



Protect. Improve. Create.

St Neots

Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2029

24 February 2016
Final Plan

*Prepared by the Development and Growth Committee
Chairman Louie Ruck*

St Neots
Town Council

St Neots Town Council, The Priory, St Neots PE19 2BH

St Neots Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2029

Final Plan – 24 February 2016

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Note – This list relates to the Committee Membership as at April 2014, the time of Submission for the Neighbourhood Plan



The Town Council received professional planning support from AFA Planning Consultants Ltd during the production of this Neighbourhood Plan.



The Neighbourhood Plan was subject to Independent Examination during the winter of 2014/2015 by Ann Skippers *BSc (Hons) Dip Mgmt (Open) PGC (TLHE)(Open) MRTPI FHEA FRSA AoU*, appointed through the Neighbourhood Plan Independent Examiners Referral Service (NPIERS).



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Foreword

For many years the residents of St Neots felt that decisions regarding development in and around the town have been outside of their control. This is why in 2010, following the Town Council elections, it was felt that the Neighbourhood Planning policy would give some much needed control back to the people of the town.

The original idea of a Neighbourhood Plan was muted in the summer of 2010, but with unclear guidance at the time on how Neighbourhood Plans would benefit residents and businesses locally, the idea was shelved until such time as that guidance became clearer.

In 2011 that guidance came, and with that, the Council and specifically the then Policy and Audit Committee of St Neots Town Council began to actively explore the possibility of developing a Neighbourhood Plan. In the eighteen months since the previous elections, there had been huge changes in the town. The Loves Farm development was nearing completion and proposals for Loves Farm 2 and Winteringham Park were now being placed on the table.

Within the town, the Council had organised a series of highly successful events including the Jubilee Celebrations, the Christmas Lights switch-on (which attracted 4000 people to the town centre) and the SunFest festival. There had also been a Town Team established, comprising of local businesses and community groups, to help promote and improve the town centre. Part of their activities was the developing a Mary Portas Bid and they were successful in achieving £10,000 for the town centre improvements.

With all the activity to improve the town ongoing, a Neighbourhood Plan fit the ethos and the mood of the town's people and would provide some much needed control over how development would progress. In 2012, a clear direction was set and it was agreed that the Council would proceed to develop a Neighbourhood Plan. Councillor Louie Ruck was the Chair of the Committee leading this project.

At the time the Council agreed to proceed, there were fewer than five Neighbourhood Plans begin consulted on and only one which had been through examination. St Neots Town Council was taking part in a quiet revolution in

planning and it was a privileged to be at the helm. I can only hope that the hard work of all those involved in producing the plan is able to fulfil the aspirations of the people who matter; residents and business owners of St Neots.

The St Neots Neighbourhood Plan was the first Neighbourhood Plan in Huntingdonshire District to reach examination stage. The Plan covers the town of St Neots which is contiguous with the Town Council administrative boundary.

Huntingdonshire District Council approved the designation of the area on 17 October 2013. The Plan covers A period of 15 years from 2014 – 2029. The pre-submission draft of the Plan was published for six weeks from 7 February to 21 March 2014. The submission version of the Plan was subject to a six-week consultation period from 29 July to 9 September 2014.

The Plan was subject to an Independent Examination by Ann Skippers, her report was published on 27 February 2015 and the Plan is subject to a Public Referendum in February 2016.

Following a 93% vote in favour of the Plan at the Referendum, the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan was formally 'made' by Huntingdonshire District Council on the 24 February 2016. Consequently with immediate effect the Plan becomes part of the statutory development plan for Huntingdonshire.

With thanks to all involved

Councillor James Corley
Mayor of St Neots



Acknowledgement

St Neots Town Council would like to extend their thanks to all those who have been involved with the formation of the Neighbourhood Plan. In undergoing this process, we have seen first-hand the passion that our community has for St Neots and the belief there is in a brighter future for the town; with support coming from local residents, businesses and stakeholders alike.

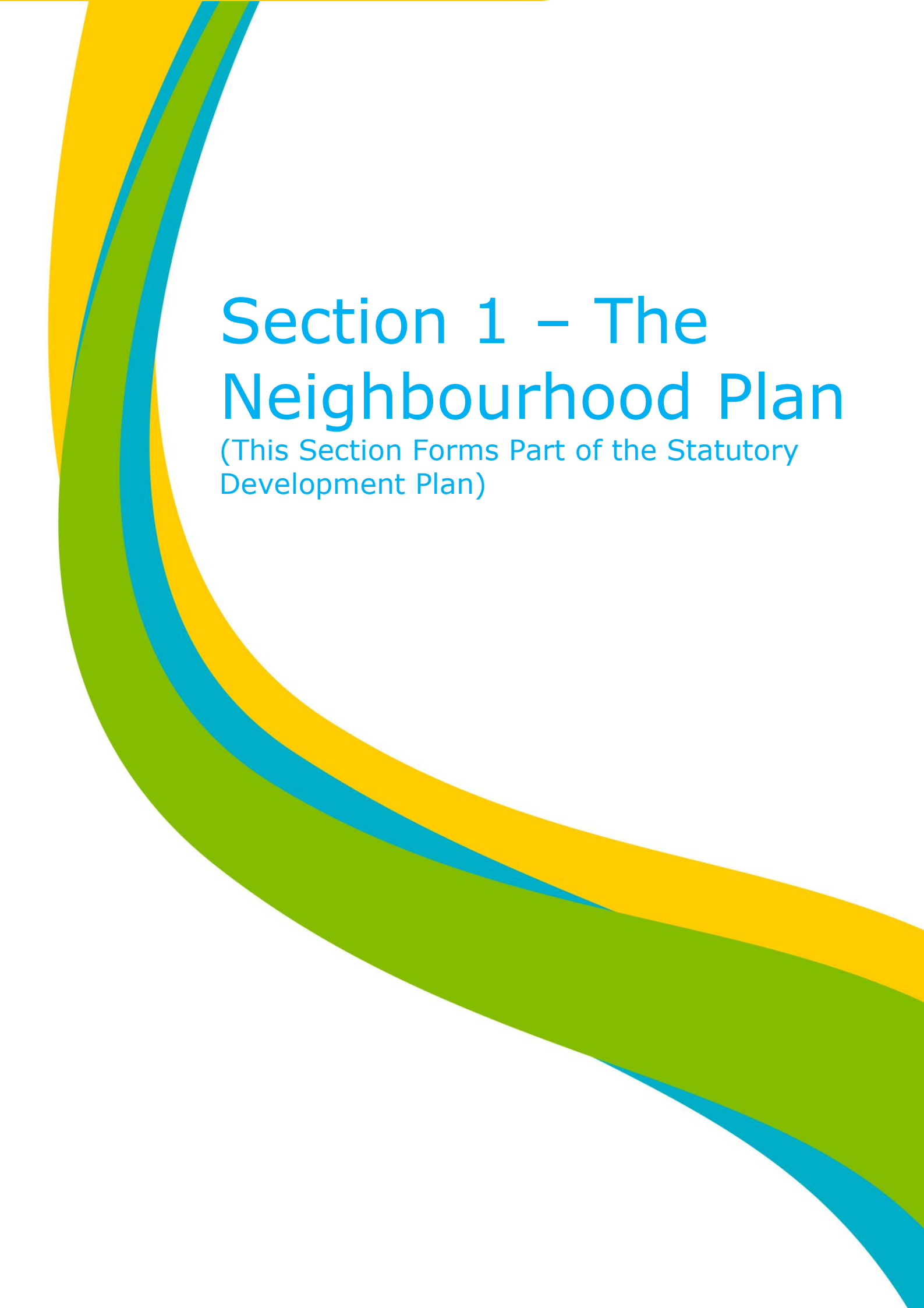
Council Officers spent many late nights working through the plan and developing it in to the high-quality document you see here and we are very grateful for their time, commitment and valuable input.

