

Hilton's Response to HELAA Consultation - October 2017

This document was discussed by Hilton Parish Council (HPC) in open session at an Extraordinary Parish Council meeting held on Monday 30th October 2017.

Scope:

We have limited the scope of this response to identifying the apparent contradictions between the emerging policy *Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036* and the call for land as laid out in the document *HELAA October 2017 05-10-2017 HQ-reduced*.

HPC closely observed the formulation of the Huntingdonshire District Council's new planning policy document, *Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036*, and have been supportive of it, as outlined in the detailed response HPC sent to Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) during the consultation period this summer. We have been advised by HDC that there is a significant push for more housing nationally and in the Cambridgeshire Region in particular, and bore that in mind in our response.

In light of this the recent call for new sites for housing development was unexpected and has caused concern in Hilton. There are significant contradictions between the objectives set out in the new Local Plan and this latest review of the five sites identified in Hilton under the Housing & Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) initiative.

Although it is understood that this call for development sites does **not** constitute new planning policy we are obliged to point out where emerging planning policy in the form of the Local Plan to 2036 would make it difficult for HDC to support development on any of these five sites in Hilton. In addition there are some factually incorrect assumptions made in the document '*HELAA October 2017 05-10-2017 HQ – reduced*' which we would like to highlight here.

Specifically:

- 1) Refer to document: *Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036-Small Settlements (LP5)*

The Local Plan states in 4.38 with reference to policy LP5 "*The purpose of this policy is to identify the small settlements across Huntingdonshire that have very limited or no service or facilities available*". It then goes on to list these settlements of which Hilton is one.

It also states "Small settlements have a limited role in delivering sustainable development", and further explains in 4.39 "*The National Planning & Policy Framework places a strong emphasis on the role of the planning system in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities. The nature of small settlements varies considerably but generally there are few or no services or facilities available. In most cases residents will have to travel to other nearby settlements to meet their day to day needs. Such journeys are generally longer than most people are willing to walk and so many will be by car. Many of the villages retain their historic form and have particular*

heritage features. Development pressure can easily undermine the sensitive character of these settlements if it is not sympathetic to its local context and the size of the settlement”.

On the subject of any development at all in small settlements the Local Plan states in 4.40, *“The policy does not set out a size limit for development as the scale of development will be limited to that which makes most efficient use of the limited development opportunities which both fit with the settlement's character and are within the built-up area”.*

It is therefore clearly stated in this emerging policy document, a policy document which is currently informing planning decisions, that the sites identified in Hilton for potential development by HELAA would not be supported by HDC's own emerging policy. The policy says support for any development would be considered on its merits of sustainability including (LP5):

- a) availability of services;*
- b) availability of sustainable modes of transport;*
- c) efficient use of land and existing infrastructure;*
- d) scale of development proposed and how it fits in with the surroundings; and*
- e) effect on the character of the settlement and surroundings.*

Development on any of the sites identified in Hilton with the scale of new housing outlined in HELAA would not be supported if the Local plan is to be adhered to.

2) Refer to document: *HELAA October 2017 05-10-2017 HQ –reduced/paragraph 3*

The ‘greenfield’ sites identified in Hilton do not meet the site selection criteria set out in this all important paragraph. It states that a site for consideration should be located in or adjacent to one of the:

- Spatial Planning Areas identified in the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036: Consultation Draft 2017 which are Huntingdon, St Neots, St Ives and Ramsey; or*
- Key Service Centres identified in the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036: Consultation Draft 2017 which are Buckden, Fenstanton, Kimbolton, Sawtry, Somersham, Warboys and Yaxley; or*
- small settlements which has a range of services including at least four of the following: primary school, doctors surgery, public hall, food shop or public house;*

Hilton is not located in, or adjacent to, either a Spatial Planning Area or a Key Service Centre. As the reasoning outlined in the Local Plan (LP3 & LP4) is to develop towns and larger villages with facilities to provide for day-to-day needs of residents without the need to travel, Hilton is too remote from any of these centres to qualify for development under this criteria.

