring improvements to public realm & creation of a café culture.   |
| Better street lights along main roads and in parks.  | Include in non planning section.  |

**Table 5.** Findings from Neighbourhood Plan survey and how they are addressed in the Neighbourhood Plan in relation to Development.

**Entertainment & Leisure:**

Leisure ideas and improvements

| <b>Survey finding</b>  | <b>How NP can address issue</b>                        |
|--|--|
| Better or additional swimming pool. Partnered with the return of the outdoor pool.   | Policy supporting a new swimming pool.                 |
| More health and fitness events.  | Include in non planning section                        |
| Crazy golf   | Refer to in supporting text in Leisure section of NP.  |
| More social groups; Mums & Children groups. Community groups need greater support.   | Include in non planning section.                       |
| Improve Priory Centre: Permanent Theatre.  | Policy supporting the creation of a permanent theatre. |
| Add a roof onto the ramps at the park. This allows usage all year round. Better CCTV at the ramps so that children feel safer. | Include in non planning section.                       |
| Parking at the cinema has been a big concern. How much for a standard 2.5 hour film?   | Include in non planning section.                       |

*Table 6. Findings from Neighbourhood Plan survey and how they are addressed in the Neighbourhood Plan in relation to Entertainment and Leisure.*

**Shops and Services:**

Retail

| <b>Survey finding</b>   | <b>How NP can address issue</b>  | <b>Actions to take forward</b>   |
|---|--|--|
| There is an excellent variety of restaurants.   | Comment noted, NP to include a policy protecting town centre uses.   | Town Centre Manager to seek to attract shops residents have identified are needed. |
| More supermarkets are needed.   | Policy support for new supermarkets.   |  |
| Need better variety in stores that are affordable franchises. We need to actively seek occupants; Wilkinson's | Policy supporting the enhancement of the Town Centre, refer in supporting text to need for affordable franchises |  |

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| and Poundland.  |  |  |
| The High Street appears dated, with too many card shops, opticians and charity shops. There are also far too many empty stores. | Policy supporting the enhancement of the Town Centre including expansion of and public realm improvements.   |  |
| Overall stores that are needed: Men and children clothing, Job centre, better library, registry office and butchers.            | Policy supporting the enhancement of the Town Centre, refer in supporting text to need for men's and children's wear chain stores, Job Centre, better Library, Registry Office and Butchers. |  |

**Table 7.** Findings from Neighbourhood Plan survey and how they are addressed in the Neighbourhood Plan in relation to Retail.

### Services

| Survey finding   | How NP can address issue  | Actions to take forward                   |
|--|---|---|
| Pay council tax by cash.   | Include in non planning section.  |   |
| Better policing on the street and in vehicles. Need to be actively seen along the High Street and in residential areas; especially on a Friday and Saturday night. | Include in non planning section.  | Discuss with Neighbourhood Policing Team. |
| Better bus service is desperately needed. Direct routes to town, Tesco and train station. Sunday services are also needed.   | Policy supporting improved linkages by sustainable modes of travel, plus include in non planning section. | Discuss with bus companies.               |
| Regular shuttle bus from villages to town could be   | Include in non planning section.  | Discuss with bus companies.               |

|   |                                  |                   |
|---|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| very beneficial especially as many people have issues with parking costs.   |                                  |                   |
| Better service in the doctors. People are arguing that they wait up to an hour after their appointment time to actually be seen. This is very poor service especially when people usually have to take time off work to get an appointment. | Include in non planning section. | Discuss with GPs. |

**Table 8.** Findings from Neighbourhood Plan survey and how they are addressed in the Neighbourhood Plan in relation to Services.

## Parking & Traffic:

### Parking

| Survey finding   | How NP can address issue  | Actions to take forward    |
|--|---|----------------------------|
| Parking costs are far too high. Many residents are asking for free parking or at least the first 30 minutes to an hour free. | Include in non planning section.  | Discuss with HDC.          |
| Road parking has now been taken away from many residents due to yellow lines, or poor road markings.                         | Include a Policy setting minimum car parking spaces for new dwellings.    |                            |
| Permit schemes for residents and visitors may be a positive solution.  | Include in non planning section.  | Discuss with HDC.          |
| Better CCTV in every car park.   | Include in non planning section. Include a policy supporting CCTV as part | Discuss with HDC & Police. |

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
|  | of new development. Perhaps as part of a general design policy. |  |
|--|---|--|

**Table 9.** Findings from Neighbourhood Plan survey and how they are addressed in the Neighbourhood Plan in relation to Parking and Traffic.

### Traffic

| Survey finding  | How NP can address issue  | Actions to take forward                                    |
|---|---|--|
| Too many traffic lights. Many are requesting that the High Street is pedestrianised.    | Policy on improving the public realm of the Town Centre. Also include in non planning section | Discuss traffic lights & pedestrianising High St with CCC. |
| A428 needs dualling.  | Include a policy supporting this.   | Discuss with CCC & HDC.                                    |
| Priory Road needs re opening.   | Include in non planning section.  | Discuss with CCC.  |
| Safer cycle tracks to prevent the inexperienced cyclists causing a build-up of traffic. | Policy requiring improvements to cycle paths as part of new development.                      | Discuss specific locations with CCC.                       |
| New car parks to support all of the new houses and infrastructure in the town.          | Policy safeguarding existing car parks.   |  |

**Table 10.** Findings from Neighbourhood Plan survey and how they are addressed in the Neighbourhood Plan in relation to Traffic.

### Parks:

| Survey finding   | How NP can address issue         |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Litter especially around the skate park and kids play areas, we must invest in more bins.    | Include in non planning section. |
| Desperately need better street lighting, which clearly lights paths in and around the parks. | Include in non planning section. |
| The cows on the common are believed to be dangerous, preventing people                       | Include in non planning section. |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| walking dogs.   |   |
| Too much dog fouling in the parks and on the streets.   | Include in non planning section.  |
| Beautiful parks and river overall.  | Designate the most important/ special Parks in the town as Local Green Spaces & include a policy in the NP. |
| To decrease the chance of flooding cleaning and digging out the river bed would be a definite solution.   | Include reference to flooding & mitigation measures in Environment section of NP.                           |
| Riverside events are considered to be thoroughly enjoyed by majority of the residents and they have asked for more events to increase community spirit. | Include reference to this in supporting text to river setting policy, also include in non planning section. |

**Table 11.** Findings from Neighbourhood Plan survey and how they are addressed in the Neighbourhood Plan in relation to Parks.

## Focus group

The Neighbourhood Plan survey and the evidence base generated a number of options for the Neighbourhood Plan. Prior to discussing these options the Town Council wanted to hear from the community and so held a focus group. This was held on 10 January 2014 and 10 people attended. Nine were residents and one person worked in St Neots but lived outside of the town.

This focus group was a really useful way of hearing detailed considerations from different members of the community and testing the options identified. It also provided the Town Council with reassurance that the options reflected the wishes of the community. Discussion also centred on how the Neighbourhood Plan had been promoted and whether it successfully reached the majority of the town.

## Contact with Huntingdonshire District Council

Whilst St Neots Town Council is responsible for preparing the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan and want it to be community led, the Town Council recognise that it must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan. The Basic Conditions Statement explains that the

Neighbourhood Plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan and general conformity with the emerging Local Plan.

A representative from St Neots Town Council met with Huntingdonshire District Council's (HDC) Planning Policy Manager and Senior Planning Policy Officer in January 2014 to discuss the progress to date. Prior to the meeting a number of options derived from the Neighbourhood Plan survey and the evidence base were sent to the District Council. At the meeting some of the Town Council's emerging draft policies were discussed. Following the meeting HDC submitted a note to the Town Council outlining policies where HDC believed there were conformity issues.

In accordance with Regulation 14(c), a hard copy of the draft Neighbourhood Plan was sent to HDC.

## Promoting and Publicising the Neighbourhood Plan

A dedicated marketing campaign was devised for the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan consultation to raise awareness across the St Neots area and to encourage engagement from local residents.

A full suite of marketing materials were produced, with a unique design identity to create a professional impactful approach and to demonstrate the significance and importance of the consultation. Activities and materials offered each and every St Neots resident the opportunity and ability to connect with the campaign in a multitude of ways, regardless of age, background or accessibility.

The organised campaign provided a genuine opportunity for residents to have their say in helping to shape the future of the town. The emphasis of the campaign was to clearly outline what the Neighbourhood Plan could offer, to reiterate that their views were important and start to gain an insight as to what the community wants to the future of the town to be.

We believe our multi-channel marketing campaign clearly and effectively reached out the St Neots community and provided a powerful platform for the activity. Campaign elements included:

### **Printed collateral**

A range of materials were produced to present details of the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan in a multitude of ways:

- 6 page DL Leaflet: to introduce key objectives of the plan to encourage further interest. Inserted into local paper for community wide reach, in book bags at all schools and nurseries, displayed by key promoters across the town and on display at all consultation events
- A5 postcard: to promote the plan and provide space for written feedback, displayed by key promoters across the town and on display at all consultation events
- A4, A3 and A2 posters: reiterating the campaign messages and for display throughout the town
- Outdoor banners: displayed in key location in the town during the six week period

### **Face to face discussion**

Over twenty events and dedicated focus groups, reaching hundreds of residents, were held in and around the town during the six week period - enabling residents to find out more about the plan and to state their opinions face to face, on paper or online.

Handpicked venues and selected key partners were approached in order to run bespoke Neighbourhood Plan events with a variety of event support materials provided as part of the campaign to reiterate the main Neighbourhood Plan messages. An introductory campaign video ran throughout the events and branded merchandise included balloons, notepads, pens, coasters and sweet pots; against the backdrop of a campaign banner and sandwich board that appeared at each event in the town.

**Impact:** Over xxxx St Neots residents' were part of dedicated roadshow events and focus groups across the town, playing a part in over xxx comments being submitted.

## Targeted advertising and PR awareness

As part of the campaign, an official media partnership was agreed with the local newspaper the St Neots News and Crier – part of an award winning free weekly newspaper series spanning the Ouse valley region, publishing quality local news, sport and features.

The media partnership enabled us to work closely with both the advertising and editorial departments to discuss the best approach to communication - reaching a potential weekly St Neots audience of nearly 13,000 – rising to over 40,000 when combined with the circulation figures for Huntingdon and St Ives.

The media campaign was launched with a full cover advertising wrap, which local businesses also committed to in support of the campaign. Half page ads were positioned week to week, each with a personalised message to promote the roadshow events coming up in the following week. The detailed Neighbourhood Plan leaflet was also inserted into the publication at the half way point of the campaign to act as a reminder of the activity and reiterating the importance of community involvement.

**Impact:** a weekly reach of up to 13,000 local St Neots residents through unique advertising plan in key community paper

Regular correspondence with the local press and the provision of PR content led to the publishing of approximately 20 independent news articles appeared during the campaign in the local area, including some front page news and unique article content, as well as regular campaign status reports.

## The value of an online presence

- Dedicated webpage in campaign style
- High level of Facebook and Twitter activity - using bespoke campaign hashtag #stneotsplan
- Web buttons for partner use and bespoke online advertising

With a large number of individuals now working and socialising online, having an online presence for the campaign was also key.

Details of the Neighbourhood Plan were displayed on a dedicated webpage ([www.stneots-tc.gov.uk/stneotsplan](http://www.stneots-tc.gov.uk/stneotsplan)), following the same campaign approach and linking to key social media channels and including an embedded copy of the introductory video - which received 138 hits during the six week campaign

A high level of interaction took place through social media channels to generate extensive awareness of this significant community initiative. A dedicated hashtag #stneotsplan across all tweets generated a campaign approach to the promotions and enabled an additional level of tracking for those who retweeted the content or responded directly. The St Neots Town Council Facebook page also published regular articles to a growing number of followers.

An online partnership was also secured with a well-known local business About My Area PE19 which committed to displaying regular content on its news pages and through its social media platforms.

The negotiated media partnership mentioned above also allowed us to agree to a number of online advertisements too, with an online page wrap appearing on the site homepage for the full six weeks of the campaign – obtaining 26,949 impressions and leading to 102 clicks through to the website.

The Council also invested in Facebook advertising to raise awareness of the plan to those users over the age of 16 that stated St Neots as their location. Investing in a dedicated campaign ad enabled over 5593 St Neots individuals to see details in their news feeds which saw 29 likes and 24 comments appear on the post directly as well as leading to 354 web clicks.

**Impact:** *online advertising\* led to over 450 clicks onto the campaign website.*

\* as of Friday 21st March, based on ads running on Newsandcrier.co.uk and Facebook

The box, below, shows the number of Twitter followers and Facebook likes for the Neighbourhood Plan for every week of the consultation period. There have been 697 downloads of the Neighbourhood Plan. These figures demonstrate the strength of the Town Council's engagement with the community since work began on the Neighbourhood Plan.

| Date                                | Twitter Followers | Facebook Likes |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Feb 7th                             | 2,493             | 352            |
| Feb 10th                            | 2,498             | 355            |
| Feb 17th                            | 2,517             | 359            |
| Feb 25th                            | 2,532             | 375            |
| March 5th                           | 2,547             | 381            |
| March 11th                          | 2,553             | 388            |
| March 17th                          | 2,558             | 391            |
| March 20th                          | 2,557             | 391            |
| Final Neighbourhood Plan downloads: |                   | 697            |

## Pre-submission consultation

This stage complied with Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, which is set out below.

14. Before submitting a plan proposal to the local planning authority, a qualifying body must—
- (a) publicise, in a manner that is likely to bring it to the attention of people who live, work or carry on business in the neighbourhood area—
    - (i) details of the proposals for a neighbourhood development plan;
    - (ii) details of where and when the proposals for a neighbourhood development plan may be inspected;
    - (iii) details of how to make representations; and
    - (iv) the date by which those representations must be received, being not less than 6 weeks from the date on which the draft proposal is first publicised;
  - (b) consult any consultation body referred to in paragraph 1 of Schedule 1 whose interests the qualifying body considers may be affected by the proposals for a neighbourhood development plan; and
  - (c) send a copy of the proposals for a neighbourhood development plan to the local planning authority.

The Town Council published the draft Neighbourhood Plan for a 6 week period of public consultation from 7 February – 21 March 2014. The organisations

referred to in paragraph 1 of Schedule 1 of the Regulations were given an extended deadline of 3 April 2014.

A copy of the Neighbourhood Plan was published on the Neighbourhood Plan website and a link to this was available from the Town Council's website. The Evidence Base document, Sustainability Assessment and draft Strategic Environmental Assessment/ Habitat Regulations Assessment screening opinion were also made available. A number of roadshows and focus groups were held during the consultation period and the findings from these are summarised in the following section.

The principal aim of this consultation was to bring the Neighbourhood Plan to the attention of as many people as possible. Crucially the Town Council wanted to find out if they had identified the issues of importance to the community and addressed them satisfactorily.

The Town Council considered all comments received on the Neighbourhood Plan. The Development and Growth Committee considered and discussed comments on 25 March 2014 and agreed various amendments to the Neighbourhood Plan. Further amendments were considered and agreed by the Development and Growth Committee following 3 April 2014, which was the extended consultation deadline given to statutory consultees. The Full Town Council agreed the amendments to the Neighbourhood Plan at a meeting on the 10 April 2014. At this meeting the Town Council resolved to submit the Neighbourhood Plan and supporting material to Huntingdonshire District Council in accordance with Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations.

## **Summary of Roadshows and Focus Groups**

This section analyses the feedback received from the roadshows and focus groups. Feedback is broken down for each location with a summary of the main issues raised and a comment on how the Neighbourhood Plan addresses the issues raised.

### **Eaton's Children's Centre - Mucky Pups 11.02.14**

"I live near Tesco Eynesbury and it would be very convenient to have bus stops to Cambridge (X5) instead of driving to the town centre to catch the bus. Also more shops like Mothercare."

"We need more facilities for young children- especially after losing so many groups at the children's centres."

"More facilities for teenagers, places to 'hang out'. Also a better swimming pool with tunnels and slides."

"Swimming pool with specific times for toddlers and children. Swimming lessons at varied timetables."

