



Report To: Planning Portfolio Holder's Meeting
Lead Officer: Director, Planning and New Communities

9 September 2014

St Neots Neighbourhood Plan – Response to Consultation

Purpose

1. To agree the response to the pre-submission consultation on the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2029. The deadline for comments is 9 September 2014.
2. This not a key decision.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that the Planning Portfolio Holder
(a) Agree the response to the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan as set out in paragraph 14 to 16 of this report.

Reasons for Recommendations

4. St Neots is a settlement within Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) and shares a boundary with South Cambridgeshire. Proposals within the neighbourhood plan could impact on our district and when it is adopted the plan will become part of the statutory development plan for HDC. Therefore it is considered beneficial to respond to the consultation to ensure that any issues within the St Neots Plan are compatible with the Local Plan for South Cambridgeshire.

Background

5. St Neots Town Council has prepared a neighbourhood plan for their area and has submitted the plan along with supporting document to Huntingdonshire District Council as the relevant local planning authority to carry out a statutory six week period of consultation. This is one of the first neighbourhood plans within Cambridgeshire to reach this stage of development.
6. The Town Council has itself carried out a six week period of consultation earlier this year. South Cambridgeshire District Council was not formally included as a consultee to this and therefore has not made any comments to date on this plan.
7. St Neots is a market town within Huntingdonshire District Council. It is to the west of South Cambridgeshire within the A428 corridor.
8. The Plan includes six themed sections –
 - *Aesthetics* – concerned with the conserving the history and character of the town. It includes policies on enhancing the public realm of the Town Centre; improving the gateway into St Neots with a design led policy; encouraging high quality design to retain local distinctiveness:
 - *Entertainment and Leisure* – contains specific proposals for an outdoor theatre, a bandstand and a swimming pool.

- *Parking and Traffic* - promotes the use of sustainable modes of transport and encourages development proposals to include Travel Plans, supports proposals to improve facilities at the railway station, has policies about both residential and public car parking and a policy promoting working with Huntingdonshire DC and Cambridgeshire County Council to explore road projects which include dualling of the A428
- *Parks and Open Spaces* – includes policies identifying local green space, protecting existing open space and the setting of the River Great Ouse, a policy about flood prevention
- *Rejuvenation* - includes a policy to protect existing employment sites from changing to alternative uses, one to encourage high quality employment, business start ups and creative industries to the Eastern expansion employment allocation and a policy about encouraging lifelong learning
- *Shops and Services* – includes policies about proposals for the town centre and the services that should be delivered in new residential developments.

Considerations

9. There are a number of reasons why it is important for South Cambridgeshire DC to respond to the consultation on the neighbourhood plan for St Neots
 - (i) The plan will be part of the statutory development plan for Huntingdonshire DC
 - (ii) The town is within the A428 corridor and contains a policy relating to the dualling of this road. South Cambridgeshire District is also within this corridor and the submitted Local Plan proposes strategic scale developments at Bourn Airfield new village and Cambridge West that require improvements to the A428 corridor.
10. Many of the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan are specific to St Neots and would not directly impact on our district however it is those relating to roads and transport that are the ones most likely to impact on South Cambs and therefore it is appropriate to comment upon these.
11. **Policy PT1** - Promotes the use of sustainable modes of transport, encourages development proposals to include Travel Plans and supports proposals for improved facilities at the railway station. This policy is consistent with the similar policy in the Submission Local Plan for South Cambridgeshire (Policy TI/2 Planning for Sustainable Travel). As St Neots is within the A428 corridor and car traffic generated from within this area will impact on the road network used by people who live and work in South Cambridgeshire the Council is pleased to see this policy.
12. The railway station in St Neots is for many who live or work in the west of the district their local station so the Council would welcome the positive support shown in Policy PT1 to improvements to the facilities at the station. Access to the station by more sustainable forms of transport could also be considered in this policy.
13. **Policy PT4** - States the Town Council will work with Huntingdonshire DC and Cambridgeshire County Council to explore a number of road projects including dualling of the A428. However there is a caveat within the policy that states 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 Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire Transport Strategy that supports the submitted South Cambridgeshire Local Plan identifies the A428 Caxton Gibbet to Black Cat improvements as an important part of the strategy to support the development

proposals in the A428 corridor, including the new village at Bourn Airfield and Cambourne West and the Council supports the wider consideration of improvements to the A428 corridor.

Proposed Response

14. **Support Policy PT1.** As St Neots is within the A428 corridor and car traffic generated from within this area will impact on the road network used by people who live and work in South Cambridgeshire the Council is welcomes this policy. The successful implementation of this policy should reduce car traffic on the wider road network.
15. **Support Policy PT1 – Railway station improvements** - The railway station in St Neots is for many who live or work in the west of the district their local station so the Council would welcome the positive support shown in the neighbourhood plan to improvements to the facilities at the station. However the Town Council may wish to include in the policy consideration of improving sustainable travel links to the station e.g. cycle paths.
16. **Support Policy PT4- part (d).** South Cambridgeshire DC welcomes the inclusion of the Town Council being willing to work with Huntingdonshire DC and Cambridgeshire County Council about dualling the A428. Improving the traffic flow on this road by dualling from the A1 to Caxton Gibbet would help the road network within the district to move more efficiently. It is one of the critical corridors for development within the county with planned development at St Neots, West Cambourne and Bourn Airfield. The Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire Transport Strategy recognises the A428 corridor as one that needs improvement to accommodate planned growth.

Options

17. The Portfolio Holder could decide not to respond to the consultation. This could result in a missed opportunity to respond to a plan that after a successful referendum would be part of the statutory development plan for Huntingdonshire District Council.

Implications

18. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered: -

Legal

19. The St Neots Neighbourhood Plan could in the future be part of the statutory development plan for Huntingdonshire and therefore the implementation of the policies contained within it could impact on the planning in South Cambridgeshire.

Consultation responses (including from the Youth Council)

20. No consultation has been carried out on this response.

Effect on Strategic Aims

Aim 1 - Engagement: engage with residents, parishes and businesses to ensure we deliver first class services and value for money

21. Neighbourhood planning engages local people in the planning process by giving them a tool to guide the future development, regeneration and conservation of an area.

Background Papers

Link to the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan

http://consult.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/portal/pp/nps/stn-np_1?tab=list

Link to the St Neots neighbourhood planning website

<http://www.stneots-tc.gov.uk/stneotsplan>

Where [the Local Authorities \(Executive Arrangements\) \(Meetings and Access to Information\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#) require documents to be open to inspection by members of the public, they must be available for inspection: -

- (a) at all reasonable hours at the offices of South Cambridgeshire District Council;
- (b) on the Council's website; and
- (c) in the case of documents to be available for inspection pursuant to regulation 15, on payment of a reasonable fee required by the Council by the person seeking to inspect the documents at the offices of South Cambridgeshire District Council.

Report Author: Alison Talkington – Senior Planning Policy Officer
Telephone: (01954) 713182