Of the services a small settlement should provide to meet the criteria, Hilton has just three; a public hall, a food shop and public house, not the minimum of four called for and does not therefore provide 'reasonable sustainability'.

3) Refer to document: *HELAA October 2017 05-10-2017 HQ –reduced/paragraph 26-27*

Hilton is placed in a list headed *Small Settlements with Reasonable Sustainability*; these are villages which have at least four of these services; primary school, doctor's surgery, public hall, food shop and public house.

As already stated, this is factually incorrect as Hilton only has three of these services; public hall, food shop and public house. As Hilton has neither a doctor's surgery, not a primary school, as a settlement it cannot support the day to day needs of residents without the need to travel. In addition, we have no sustainable modes of public travel.

4) Refer to document: *HELAA October 2017 05-10-2017 HQ –reduced/Small Settlements with Reasonable Sustainability, page 467*

In this brief description of Hilton, it is said to have "a good bus service for Hilton on Busway routes A and D which run between Cambridge and St Ives. Dews Coaches Service 9 runs towards St. Ives Monday to Friday". Sadly this service has been terminated by the current operator as it has become unviable to run. At present there is a temporary service in place but this will cease by mid-2018. As it appears commercially unviable to maintain a bus service through Hilton, it is therefore clear Hilton could not sustain an increase in population without the ability of all residents to drive or have alternative private arrangements to leave the village.

5) Refer to document: *Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036-TheCountryside (LP6)*

Hilton still has a strong rural community with close links to its agricultural heritage. This is maintained by a number of nearby private farms that operate in and around the village. Greater expansion would further urbanise the character of the village making it more suburban in nature and do little to support the local rural economy which has already lost significant land to the new A14 link road. This would appear to run counter to policy LP6:

A proposal for development in the countryside should:

- a) demonstrate how it would protect the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside;*
- b) not give rise to noise, odour, obtrusive light or other impacts that would adversely affect the enjoyment of the countryside by others;*
- c) not lead to the irreversible loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land (Grade 1) and should use land of lower agricultural value in preference to land of higher agricultural value; and*
- d) support the vitality and viability of the rural economy or support a rural community.*

6) Refer to document: *HELAA October 2017 05-10-2017 HQ –reduced/Small Settlements with Reasonable Sustainability, page 469/473/477/480/484*

For each site in the column titled ‘*Sustainability Assessment Objective*’, point 18 it states: *Improve access to satisfying work, appropriate to skills, potential and place of residence*. In the column titled ‘*commentary*’ it identifies Papworth Hospital as the nearest major employer. This is true but the commentary fails to mention that Papworth Hospital will be relocating to a new site at Addenbrookes Cambridge scheduled for September 2018. Therefore we are already faced with a significant drop in local employment opportunities in the near future for those already living in Hilton.

In summary

On the understanding that the HDC Local Plan to 2036 was formulated on sound analysis, research and argument, we request that HDC and the Cambridgeshire County Council honour the guidelines defined within the plan. The adoption of any of the five development sites around Hilton would represent a fundamental shift in reasoning.

We also ask HDC to consider any future development in or around Hilton in the context of the significant impact on Hilton of the new A14 link road, the extent of which we are yet to fully understand.

Therefore, we do not see how Hilton qualifies for housing development based on either HDC’s own HELAA site selection criteria and in the context of the emerging planning policy of the Local Plan.

We request that HDC confirms Hilton's status as a small settlement, according to HDC guidelines and that it continues to engage with Hilton parishioners through Hilton Parish Council as the process of site selection continues, and on any changes to the current draft of the Local Plan to 2036 that may result.

This response was discussed in a public meeting attended by 80+ Hilton parishioners who voted unanimously in favour of this document. It clearly represents the views of Hilton Parishioners concerning the contradictions in planning policy raised with this call for new development sites. Parishioners also raised a number of concerns, such as increased traffic, lack of supporting infrastructure for instance; issues which will be explored in detail by Hilton Parish Council should a planning application result from this call for housing development.

END

Hilton Parish Council