"Desperately need a tumble tots in St Neots. 1-2 times a week. This would offer consistent activities for children, without having to travel miles- this is hard without a car."

"Please don't close down our sure start centres. We need better swimming pool time sessions for the children - too limited at the moment."

"A baby gym, low beams, vaulting horses, soft mattresses to jump on, trampolines, baby assault courses. "

"Willing to pay 50p-£1.00 a child to continue events like mucky pups. Please offer funding to these centres. Some people bring x 3 children to each event so the families really love these sessions. "

"More activities for kids- teenagers. During holidays they have nothing to do. Can't afford for them to travel and pay for certain things. Develop better teenager amenities in town."

"We need to have a small retail park on the boarder of Wintringham Park; 3-4 shops such as Next, Matalan, Peacocks, Outfit and a small ASDA or Sainsbury's. This would help keep our town centre historical."

**Summary:**

The main feedback received from this event relates to Entertainment and Leisure. Parents want a greater variety of activities to offer their children that is affordable and local. Majority of the parents spoken with would prefer to save money of the cost of transport to other towns for leisure facilities by

walking to places within the town. However, they feel there is not even the option to stay within the town.

**St Neots Town Council response:**

The Town Council agrees that the entertainment and leisure offer within St Neots should be enhanced. The Neighbourhood Plan supports leisure uses in the Town Centre, which is an accessible location within the town. The Neighbourhood Plan also supports specific leisure uses; a new swimming pool, outdoor theatre and bandstand.

**Waitrose - 13.02.14**

"Retail park for large stores. Wintringham Park is ideal for retail. Fill empty shops on High Street."

"Better access to swimming for children sessions- only on at weekends or at lunchtime. Need a session for preschool (0-5yrs) during week."

"Better traffic control on High Street. Indoor swimming pool in town."

"Buses to Sandy & South of St Neots & bring back X4."

"Church Street needs resurfacing. Leisure for the elderly."

"Better transport links from Little Paxton to station etc."

"Save the Ouse meadows, extend Riverside Park. Keep Priory Centre."

"Open air swimming or indoor swimming pool!"

**Summary:**

This event showed real variation in the feedback received. Better transport facilities were mentioned by many residents. With the event being held at lunchtime in a local supermarket the discussion of lack of buses seemed to be a real issue. The use of the empty 'outdoor pool' pitch has also been mentioned several times, with the ideas that an indoor pool could be built there to create a 'leisure world' around the existing Eat 'n' Bowl. This would allow an indoor pool to be accessible anytime during the day and not be restricted due to school swimming classes.

**St Neots Town Council response:**

The Town Council agrees that traffic congestion is an issue in the town and the Neighbourhood Plan identifies transport projects that the Town Council would like to explore with partners. The Neighbourhood Plan also seeks to promote sustainable modes of travel. The development of a new swimming pool on the old swimming pool site along with enabling development is supported in the Plan.

**Councillors Surgery 15.02.14**

"We have been promised major improvements for some time both of which are very late and await completion. Are there any penalty clauses to ensure that this does happen? The people of the town want action rather than promises."

"Shop rents seem too high to attract small local businesses to the town centre."

"There should be public toilets in Priory Park to encourage more use other than clubs."

"We need another road bridge in the north of the town. Opening Priory Lane will only make (a) small improvement."

**Summary:**

This event offered feedback regarding rejuvenation and shops & services. Longer time frame plans have left residents feeling frustrated, especially when there aren't any monthly progress notifications to the public. Majority of the residents that offered feedback would like a greater variety in retail within the town.

**St Neots Town Council response:**

Residents' frustrations in terms of project delivery are completely understood. Looking forward, the Town Council recognises that more work is needed to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan is monitored. The Neighbourhood Plan supports retail growth within the Town Centre.

**Farmers Market events (throughout February and March 2014)**

"I live in Chesterfield but visit St Neots quite often. We come to enjoy the beautiful park. We enjoy the market and local area. St Neots is a very

enjoyable place to visit, however, the traffic does deter you slightly from enjoying the town to its full potential."

"Pedestrianising High St is a crazy idea! All that is needed is to make the market square a proper market square and not a car park. Other than that the plan has some good ideas."

"Anything on flood protection?"

"There is a need for a northern bypass; A428 behind Love's farm to A1 via across the road to Great Paxton, over railway, over river, North of Little Paxton."

"Please stop building. Just give us 2-3 years to secure and improve our infrastructure we have at the moment with the population we have at the moment. Rather than make the problem of our roads worse by adding so many more people and cars. Please just pause planning for a couple of years and let us save our town!"

"New cemetery in Little Paxton?"

"The riverside parks need a good clean up. The paths at the side of the streams need clearing from litter. It will make it look a lot better for visitors as at the moment it looks a mess."

"We are seriously against opening Priory Lane. It would be dangerous!"

"The bypass is out of control. It is the only link for anyone south of St Neots to travel to Cambridge. It was meant to take a load off of the traffic that runs through the town, both are awful. We need a roundabout on A1 near Little Paxton to join Love's Farm road access onto A428."

"Maintain the historical nature of the town, so shop frontage could be maintained but you could knock through 2 shop units to allow larger stores to trade in the town."

"A bicycle hire would be fantastic. But cycle paths and pedestrian areas need to be dealt with FIRST."

"Eaton Socon needs a bit of attention. Roadways and pathways need rejuvenating. More youth entertainment facilities. Better alleyway lighting and more bins."

"Put bus lanes back in market sq. Open Priory Lane. Bring back info centre to museum. Regular bus service to station. We have too many traffic lights through town which hinders traffic flow. Develop Windmill Road site (small shops etc.) cut parking fees."

"Traffic around Market Square is terrible. I suggest making two lanes by Steve's taxi's so some vehicles are able to turn left or right causing better traffic flow. However, the traffic lights need to be synced for this to work effectively. Cut parking charges to get bigger footfall in town."

"Desperately need better variety of shops."

"Excellent ideas in the plan- it would be interesting to see a priority plan in terms of short term achievables and long term achievables."

### **Summary:**

The main areas that have come out in discussion during the campaign seem to be with regards to traffic, our parking and the constant building of homes. These are obviously delicate issues that are concerning majority of our residents. However, other comments do encourage more positive changes such as greater leisure facilities within the town, and these can be achieved as a short term plan, rather than longer term plans which require the most funding.

### **St Neots Town Council response:**

As explained previously the Neighbourhood Plan sets out a list of potential projects that the Town Council would like to explore with the Highways Authority and other partners to help improve the traffic congestion within the town. The Neighbourhood Plan cannot promote less development than set out in the District's Local Plan. However, through the Neighbourhood Plan the Town Council has tried to ensure that development in the town will be shaped by the community.

### **The Hillings Residential Home: 20.02.2014**

"We need better variety of shops; such as, Next, Peacocks, Wilkinson's."

"Keep shop frontage but knock through to make units larger."

There is far too much traffic. This needs to be addressed immediately. By simply pedestrianising the High Street won't get rid of traffic. That traffic must go somewhere, so a new structured route must be built before any major changes are enforced."

"A stronger bus route for instance a shuttle bus would allow a constant service that runs from the Eaton's to town, Eynesbury and Love's farm to the town and the surrounding villages. How can you expect more people to not use cars when there is absolutely no public transport?!"

Parking should offer 1-2hrs free. Better leisure amenities within our parks would be fantastic. A pavilion near the café and crazy golf."

"A nature reserve of mini zoo, farm."

"We need an indoor market or arcade."

### **Summary:**

Better public transport appeared to be the most talked about issue during this event. Especially with the residents being elderly they would utilise public transport quite frequently. Better transport allows residents from all backgrounds to be able to visit our wonderful features in the town, whether it is our town centre or the park. Restricting them of these luxuries is unfair.

### **St Neots Town Council response:**

The inadequate bus service has been mentioned by many residents. The Neighbourhood Plan requires new development of 10 dwellings or more to demonstrate how people can travel by sustainable modes of transport. The Neighbourhood Plan cannot require an improved bus service, however the Town Council has included talking to bus companies about the towns existing service in the non planning section as this is an important issue for many people in the town.

### **LikeMinded Network focus group: 25.02.2014**

Key areas of discussion included:

Better roads:

- The dualling of the A428 was of high importance to all meeting attendees
- The issue with the Little Paxton road flooding was also a concern – with the suggestion of raising the road to eliminate the road flooding. The potential of a northern bypass was also mentioned and was felt could also be of help.

#### Larger units for retail:

- It was felt by many in the group that the town needs commitment from bigger retailers, with some wanting this to be within the town centre. Others were comfortable with retail parks on the edge of town, like in Huntingdon, but some of the group felt that this would remove people from the heart of the town.
- Others in the group felt that there was an opportunity for St Neots to take a different approach, and encourage uniqueness by encouraging independent traders to come into the town. There was real interest in creating pop up shops for small local businesses to test the market and raise their profile with the local community. This topic of conversation came up several times during the evening's discussions. It was felt that an emporium could be popular, enabling smaller businesses to rent space within a larger business, perhaps with a built in coffee shop.
- The Handyman unit was mentioned specifically as an eyesore and a question was raised over whether retail units could be knocked together to create square footage for a larger retailer. The town was commended for only having 6% empty retail units compared to the national average of 15%.

#### Increasing accommodation options:

- It was mentioned that St Neots is already a desirable destination and many people visit St Neots on holiday. Offering a wider choice of places to stay would be helpful – such as B&B's which have disappeared over recent years.

#### Pedestrianising the High Street:

- This was raised by one town centre retailer who felt that pedestrianising part of the High Street should be considered.
- A lot of people in the room felt that the current layout of the High Street does not encourage people to walk about, you tend to put your head down and walk in a straight line to where you need to get to, rather than 'mooch around' the area and wander.
- The level of traffic in the town was also a concern, certainly for those with young children, which pedestrianising would eliminate – although it was agreed that this could have a knock on effect in other related areas – such as

moving the traffic hotspots elsewhere and discouraging people from entering the town if buses can't get into the centre.

Public transport:

- It was felt that the current bus provision was lacking and not fit for purpose. Many people living in areas outside the town itself (such as the Paxtons, Perry and Kimbolton) do not have flexibility with public transport options which can limit their opportunities to visit the town.
- It was also mentioned that there are large buses (single and double decker) that are often empty – due to erratic schedules. It was suggested that having small hopper style buses would make more sense – running across all local areas at regular intervals and with a smaller number of seats to increase likelihood of being utilised.
- There was significant support for the East to West railway line with a stop at St Neots, to enable easy access to traffic hotspots such as Cambridge and to encourage visitor footfall.

Local markets:

- The St Neots markets are seen as a key success for the town (the Farmers Market was rated very highly), with the suggestion that more tailored markets are run during the year, like the International Food and Drink market that took place last year

Increase the focus on eating and drinking destination:

- It was felt that local restaurant options have developed significantly in recent years and are very popular. This is something that some of the group felt could be expanded further.
- One attendee made the point that we may not be able to get the retailers we want to bring people in, but our good and developing eateries could be promoted to encourage footfall from this perspective.
- St Neots already has a coffee shop culture which could be enhanced further. It was felt by many in the room that a gastro pub could be a good addition to the current offering.

Maximising river frontage:

- Making the most of the river setting was something that the group were all in agreement of – with the suggestion of a bandstand and outside theatre area being of real interest.

New housing developments:

- There was a concern about the integration of the new out of town housing developments with some of these residents feeling disconnected from the community - the railway line was felt to act as a significant division and barrier from the town. However it was agreed that the new railway bridge will help to establish a stronger feeling of connection between areas.

Increasing family oriented facilities:

- A question was raised over the number of new residents due to enter St Neots in the next few years with the building of new housing areas, and it was agreed that the significant majority of this demographic will be families – so an emphasis on family oriented facilities and activities will be essential.
- This includes creating a better balance of retailers to appeal to the whole family – with a lack of children’s and men’s clothing options being raised by a number in the group.
- Some of the group questioned the amount of things there are for teenagers to do in the town, whilst others felt there were opportunities to get involved in activities if you seek them out.

#### **Summary:**

The feedback gained was a mix of business related requirements as well as general comments from women who live and work in the area who have a real interest in the town’s development.

#### **St Neots Town Council response:**

One of the main objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan is to support both existing and new businesses in the town through a variety of developments to encourage and grow the local economy.

#### **St Neots Museum: 27.02.2014**

“Can we please have a re-connected bus link between Cambourne and St Neots - for commuters, the new cinema and school. It is a desperate need that there is absolutely no public transport.”

“Bus link between Cambourne/ Cambridge – St Neots. We desperately need it in the community and the school in Cambourne. Otherwise provide a better secondary school in St Neots.”

"The priority should be to control/ rearrange the traffic in the town centre and the surrounding roads."

"Traffic is mentioned BUT what about the centre of St Neots? It is almost always gridlocked, and unbearable when it floods. Not just traffic chaos but air pollution for residents and shoppers."

"We need to know what's going on in our town and have our say a bit more seeing as this is the 2nd biggest town in the country."

**Summary:**

Better bus links have been mentioned again as well as poor traffic control. The main perception I received from this discussion was that people's lives are being made 10 times harder than they need them to be, and in their opinion yes they are large requests but they would make living in the town so much more enjoyable. A proper traffic management system must be devised as well as a strong bus service.

**St Neots Town Council response:**

See comments in the preceding paragraphs about transport projects and the bus service.

**Promotion and Tourism meeting: 04.03.2014**

"A428 will not be dualled, and the council are not actively supporting better road developments in our suffered town."

"If we stop building there will be an immediate stop in revenue. But something has to be done about our appalling infrastructure."

"HDC said they would maintain the skate park but are yet to do so. Therefore volunteers had to go down there and clear litter. Shady side of the High Street needs to be dealt with. Utilise the unused plots in the town such as the handyman. That is a massive unit space with an empty unit next door, offer it as one unit and it can be knocked through."

"We must take back control from HDC! This is our town not theirs."

**Summary:**

It appeared that the general consensus from this meeting was that St Neots residents would like our town council to take back the responsibility for our own town. If not, to have a greater percentage of input to large decisions that affect our residents. Correct surveys need to be undertaken to ensure the correct findings can be analysed and an appropriate plan of action can be produced.

**St Neots Town Council response:**

The Neighbourhood Plan will give St Neots more influence in the development of the town.

**Longsands Focus Group: 04.03.2014**

"Social events are great. It gives families things to do without paying to travel so far."

"Cycle hire on the market square. If it wasn't a car park, it could be used for so many great things. Cycle hire would allow those that can't afford a bike to cycle to school or just around to their friend's house for the day."

"Our parks are the best feature in St Neots. The ramps need a good clean with a roof so it can be used all year round. Better monitoring for drug users and alcohol."

"No fashion shops for teenage boys or men. Parking costs are high and the traffic is awful."

"Multi-storey car park could be built on Tebutts Road. It's a central location and near to the new cinema."

"If it is pedestrianised we need better shops, otherwise people will still go elsewhere and it will just be empty unused space."

"Outdoor pool needs to come back. Or an indoor pool that can have a sliding door to be opened in the summer months. We need to utilise that great area of St Neots; Priory Park, Eat 'n' Bowl, Longsands Academy."

"There are pointless islands in the middle of the road. It is making traffic flow complicated. Too many traffic lights. Signage needs to be cleaned or renewed, it doesn't look fresh."

"We do need better retail in the town. However, another secondary school or form of further education. We are bigger than Huntingdon so why don't we have a regional college? Or offer enterprise schemes or internships within the industries that we do have. This would encourage employment, offer new skills and train for future careers."

"Better bus links to colleges. Football goals in the parks."

**Summary:**

The students were so knowledgeable and certain of what they would like see be improved within the town. They are very conscious of the amount of traffic and lack of public transport to help them get to school or in and around the town. They do want to see a better variety of teenage retail stores as well as new leisure facilities, however their main interest was seeing the roads be improved, and a dramatic reduction in traffic and to make St Neots aesthetically look more pleasing.