We would especially like to thank the general public who have actively participated throughout the campaign. Without all their contributions, the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan would not exist and we would not have the opportunity to decide the town's future as we do now. As we say in the Plan, we are confident that St Neots has an exciting future and we look forward to seeing it come to life.

Additional thanks to:

- About My Area PE19
- Longsands Academy
- St Neots Library
- Shape Your Place
- St Neots Children's Centres
- St Neots Local History Society
- St Neots Museum
- The Likeminded Network
- U3A St Neots branch
- Waitrose, St Neots
- The Hillings Residential Home, St Neots
- Tesco, St Neots
- Longsands Academy
- St Neots News and Crier
- Keystone Marketing

The Town Council also acknowledges the support received from officers at Huntingdonshire District Council.



Section 1 – The Neighbourhood Plan

(This Section Forms Part of the Statutory
Development Plan)

Introduction



The Localism Act 2011 introduced a new type of Community Led Plan. Communities now have the right to produce a Neighbourhood Plan, setting out policies on the development and use of land. Developing a Neighbourhood Plan is a way for communities to play a greater role in determining the future of their area.

The St Neots Neighbourhood Plans form part of the statutory development plan once made. This means that Huntingdonshire District Council will have to determine planning applications within St Neots in accordance with this Neighbourhood Plan alongside other Development Plan Documents.

This Neighbourhood Plan is a true Community Led Plan. It has been prepared by the Town Council's Development and Growth Committee and has been informed by public consultation with the local community. The options for the Plan and the Plan itself have been shaped by the results of the Neighbourhood Plan survey and previous public consultations to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan accurately reflects the aspirations of the community.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Throughout this Neighbourhood Plan reference is made to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It was published on 27 March 2012 and is now also supplemented by Planning Practice Guidance.

The NPPF provides a framework to produce locally distinctive Neighbourhood Plans which reflect the needs and aspirations of the community. The NPPF is clear that the planning system remains plan led. As set out in paragraph 2 of

the NPPF, Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 remains unchanged and requires that planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. One of the most widely used definitions of sustainable development comes from the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (the Bruntland Commission), 'Our Common Future' (1987), which defines it as "*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*". A more detailed definition is offered in the UK Sustainable Development Strategy, *Securing the Future*, which includes the following five guiding principles for sustainable development.

Ensuring A Strong, Healthy And Just Society - Meeting the diverse needs of all people in existing and future communities, promoting personal wellbeing, social cohesion and inclusion and creating equal opportunity for all.

Using Sound Science Responsibly - Ensuring policy is developed and implemented on the basis of strong scientific evidence, whilst taking into account scientific uncertainty (through the precautionary principle) as well as public attitudes and values.

Promoting Good Governance - Actively promoting effective participative systems of levels of society – engaging people's creativity and diversity.

Achieving a Sustainable Economy - Building a strong, stable and sustainable economy which provides prosperity and governance in all opportunities for all, and in which environmental and social costs fall on those who impose them (polluter pays) and efficient resource use is incentivised.

Living within Environmental Limits - Respecting the limits of the planet's environment, resources and biodiversity – to improve our environment and ensure that the natural resources needed for life are unimpaired and remain so for future generations.

The St Neots Neighbourhood Plan contributes towards the achievement of sustainable development.

Challenges encountered

The main difficulty encountered in preparing this Neighbourhood Plan was understanding a new process. When the Town Council embarked on this Neighbourhood Plan, only a few Neighbourhood Plans around the country had gone through Examination. The Town Council therefore had few examples to learn from. Whilst this has been a difficulty, it has also been an opportunity and the Town Council believe that it has prepared a Neighbourhood Plan which reflects the aspirations of the community and the process has been tailored to the Town Council's established way of working.

Structure of Neighbourhood Plan

The Neighbourhood Plan includes five themed sections: Aesthetics, Parking and Traffic, Parks, Rejuvenation and Development and Shops and Services. These are all issues that are important to the community and within each section policies are included to guide the development and use of land.

Following the themed sections, the Neighbourhood Plan contains an implementation and delivery section. It is important that Neighbourhood Plans are deliverable and this section includes the key projects arising from the Neighbourhood Plan and details of how they will be delivered.

The final section includes a list of non-planning issues that the community raised as being important. The Town Council has not ignored these important issues, but as this is a statutory planning document it cannot include non-planning issues. This section is included in the Neighbourhood Plan to demonstrate to the community that all of their concerns have been taken into account and will be addressed by the Town Council outside of the Neighbourhood Plan process.

