

Hilton Parish Council (HPC) – 21st August 2017

Ref: Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 – Consultation Draft 2017

Response:

HPC welcomes the work undertaken by Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) in the preparation of this document and the opportunity given to Parish Councils to comment whilst the Local Plan is in draft form.

This response is limited to policy which directly affects the village parish of Hilton, both in terms of the scope for future development within the village or development which would directly affect the village such as surrounding infrastructure, large developments nearby, traffic policy etc.

Highlighted here are policy statements which are particularly important for Hilton. This response seeks to represent the opinions of the majority of Hilton parishioners in line with a recent survey conducted in 2016 concerning new housing development, in addition to the survey conducted by Acre in 2009 and also with reference to the Hilton Parish Plan of 2005.

1. It seems entirely appropriate that housing development will be focused on sites offering greatest access to services and facilities, Key Service Centres, the closest to Hilton being Fenstanton and Spatial Planning Areas.
2. HPC are concerned about the statement: *“small and windfall sites will be delivered in conformity with other policies in this plan”* (LP1), and hope that Hilton being classified as a small settlement takes priority in this regard. HPC does however acknowledge HDC seeks to *“support a thriving rural economy”* (LP1), and would support development *“where it will deliver community benefits or help local housing needs”* (LP6), and trust a balanced outcome would be achieved.
3. In previous drafts of this emerging policy there was a clear definition as to the scope of development within a designated small settlement: infill only, maximum three dwellings. In this latest draft the development limit is now more subjective: *“availability of services and existing infrastructure..... travel to sustainable modes..... effect on the character of the immediate locality”* (LP7). It is appreciated, as explained in covering notes, that this catch-all definition does not necessarily fit well to *all* small settlements, however HPC would prefer a tighter definition, even if there had to be more than one category of a “small settlement”.
4. HPC supports the statement, *“protect the character of existing settlements and the surrounding countryside”* (LP1) and *“protect the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside”* (LP8).
5. HPC also supports the statement, *“a proposal will be supported where it is demonstrated that it responds positively to its context and has drawn inspiration from key characteristics of its surroundings, including natural, historic and built environment”* (LP10), and the general principles of design outlined in LP11.

6. HPC appreciates the commitment to sustainable travel. *“proposals will be supported where it demonstrates opportunities are maximised for the use of sustainable travel modes”* (LP15). In light of this statement we would like to explore such modes, particularly cycle (mobility scooters, electric bikes) paths to Papworth and St Ives in the context of the current A14 scheme.
7. HPC understands and appreciates the policy outlined in LP18 and LP19, support for the rural economy and rural workers.
8. HPC understands and appreciates the policy outlined in LP27 and LP28, support for the Community Planning Proposals and Rural Exception Housing. As such schemes could have a significant effect on a small community HPC would expect Parish Councils to have full and meaningful consultation in planning process.
9. HPC understands and appreciates the policy outlined in LP30, LP31, LP32 and LP33, protection of Biodiversity and Geodiversity, Open Spaces and Rural Buildings.
10. HPC understands and appreciates the policy outlined in LP34 and LP35, protection of Heritage Assets and definition of a Heritage Strategy.
11. HPC would expect HDC to improve local infrastructure in all areas not just in designated development sites in order to keep pace with the general increase in population and growth in this part of the county.
12. And finally, HPC asks for a closer involvement with an opportunity to bring meaningful input into HDC’s planning strategy process.

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