**St Neots Town Council response:**

Refer to transport project comments in the preceding paragraphs. Policy SS1 seeks to increase the retail offer within the town and it is recognised that more men's and children's fashion shops are needed. Policy A1 seeks to improve the public realm of the Town Centre, which will make St Neots more aesthetically pleasing.

**St Neots Library 06.03.2014**

"What are the logistics to reopening Priory Lane? Pedestrianising the High Street won't work. It will simply direct traffic around our residential areas which are suffering as it is with poor roads."

"Flooding needs to be addressed immediately. What about a river boat that runs at rush hour to take people into the town when it has flooded?"

"River trips during the summer need to return, as does a crazy golf. The Priory Centre needs knocking down and starting again. That is one of the best locations in our entire town with a perfect river view and that building isn't utilised to its best potential."

"We need better river front café's, restaurants, bars. Also, more children play cafes where the adults could enjoy a coffee while the staff plays with the children."

**Summary:**

Flooding became a large topic of discussion during this event and the severe effects it has on the town in terms of traffic. We are aware that we live on a flood plain, but that doesn't mean actions can't be taken to ensure when it does flood the whole town doesn't suffer. This requires structured and in-depth analysis and time taken to devise flood restriction plans.

**St Neots Town Council response:**

It is agreed that flooding is a problem in the town and the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to ensure that new development does not exacerbate existing flood issues and includes appropriate mitigation measures to reduce flood risk.

**Bumps and Babes; Eaton Socon Children Centre 13.03.2014**

"Street a week is a great new scheme which helps to tidy the community and keep it pleasant. Bury has a scheme where if your car is low emissions you get a lower priced parking ticket."

"More changing facilities in retail stores. 4-5years play areas. Kids world."  
"Better mother-child parking. There are too many disabled parking which doesn't get used and not enough mother-child parking. People underestimate how much space you do need to get a child and pushchair out of a car."

"Sheltered seating in parks. No adorable children shops in town. Tesco is so limited its shocking that such a large family town there aren't enough children or teenage clothing stores."

"Love's Farm and Eynesbury Manor have shared pavements-roads, so pedestrians are in danger as cars think it is the road. When you have a pushchair it is even more dangerous. There needs to be much better planning on all these development areas."

"Northern access at Love's Farm is a good idea but a proper survey needs to be taken to address traffic management systems. What are the positive and negatives of having this road? Rather than just one person's opinion."

"Encourage more community classes. Offer funding to support children centres to stay open, otherwise offer us affordable and a better variety of children zones."

"Play areas in parks need to not be so separate down to age group. We have more than one child at different age groups and the play areas are too far away from each other, that they can't play together or at the same time."

**Summary:**

With this being a group for young mums and mums with a growing family the ideas mentioned are actually areas that are perhaps over looked, for instance; more mother-child parking bays rather than 4-5 in one large supermarket. Community group funding has been requested. Due to the lack of funding staffing has had to suffer at Eaton Socon Children Centre, which in return has led to some of the classes being permanently cancelled. These women have offered to pay to come to the groups, a £1.00 per child for example, but if is there few times a week where they can interact with other people in the same position as them. Funding distribution within the town needs to be looked at.

**St Neots Town Council response:**

These are important comments and are issues that affect many young families in the town. Unfortunately the Neighbourhood Plan cannot address the issues referred to in the summary but they will be added to the non planning section.

**U3A discussion 18.03.2014**

"We must take back ownership of the town from HDC if we think we will get anywhere."

"What about the possibility that if you have a train ticket (commuters) you get a free bus pass? This is dependent on whether a constant shuttle bus is enforced."

"The bus service needs a massive overhaul. It is disgraceful that councillors encourage you to not drive but you give us no alternative!"

**Summary:**

The idea that if a commuter who travels via train was able to get a cheaper bus ticket when they show they season train ticket seemed to offer a great

incentive to use public transport. This however, would only work if a solid bus link to the town centre, Cambridge or the railway station was enforced.

**St Neots Town Council response:**

The idea of a free bus ticket for rail commuters is an excellent idea, although not one that can be included in the Neighbourhood Plan. The Town Council would like to enter into discussions with Network Rail and the bus companies and this is one idea that will be put forward.

**Final Focus Group 19.03.2014**

The main objective of this focus group was to discuss what people's thoughts were on the campaign overall and to discuss the feedback we had received so far and what the thoughts were on them.

"The plan seems to come across as what can be done, in terms of a wish list, in comparison to what is feasible? The overall plan was considered as a great idea however, I would like to see a plan for priority planning, both short and long term plans. How much is actually deliverable?"

"If pedestrianised a bridge north of the Priory Centre would be the most appropriate location. Cars and retail don't mix. If Priory Lane was opened it is more dangerous than good. Once the High Street is pedestrianised, then what? It is dead space after retail hours and will this attract vandalism."

"We must get the NP accepted to allow opportunities in the future for greater policies. We need to secure and invest in employment land; near Little Paxton by the A1?"

"1-2 hours free of charge at all car parks. This would encourage greater footfall to the town and support the new development of the cinema. We need to encourage better shop signage, achieve what Chichester and Stamford have done, and make all signs the same."

**Summary:**

It appeared through general consensus that people agreed with majority of the plan. However, it was highlighted that perhaps actual deliverables with timescales need to be addressed and mentioned to ensure the public are fully aware of the planning intentions. Ideas have been created in the past but the residents now want to see actual evidence that their contribution is being

considered. Through correct plans to make residents lives easier and more enjoyable. A wish list isn't what the residents are after; they want to see solid structured plans that are feasible. They want a structured timeline to show show-term achievable compared to longer-term achievable. Traffic has been a predominant area of concern throughout this entire campaign. People's lives are being made more and more stressful through poorly structured traffic management systems and they want an immediate change. Retail was discovered to be a key factor in the first stage surveys and although it has come up as still important there are other major areas they need addressing.

### **St Neots Town Council response:**

The Town Council is pleased to learn that the generally residents agreed with the majority of the Plan. Neighbourhood Plans, once made, are statutory planning documents and so the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan will have more status and influence than previous plans and projects. The comments about timescales is understood and it is difficult to set timescales as the projects in the Neighbourhood Plan are dependent on other organisations, including developers. For this reason it is proposed to delete the timescales section from the delivery table. The Town Council is not able to set the timescales and do not want to set unrealistic and unachievable timescales.

### **Summary of comments submitted by email and post**

This section summarises the written comments that were received about the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan. A response is included, which shows how the Town Council considered each comment and, where relevant, has addressed in the Neighbourhood Plan. Where amendments to the Neighbourhood Plan are proposed additions are shown in bold and deletions are shown as struck through.

This section begins by summarising general comments, with a response to each. It then outlines all comments received in relation to each policy with an overall response for each policy.

Many of the comments received began by congratulating the Town Council on the Neighbourhood Plan. These have not been repeated in this summary but it is important to note that many of respondents support the Draft Neighbourhood Plan and through their comments are helping to improve the Plan.

## General

I found the idea and the scope of the St Neots Plan quite ambitious in a time where we are moving away from recession and into a growing economy. That said, without initiatives like this then nothing will ever happen. I thought the content of the plan were very informative and covered all of the major talking points in St Neots.

Colour, format, etc was very striking and easy to read.

The order of the plan seemed illogical to me.

The vision section seemed a bit light to me give all of the other components that have gone into it. A "Roadmap" would be very useful which would give an indication of the order and timelines in which you would hope to tackle each of the issues at hand. The implementation section at the end alludes to this but should have been more prominent. Trevor Baldwin, resident

St Neots Town Council response: Comments noted.

a) It would be helpful if a map showing the area which the Neighbourhood Plan covers could be included at the start of the document. b) Page 10, paragraph 2, amend Great Ouse to River Great Ouse. c) Page 10, paragraph 3 and page 11, paragraph 3 - amend 1960's to 1960s. Can the Parks section be renamed to 'Parks and Open Spaces' please, to reflect its actual content? Alison Pearson, resident

St Neots Town Council response: Comments noted, typos to be amended and include a map of the Neighbourhood Plan area in the introduction. Amend title of Parks section as suggested.

The St Neots Neighbourhood plan of April 2014 totally ignores the subject of access to the town from the A1 via Lt Paxton. Recent events with flooding and closure of the river bridge at Lt Paxton have shown that far from being a 'minor' irritation, the loss of this vehicular access to the town causes major commercial and personal disruption to the whole of the town, with traffic grid-lock occurring on Crosshall Road & St Neots Road in Eaton Ford, the A428 between the A1/A428 junction, Cromwell Road and Berkley Street Eynesbury and has even caused the A1 southbound to back-up beyond the Buckden roundabout. Beside the disruption to the population who live, work, shop, or go to school in St Neots (a round trip from Lt Paxton to Longsands can take well over an hour – walking is not always advisable). Apart from the time, and cost, this has obvious implications for the Quality of Air and Particulate

Pollution levels within the town and especially the High Street. Neil Donoghue, Little Paxton resident

St Neots Town Council response: The Town Council believes that it has done everything it can through the Neighbourhood Plan to address parking and traffic issues throughout the town. It accepts that there is a lot of work to do outside of the Neighbourhood Plan process and as a spatial planning document there are limits as to what it can achieve in terms of parking and traffic. The Town Council has included a list of highways projects it would like to explore with Huntingdonshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council (the Highways Authority) in policy PT4. Raising Mill Lane has been added to the list of projects to explore.

The cows on the common are believed to be dangerous, preventing people from walking dogs. This is self-evident. The issue is whether the historic right to graze cattle on common land should be denied to allow owners to walk their dogs wherever they please. Neil Donoghue, Little Paxton resident

St Neots Town Council response: This was a comment received as part of earlier consultation. The Neighbourhood Plan does not suggest denying a right to graze cattle on common land.

The St Neots Community Hydro scheme is at an early stage and a feasibility Study has just commenced, which will be carried out by the Anglia Ruskin University. The scheme will be sited alongside Mill Lane on the River Great Ouse adjacent to the river bridge and sluices. There are around 20 Community Hydro schemes around the UK which are either now producing green energy or are in various stages of being implemented. In many of these schemes the local District or Town Councils have taken an active interest and in some they have actually taken shares in the schemes to confirm their commitment to the local communities. Many of these schemes have become a real tourist attraction and are regularly visited by schools in the areas to teach children about renewable energy generation and carbon emissions. The implementation of this scheme is not being undertaken lightly and we appreciate that we will have many difficulties to overcome such as obtaining planning permission, negotiations with land owners and all the requirements which will be imposed by the Environment Agency, but we have accepted this challenge and we are convinced that this is a project which will benefit the local community and St Neots in General, for many years to come. This is a scheme which the St Neots Town Council should be actively interested in,

should really support and should be included within in the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan to demonstrate that the Council are both supporting a community effort, supporting the Government in its aim to reduce carbon emissions and to show that the Council is also forward looking and supportive of generation green energy and local community enterprise. John Mouatt, resident

Power generation water driven turbine under the Little Paxton bridge. Bryn Dymott, resident

St Neots Town Council response: The Town Council supports the principle of this community renewable energy scheme. It agrees that reference should be made to the scheme in the Neighbourhood Plan, although it is difficult to include specific detail as the scheme is at an early stage. The following addition is proposed to the end of Policy P3: **"The Town Council supports the St Neots Community Hydro scheme subject to compliance with other planning policies."**

Front cover: Would be nice to have a picture of centre of town with people etc. Robert Tyler, resident

St Neots Town Council response: Comment noted.

Page 9 – would suggest some more positive that "difficulties encountered" – maybe challenges would be better. Robert Tyler, resident

St Neots Town Council response: Agreed, amend as suggested.

One of the main problems in St. Neots Town centre is the poor traffic flow. This is not helped by the location of busy and inadequate bus stops around the Market Square, resulting in both local and national busses stopping in the High Street to pick up and drop off passengers. A dedicated bus station would ease this problem where busses could stop safely without causing an obstruction and passengers could wait in an equally safe environment. Ideal locations would be either the Market Square, the Riverside Park Car Park or Tebbuts Road Car Park which would all provide a central and easily accessed location for pedestrians, with parking for car users. Alternatively the old outdoor swimming pool site could provide an out-of-town bus station which could be served by a town circular local bus linking it to other routes and the Railway Station. Cliff Owen, resident

St Neots Town Council response: The Town Council believes that it has done everything it can through the Neighbourhood Plan to address parking and traffic issues and accepts that there is a lot of work to do outside of the Neighbourhood Plan process. The Neighbourhood Plan is a spatial planning document and there are limits as to what it can achieve in terms of parking and traffic.

### Bus station??

Page 10 Historic Development - you state that the river was the county boundary until 1974. This is incorrect - the river ceased to be the county boundary in 1965, when the Eatons were moved from Bedfordshire to Huntingdonshire. 1974 was the year when Huntingdonshire was subsumed into Cambridgeshire. Dave Jarett, local resident

St Neots Town Council response: Delete the following sentence from page 10: "Prior to the 1974 local government reorganisation, the river formed the Cambridgeshire/Bedfordshire border."

Ideally developers should be made to build the community facilities prior to or in parallel with the first batch of houses on any development, and not allowed to leave till the end (witness the recent Little Paxton situation) Dave Jarett, local resident

St Neots Town Council response: Comment noted, the Town Council agree.

You mention that there are 2 Scheduled Ancient Monuments in St Neots - could they please be listed so we know what they are. One website lists 3 - the Castle Hills in Eaton Socon, the Priory, and the Malting Kiln (it's not an Oast House!) Dave Jarett, local resident

St Neots Town Council response: The Evidence Base document lists the two Scheduled Ancient Monuments in St Neots: the Benedictine Priory and the Maltings (former John Days Brewery).

There are a (small) number of spelling, grammatical and typographical mistakes - I suggest a severe proof-reading of the final version.

St Neots Town Council response: Agreed.

Efficient property use: will SNTC pursue HDC to use their powers to get long-term empty housing stock, buildings such as the Old Falcon, and other buildings (where not beyond repair) back into use? Some have been vacant for a decade or more but HDC seems more afraid of upsetting absentee property owners than of meeting the needs of the community. Julia Hayward, resident

St Neots Town Council response: The Town Council will work with developers and Huntingdonshire District Council in an attempt to re-use vacant buildings throughout the town. It is agreed that this is an efficient use of land.

Improve town councils image – The town council needs to improve its image in order to gain public support. Peter Clark-Ward resident

St Neots Town Council response: Through the Neighbourhood Plan the Town Council and thus the community will have greater influence over development in St Neots. The Town Council has engaged with the community throughout the production of this Neighbourhood Plan and it is hoped that better relationships have been formed between the Council and community.

I feel that insufficient time has been given for responses. Bryn Dymott, resident

I don't feel we have all been given enough time to consider these proposals in detail. Holly Jones, resident

We are concerned about the Neighbourhood Plan's ambitious timescales. Huntingdonshire District Council

St Neots Town Council response: The Town Council has engaged with the community throughout the Neighbourhood Plan process. 6 weeks has been given for comments on the Draft Neighbourhood Plan as set out in the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations.

It is unclear why the District Council is so concerned about the timescales. The Town Council has been pro-active in driving forward this Neighbourhood Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan is legally compliant and extensive consultation and publicity took place; far in excess of that required by the Regulations. We question the Town Council's assessment that a SEA is not required due to the plan containing only beneficial policies. This is not the case - the draft plan supports a northern by-pass and river crossing, to ease traffic flow through the town. While we agree with the need to tackle congestion in St Neots, providing more road capacity is unlikely to provide a long-term solution. Further, the

route of such a by-pass would likely pass close to, or through, existing wetland areas of importance for wildlife and people, such as Paxton Pits nature reserve. Such development could be very damaging in environmental and landscape terms, while compromising the green space ambitions referred above, and therefore demands appropriate assessment (in the form of a SEA). David Hoccom, Little Paxton resident

St Neots Town Council response: The Town Council's SEA screening opinion explains why the Town Council considers that a SEA is not required. Huntingdonshire District Council has been asked to consider this screening opinion along with the Environment Agency, Natural England and English Heritage. The Neighbourhood Plan does not support a northern bypass and river crossing but sets out the Town Council's commitment to work with partners to explore the potential for this project, along with others to improve traffic flow into/ out of and within the town. If this project is explored it will of course involve appropriate environmental assessments.