St Neots and Surrounding Area

Population

St Neots is the largest Town in Cambridgeshire with, according to recent estimates, over 32,500 population living within the urban area. Adjoining and nearby settlements falling within the extra urban area contain a population considerably in excess of 40,000 residents; equivalent to the aggregate populations of Huntingdon and St Ives together. When feeder communities which rely on St Neots as a hub for services are considered, the catchment is estimated to be in excess of 80,000. Furthermore, Cambridgeshire has the highest County growth rate in the UK and St Neots has the fastest rate of population growth within our County.

Historic Development

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.

St Neots has evolved through the expansion of several communities; Eaton Ford, Eaton Socon, Eynesbury and St Neots town as well as smaller settlements such as Crosshall, Sudbury and Eynesbury Hardwick. These population areas have progressively expanded until physically joining to form the urban area of St Neots. The town itself is divided through the centre by the Great Ouse. Prior to the 1974 local government reorganisation, the river formed the Cambridgeshire/Bedfordshire border.

St Neots experienced a major population increase in the 1960's due to planned relocation of residents from north London. That relocation was achieved through building industrial facilities which attracted workers to new housing. Today there is a further 10,000 inhabitants planned for the town and its surrounding area but, as of yet, there are limited planned improvements to the supporting infrastructure, employment, recreation or services infrastructure.

Infrastructure

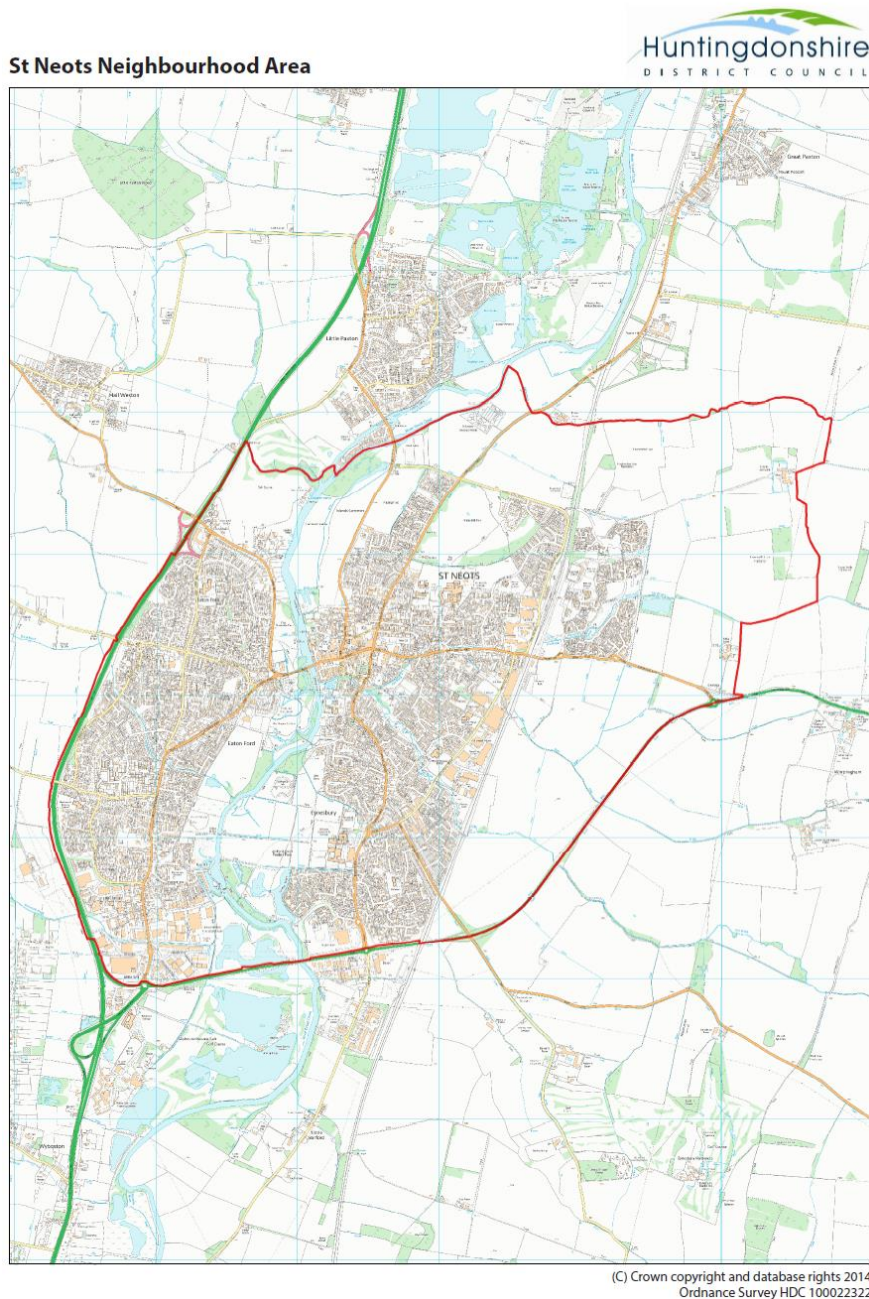
In the 1960s, St Neots was ideally located for commuters due to the proximity to Cambridge and Bedford and the rail link to London. Today, St Neots railway station is a primary station, used by residents of the town and the surrounding villages. However, the rising cost of commuting and the operation of services at capacity combined with the highest parking charges on the Great Northern Line (nearly £2,000 per annum for car parking alone) makes commuting to London unviable for many. The proposed new railway station for Alconbury is expected to further reduce capacity at St Neots.

The A428 is the main road between St Neots and Cambridge. With increases in commuting to the city, the road is now operating at and above capacity. The increase in population to the east of the town has raised concerns about the inadequacy of the road capacity. Dualling of the road has been a local aspiration for many years, but as of yet has not been a priority at national level.

Infrastructure within the town focuses on the town's High Street and the Town Bridge. The bridge was originally designed in the 1960's to serve a population of 8,000 with low car ownership. Today it is used by a population of 40,000 with considerably greater car ownership. The location of both secondary schools to the east of the town prompts thousands of daily school runs via the bottle-neck town bridge and town centre. This has presented a problem in recent years and has caused significant congestion problems in the town centre.

St Neots has a history of expansion and welcoming new residents. However, for expansion to work, measures to provide the necessary infrastructure must be taken if the town is to retain and build on its unique and vibrant heritage and culture.

Figure 1: Map of St Neots



The Neighbourhood Plan covers the area delineated by the red line.

Vision

St Neots is a popular and vibrant town with a strong community ethos - and the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan provides us with a valuable opportunity to build on the town's successes and enhance its future. Our active community and the St Neots Town Council together have a clear vision for the town over the next fifteen years (until 2029) - and these aspirations and strong expectations are at the very heart of the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan.

The St Neots community has been fully involved in the work to design the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan. Our Vision has been developed further to extensive consultation with our residents and the findings from "the evidence base"; from which we have created ambitious but achievable objectives.

As part of our plan, St Neots will enhance its position as the leading market town in Huntingdonshire with a strong local economy - with the creation of new opportunities and facilities benefiting the entire community; across all needs and interests. A focus on improving traffic and employment opportunities, protecting open spaces and creating better shopping and leisure environments are some of the fundamental components of our vision; which we believe are key to the future development of the town.

Our unique market town character will be protected and the Town Centre will flourish with new retail and leisure developments and an improved community environment. Existing partners in the Town Centre will be retained and valued; with the ability for new retail and leisure developments to prosper.

St Neots has the opportunity to benefit from the planned new developments in the area covered by the Neighbourhood Plan. Balancing growth for the benefit of both existing and new residents of our town is the overarching ethos of our plan.

The Eastern expansion will deliver a range of housing types, including affordable housing for local residents and their children - and will also maintain a balance of facilities by providing open spaces, community facilities, education and healthcare provision; as well as much needed employment opportunities within the designated employment land. Our focus is that the lifestyles of every

resident will benefit from the new developments and that an appropriate balance will be met between housing development and new or improved infrastructure.

St Neots Town Council will continue to work with our community, Huntingdonshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council to help shape the future of St Neots; to enable the town to grow and prosper. With a dedicated approach, improvements to infrastructure can be secured, with a better quality of life for all our residents, businesses and visitors.

The objectives that follow below identify in more detail the issues, opportunities and challenges that need addressing in order to reach this important vision for the town.

We are confident that St Neots has an exciting future - one where existing facilities and assets are protected, local infrastructure is improved and new opportunities are created – and we look forward to seeing it come to life.

Objectives

Promote the growth of high quality and sustainable employment

- Employment land allocations will be supported and regularly reviewed to maintain a prosperous economy and balanced community to improve local job opportunities
- Protect and promote the river setting to boost the economy
- Promote a vibrant Town Centre and wider St Neots economy
- Provide for a balance of new homes and jobs to support the economic prosperity of our growing community and reduce the need to travel

Encourage the growth of retail, leisure and community facilities

- Enhance the appearance and historic character of the Town Centre
- Utilise the historic character of the Town Centre to showcase the town's heritage
- Promote the Town Centre as the destination of choice for retail leisure and community activities
- Enhance the leisure and entertainment offer throughout the town
- Promote the river as a low impact leisure resource

Protect and enhance St Neots' natural and historic environment, countryside and river setting

- Enhance the green infrastructure network through the creation of new open spaces and the protection and improvement of existing open spaces
- Improve attractive and accessible spaces for residents to live, work and play
- Ensure that new development does not increase the risk of flooding and takes every opportunity available to minimise the risk of fluvial and pluvial (surface) water flooding is taken
- Create attractive approaches to the town from every direction utilising a mixture of soft landscaping and wide boulevards
- Ensure that both new and existing communities are fully integrated

Improve Availability and Accessibility of Housing Stock and Improve Community Assets

- Continue to improve the facilities on offer to support the growth of the local population
- Ensure that the new developments are integrated into the existing community of St Neots
- Encourage high quality and accessible education, medical, youth and elderly provision for all our residents in line with growth in the town.
- Encourage pre-school, primary, secondary and post 16 education within the town
- Provide a site for a new cemetery

Improve the Provision of Sustainable Transport throughout the Town

- Sustainable transport modes including safe cycling provision will be supported



1 Aesthetics

Aesthetics

1.1 Introduction



1.1.1 St Neots is an attractive town with a rich historic and natural environment.

1.1.2 The close association of the town with the River Great Ouse, in terms of visual links, public open space and recreation, gives St Neots a strong sense of place and a highly distinctive landscape setting.

1.1.3 In terms of nature conservation, Paxton Pits and St Neots Common are of particular environmental significance and these are notified as Sites of Special Scientific Interest. There are two Scheduled Ancient Monuments and 163 listed buildings within the town. Listed buildings are predominantly clustered around the Town Centre and along Great North Road in Eaton Socon.

1.1.4 The St Neots Conservation Area was amended in 2006 and amalgamates the three old Conservation Areas (St Neots, Eynesbury and the Eatons) into one larger one. Distinctive areas include the Market Square and riverfront, Island Common and Priory Park. It is essential that new development is designed to a high quality that reflects local distinctiveness and protects and enhances the natural and historic environment.

1.2 Public Realm

1.2.1 The High Street is dominated by cars and is cluttered with signage. Consultation has shown that the community would like a reduction in signage and street furniture such as bollards. They would like to see as a priority more seating in the Town Centre. A café/bistro culture would encourage people to spend more time in the Town Centre.

1.2.2 The attractive buildings and historic Market Square have the potential to create a unique focal point, attracting Families and ensuring a diverse mix of users within the Town Centre Area itself. An improved public realm benefits everyone; it benefits retailers, businesses, residents and visitors. Public realm enhancements can also contribute towards creating a distinctive St Neots brand.

1.2.3 The term 'public realm' refers to the public spaces between buildings. It's the pavements, squares, seating, signage, materials and planting. Public Realm plays a key role in defining a town's wider image and in setting a welcoming or neglected feel. Investment in the public realm reaps both environmental and economic returns. A CABI Report on street design quality found that simply improving street design can make a major difference to market values. The study found that in London public realm improvements added an average of 4.9% to retail rents. Investment in public realm can also lead to social benefits by promoting social cohesion and reducing levels of crime.