St Neots has an ageing population and the Town Council can act as a catalyst to encourage and support provision and /or facilities for the elderly. William Musck, resident

St Neots Town Council response: The Neighbourhood Plan has been written with the needs of all residents in mind.

Plan for new church or community centre. Most people I know are concerned about the planned growth of the town that will change the town for ever and, although I know this is completely outside the town council's sphere of influence, I think it important that you know how worried many people are about this! Elaine Donaldson, resident

St Neots Town Council response: The Town Council is also concerned about the growth of the town and this was one of the reasons for producing a Neighbourhood Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan allows the community a chance to have a say in development within St Neots. Policy SS2 has been amended to refer to development making provision for new places of worship.

The Wintringham Park Consortium were not consulted on the Neighbourhood Plan, which is contrary to paragraph 14, subsection (a) of Part 5 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General Regulations) 2012 Regulations. Parts of the evidence base are misleading. The applications for Wintringham Park proposes

2,800 homes and Love's Farm East (Phase 2) proposes 1,200 new homes. The figures stated at Page 6 of the Evidence Base (3,600 homes and 1,500 homes) are not justified by any evidence. It then concludes this will add a further 20,000 inhabitants for the town. The draft Plan does not appear to be in conformity with the NPPF and the adopted Core Strategy 2009 and there is limited supporting evidence to justify some of the development control policies contained within the document. The Wintringham Park Consortium (Bidwells)

Gallagher Estates were not consulted on the draft Neighbourhood Plan.  
Gallagher Estates (Savills)

St Neots Town Council response: As detailed in the Consultation Statement the Neighbourhood Plan has been widely publicised and the Plan was obviously brought to the attention of The Wintringham Park Consortium and Gallagher Estates as they have both submitted comments. The evidence base includes St Neots Town Council's response to the Huntingdonshire Local Plan consultation in July 2013. The figure of 3,600 homes was the original figure quoted at District for Wintringham Park but densities have been reduced. Phase II of Love's Farm is between 1,200 and 1,400 depending upon whether it is built at the higher or lower density. In addition, there are a number of other sites identified by the emerging Local Plan such as Cromwell Road, and Little End Road, St Mary's in the Town Centre etc. Also the Knights Park proposals. The 20,000 population figure was from a County demographics projection. Considering that the Eastern expansion and other development sites will likely total around 6,500 - 7,000 dwellings, with about 2-4 inhabitants, the 20,000 population increase is not inaccurate. The number of dwellings proposed for Wintringham Park and Love's Farm phase 2 have been amended in the evidence base document. The Basic Conditions Statement explains that the Neighbourhood Plan is in conformity with the NPPF and development plan. The evidence base is appropriate for the Neighbourhood Plan. Neighbourhood planning is community led and it is not realistic to expect Neighbourhood Plans to have the same extensive evidence base requirements as Local Plans.

The new development of Wintringham Park is going to compound the concept of St Neots as a dormitory town for both Cambridge and London. Nothing to keep adults in the town, added congestion in the streets around the station but no limited hour restrictions to curb the residential parking. The plan itself is comprehensive; it is a shame that St Neots as the larger town does not have the authority to make its own decisions. Russell Taylor, resident

St Neots Town Council response: Through the Neighbourhood Plan the Town Council and thus the community will have greater influence over development in St Neots.

As a resident of Bean Close, we have a minimum of seven on road parking spaces to service 12 flats as well as about six houses at end of bean close. I feel that the land that is at the rear of Miers industrial unit next to the bungalows in bean close should be developed as residents parking as most of the 12 flats have at least two vehicles and we have less than 1 on road parking spaces per flat. Steve Dwight, resident

St Neots Town Council response: The Town Council appreciates the problems that lack of car parking brings and indeed is seeking to prevent this being a problem for new development through Policy PT2. However, the Town Council supports the retention of existing employment land through Policy RD2 to help ensure that employment land in St Neots is not lost and a balanced community remains.

Various criticisms of the findings of the Sustainability Assessment.  
Huntingdonshire District Council

St Neots Town Council response: The Sustainability Assessment was used as a means of assessing the draft policies to effectively check that the Neighbourhood Plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. It is accepted that not everyone will agree with the findings of the Assessment but this does mean that it has not been a useful exercise. The Sustainability Assessment is not a requirement and the Town Council took the decision to carry out the assessment to add greater rigour to its emerging Plan. As would be expected for an assessment of the sustainability of the Plan the assessment took place alongside the development of the Plan and helped influence the final consultation draft. For this reason some of the preferred options may differ slightly from the draft policies. This should not be criticised as it clearly shows that the assessment was carried out as part of plan preparation and not as a standalone exercise once the final consultation draft was completed.

## **Vision and objectives**

The vision and objectives are generally appropriate but some parts appear to be setting policy. Huntingdonshire District Council

St Neots Town Council response: The vision and objectives are not policies. The policies of the Plan area clearly identified.

#### Objectives 1 and 2

Under "Promote the growth of high quality and sustainable employment" or "Encourage the growth of retail, leisure and community facilities" on page 14 I would suggest "bring in to use underused commercial land and buildings". A clear policy statement within the Town Plan would send a clear message to owners of buildings that they need to be used and maintained properly. The Council has powers to buy and improve underused land that is detrimental to an area and so it may be worth highlighting these powers. Robert Tyler, resident

St Neots Town Council response: Agree with proposed addition to the objectives. Compulsory purchase is a complicated issue and would need discussions with Huntingdonshire District Council. Whilst the Town Council would not rule out entering into discussions it does not wish to refer to it in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Under "Encourage the growth of retail, leisure and community facilities" on page 14 I would suggest "Encouraging the development of gym facilities at key hubs (such as the station) and developing green gyms within public open space areas." While Green Gyms are mentioned in the strategy there doesn't appear to be any particular strategy as to how they will be introduced and were. This would meet the Council's responsibility to promote healthy living under the Health and Wellbeing Bill and help to reduce unnecessary travel to other leisure facilities in the town. Robert Tyler, resident

St Neots Town Council response: Agree with suggested change to objectives. Objective 2 and 3

There could be conflict between item 5 of Objective 2 - "Promote the river as a leisure resource" and Objective 3 - "Protect and enhance St Neots' natural and historic environment, countryside and river setting". I would like the first statement amending so that it doesn't allow activities which could impact on

the natural environment of the river, e.g. 'low-impact leisure resource'. Alison Pearson, resident

St Neots Town Council response: Amend as suggested.

### Objective 3

'Open Space' needs clarifying (as will be mentioned again). Should it read 'Green Space'? Alison Pearson, resident

St Neots Town Council response: Open space is defined in the glossary.

### Objective 4

Under "Improve availability and accessibility of housing stock and improve community assets" on page 15 I would suggest "Provide a site for a community farm and café". Apart from engendering community and providing a valuable educational tool for children, where properly developed such facilities can attract people to the town and could create a few jobs/apprenticeships. Robert Tyler, resident

St Neots Town Council response: The idea of a community farm and café is an interesting one. However, the Town Council is not aware of any proposals or widespread support throughout the town.

Would include reference to local energy generation and energy efficiency, ideally as a separate item or within the Under "Improve availability and accessibility of housing stock and improve community assets" on page 15. This is one of society's most pressing challenges and so really needs to be included. Such schemes may be covered by District and County policies but the Town Plan could set out tighter requirements. Every new property should maximise the use of PVI and solar heating and other technologies such as ground source heat pumps, etc. Why doesn't every new house on Love's Farm have a proportion of self-generated energy? The Town Plan should support the set-up of community energy generation – these collective schemes are very recent but are becoming fashionable as they are helping to meet local energy generation and fuel poverty head on. They usually involve partnerships between the community, local authorities and energy companies. Robert Tyler, resident

St Neots Town Council response: Supporting the community hydro renewable energy project has been added to policy P4.

This section requires development to provide a balanced mix of housing with the maximum of 40% affordable housing provision to be achieved in all new major developments. This is in direct conflict with the adopted Core Strategy which expresses affordable housing provision as a percentage target to be achieved, subject to viability. The Wintringham Park Consortium

Page 15 - Why the maximum? Is affordable housing seen as bad? Is there a minimum? Ganesh Sittampalam, resident

St Neots Town Council response: This is an objective and not a policy requirement. In any case, Policy CS2 of the Core Strategy states that in the St Neots Spatial Planning at least 2650 homes will be provided and about 1060 will be affordable housing, which is 40%.

#### Objective 5

Object to the inclusion of a northern bypass linking A428 and A1 for the following reasons. a) I would suggest it is outside the scope of this Neighbourhood Plan, which covers an area up to but not including Little Paxton. b) The only undeveloped available route would bisect Paxton Pits Nature Reserve with detriment to wildlife, habitat and visitors, to say nothing of residents and businesses close to it. Also question whether this Plan can include supporting the Oxford to Cambridge rail link as it is outside the Plan area. It could include securing a St Neots stop on an Oxford to Cambridge railway line if it went ahead. Alison Pearson, resident

St Neots Town Council response: See response to policy PT4.

Under "Improve traffic flow into, out of and within the town and improve parking availability and sustainability throughout the town" on page 16 I would include an objective "Development of a safe and segregated cycle network within and around St Neots and between key communities and ensure all new junctions and road improvements cater for cyclists". There are good elements of a cycle network in St Neots but the cyclist needs to be given more priority and it is important that the network doesn't disappear and reappear along roads. Robert Tyler, resident.

St Neots Town Council response: Agree with proposed addition.

Under "Improve traffic flow into, out of and within the town and improve parking availability and sustainability throughout the town" on page 16 I would include an objective "Promote the use of and develop infrastructure for electric vehicles". Robert Tyler, resident.

St Neots Town Council response: Agree with proposed addition.

English Heritage is pleased to see the objectives 'to enhance the appearance and historic character of the town' and 'utilise the historic character of the Town Centre to showcase the town's heritage'. When introducing St Neots on page 10 it would be useful to refer to the many listed buildings within the town and conservation area. English Heritage

St Neots Town Council response: Add the following to form the first paragraph of the 'Historic Development' section on page 10: **"St Neots has a rich heritage and a large part of the town is included within the St Neots Conservation Area. The entire Town Centre lies within the Conservation Area; distinctive areas include the Market Square and riverfront, Island Common and Priory Park. There are 163 listed buildings within St Neots. Listed buildings are predominantly clustered around the Town Centre and along Great North Road in Eaton Socon."**

Policy A1

We welcome the strong promotion of an enhanced public realm. Once the Plan is adopted it will be necessary to have a vision and a clear set of priorities that are going to be funded. English Heritage

Very valid, there is little consistency in St Neots, a strategy is very important when trying to maintain character. Trevor Baldwin, resident

Section 1.2 and Policy A1 – Agree Alison Pearson, resident

Make the Market Square an even more attractive place to enter, eat and enjoy (sort out delays in repairing the statue!). Encourage cafes, small restaurants, etc, and fewer charity shops. Peter Thwaites, resident

Further discussions will be needed to identify the Town Council's infrastructure priorities. The Neighbourhood Plan could be used to set out what the Town Council will fund using their meaningful proportion of CIL and could set out other funding opportunities. Huntingdonshire District Council

St Neots Town Council response: Support/ comments noted. The supporting text refers to a comprehensive public realm strategy. The Plan covers a 15 year period and the Town Council does not want to be too prescriptive about the public realm improvements it will seek. Furthermore, funding opportunities will change over the plan period.

## Policy A2

After living on Love's Farm for 2 years I can see why this is very important, the approach into St Neots will be littered with building sites in the future, if this policy is not implemented then there will be no differentiation between St Neots and new towns like Cambourne. Trevor Baldwin, resident

Section 1.3 and Policy A2 - Agree but Policy A2 (a) will be difficult to enforce, as the edge of St Neots keeps changing. Please could an additional item be added to help our wildlife? Something along the lines of, 'All soft landscaping should contribute to supporting native fauna where possible, using the latest research available to support choices, which may include non-native plant species, more tolerate to future climate change.' Alison Pearson, resident

It is important that the first impression of St Neots is welcoming and attractive. Anonymous

Parts of this policy lack clarity; it is not clear what the expectation for 'wide boulevards' is. Design issues have already been addressed in the St Neots Urban Design Framework and forthcoming Huntingdonshire Design Guide. Huntingdonshire District Council

St Neots Town Council response: Support and comments noted. Insert suggested amendment: "**All soft landscaping should contribute to supporting native fauna where possible, using the latest research available to support choices, which may include non-native plant species, more tolerate to future climate change**" as criterion (f) to policy A2. The supporting text is clear that this policy applies to all development on the edge of St Neots. The Eastern Expansion is specifically referred to as this

is the only major development currently proposed on the edge of St Neots. It is not considered that wide boulevards could be misinterpreted and it would be overly prescriptive to set out a minimum width for footpaths. It is expected that developers will discuss design issues with the Town Council in accordance with policy A3.

### Policy A3

We welcome the requirement for high quality design that reflects local distinctiveness. However, we suggest further supporting text on what constitutes local distinctiveness. A tighter and more curtailed policy would be beneficial. Cross referencing to the latest version of the St Neots Conservation Area Character Appraisal (2006) would be beneficial. English Heritage

Section 1.4 and Policy A3 - Largely agree. However, as with Policy A2 (a), defining the edge of a development in order to specify building styles and height will be difficult to enforce. I would also prefer development limited to 2 stories on the fringes. It should also be noted that there are a surprising number of 3 story buildings in St Neots, around the Market Square and also at Love's Farm. In fact Gallagher used the Market Square buildings as the basis for including so many multi-story housing blocks at Love's Farm, which have proved to be aesthetically displeasing along Cambridge Road. Alison Pearson, resident

New builds – Improve the new estates/areas with the rest of the town (Love's farm, Wintringham Park...) so that they actually feel like part of the town rather than new builds devoid of character and Lego block additions which the rest of the town wants to avoid going to. Peter Clark-Ward resident  
The extension to Love's farm and the proposed Wintringham Park, is I feel foolhardy. We are allowing the building of poorly designed badly built properties with inadequate eco features. The developments are not conducive to a good quality of life. Russell Taylor, resident

We also agree with the importance of design (of new buildings) reinforcing local distinctiveness. It would be relatively straightforward for the Town Council to expand this policy to provide homes for wildlife that makes its home in buildings, such as house sparrows and swifts. Swifts are a distinctive feature of St Neots in the summer and have been declining in numbers due in part to their traditional nesting sites being demolished or refurbished. Protecting

remaining nesting colonies is vitally important, working with developers to identify and secure these. David Hoccom, Little Paxton resident

I wonder whether any attention has been paid to the provision of attractive smaller houses or bungalows (with gardens and garages) that might encourage single people or couples currently living in larger houses than they need to down-size, thus making larger properties available for families? Elaine Donaldson, resident

Page 23 - I oppose the height restriction element of the plan. There's nothing special about St Neots that makes 4 storey buildings out of place and the country as a whole needs to accept higher density housing if it wants to reduce the land take. Frankly, there's nothing distinctive about St Neots and it's pointless to try to invent some requirement to make it so. Ganesh Sittampalam, resident

The limit on 3 storey buildings as a maximum is not justified. No supporting evidence is available to understand the reason for this policy restriction. Also, the final paragraph should be sub text, not a policy requirement, and it should be deleted as it is already part of the subtext on page 23. The Wintringham Park Consortium

This policy may need to be tightened in relation to District design advice. The District Council remains the responsible body for determining planning applications. Huntingdonshire District Council

St Neots Town Council response: Through the Neighbourhood Plan process the Town Council has heard from many people who have said that the design of recent developments in the town does not reflect local vernacular and includes housing types you could see in any town in the country. Through the design policy the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to ensure that new development in the town respects and enhances local character and distinctiveness. Buildings of 4 storeys or more are not part of St Neots heritage. Only Love's Farm has buildings of this size on the edges of the development site and so it is considered entirely appropriate and reflective of local vernacular to limit new buildings on the fringes of development sites to 3 storeys in height. It will be difficult to enforce a maximum of 2 storeys in height and so the 3 storey maximum is seen as a compromise.