1.2.4 The Town Council believe that enhancing the public realm of the Town Centre will enhance its vitality and viability and help to create a Town Centre that the community are proud of.

"We want to preserve the characteristics of the town and ensure it remains attractive, therefore limit the amount of new buildings in our green areas."

Comment from St Neots resident



Policy A1

Proposals in the Town Centre that create new or enlarged units will be expected to contribute to the improvement of the Town Centre's public realm where viable.

1.2.5 Every opportunity should be taken to improve the public realm of the Town Centre. An improved public realm will make the Town Centre more attractive and encourage more visitors, thus improving its vitality. As part of the Neighbourhood Plan survey many people said that if they could change one thing about St Neots it would be to make the High Street more attractive.

1.2.6 A strategic approach to public realm improvements would be taken. These would include a consistent high quality shop signage and frontages. Seating and foliage will be an essential part of the St Neots brand.

1.2.7 Proposals for new units or the expansion or alteration of existing units could contribute towards public realm improvements. The Town Council may use CIL or other funding opportunities towards public realm improvements as part of a comprehensive public realm strategy.

1.3 Gateway into St Neots

1.3.1 The Eastern expansion offers the opportunity to improve the gateway into St Neots from the East. It is essential that this gateway into the town, and indeed all development on the edge of the town, creates an attractive entry into St Neots.

1.3.2 Huntingdonshire District Council's St Neots Eastern Expansion Urban Design Framework recognises that the boundary between town and country should be a soft edge and that development should consider the urban-rural interface. The Town Council strongly agrees with this and through Policy A2 are seeking to ensure that all new development on the edge of St Neots creates a welcoming gateway into the town.

Policy A2

All development on the edge of St Neots must provide soft landscaping on the approach into the town. The following design principles must be taken into account:

- (a) The density of residential development should reduce towards the countryside edge with a larger proportion of detached dwellings with front gardens set in the landscape; and
- (b) The landscape treatment should be designed to minimise but not obliterate views of the development except where required by a visual impact assessment; and
- (c) Stands of trees should be used to either restrict or focus views of the development and to break up the form of the buildings; and
- (d) Wide boulevards will be expected on the main approach into St Neots to create a high quality environment; and
- (e) Roundabouts should be attractive and must ensure that good vision is achieved for drivers.
- (f) 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.

1.3.3 It is important that the first impression of St Neots is welcoming and attractive. The use of green gateways will help to achieve this. Green gateways also help to protect landscape character.

1.3.4 Whilst Policy A2 takes some of the design principles from the St Neots Eastern Expansion Urban Design Framework, these principles will be relevant and applied to all development proposals on the edge of St Neots.

1.4 Design

1.4.1 It is essential that development within St Neots is of high quality design that protects and enhances the character of the area.

1.4.2 St Neots can be split into four character areas: St Neots in the north-east, Eynesbury in the south-east, Eaton Ford in the north-west and Eaton Socon in the south-west.

1.4.3 St Neots retains historic architecture on the scale of other Huntingdonshire market towns and demonstrates its importance as a trading and commercial centre from the 17th century onwards. This area includes the Town Centre, commercial areas and mainly residential streets on the outskirts of the Town Centre.

1.4.4 Eynesbury retains its village identity with its village green and parish church, despite being surrounded by modern housing development. The original 12th century village had a very open texture and this has not been completely lost. However, the historic settlement is now isolated from the rural context. The area contains a wide variety of buildings from different ages and of varying styles, from small cottages and terraces, to larger houses as well as local authority housing.

1.4.5 Eaton Ford and Eaton Socon both retain a rural quality. Eaton Ford is a district of St Neots. It lies on the west bank of the River Great Ouse, and was absorbed into St Neots in 1965. It is largely residential and retains the old village centre, which is still identified by the triangular village green and several old farmhouses amongst the newer houses.

1.4.6 Eaton Socon acts as a gateway to people heading into St Neots offering a gentle approach in to the town. Whilst the village is an integral part of the town, Eaton Socon still retains its identity with its own parish church and village green. Historic buildings and plenty of open spaces contribute to a rural feel in the village.

Policy A3

All development must be designed to a high quality that reinforces local distinctiveness.

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, proportion of windows, plan depth, plot width and access, the site and its surroundings including considerations of flood risk management.

Buildings on the fringes of major developments should have variations in height, style and position. They should reflect the town heritage design and characteristics with a variety of traditional and modern building materials. As a matter of good design, defensible space should be provided.

Careful consideration should be given to the servicing requirements of buildings to ensure that essential items such as car parking and space for the storage of waste and recycling bins are successfully integrated into the design, including access for service and emergency vehicles.

1.4.7 Design is much wider than just visual appearance. Good design addresses connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment.

1.4.8 Early discussions should be held with the Town Council to discuss design issues. Proposals that have evolved with the community will be favourably considered. The Town Council can provide valuable advice to applicants in terms of St Neots special character and local distinctiveness.

1.4.9 All development should reinforce local distinctiveness. Major applications will usually be expected to be accompanied by a Site Analysis and demonstrate how the surrounding development has influenced the design. A Site Analysis will also be helpful for some minor developments to demonstrate that local vernacular has been taken into account and how it has influenced the design of the proposal. Applicants should refer to the latest St Neots Conservation Area Character Appraisal.

1.4.10 High quality hard and soft landscaping can help to successfully integrate development into the wider environment. Major development proposals should consider landscaping from the outset. A Landscape Strategy will often help to demonstrate how the proposal integrates into the wider environment and should be prepared at an early stage.

1.4.11 The use of local materials, building methods and details can be an important factor in enhancing local distinctiveness. Careful attention must be paid to detailing such as doors, windows, porches, lighting, flues and ventilation, gutters, pipes and other rain water details, ironmongery and decorative features.

1.4.12. 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.

1.4.13. The use of local materials, building methods and details can be an important factor in enhancing local distinctiveness. Careful attention must be paid to detailing such as doors, windows, porches, lighting, flues and ventilation, gutters, pipes and other rain water details, ironmongery and decorative features.

1.4.14 It is essential that car parking, waste storage and cycle parking is considered from the outset to ensure that these important servicing requirements are not added on at a late stage but successfully integrated into the design of the development.

1.4.15 Good design should incorporate measures to design out crime in line with the principles set out in the NPPF. Consultation will be expected, at the initial design stage of any major proposals, with Cambridgeshire Police to identify crime prevention and community safety measures to be incorporated in developments.

1.4.16 Whilst this policy requires development to reinforce local distinctiveness innovative and highly sustainable buildings will be supported by the Town Council.

1.5 Landscape Backdrops

1.5.1 Landscape buffers provide an opportunity to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments, which is supported by the NPPF. Net gains in biodiversity will contribute to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.

1.5.2 The Neighbourhood Plan survey has revealed that some residents believe the density of modern housing is far too high and opportunities to ensure modern developments are ecologically sustainable have been missed.

Policy A4

Developments for 50 or more dwellings should include landscape backdrops around the development site for screening and wildlife.

Proposals must be supported by a plan clearly showing the extent of the landscape backdrop and form this will take. Proposals will also need to make it clear how the landscape backdrop will be managed in the future.

1.5.3 Landscape buffers provide a multitude of uses and should be encouraged for all development. They are particularly important for major developments of 50 or more dwellings to help ensure that the development integrates well with the surroundings.

1.5.4 Developers will need to consider the future management of landscape backdrops and for large areas of land this could include transfer to and management by the Town Council.

1.5.5 For proposals on Greenfield sites on the edge of the town, landscape backdrops will screen the new development which will help to protect landscape character and provide a green gateway into St Neots.



2

Parking and Traffic

Parking and Traffic

2.1 Introduction



2.1.1 Parking and traffic is one of the biggest concerns of the community. The Neighbourhood Plan survey found that only 2% of respondents believe the traffic situation in St Neots is good. 38% consider it to be inadequate, 27% consider it to be poor and 14% consider it to be average.

2.1.2 The survey found that the lack of any free parking areas within the town and the almost doubling of parking prices in recent years are very prominent problems.

2.1.3 The overall quality of roads and paths within St Neots has been a recurring issue mentioned in the survey. In terms of specific traffic problems identified in the survey, many respondents commented on the need to address the traffic in the High Street, with comments about reducing the number of lights and pedestrianising the High Street.

2.1.4 Access into and out of the town along the A428 is of great concern to the residents of the town. Due to the town's location, many people travel to the Cambridge area to work.

"The A428 needs immediate attention and roads need to cater for the mass amount of residents that are now in the town."

Comment from St Neots resident

2.1.5 With a distinct lack of public transport, travel by car is by far the best option for many commuters. Therefore there is an urgent need to upgrade and dual the A428. The Town Council will actively encourage this through raising the

profile of the A428 on the National Roads Programme, as well as support applications to undertake the upgrade.

2.1.6 The Town Council believe that new development should not exacerbate existing parking and traffic problems across the town and this is the primary aim of the policies in this section.

2.2 Sustainable Travel

2.2.1 The availability of safe and well connected sustainable modes of travel will reduce congestion and greenhouse gas emissions and promote healthy lifestyles.

"Better public transport within the town and to surrounding cities must be addressed to help reduce traffic."

Comment from St Neots resident

2.2.2 The Town Council will work with partners, including Cambridgeshire County Council, bus companies and Network Rail to promote sustainable modes of travel and help to ensure the creation of better connections throughout the town. The Town Council will also continue to work with Cambridgeshire County Council, Sustrans and other interest groups to improve and develop St Neots' cycle network.

Policy PT1

Development proposals must demonstrate how opportunities for the use of sustainable modes of transport are maximised. This should be achieved through maximising the potential for cycling and walking throughout the site and through contributions towards the extension, linking, and/or improvement of existing routes throughout St Neots.

The Town Council will support proposals to improve facilities that enhance safe and suitable access to the railway station or support sustainable and health objectives.

2.2.3 All major development, i.e. over 10 dwellings or non-residential development over 1,000sqm, should be supported by a Transport Assessment. The content and level of detail of the Transport Assessment will depend upon the scale of the development proposed. For large scale proposals of over 100 dwellings a comprehensive Transport Assessment will be expected clearly explaining how future residents will be able to access sustainable modes of transport. For developments of 10-20 dwellings, a short statement is likely to be acceptable.

2.2.4 The scale and nature of development will depend upon what enhancements are necessary to enhance opportunities for sustainable modes of travel. Enhancements may include, but are not limited to, contributing to improvements to existing roads, footpaths and cycle paths to make them safer and more likely to be used, secure cycle parking and incentives for people to use the bus.

2.2.5 The Town Council will support ventures to establish local bus routes and to improve existing routes. The Neighbourhood Plan survey showed that this is important to the community with residents saying that better bus services are desperately needed, including direct routes into the Town Centre, to Tesco and to the train station. Residents commented that Sunday services and regular shuttle buses from the villages surrounding St Neots are also needed, particularly as many people have issues with parking costs. A circular mini-bus/shuttle service serving the town and particularly the railway station would be supported.

3.2.6. 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.

2.2.6 The Town Council will seek to work with Network Rail to improve facilities at the railway station. Particular issues to address include making the railway station safer and enhancing the quantity and quality of cycle parking facilities.

2.2.7 The Town Council will support proposals to link St Neots within the proposed East West Rail scheme, between Oxford and Cambridge and/or a similar project such as a guided bus.

2.3 Vehicle parking standards for residential development

2.3.1. Levels of car ownership in the district are high compared with the national average, as Huntingdonshire is both a relatively prosperous and a predominantly rural area. It is therefore essential that development is designed to incorporate sufficient levels of car parking.

2.3.2. Road parking has been taken away from many residents in St Neots due to yellow lines or poor road markings. This has resulted in many problems such as inconvenience to residents and their visitors not being able to park close to home, a cluttered local environment and increased congestion.

2.3.3. Restricting the availability of parking at trip origin does not deter people from owning a car. Instead it creates the problems referred to above. To avoid this happening, the Town Council requires provision of adequate car parking to meet the needs of both residents and visitors within any developments which will deliver new homes.

Policy PT2

All development proposals which include an element of residential development, including change of use to residential, must provide adequate space for vehicle parking to meet the expected needs of residents and visitors.