The comment about biodiversity is understood and the following addition is proposed after the fourth paragraph following Policy A3: **“Good design should incorporate measures that maximise biodiversity benefits. Swifts are a distinctive feature of St Neots in the summer and have been declining in numbers due in part to their traditional nesting sites being demolished or refurbished. Proposals for change of use of existing buildings must protect biodiversity and new buildings should consider including biodiversity enhancement measures.”**

The second paragraph of the policy has been amended as follows: “Design should be guided by the overall scale, density, massing, height, landscape, layout, materials, detailing, **roof orientation, relationship to back of pavement, wall to window ratios, proportions of windows, plan depth, plot width** and access of the site and its surroundings.”

The following sentence has been added to the end of the third paragraph following the policy: **“Applicants should refer to the latest St Neots Conservation Area Character Appraisal.”**

A mix of housing types should be delivered in St Neots, including smaller homes and more detail on housing mix is included within Huntingdonshire District’s planning policies. The reference to early discussions on design issues with the Town Council will remain within the policy to help ensure that this does occur and the Town Council is involved in the design of development. The Town Council acknowledge that the District Council remain the responsible body for determining planning applications. It is entirely appropriate that the Neighbourhood Plan includes a design policy, which adds a local element to the District’s design policies and guidance. Paragraph 58 of the NPPF states that “neighbourhood plans should develop robust and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the area”. Furthermore, paragraph 66 of the NPPF states that “Applicants will be expected to work closely with those directly affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Proposals that can demonstrate this in developing the design of the new development should be looked on more favourably”.

#### Policy A4

After living on Love’s Farm for 2 years I can see why this is very important, the approach into St Neots will be littered with building sites in the future, if this

policy is not implemented then there will be no differentiation between St Neots and new towns like Cambourne. Trevor Baldwin, resident

Section 1.5 and Policy A4 - Strongly support. Alison Pearson, resident

I applaud the intention behind this policy, but buffer strips may not be the only way of increasing biodiversity on a development. Nor is it necessarily related to density. The important thing is that the developer has an ecological master plan, which would probably be integrated into the overall master plan. Ecological features could range from providing large areas of semi-natural habitat, to green corridors and bio diverse SUDS right down to smaller features in gardens, on roofs (for example, green roofs on school or commercial buildings) and in buildings (why shouldn't every house have a built-in swift box?). Simon Marsh, resident

Regarding Policy A4 on page 25 I would suggest being more descriptive that "...as well as other developments where appropriate" in order to ensure the policy captures appropriate developments. Robert Tyler, resident

The policy refers to Wintringham Park and Love's Farm East with no specific definition of the areas reference in the document to provide clarity. The Wintringham Park Consortium

This policy will not stand scrutiny though the development management process. The St Neots East Urban Design Framework refers to landscape backdrops in preference to buffers. There are current planning applications for the St Neots East area and so the policy is likely to be out of date before it is even finalised. Huntingdonshire District Council

St Neots Town Council response: It will not be appropriate for every development to provide buffer strips, for example, very small scale developments. The policy needs to be flexible. The policy refers to Wintringham Park and Love's Farm East rather than the Eastern expansion as this is clearer to residents what sites the policy refers to. A map would not be appropriate as this policy may also apply to other areas if appropriate. Whilst it may be out of date in relation to the Eastern Expansion as suggested by the District Council, it could apply to other future developments on the edge of St Neots.

Policy EL1

I cannot support Policy EL1. I disagree with the conclusions made in the 'Sustainability Assessment January 2014' for an Outdoor Theatre. Alison Pearson, resident

Disagree as to whether the crazy golf should be introduced or re-instated. Dave Jarrett, resident

The idea of creating both a bandstand and an open air theatre in the Riverside Park although admirable in intention, seems not to have been thoroughly thought through. The park is after all, the flood plain for the river and siting anything on it could cause problems. Lin Buck, resident

This is not a priority for me. Anonymous

The Town Council will need to assure itself that there is no inconsistency between this policy and the Local Green Space designation for Riverside Park. Huntingdonshire District Council

St Neots Town Council response: The Sustainability Assessment was used as a means of assessing the draft policies to effectively check that the Neighbourhood Plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. It is accepted that not everyone will agree with the findings of the Assessment. There is little detail about the form an outdoor theatre may take as the Town Council does not want to be overly prescriptive. Any proposal will need to demonstrate that it is compliance with the Local Green Space policy and flood risk policy. The Local Green Space policy recognises that leisure and recreation development will be appropriate in Riverside Park. Policy EL2

Bandstands are popular in Europe, a particular favourite of mine is in the main park Munich, not everyone will be familiar with them though so it would be worth embellishing the document with the potential uses. Trevor Baldwin, resident

The idea of creating both a bandstand and an open air theatre in the Riverside Park although admirable in intention, seems not to have been thoroughly thought through. The park is after all, the flood plain for the river and siting anything on it could cause problems. Lin Buck, resident

I cannot support a Bandstand in Regatta Meadow and disagree with the conclusions made in the 'Sustainability Assessment January 2014' for this proposal. Alternative suggestion: Could the Council consider hiring/buying a mobile Bandstand, that could be situated close to Riverside Park car park on the few occasions each year that it is required? Alison Pearson, resident  
Support and promote local music and the arts with bodies like St Neots Choral Society and St Neots Sinfonia and smaller groups, which enrich the life of the town. William Musck, resident

There is inconsistency with the Local Green Space policy. Ownership needs to be addressed. Huntingdonshire District Council

St Neots Town Council response: See previous comments about the Sustainability Assessment. There is little detail about the form a bandstand may take as the Town Council does not want to be overly prescriptive. It could take the form of a mobile bandstand and the policy does not restrict this. There is no need to address ownership. Regatta Meadow is prone to flooding and the following sentence will be added after the first sentence of the policy: **"The design should ensure that it is appropriate to the local environment and setting."** The Local Green Space policy recognises that leisure and recreation development will be appropriate in Riverside Park.

Policy EL3

Section 2.4 and Policy EL3. Agree. Alison Pearson, resident

St Neots Town Council response: Support noted.

Policy EL4

Outdoor Pool. Should never have been closed, but .... That site was due to be sold, why not completed? Get it developed as housing/flats whatever residential and use some of the proceeds to build an outdoor pool on the Priory Park next door (recreational so would be in keeping with the park and should not upset locals). Or why not put in over by the Indoor Bowling centre/football pitch by the skate park in Riverside Park. Bryn Dymott, resident

A swimming pool is very much needed but providing one outdoors does not make much sense bearing in mind the time that will be in use along the year. Ignacio Salan, resident

The policy reads as a land allocation although it is not specific enough. It is unclear whether the policy intends to allow for the option of enabling development on this site and the swimming pool on another. The Draft Local Plan contains an allocation of this land although this is likely to be amended given changing circumstances regarding land to the rear. Huntingdonshire District Council

St Neots Town Council response: The Town Council supports the return of a swimming pool on this site. Many residents have told us that they would support this. Whilst the supporting text to Policy EL3 refers to the old outdoor swimming pool the policy states that a swimming pool will be supported on the site of the previous swimming pool. This could be indoor or outdoor. Through Policy EL4 the Town Council has referred to supporting enabling development to help bring forward a swimming pool on the site. This policy is not a land allocation. There is no requirement for the Neighbourhood Plan to be in conformity with emerging planning policy and it is very difficult to be in conformity with a policy that is going to be amended. The most recent version of the draft Local Plan refers to a mixed use development on this site. The word “**Additional**” has been added to the beginning of the second paragraph of policy EL4 to make it clear that the intention of the policy is for the enabling uses and the swimming pool to be delivered on the same site. This is an important issue for St Neots residents. As part of the Neighbourhood Plan survey there were numerous comments from residents about opening a swimming pool on the site of the old swimming pool.

#### Policy PT1

As a regular train traveller, I am very surprised by the lack of link up between the town centre and the station. If shuttle buses were available then there would be less call for taxis and in turn less taxis blocking up the train station entrance/exit and car parks. Trevor Baldwin, resident

Section 3.2 and Policy PT1. Agree. Alison Pearson, resident

Make sure that the bus and train services are inter-connected, so that commuters can be confident of catching their trains. William Musck, resident

More/better public transport around the town and to surrounding villages or towns. Anonymous

While policy PT1 identified the need for travel planning, the fact is that expected and actual results for the promotion of cycling and other sustainable transport measures through travel planning often don't match. If these means of transport are to truly be promoted a clear plan of what the Town Council want to achieve in St Neots and the surrounding area is needed. I would therefore strongly suggest that the policy either makes reference to a plan which clearly shows a joined up cycle and sustainability transport network for St Neots or has a policy to develop one within the next few years. Robert Tyler, resident

There is little mention of cycling as a sustainable mode of transport, which is disappointing. Cycling provision in St Neots is relatively poor, with neglected road surfaces, few and disjointed cycle lanes, and a generally hostile town centre area with narrow roads and no facilities common elsewhere such as advance stop-lines. Cycle parking in the town centre is scarce and hard to find. Proper encouragement of cycling would also reduce the pressure on parking space, contribute to good health. A quality public transport interchange at the eastern side of the railway station is a must. Town buses need to do more to integrate with rail services. Julia Hayward, resident

Transportation – St Neots has a poor 'village bus service' needs to liaise with Stagecoach, Whippet and others to improve bus links. There is no clear incentive for people to leave the car at home and use the bus instead. Also there is no bus service on a Sunday or early evening which is strange. Peter Clark-Ward resident

The bus service is unreliable and bus shelters are poorly maintained. Sara Foyle, resident

St Neots is the largest town in Cambridgeshire with a large number of people who have to travel to Cambridge to work and study. We have an inadequate public transport system. Mrs Kingham

Cycle paths are inadequate. They are rarely more than white paint reducing the width of the road making them exposed to motorised vehicles especially lorries and buses. The edges of the roads are in a very poor state of repair and this is harder to negotiate safely by cyclists. A cycles only route through town and out to the residential areas is needed, preferably one not shared cars/lorries. The New footbridge over the Great Ouse at Eaton's shows how it

could be, we need joined up routes. The cycle way under the rail bridge on Cambridge Road is particularly poor. All that development money from Love's Farm and subsequent Wintringham Fields and a proper cycle path has not been constructed/planned? Bryn Dymott, resident

Final plans must show fully integrated network of cycle paths through parks and on roads. This will hopefully reduce traffic congestion. Rod Bee, resident  
Is this a realistic prospect or just grandstanding? The East-West proposal is to go via Sandy and Hitchin: I would be against pointless campaigning for an inferior option that would just destabilise the viable route if it had any effect at all. Ganesh Sittampalam, resident

There are not enough buses around the town, the timetable they have does not cover properly the needs of people. Ignacio Salan, resident

The policy may not be required as it is already a District policy.  
Huntingdonshire District Council

St Neots Town Council response: It is agreed that there needs to be better links in St Neots' cycle network and bus service. There is already a cycle strategy for St Neots and the Town Council will continue to work with Cambridgeshire County and Sustrans to improve the cycle network. The following addition is proposed to the second paragraph of section 3.2: "**The Town Council will continue to work with Cambridgeshire County Council, Sustrans and other interest groups to improve and develop St Neots' cycle network**".

The supporting text does include examples of developer contributions towards sustainable travel. The supporting text also states that the Town Council will work with Network Rail to improve facilities at the railway station. It is agreed that the bus service is poor and reference is made to this in the supporting text. Working with local bus companies to improve the service is included in the non-planning section. The following addition is proposed to the non-planning table: "**The Town Council will work with bus companies and interest groups with a view to achieving better linkages around the town, including to the railway station. If this is unsuccessful the Town Council will explore under local competence powers, the provision of a mini bus service around the town.**"

Policy PT2

How realistic is this? In a country lacking affordable housing, how can we expect developers to scale back the number of dwellings in order to provide more parking space? This will just drive up the cost of housing. I agree that it's a problem but this is more to do with the town council accepting and approving totally inadequate road plans such as those on Love's Farm. The council has to take more responsibility here. Trevor Baldwin, resident

Section 3.3 and Policy PT2. I cannot support Policy PT2. I find this section unrealistic and contradictory to Section 3.2. Whilst I understand the need for sufficient parking spaces at each dwelling, insisting that there must be one for each bedroom will result in frontages being paved instead of including green spaces and encourage unsustainable transport usage. It also begs the question of how could you provide four parking spaces for a 3-storey property with a narrow frontage? If a parking space policy remains, I would strongly urge the inclusion of 'green' parking areas. Alison Pearson, resident

I have reservations about this policy. I understand the town council's concern about parking, but I think the policy is too prescriptive by ruling out rear parking. This will require parking provision at the side or front of the house, which may be appropriate in some circumstances, but will prevent certain house styles. Wintringham Park in particular is a large-scale development which will require a range of house styles and densities. We should not fall into the trap of promoting uniform suburban development. Simon Marsh, resident

Regarding Section 3.3 and parking near the railway station, there is also a significant issue along Station Road, where cars park on the grass verge to avoid parking charges – this is dangerous and makes a mess. Other parking issues also exist along other areas such as on the Love's farm estate near to the football ground and when the railway bridge fully opens this will also be very busy. Robert Tyler, resident

Addressing car ownership is difficult because you can't prevent people from owning more than one car. Probably the best way to reduce unnecessary second car ownership is to offer viable alternatives that save people money. Regarding Section 3.3, I therefore think it would be worth considering the introduction of car share schemes strategically across St Neots, initially on a trial basis. These schemes have been very successful within London and in St Neots could potentially discourage second cars or car ownership, particularly within St Neots Town Centre and in developments closer to St Neots Station,

where a greater proportion of residents are likely to commute. A trial scheme could easily be funded through CIL/Section 106 or even through a DEFRA AQ Grant. A study would be needed to identify capacity and ideal locations for such vehicles. The use of electric vehicles could also be considered. Robert Tyler, resident

The choice of 1 parking space per bedroom seems unnecessarily large. While there are problems due to under provision in areas where there are lots of small dwellings like Eynesbury Manor, it is not an appropriate constraint for areas of fewer large dwellings where it is very unlikely that every bedroom will be occupied by a car-driving adult. Example - Collingwood Road, Eaton Socon - almost all 4-bedroomed houses - would require 240 car parking spaces under this policy, taking up an area larger than the Riverside car park. Again, we have the implication that because public transport is poor therefore we need to over-provide for private cars when the more sustainable solution is to actually provide quality public transport. Julia Hayward, resident

There may need to be exceptions to this rule in the town centre. Anonymous Really? 4 spaces for a 4 bedroom house? This seems excessive. Is this some standard that has been applied elsewhere? I would suggest 1 bedroom = 1 space, 2-3 bedrooms = 2 spaces, 4+ bedrooms = 3 spaces. My own household has 4 bedrooms and 1 car. Ganesh Sittampalam, resident

The requirement for a minimum 1 car space per bedroom for each dwelling is excessive and unjustified. This does not meet the NPPF requirements of promoting sustainable development and is not in general conformity with the Core Strategy principles. The reason behind this policy is a perception that this will correct issues of the past. A greater understanding of urban design is required to justify this approach as it is not simply a case that additional parking provision alone creates a better quality environment. The relationship of built form, density of development, layout and arrangement of spaces are amongst other contributing factors. We are concerned that this policy restriction has the potential to result in even poorer environments being created with unsightly banks of cars dominating the street scene, particularly when coupled with the other restrictions in PT2 preventing rear parking and on street parking. The Neighbourhood Plan should not apply a blanket approach to restrict car parking at the rear of dwellings or on street. The District Council is encouraging the use of more on street (off-line) parking throughout development proposals to create visitor parking or additional parking for terraced/mews housing. Provided these spaces are properly designed into the

street layout and create an integrated approach to the delivery of parking, it can create quality neighbourhoods that are not dominated by the private car. The use of rear parking areas is generally less desirable but in some cases it is a necessity for example for apartment blocks or where the housing mix includes terraced housing which in itself can be a strong urban form. The Wintringham Park Consortium

This policy is not achievable and is contrary to government guidance and the development plan. A 4 bedroom dwelling would require 4 car parking spaces which would result in unsustainable form of development. There would be a problem with enforcement as developers could show studies on plans and there are permitted development rights to convert garages to habitable accommodation. Huntingdonshire District Council

The Town Council's minimum parking standards are much greater than HDC's parking standards and we would be keen to understand whether your position is endorsed by HDC or CCC. Gallagher Estates (Savills)

St Neots Town Council response: Through this policy the Town Council is seeking to ensure that new dwellings are provided with a realistic number of car parking spaces and that allocated spaces are used by residents. Rear car parking courts can be inconvenient and lead to residents parking on-street to be closer to their front door. Following comments received during the consultation period the Town Council considers it necessary to reduce the vehicle parking requirement to ensure that the potential adverse effects identified by respondents does not occur, whilst still ensuring that a realistic level of car parking is delivered for new dwellings. Policy PT2 has been amended as follows: "All new residential development, including change of use to residential, must provide a minimum of ~~one~~ **1.5** car parking spaces **or 0.5 spaces** per bedroom, **whichever is greater**, for each dwelling." Parking restrictions is not a planning issue. However, the Town Council agrees with many of the comments made about parking charges and parking restrictions and will consider, outside of the Neighbourhood Plan process, how these can be addressed.