A design-led approach should be taken to ensure parking is properly integrated into the layout of the scheme, minimises adverse impacts on surrounding uses, and facilitates traffic flow and accessibility for service and emergency vehicles.

2.3.4. Good design of access arrangements and parking facilities is fundamental to the success of a development. Insufficient parking can lead to inappropriate parking on streets and verges creating highway safety problems and have an adverse impact on the appearance of the local environment. In proposals for 10 or more dwellings, the Town Council will encourage provision of an average of at least 1.5 car parking spaces per dwelling for 1 and 2 bedroom properties and an average of at least 0.5 spaces per bedroom for properties with 3 or more bedrooms. Where provision includes garages these must be large enough to accommodate a modern family car.

2.3.5. In setting this standard the Town Council has had regard to accessibility around the town and to other towns, the type of development this standard is appropriate for, the availability of public transport in St Neots and local car ownership levels.

2.3.6. Residents living near the railway station are frequently inconvenienced by commuters parking close to their homes; blocking their driveways and light. Whilst yellow lines have caused problems elsewhere in St Neots, the Town Council would support the introduction of parking restrictions along Longsands Road area.

2.4 Car Parks

2.4.1 The community considers that there is a lack of car parking within the Town Centre. To ensure this problem does not worsen, the number of car parking spaces in the Town Centre will be safeguarded. The two stage approach of improving sustainable travel linkages to the Town Centre and safeguarding existing car parks will help to address the issue of lack of car parking.

2.4.2 The NPPF supports improving the quality of parking in Town Centres so that it is convenient, safe and secure. The Neighbourhood Plan survey identified the need for better CCTV in every car park.

Policy PT3

The loss of public car and motorcycle parking spaces in the Town Centre will be resisted unless it can be demonstrated that the proposal is accessible by other sustainable transport modes and that the loss of any such spaces would not adversely affect the vitality and viability of the Town Centre.

Support will be given to the development of a multi-storey car park provided that it is of an appropriate scale, mass and design and has appropriate regard to the Conservation Area and other heritage assets and is considered as part of a comprehensive transport and parking strategy for the Town Centre.

Support will be given to improving the quality of parking in the Town Centre so that it is convenient, safe and secure. Proposals for improvement are encouraged to include the installation of CCTV.

2.4.3 Improvements to car parks within the Town Centre should include new or improved CCTV. Where CCTV is already present, opportunities should be taken to introduce more cameras where necessary and include night-vision cameras.



3 Parks and Open Spaces

Parks and Open Spaces

3.1 Introduction



3.1.1 St Neots has many attractive green open spaces and the parks have received the most positive feedback as part of the Neighbourhood Plan survey. The parks are the most enjoyed and appreciated areas in St Neots. The community feel very strongly about the need to preserve the parks, green spaces and river, whilst also having more events to bring the community together.

3.1.2 St Neots has a wealth of high quality open spaces and of particular importance to the community are Priory Park, Riverside Park, Sudbury Meadow, Regatta Meadow, The Coneygeare and Barford Road Pocket Park. The Neighbourhood Plan survey showed that the public really value these parks and consider the parks to be the best thing about St Neots.

3.2 Local Green Spaces

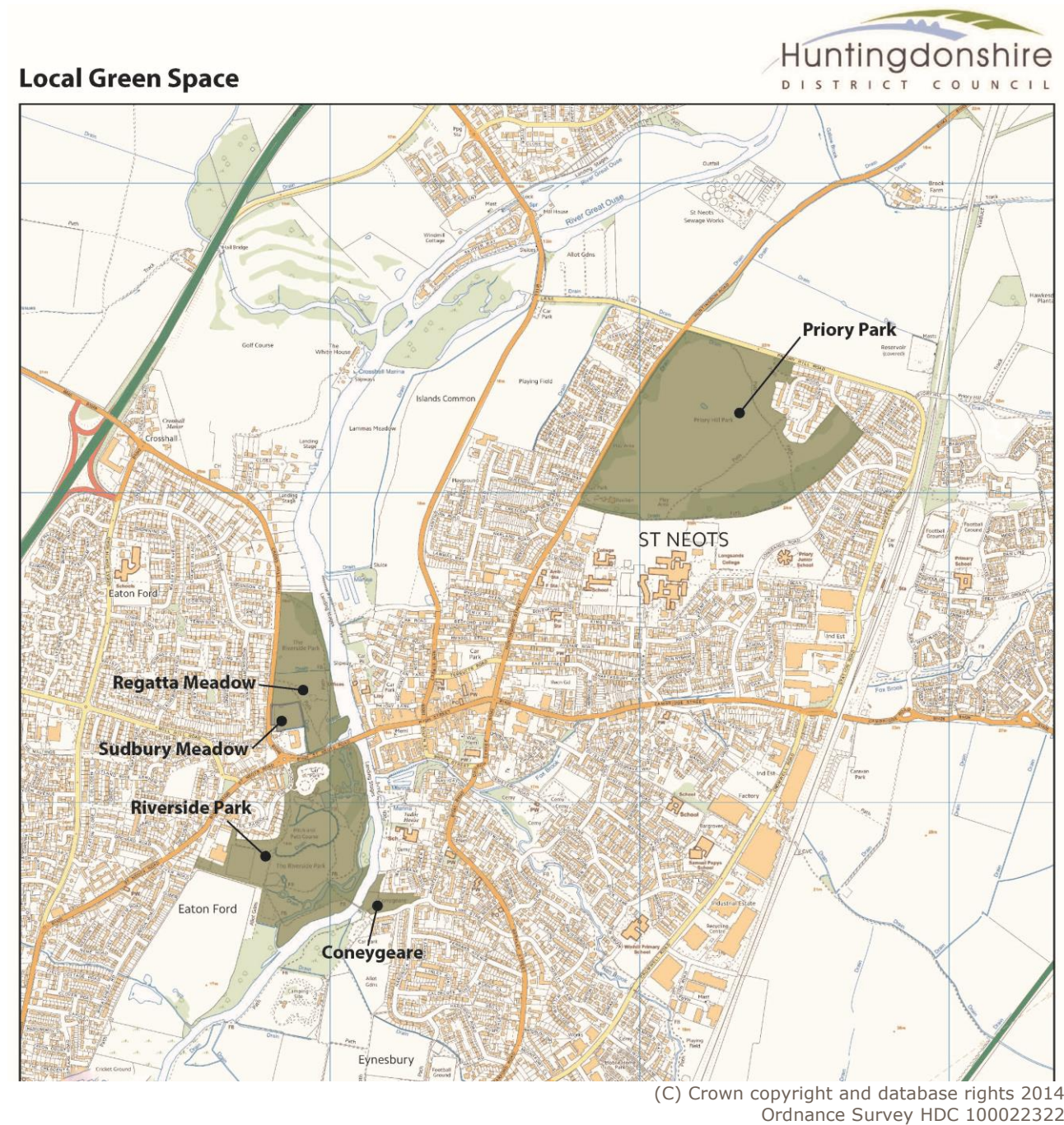
3.2.1 The NPPF provides local communities with the opportunity to designate Local Green Spaces as part of Neighbourhood Planning. Local Green Spaces are very important green spaces in which development will be ruled out in all but exceptional circumstances. Local Green Space designation is not appropriate for all parks or open space within the Town.