The Town Council agree that car share schemes and electric vehicle charging points should be supported and the following paragraph is suggested as an addition to the supporting text to Policy PT1 (add after the third paragraph following policy PT1): "**Support will be given to car share schemes and electric vehicle charging points. Electric vehicle charging points**

**should be considered comprehensively to create a viable network for existing and future users of electric cars."**

Policy PT3

New car parks can be difficult to successfully integrate into historic town centres. An addition is proposed to the policy to address this point. Experience elsewhere has shown that reduced levels of car parking coupled with increased levels of sustainable travel can enhance public realm. English Heritage

Section 3.4 and Policy PT3. Agree. Alison Pearson, resident

The regular complaint from the Retail Club has been that St Neots does not have sufficient large units in the town centre to attract major retailers. Something has to give if this is to change; we cannot both keep all parking land and expand our business space. There needs to be acceptance that low-density parking areas such as the back of the Coop may have to be developed, and that travel solutions with more efficient land use (multi-storey to replace other parking provision, schemes to encourage workers to come into town by other means to leave parking available to shoppers and other visitors) should ameliorate any loss of vehicle space. Julia Hayward, resident

The majority of residents in surrounding villages must use cars to shop in the town due to absence of public transport. Measures to make the town car friendly are urgently needed. Parking spaces must be provided and charges reduced to encourage both local shoppers and tourist visitors to enter and spend money in the town. High charges/time limits drive people out of town and discourage staying around to spend money. Peter Thwaites, resident

Make all parking spaces free for 30 minutes and put back the small number of free parking spaces in riverside car park. Bridget Hale, resident

Free parking would encourage greater footfall. Anonymous

Parking seems to be a strong topic/subject. I consider St Neots to have more parking spaces than many other similar towns/cities of its size. But what I have heard and I agree with is the excessive cost of it. Ignacio Salan, resident

Why doesn't the plan include doing something about the highest parking charges on the Great Northern Line? For example the council could provide

cheaper parking itself, or it could put real pressure on FCC to reduce the charges. A much better solution to parking restrictions would be to active steps to ensure there is adequate parking dedicated to the station, instead of just making meaningless noises about talking to Network Rail/FCC about it. Page 37 - "The Town Council would like all car parks within St Neots to be free of charge." Won't this just make traffic worse? Spend the money on a better bus service instead. Ganesh Sittampalam, resident

If you want to protect our town centre and encourage people to enjoy a bistro type environment, then you must tackle parking charges. Lucy Collett, resident

Car Parking inadequate and too pricey. To compensate for the poor shopping free car parking for say 2 hours may encourage families back into St Neots. Bryn Dymott, resident

The content of much of this policy may not be achievable through a Neighbourhood Plan. The standard of information required to support the policy is not apparent. Huntingdonshire District Council

St Neots Town Council response: The following addition has been made after the first paragraph of policy PT3: **"The site for a multi storey car park will need to be carefully selected. The design, scale and massing will need to ensure that it does not adversely affect the character or appearance of the conservation area, or the setting of nearby listed buildings."** The Town Council believes that there needs to be a balance between retaining car parking spaces, which many residents have said is important to them, and enabling businesses space to expand. Policy PT3 supports the development of a multi-storey car park and this could potentially make land available for businesses to expand whilst also retaining the existing level of car parking provision. The Town Centre is defined within both the draft Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan. Unfortunately the Neighbourhood Plan cannot address the issue of parking charges, however this is included in the non-planning section. The following addition has been made to the non-planning table: **"The Town Council will investigate taking over the management of car parks from Huntingdonshire District Council under the power of competence."**

Policy PT4

This is a no brainer and a summary of everything that is holding St Neots back currently. However, if contractors are allowed to cut corners on jobs such as the footbridge at the station (which clearly did no impact analysis on foot and car traffic on the station side and as such has added tie on to most commuters journeys or the debacle of the building of the cinema) then we will be no better off in the long run. Trevor Baldwin, resident

I love our little Town I really do...but one thing vexes me and probably every other resident, and that is the complete and utter monumental error in the town centre traffic management. I even have some suggestions.... 1. reorder the light sequence to cut the number of times people get to sit and watch the lights change 3- 4 times without moving an inch, 2. on the 4 way junction by M&S split the lane coming in to St Neots or change the light to give way to prevent traffic turning right effectively blocking the road for all other users, 3. during peak hours switch off unnecessary pedestrian crossings. Dominic Harness, resident

The latest residential developments are not in keeping with other houses in Cambs (out of character) and the minimum road width standards applied have made Eynesbury Manor and Love's Farm roads difficult to pass with too many cars and vans 'parked' on the road edge and the pavement and even straddling across cycle paths! The road bridge at the top of Love's Farm between Hawkesden Road and Priory Hill should be opened to ease traffic problems on Love's Farm. The A428 is overcrowded. As the major route through/around St Neots east-West it is too busy and with the threatened A14 improvements the A428 needs to be upgraded/improved before work is allowed to start on the A14. Bryn Dymott, resident

We all know we have an issue with our roads being over loaded and too few roads (crossing rivers) but why are there plans to increases house building when we already can't cope? Holly Jones, resident

Traffic management through the town causes ridiculous delays at peak times. When flooded/ or accidents occur on bypass the roads throughout the entire town are gridlocked. Need an extra crossing of the river to allow better flow of traffic. Traffic lights and crossings need to seriously be reduced. Anonymous

Aim in the long term for a northern by-pass so that the central route through the town does not become choked with traffic as the town expands. William Musck, resident

Further residential expansion will put severe strain on roads: bridges and town roads will hamper growth, delay traffic movement and increase pollution. A428 dualling/new junctions essential. The Mill Lane/bridge bottleneck needs to be eliminated by widening/raising the road over flood waters. Infrastructure improvements are essential before growth can be successful. Peter Thwaites, resident

To make the town centre more attractive and functional it should be pedestrianised. Traffic going east should turn Left into the Priory immediately after the bridge. Traffic going west should turn Left into Church Street. I find this drive to dual the A428 illogical. Russell Taylor, resident

Improvement and probably dualling of the A428 seems necessary before any more eastern development. Important that all residents will benefit from the new developments and that an appropriate balance will be met between housing development and new or improved infrastructure. I think that opening up Priory Lane would make access to the Priory Centre area, the library, the Bridge House and the Cross Keys Mall very dangerous. I cannot support Policy PT4 in its current form for the following reasons: a) Please note that you refer to the wrong road in the first paragraph. It should be The Priory which will be opened up to traffic. Priory Lane already is open to traffic. I cannot support the opening up of The Priory for one-way traffic. It would compromise the safety of pedestrians trying to cross from the River Bridge into the Market Square and vice versa, as it used to do when it was open. It would also compromise the safety of people trying to use the Bridge House. The reason for closing The Priory to through traffic was to improve pedestrian safety, particularly for school children. I think it would be far too dangerous to re-open The Priory, to say nothing of the costs involved in removing the existing pedestrian traffic lights and probably having to install new lights of some description. b) I cannot support the pedestrianisation of the High Street as I can't see how it will improve traffic flows around the town. It might make the High Street a better place to shop, but could cause grid-lock elsewhere, especially when Mill Lane is closed to traffic due to flooding, something which may become more frequent in time. Delivery lorries, buses and coaches still have to get in and out of St Neots and if the High Street is closed, they will have to travel around New Street, Tebbutts Road and Huntingdon Street. Not impossible as was proved when sewage works caused the High Street to be closed. However that was for a short time, not permanent. c) I do support dualling of the A 428, although I question whether it should be part of this Neighbourhood Plan. The boundary

of the Plan is along the A428, but only a short stretch. d) I cannot support a bridge/bypass north of the town without knowing where it would be situated. I question whether it should be included at all as it will probably be outside the area of this Neighbourhood Plan. I would particularly object if a road was proposed which would bisect Paxton Pits Nature Reserve. Alison Pearson, resident

I agree with a great many points raised in the plan, particularly the dualling of the A428. It would be great to have a guided busway from St Neots to Cambridge and a trainline. Mrs Johnson

The proposed north bypass between the A428 and A1 could have a potential impact on Little Paxton. Little Paxton Parish Council

I cannot see a need for a northern bypass once the new A14 is built and the A428 is dualled, and it would inevitably destroy more countryside. Dave Jarrett, local resident

The Trustees and members of the Friends of Paxton Pits Nature Reserve, (FFPNR) oppose the Council's Objective, as set out on page 15 of the Plan, to "Work with partners at a District and County level to secure a northern bypass between the A428 and the A1," and to all other references to such a proposal, particularly in Policy PT4 on page 37. Our objection arises from our belief that the route of any such bypass would be highly likely to have a serious damaging effect on the Nature Reserve and the associated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), in terms not only of their scientific and conservation importance, but also as a highly-valued recreation resource for the people of St Neots and a much wider area. We note that, on page 18 of the Plan, the value of Paxton Pits is specifically recognised as being part of the "rich historical and natural environment of the town", and, on the same page, that "it is essential that new development...protects and enhances the natural and historic environment". There is thus, it seems to us, a clear internal conflict within the Plan in relation to the concept of a northern by-pass. This letter has deliberately been kept brief for clarity: you can find more information on FFPNR, and on the importance of Paxton Pits, in the Appendices below. I can assure you that there is a great depth of concern among our Trustees and members, including those living in St Neots, in Little Paxton and well beyond. FFPNR strongly urges you to remove the commitment to securing a northern bypass from the Plan. Friends of Paxton Pits Nature Reserve

There is a good public transport corridor towards Cambridge with the very successful X5 coach. Also the logic that the A428 needs dualling because public transport is poor doesn't follow - surely this is a good reason to encourage public transport use (as the intention is to be sustainable)? One of the biggest limiting factors in Cambridge commuting is the congestion within Cambridge itself - one of the reasons I gave up working there and turned to London - and the A428 will not alleviate that. Julia Hayward, resident

The idea of opening up a left turn after St Neots Bridge is just not practical. It could be lethal! The lane is far too narrow for any vehicle of length to turn there and also go along the back of the shops. If the proposal is to send traffic down the road by Waitrose it would create even more problems there. Those back roads are too narrow and as far as I can see there is no way of widening them to make the system effective. Pedestrianising the High Street sounds a good idea, but again it is not practical. I assume that it would mean that traffic would have to go along Brook Street and then South Street before turning along the back of the Market Square. The roads again are too narrow and it does not seem practical to widen them. Lin Buck, resident

A428 and Black Cat need to be looked at to reduce traffic. Congestion whether it floods or not needs to be addressed. Bridget Hale, resident

The other issue that concerns me is a passing reference to a northern bypass joining the A1 to the A428. There is no mention of a possible route, but it will obviously have to bisect Paxton Pits Nature Reserve - a much loved and used, tranquil area which also enjoys Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) status which is home to quite rare flora and fauna. How will a bypass impact on such a precious, eco- sensitive area? Paul Davies, resident

We are unsure how this policy can be applied in practice. It is not an appropriate development management policy. The Wintringham Park Consortium

Policy PT4 would require developers to construct all roads to adoptable standards within a year of 90% of properties being completed. However, if the site is not completed there is no guarantee that all roads will have been constructed, and it seems illogical that you would build all roads to adoptable standards before the houses are complete, as there would still be construction vehicles on site, services to implement, etc. We would welcome discussion with

you and CCC regarding how this could be managed, or perhaps discuss an alternative approach. Gallagher Estates (Savills)

This subject would be best addressed in text rather than in policy. This topic will need a full discussion with District and County Councils and the Highways Agency. It is unlikely that Priory Lane can be re-opened and pedestrianisation of the High Street would in itself require a full remodelling of transport movements in and around the town. It is not clear whether these projects would conflict with the Local Green Space designation. Huntingdonshire District Council

St Neots Town Council response: Through Policy PT4 the Town Council is setting out its commitment to working with partners, including the community, to explore a number of traffic projects throughout the town. Whilst not everyone agrees with each of the suggested projects there is consensus within the town that traffic congestion is a problem and one that is likely to worsen as the town expands. The Town Council is not stating its support for all of these projects as considerable work, with partners, is required to ascertain how feasible and importantly safe these projects are. As traffic congestion is such a major concern in St Neots the Town Council believe it is appropriate for this list of potential projects to explore with partners to be included as policy. Exploring the potential of a northern bypass has caused the most concern. The Town Council would not support any scheme that would adversely affect Paxton Pits SSSI and the following amendment has been made to make this clear. Additionally, it has been suggested by several residents that Mill Lane is raised, which will allow road access during times of flooding. The Town Council favour this option ahead of considering a bypass and this project has been added to policy PT4.

“(e) **Raise Mill Lane**

(f) Installation of a bridge/bypass north of the town.

**The Town Council will not support any of these projects if they will result in road safety issues or adversely affect an environmentally sensitive site.”**

The following objective on page 15 has been amended as follows: “Work with partners at a District and County level to ~~secure~~**investigate** a northern bypass between the A428 and the A1,”

The Town Council agrees that new roads should be adopted. Unfortunately this cannot be a requirement as this is up to the developer, but though Policy PT4 new roads will be required to be constructed to adoptable standards. The Town Council drafted this part of the policy based on a letter Cambridgeshire County Council sent to all District Councils in the county regarding adoptable standards.

## Policy P1

Policies P1-P4. I strongly support the policies for parks, particularly the designation of the open spaces as Local Green Space. The green corridor running through the centre of St Neots is one of the most attractive features of the town. It provides residents with access to open space and is also important for wildlife and flood management. Living in Coneygeare Court, Eynesbury, I feel I am living on the edge of the countryside even though I am only ten minutes' walk from the town centre. As the NP states, these spaces are demonstrably special to the local community and are very popular with dog walkers, cyclists, families, football players and many others. I particularly support the Local Green Space designation of the meadows to the south of Coneygeare Court. These meadows are not all in public ownership and are used for a variety of purposes - allotments, market gardens and meadows with access for walkers and cyclists. Together they provide a rural setting for the built-up area and a haven for wildlife. Barford Road Pocket Park is of course specifically managed for wildlife, but outside the park the meadows are important for local populations of countryside birds such as skylarks, meadow pipit and linnet. There is also a very mature hedgerow at the back of the caravan site which supports a variety of species, including the migrant warbler, lesser whitethroat. Declining species such as cuckoo are also regular summer visitors. Simon Marsh, resident

I am glad to see our green spaces are being protected and improved. Holly Jones, resident

I fully support the neighbourhood plan, and the aims set out. I particularly like the protection for our parks. Mavis Thompson, resident

Why are other 'safe' green spaces such as the Pightle and even the Common not mentioned (by 'safe' I mean they are in community hands and thus at no risk of development)? The map is very unclear. The 6 green spaces mentioned should be labelled and outlined, and the 'safe' land distinguished from that

land still in private hands and therefore 'at risk', such as Bedfordia Field, the cricket ground and land nearby, etc. Dave Jarrett, resident

Preserve, protect and cherish the green spaces like the Riverside Park and Priory Park. Add more where and when you can in the new developments. William Musck, resident

Will you confirm that the meadows between the Riverside Park and the Pightle will be protected from future development in the same way as the parks named in the plan? Julia Hayward, resident

Priory Park is a beautiful asset to the town, but please could consideration be given to opening some public toilets there? There are toilets in the Riverside Park which seem well used and maintained. Could not a similar style be used in Priory Park? Lin Buck, resident

Ensure that the character of the town is kept as much as possible but ensure that green areas such as parks are kept free from development. Peter Clark-Ward resident

I support Policy P1, but cannot agree to it in its current form. Please consider the following comments. a) Should the map of designated Local Green Spaces, include Savilles Close and surrounding homes as part of a Local Green Space? It also include St Neots Golf Club. b) You show Islands Common and Lammas Meadow as designated Local Green Spaces, but don't mention them in the text. Why not? Please also include Hawksden Leys Common which is part of the Neighbourhood Plan area but is not on the map of designated Local Green Spaces. c) In the description of Riverside Park you have included the section known as Regatta Meadow, saying the park is bisected by the river bridge and also saying that the rowing regatta is held in the park. Confusingly you have then gone on to have a separate section about Regatta Meadow as if it is in addition to Riverside Park. This error is repeated in the Appendix. Can you please correct both? d) You have missed off the woodland section of Priory Park as a designated Local Green Space. Can you please include it? Alison Pearson, resident

Identifying such extensive areas as Local Green Space may not be in accordance with NPPF criteria. The District Council also has a concern in its capacity as landowner. The 'exceptional circumstances' referred to may send

out the opposite message from the apparent intent of the policy.  
Huntingdonshire District Council

St Neots Town Council response: The Local Green Space designation is not suitable for every area of open space. Only the most important areas of open space, that are demonstrably special to the community should be designated. Whilst the proposed Local Green Spaces include large areas these are not extensive tracts of land. All have clear boundaries. One of the special and unique things about St Neots is its large areas of historic open spaces. It is entirely appropriate that the proposed Local Green Spaces remain in the Neighbourhood Plan as they meet the definition of Local Green Spaces as set out in the NPPF. The areas of open space designated as Local Green Space were identified following discussions the Town Council had with residents as part of the Neighbourhood Plan survey. Other areas of open space will be protected by Policy P2. It is agreed that the third paragraph of this policy, which refers to exceptional circumstances, could water down the protection given to these areas. This paragraph was included to offer a degree of flexibility but to avoid causing confusion it has been deleted. The provision of public toilets in Priory Park is a non-planning issue but has been added to the non-planning section.

## Policy P2

This is hugely important, whenever friends visit they always comment on how green St Neots is. This should be protected at all costs. Riverside Park on a summer's day is comparable with any park in the country. Trevor Baldwin, resident

I cannot support this policy for the following reasons. a) 'Open Space' can include paved areas as well as green areas. b) I find that there is insufficient protection for our wildlife and habitats in this section. Policy P2 states that "... every opportunity will be taken to enhance open spaces throughout the town." This could be taken to mean paving over parts of them to improve access, for example, or installing lights everywhere for security. I would like to see something along the lines of 'whilst protecting existing wildlife and its habitats' added to the first paragraph. c) I do not agree with the wording of paragraph five and paragraph six. Both stipulate that new developments should have open (green?) space in the centre of the developments. It doesn't allow for good usable green open space along the perimeter of sites, which can double as a buffer strips (NP Section 1.5) to the surrounding countryside, or that

some developments have to use land unsuitable for residential purposes, as green open spaces. I would like to see these paragraphs reworded to allow for this please. d) I do agree that new allotments and cemeteries need to be considered as part of the eastern expansion developments. However, allotments do not need to be at the edge of the sites, as again this does not allow for the use of areas which might be unsuitable for housing, e.g. too close to the railway line. It would also encourages car use to get to the allotments from some areas of development. Alison Pearson, resident

We agree with the need to not just protect existing green spaces, but to expand these to meet the needs of a rapidly growing population. We are concerned about piecemeal provision of new green space. It makes sense to identify one or two opportunities to create new green space at scale, for residents and wildlife. We live in Little Paxton, and Paxton Pits provides an opportunity to achieve a large, accessible nature reserve. The consent requires the operator to restore the land to wetlands of importance for wildlife and accessible by people, as part of an expanded nature reserve. While Paxton Pits falls outside of the St Neots town boundary, it is an important green space for residents and it is therefore appropriate that the Town Council supports initiatives that see the reserve extended. David Hoccom, Little Paxton resident

I am glad to see our green spaces are being protected and improved. Holly Jones, resident

I would like to see the provision of play equipment for Eaton Socon Residents. All new housing estates seem to get a play area. Whilst we have some green areas in the Monarch Road Area, there are no play facilities as far as I am aware from the Eaton Oak all the way to the end of monarch road. Darren Lalonde, resident

Whilst we support the general principles of this policy, the inclusion of a specific amount of allotment space is unjustified. The minimum level of allotment provision to be provided within the Eastern Expansion area is governed by the Huntingdonshire District Developer Contributions SPD and will vary depending upon the final housing mix consented. The Eastern Expansion site is in two distinct ownerships and is the subject of two separate outline planning applications. Each will be expected to provide the minimum level for the population it is expected to generate. The policy as currently worded is inflexible. The Wintringham Park Consortium

Overall the total Formal and Informal Space provision shown in the master plan will be some 7.83ha in excess of the Councils current standards which I trust would be well received by the Town Council. The Love's Farm East application does not include the provision of a cemetery and the reasons for this were discussed with HDC, the Town Council and others throughout the pre-application stage. Given the advanced stages of both these applications on the Eastern Expansion land you may wish to give further thought to alternative sites where a new cemetery might be accommodated. Gallagher Estates (Savills)

Parts of this draft policy will quickly become out of date. For example, no provision of a cemetery is made in the planning applications for Love's Farm East and Wintringham Park. The HDC Developer Contributions SPD could be replaced by a successor document. Parts of this policy are more appropriately dealt with in an implementation and infrastructure delivery section.  
Huntingdonshire District Council

St Neots Town Council response: A definition of open space is included in the glossary. The following addition proposed would help to ensure the protection of existing habitats and has been added to the first paragraph of Policy P2: "**whilst protecting existing wildlife and its habitats**". The Town Council believes that open space should be located within the centre of sites to ensure that open space is accessible to all residents. This is particularly important for large sites where the provision of open space on the edge could make it inaccessible to some residents. This does not preclude the provision of useable open space on the edges of sites as an addition to central areas. There is already a shortage of allotments in the town based on national standards and the cemetery will be full within the plan period. The Town Council believes that it is appropriate that large scale development should make provision for allotments for new residents and a new cemetery. Policy P2 merely states that Love's Farm or Wintringham Park are possible locations for a new cemetery. The minimum level of allotment provision is based on Huntingdonshire District's open space audit standards and the allotment requirement for the first phase of the Love's Farm development. The point about encouraging car usage if allotments are on the edge of sites is understood. However, the Town Council considers that it is more important that other types of open space are included in central areas. The Neighbourhood Plan protects existing areas of open space and refers to requirements in the Huntingdonshire Open Spaces Supplementary Planning Document with regards to the provision of new areas of open space. To ensure the policy does not become out of date the following

amendment has been made to the second sentence of the third paragraph of the policy: "This will be through the provision of new areas of open space within the site as defined within the Huntingdonshire District Developer Contributions SPD **or its successor(s)**". Whilst the draft policy refers to allotments and formal open space as part of the Eastern Expansion as a shortfall in these open space typologies has been identified, it does not refer to other types of open space. It is agreed that children's play areas are very important and whilst it is considered that the loss of existing children's play areas can be prevented through draft policy P2 an amendment is proposed to address the provision of new children's play areas. Unfortunately recent losses cannot be replaced through the Neighbourhood Plan: "New areas of useable open space delivered as part of new development, should be provided within central locations within the development site to ensure good accessibility. **Where appropriate new development should deliver a mix of open space typologies based on local need.** Elsewhere new areas of open space should be located at sites which are accessible to the community in which it intends to serve." Paxton Pits falls outside of the Neighbourhood Plan boundary.

### Policy P3

This is hugely important, whenever friends visit they always comment on how green St Neots is. This should be protected at all costs. Riverside Park on a summer's day is comparable with any park in the country. Trevor Baldwin, resident

Section 4.4 and Policy P3 - I cannot support this policy as it is currently worded. a) It is crucial that you specify which sections of the river frontage you are promoting as a leisure resource and for development. At the moment the first paragraph of Policy P3 and the following section of text, almost contradict some of the designations of Local Green Spaces, as it could include any part of the river bank. A map would be very helpful. b) I do support Policy P3, paragraph two and am as keen as anyone to see the Old Falcon Hotel redeveloped. Alison Pearson, resident

Within Policy P3 rather than focussing on the Old Falcon I would suggest using this as an example rather than making it a focus of the policy. For example that on the market square residential development should be encouraged at first floor and above in identified zones and that this would ensure buildings such as the Old Flacon were appropriately redeveloped. Ideally a plan would be

provided identifying areas where residential developed will be encouraged and were commercial uses will be maintained. Robert Tyler, resident

I can see you are going to be sympathetic to applications regarding historic buildings in St Neots ie. ex 'The Falcon' - Market Square. Thank god for that, it's appalling that it's been left for so long in the state it's in. Holly Jones, resident

The Old Falcon should be developed. Paul Davies, resident

Decisions must be taken and implemented faster. For example, The Old Falcon site delays are disgraceful and it is essential that such a dominant building on the Market Square is re-developed now and not be allowed to fall further into disrepair. The future of a derelict boat-house must not be allowed to stand in the way. Similarly, the old "Handyman" shop is a blight on the High Street. Peter Thwaites, resident

Aesthetically the Old Falcon needs to be looked at. Bridget Hale, resident  
Our river is an excellent swimming river has been for centuries. We could encourage its use as a swimming facility. How about re-instating some bathing sheds at Coneygeare? Or having a designated swimming area off the Riverside Park by the road bridge or on the park opposite the rowing club? The Ouse Valley Way passes through St Neots and the lack of river frontage for the path makes the section through our town disappointing and not easy to navigate. Perhaps the path could be re-instated where is it showing signs of neglect and if signed more clearly through St Neots walkers could be directed through the Market Square and past the coffee shop at the Priory Centre. Bryn Dymott, resident

Parts of this draft policy will quickly become out of date such as that relating to the Old Falcon. Insufficient attention has been given to issues relating to listed buildings, the conservation area and flood risk. The policy should not be so inflexible that development enabling a revitalised river front is ruled out. Huntingdonshire District Council

St Neots Town Council response: Through this policy the Town Council is seeking to encourage new leisure uses which will enhance the river setting. It is not considered that policies P1 and P3 contradict each other. Whilst the river setting will be promoted as a leisure resource policy P1 ensures that the most important green spaces within St Neots are protected from inappropriate

development. Many people commented about the redevelopment of the Old Falcon as part of the Neighbourhood Plan consultation and so it is considered appropriate to specifically refer to it in the policy. It is not considered that a plan is necessary showing different uses as the Town Council does not want to be overly prescriptive and the policy is clear that residential use is to be encouraged above ground level to create active frontages. There are existing policies within the Core Strategy, elsewhere in the Neighbourhood Plan, the NPPF, plus statutory protection, which ensures that there will not be an adverse effect on listed buildings, conservation areas and flood risk.

#### Policy P4

Agree but please note that any leisure developments must also be directed to areas at low risk of flooding. Alison Pearson, resident

Regarding policy P4 I have long thought that the Agencies advice regarding a suitable flood risk building line of 1 flood event in every 100 years is insufficient. It might be good if the Town Plan identified an appropriate build line for flooding. For example it was suggested in the past in some areas of the country that a 1 in a thousand year flood event line would be more appropriate. Of course another approach (and where considered safe) would be to allow building on flood plains where houses were built on stilts around or on lakes which could then act as areas of flood relief. Floating houses would also be an interesting option which have been adopted elsewhere. In relation to the discussion in 4.5 on flooding a scheme to protect the town centre and the bulk of other property in the Town, which is at risk of flooding, could be drawn up and all future development within flood prone areas required to contribute to a fund to pay for these measures (i.e. through CIL). Would be good to highlight this to support future improvements as it would appear that there is potential in the future for flooding to significantly impact the Town in some areas. Robert Tyler, resident

Flooding – Improve drainage around the Riverside Park and Ambience Café and fix the leaks under St Neots bridge. The foot underpass there often looks in poor shape and muddy. Planting some small trees near the river which won't grow very tall may help with drainage. Peter Clark-Ward resident

HDCs policy covers flood risk and is more specific. Huntingdonshire District Council

St Neots Town Council response: The Town Council and District Council will continue to rely on the advice of the Environment Agency in terms of flood risk. Floating houses is an interesting idea and if a proposal should come forward the Town Council would be keen to be involved in any discussions.

#### Policy RD1

Agree. Alison Pearson, resident

Whilst we understand the sentiments of the policy intensification of employment land could adversely affect the character or appearance of the conservation area. Amended wording is suggested. English Heritage

Use the powers that you possess to encourage more employers and businesses into the town, so that the town is not solely a dormitory town for Cambridge and a London commuter town, but also one where local young people can find good employment opportunities. William Musck, resident

This policy appears to offer an open cheque to intensification of previously developed land which may not be appropriate. Huntingdonshire District Council  
St Neots Town Council response: Support/ comment noted. The Town Council support economic growth within St Neots; there needs to be a balance between people and jobs. The development of previously developed land reduces the need to develop Greenfield sites. The second sentence of policy RD1 has been amended as follows: "The regeneration and **proportionate** intensification of previously developed land will be particularly supported."

#### Policy RD2

Agree. Alison Pearson, resident

The proposal under Section 5.2 regarding the protection of commercial land on the face of it is a good policy. However, the mechanism of identifying a site as being 'no longer suitable for commercial use' involving simply marketing an area for six months is very weak and open to abuse by landholders who don't necessarily have the town of St Neots best interests at heart. The proposed policy will result in the erosion of commercial land uses. If St Neots wants to continue to be a mixed and thriving community with a proud commercial/industrial heritage it needs to protect and develop its commercial land and businesses. The alternative is that St Neots slowly turns in to a

commuter town which would over time erode its character and economy. A stronger policy is needed here to protect and develop commercial areas. The Town Council also has a vital role to play in developing business and industry in St Neots. It seems amazing that offices/commercial development appear unused next to St Neots Station, 45 minutes away from London. Given the comparative cheap rents and land values we should have businesses falling over themselves to relocate parts of or whole businesses from London or the surrounding areas. I would therefore urge the Town Council to put forward a policy to not only safe guard but to develop existing industrial areas of the town. There may be a view that getting rid of commercial/industrial development will improve the overall character of the town and so I would suggest that the Town Plan identifies the types of business and business sectors it would like to develop in the town. I would also suggest that the Town Council sells St Neots to London businesses and spends more time enticing London businesses in to the St Neots business areas. Robert Tyler, resident

Generally, the Neighbourhood Plan should not repeat the policies of the emerging Development Plan, particularly where those may be subject to change through the Local Plan process. Policies RD2 and RD3 are such examples. The Local Plan policies may be subject to change prior to adoption. The Wintringham Park Consortium

This policy is more restrictive than the Draft Local Plan, which only applies to established employment areas. Permitted development rights allow for certain changes of use. Huntingdonshire District Council

St Neots Town Council response The Town Council agrees that policy RD2 should be stronger to protect employment land. However, as a statutory planning document the Neighbourhood Plan must be in conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which restricts the long term protection of redundant employment sites. The Town Council believes that Policy RD2 strikes the balance between conformity with the NPPF and protecting employment land. It is agreed that the Neighbourhood Plan should not simply repeat development plan policies and it is not considered that policies RD2 and RD3 repeat existing policy. Indeed the District Council has commented that policy RD3 is more restrictive than the Draft Local Plan.

Policy RD3

Agree. Alison Pearson, resident

Generally, the Neighbourhood Plan should not repeat the policies of the emerging Development Plan, particularly where those may be subject to change through the Local Plan process. Policies RD2 and RD3 are such examples. The Local Plan policies may be subject to change prior to adoption. Reference throughout the Neighbourhood Plan should be clear on the status of the Local Plan and should remain flexible to change. For example, Policy RD3 refers to the Eastern Expansion employment allocation which gives the impression this will be a single entity when in fact it will feature a range of sites across the whole expansion area. The Wintringham Park Consortium Encouragement of high quality employment is in line with District Council objectives. The text refers to 25 hectares of land being allocated for employment use. However, the text should be reviewed as only a Draft Local Plan has been produced and the 25ha is an approximate figure in the same way as the approximate number of houses. Huntingdonshire District Council

St Neots Town Council response: It is agreed that the Neighbourhood Plan should not simply repeat development plan policies and it is not considered that policies RD2 and RD3 repeat existing policy. It is considered that the Neighbourhood Plan is flexible. It does not need to refer to the status of the Local Plan. The Adopted Core Strategy, which forms part of the development plan, allocates about 25ha of land for B1, B2 and B8 uses to the east of St Neots.

#### Policy RD4

Agree. Alison Pearson, resident

The lack of employment related skills development opportunities in St. Neots is very serious indeed and I feel that the policy does not go far enough in prioritising the provision of post 16 training. There should be explicit and specific commitment to working with schools within the Town but also to working with colleges in Cambridgeshire to provide training facilities in St Neots. A stronger policy statement should be drafted which goes beyond simply favouring new buildings. Virginia Stirling, resident

Encouragement of these uses is in line with District Council objectives. It would not be possible however to require information upon a planning application to provide information about local skills. Huntingdonshire District Council

St Neots Town Council response: Support/ comments noted. The following sentence has been added to the end of the first paragraph of policy RD4: **“The Town Council will work with schools within the town and colleges in Cambridgeshire to provide new and improved training facilities in St Neots.”**

#### Policy SS1

I appreciate the emphasis on affordability of shops in this section but at the same time, we do not want to end up like so many run down towns that have High Streets full of pound shops, betting shops with only the occasional estate agent littered amongst them. We should be doing everything possible to encourage local independent shop makers such as butchers, grocers and boutique shops. A national retailer such as Primark would help bring footfall to the town but those such as Wilkinsons and Poundland will only tarnish the town’s image. The cinema opening up should also bring additional footfall.  
Trevor Baldwin, resident

High Street wise, well as far as I can see we have limited shops, most of which are card shops and estate agents! Could we try and avoid the mainstream and go for something niche? A good example is Saffron Walden, very few mainstream shops which keeps visitors coming in because what they are seeing is new! Why should St Neots be the same as every other High Street in Britain?  
Holly Jones, resident

Internet shopping is increasing and it will be important to ensure that expansion of the town centre does not lead to vacant units in the future. The introduction of large stores, such as supermarkets, will need to be handled with care to ensure that they can be successfully integrated into the fabric of the town. Car parking can be particularly difficult to integrate and we recommend that policy SS1 is re-worded to address these issues. English Heritage

Agree. Alison Pearson, resident

I would therefore suggest that policies: a. For improving shop fronts are included including that older style signs and/or painted wood shop fronts must be used in the town centre to create a more traditional town feeling. There are many towns where this has been a success. b. Are put in place to protect the diversity of shops by putting limitations on what supermarkets can sell. c. Are

put in place to ensure that buildings and shop fronts are maintained to a high standard – many shops are currently poorly maintained which has an impact on the look and feel of the town. d. Once these improvements are made brown signs should go up on the A438 directing people to “St Neots, historical market town” and “Riverside Parks”. This should attract passing trade. e. Conditions for the need to develop a St Neots park and ride scheme/bike hire scheme should be identified as once the Town is attracting more people from the surroundings congestion and air pollution will become more of a problem. Under “Promote the growth of high quality and sustainable employment” or “Encourage the growth of retail, leisure and community facilities” on page 14 I would suggest “Assessing the capacity for and introducing a Saturday morning market”. This would enable those working during the week to use the St Neots Market and would be a nicer use of the Market Square. Robert Tyler, resident

I would also like to see an improved market and it being on a Saturday. I sometimes go to Bedford market and love the variety and choice of fresh fruit and vegetables available at really good prices. Mrs Johnson, resident

Personally I think the TC Harrison car dealership is an eyesore and a desperate waste of land in the town centre. Will you push for the site to be guaranteed to be earmarked for retail development (not housing) should it become available? Julia Hayward, resident

Liaise with the Chamber of Commerce and similar bodies over how to foster a varied mix of shops (as has been done quite successfully with cafes and restaurants) in the town centre. William Musck, resident

Encouraging shops of any type does not seem to me as a policy which will make this community better and improve the wellbeing of St Neots citizens. The outcome and final shape of St Neots retailers will be decided by the consumers and the market as it should be. Ignacio Salan, resident

It is unclear what is being referred to in regards expanding the primary shopping area and primary shopping frontage. There are permitted development rights which allow certain changes of use. The part of the policy about existing facades may also result in unintended consequences. Existing facades are likely to be an issue in respect of heritage buildings. Huntingdonshire District Council

St Neots Town Council response: Support/ comments noted. Reference to Wilkinsons and Poundland were added to the Neighbourhood Plan as many residents asked for this as part of the Neighbourhood Plan survey. There is a desire amongst the community to see new retail uses within the Town Centre. The support to extending the primary shopping area and primary shopping frontage seeks to address this point by supporting a greater concentration of retail units within the Town Centre. Policy A1 is also relevant to some of these comments as it relates to improving the public realm of the Town Centre. The Harrison car dealership is within the Town Centre and so in accordance with Policy SS1 town centre uses will be expected. Residential uses will only be considered acceptable on upper floors. The third paragraph of the policy concerns facades. Whilst the Town Council believes that it is important that historic facades are retained to protect the character of the area it does not wish to stifle the development of large scale retail within the Town Centre. As such, the third paragraph of this policy has been amended as follows: "Proposals for uses covering two or more existing units will be favourably considered. **Where proposals involve alterations to listed buildings or buildings that contribute to the character or appearance of the conservation area** provided that the existing facades **should be** are retained." There have been a number of comments about a market in St Neots and the need to improve Market Square. To address these points the following addition has been made to the second paragraph of the policy: "**The introduction of additional markets on Market Square will be supported.**"

Policy SS2

Agree. Alison Pearson, resident

The District Council's policy covers this and is more specific. Huntingdonshire District Council

We agree with bringing vacant historic buildings back into viable uses. However, it is important that changes are sympathetic to the historic building. An amendment is proposed. English Heritage

St Neots Town Council response: Support/ comment noted. Policy SS2 has been amended as follows: "The Town Council will support the re-use of historic buildings within the Town Centre for **appropriate** town centre uses. Any

alterations to historic buildings will need to be sympathetic to the historic and architectural **significance and** character of the building.”

### Policy SS3

Agree. Alison Pearson, resident

I fully support the neighbourhood plan, and the aims set out. My only suggestion, which does not seem to have been mentioned, is that further housing in the town will need additional doctors surgeries, as those currently available always seem to be extremely busy. Mavis Thompson, resident  
Infrastructure needs to keep pace with the population, particularly doctor surgeries and facilities for the elderly. Anonymous

I believe health issues and concerns being raised about the current health centres in town and waiting time to be seen by a GP need to be given higher priority. Specifically when more people are expected to come and live in St Neots. I think local authorities should take this matter as soon as possible to the NHS, and whoever else have the power of doing something about. Ignacio Salan, resident

Regarding Section 6.3 schools can make a town. There are many innovations in schooling at the moment and particularly in London more independently run schools are being set up. With the recent news that Cambridge University is to set up schools in Cambridge I would encourage the Town Plan to ensure that new schooling in St Neots is linked/run by industry and/or universities in partnership to make schooling innovative, high quality and fit for the future. This should include both apprenticeships and schooling. For example with all the building work going on in the east of the Town, it would be good to know how many apprenticeships have been created with developers and to look at ways of requiring apprenticeships through the planning system and by working with developers. Robert Tyler, resident

Why doesn't the plan include doing something about this? For example provide a free bus service. Ganesh Sittampalam, resident

This may be an aspiration rather than a policy. The District Council may not be able to enforce such conditions on planning consents. Huntingdonshire District Council

St Neots Evangelical Church is a growing church. We have previously found that options within the town for either a new site or premises are limited, either in size or because they are used for employment purposes. The St Neots Neighbourhood Plan gives an opportunity for incorporating land or premises for a church in new development at Love's Farm or Wintringham Park. Our future requirements would be met by a new church building that is large enough to accommodate about 400 people, potentially as part of other community facilities serving the new development, and with appropriate car parking. Given the scale of the new development proposed at Wintringham Park in the Huntingdonshire District Council Local Development Framework Core Strategy, more than one church building or place of worship may actually be required. We propose that policy SS3 is amended to include the provision of new churches (or places of worship), to meet an identified local need. St. Neots Evangelical Church

St Neots Town Council response: Support/ comments noted. Policy SS3 to be amended as follows: "New residential development will be delivered alongside necessary improvements to existing schools, **places of worship**, GP surgeries and dentist surgeries and/or the provision of new schools, **places of worship**, GP surgeries and dentist surgeries within St Neots to ensure that the existing and new population have access to school places, **places of worship**, GPs and dentists." The following addition has been added after the second paragraph of section 6.3: "**The Town Council will support new schools that are linked or run by industry and/or universities in partnership to make schooling innovative, high quality and fit for the future.**" The provision of a school bus service is outside of the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan.

## Implementation and Delivery

What were the basis for prioritisation was in the Implementation section? I agree with most of it but would just like to know what the factors were. Trevor Baldwin, resident

St Neots Town Council response: The prioritisation was based on the Town Council's priorities and reflects the Neighbourhood Plan consultation the Town Council undertook in autumn 2013.

There is no mention of redeveloping the Market Square in the body of the Neighbourhood Plan, but it is included in item three of 'Aesthetics' in the table

and in the relevant section of the 'Sustainability Assessment January 2014'.  
Alison Pearson, resident.

St Neots Town Council response: It is agreed that redeveloping the Market Square should be referred to in the main body of the Neighbourhood Plan and the following change is proposed to the fifth paragraph of section 1.2:

“Consultation has shown that pedestrianising the High Street **and redeveloping the Market Square** is a popular option for many in the town. It is a key project that the Town Council will explore with the community and its partners over the lifetime of the Neighbourhood Plan.”

There is a need to collect sufficient data and information on how the Town changes over time. I would therefore also suggest that the Town Plan clearly identifies how changes will be monitored. For example number of cycle trips could be monitored using a cycle counters, air quality should be monitored using NO2 tubes, public perception through questionnaires, etc. Apart from allowing changes to be monitored, such information is often an essential part of supporting funding and will also help ensure the Town Plan is transparent. While I realise that this document is primarily a planning one, I would suggest that residents are identified as a partner under implementation and delivery and that the plan should identify objective to set up an active residents group to help implement selected action. For example a Town Farm, etc. This would also provide a good basis for ongoing scrutiny by the public. The Table on P62-65 appears to miss out some of the proposed items set out within the strategy and doesn't include timescales. The plan should include details of delivery for all items within the strategy with realistic timescales. I would suggest dividing the table in to sections with items mentioned in each part of the strategy listed below. Where timescales are uncertain this should be made clear. A number of the “Non Planning Issues” could potentially be dealt with through Section 106 and CIL monies as part of new development. We would suggest that this is highlighted in this section and that items that could be dealt with through development are identified. Robert Tyler, resident

The plan is well written and is a good declaration of intentions towards the future and current development of St Neots in different areas. But is not clear about milestones or by when things will be delivered. Ignacio Salan, resident

St Neots Town Council response: The Town Council agrees that it is essential that the Neighbourhood Plan is monitored to enable action to be taken if objectives are not being met and would very much welcome Mr Tyler's

involvement. It is agreed that local residents should be added as one of the delivery partners. The delivery table includes necessary projects to deliver the Neighbourhood Plan. It is difficult to give detail about timescales as the projects rely on other organisations, including developers, and are dependent on national and local funding opportunities. For this reason the timescales column in the table in the delivery and implementation section has been deleted. The Town Council's Development and Growth Committee will report to Full Council annually on the progress of the Neighbourhood Plan. Non-planning issues cannot be dealt with through S106 and CIL as they are not related to planning.

I know the list is non-exclusive, but why does Friends of Priory Park get a mention and none of the other community groups such as Friends of Sudbury Meadow, Eatons Community Association, Eynesbury Village Association, etc. I would suggest you just say something like "various community groups" Dave Jarrett, resident

St Neots Town Council response: Agreed. Remove 'Friends of Priory Park' from the list of partners and replace with '**Various community groups**'.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Neighbourhood Plan survey

### NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Neighbourhood Plan for St Neots will set out where new development will go, what kind of development it will be, and what sort of social and leisure facilities are needed to make St Neots a better place to live and work.

**The plan will provide you with the means to contribute to plans for your town.**

St Neots Town Council wants to hear from as wide a range of local people as possible - residents, businesses, shoppers, young people, older people, community groups, service providers, and other stakeholders.

**Please spend 5 minutes answering a few questions to make sure you have your say in the future of St Neots. This is just one stage in the process - there will be further opportunities to comment on the draft plan.**

**1** For each of the following list of things in St Neots please tick the box which you think best describes the current provision:

|                   | Not Sure                 | Inadequate               | Poor                     | Average                  | Good                     | Excellent                |
|-------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Housing           | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Job opportunities | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Leisure           | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Shopping          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Traffic           | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Schools           | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**2** Which of the following local facilities do you use? *Please tick those that apply.*

Shops  Social  Sports  Restaurants  Education  Other

**3** Do you go outside of St Neots for some facilities?

Yes  No

If your answer is yes, which facilities are missing or inadequate?

Where do you go for them?

**4 Do you go outside of St Neots for some facilities?**

- I live in St Neots
- I work in St Neots
- I shop in St Neots
- I use town St Neots leisure facilities
- I am active in a local community group

**5 In your opinion, how strong is the sense of community in St Neots?**

- Very Strong  Quite Strong  Average  Not very strong  Weak

**6 How do you rate the general quality of the environment in St Neots?**

- Excellent  Good  Average  Poor  Very Poor

**7 Is there anything you think is particularly good or bad about the environment in St Neots?**

**8 What do you think are the three best things about St Neots?**

**9 How do you get about in St Neots? Do you travel mainly**

- By car  By bus  On foot  By motor bike  By bicycle

**10 What do you think of the job opportunities in St Neots? Are they**

- Excellent  Good  Average  Poor  Very Poor

**11 If you could change one thing about St Neots what would it be?**

**12 What do you think should be the main priority of the Neighbourhood Plan?**

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Please provide your contact details so we can keep you informed of future stages of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Full Name:

Email:

Address:

Tel No:

When you have completed this questionnaire, please return it

- By post to St Neots Town Council, The Priory, St Neots, PE19 2BH
- By email to [mail@stneots-tc.gov.uk](mailto:mail@stneots-tc.gov.uk)

Further information can be found on our website [www.stneots-tc.gov.uk](http://www.stneots-tc.gov.uk)

**To make sure your comments are taken into account, please return your completed questionnaire by 30<sup>th</sup> November 2013.**

## Appendix 2: List of consultees

The following organisations are referred to in paragraph 1 of Schedule 1 of the Regulations and were sent a letter informing them of the Neighbourhood Plan consultation.

Huntingdonshire District Council<sup>1</sup>  
Cambridgeshire County Council  
Bedford Borough Council  
The Coal Authority  
The Homes and Communities Agency  
Natural England  
Environment Agency  
English Heritage  
Network Rail Infrastructure Limited (company number 2904587)  
The Highways Agency  
The Marine Management Organisation  
Connecting Cambridgeshire  
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group  
RWE Npower  
Anglian Water

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*1. Huntingdonshire District Council were also sent a hard copy of the draft Neighbourhood Plan.*