3.2.2 Priory Park, Riverside Park, Sudbury Meadow, Regatta Meadow, and The Coneygeare are designated as Local Green Spaces as shown on Figure 2 overleaf.

"Our parks are wonderful. We must preserve them with better security, prevent damage and littering."

Comment from St Neots resident

Figure 2: Map of local Green Spaces



3.2.3 Being within the centre of St Neots, these parks are uniquely placed to serve all residents within the town. The volume of comments about the importance of the parks demonstrates their significance and how special the parks are to the local community. The parks have significant historic and recreational value and provide tranquil areas within an urban environment. The parks are visually attractive and contribute towards landscape character and provide a strong sense of place. The parks are bounded by existing communities and have clear boundaries; none are extensive tracts of land.

Policy P1

Priory Park, Riverside Park, Sudbury Meadow, Regatta Meadow, and The Coneygeare, as shown in figure 2, are designated as Local Green Spaces.

Proposals for sustainable development within Priory Park, Riverside Park, Sudbury Meadow, Regatta Meadow, and The Coneygeare will only be permitted where it relates to leisure and recreation. All proposals must demonstrate that they have a genuine need to be located within the Local Green Space and will not adversely affect the tranquillity of the Local Green Space or existing users. All proposals must demonstrate that they are of an appropriate scale, layout and design.

Proposals adjacent to Priory Park, Riverside Park, Sudbury Meadow, Regatta Meadow, and The Coneygeare will need to demonstrate that they will not harm the setting of the Local Green Space and where possible enhance access to the Local Green Space for people and wildlife.

3.2.4 Priory Park is a sub-urban public park of amenity grassland, containing several areas of mature woodland, mature trees, a children's play area, five football pitches, several mini soccer pitches, changing rooms and a pavilion. The pavilion contains four new changing rooms, referees changing rooms, a kitchen, a refreshment area/meeting room and CCTV equipment. Priory Park is regularly used by a range of people for various activities such as picnics, dog walking, bird watching, orienteering and sponsored runs as well as children's holiday activity clubs in the summer.

3.2.5 Riverside Park is close to the Town Centre and is bisected by the bridge over the River Great Ouse. It has a beautiful one mile long waterside frontage.

Within the Park there is a small restaurant, a putting green, pitch and putt course, boating lake, skateboarding complex, basketball court and children's play areas. Eaton Socon Football Club also lease a pitch. Band concerts are a regular occurrence on Sundays during the summer weeks. The park is also regularly used for the Dragon Boat Racing and the Regatta.

3.2.6 Sudbury Meadow is a two acre site alongside the River Great Ouse. The site consists of a wildlife meadow & wildlife friendly garden area and has a wheelchair friendly path running through it.

3.2.7 Regatta Meadow is located to the west of the river and to the north of Riverside Park. It frequently floods and thus provides a habitat for moisture loving flora and fauna. In the past it was used as a wet meadow for grazing and hay.

3.2.8 The Coneygeare is a small area of parkland in the heart of old Eynesbury to the east of the River. The park is joined to the rest of the Riverside paths by a footbridge over the river. The park is an essential community asset and is used regularly by the local village association for their festivals and events such as the St George's Day festival.

3.2.9 At the eastern edge of the park is a village square, surrounded by a mixture of residential and businesses including a day nursery and a restaurant. At the western extend, there is a free long stay car park. Here, there is also a small play park offering traditional play equipment including swing, slides and a roundabout.

3.2.10 The Huntingdonshire District Core Strategy and Draft Local Plan allocates a significant amount of new housing in St Neots and the Local Green Space designations for Priory Park, Riverside Park, Sudbury Meadow, Regatta Meadow and The Coneygeare will not undermine plan making.

More detailed information about each of the parks is included in the appendix.

3.3 Open Space

3.3.1 Barford Road Pocket Park is a 45 acre site created in 2001 alongside the development of the Eynesbury Manor housing estate. The park has several

types of habitat and is home to numerous bird species. A number of events are organised throughout the year.

3.3.2 There is a shortfall in allotments and formal open space within St Neots. Improvements are needed to the existing open spaces within the town to meet the needs of a range of age groups and the needs of different members of the community.

3.3.3 The Neighbourhood Plan survey found that the community considers St Neots' open spaces to be the most important parts of the town. There is overwhelming support for the protection of existing open spaces and the creation of new open spaces.

Policy P2

Open spaces within St Neots will be protected from encroachment. Every opportunity should be taken to enhance open spaces throughout the town, including the protection and enhancement of wildlife and its habitats.

Proposals involving the loss of open spaces will only be supported, if following an assessment, it is clearly demonstrated that the open space is surplus to requirements or the open space would be replaced by equivalent or enhanced provision in a suitable location or the proposal involves the development of a sports or recreation facility the need for which clearly outweighs the loss.

All new major residential development of 10 or more dwellings must contribute to open space provision throughout St Neots. This will be through the provision of new areas of open space within the site as defined within the Huntingdonshire District Developer Contributions SPD.

Proposals for new areas of open space will be supported and should be designed to ensure that they provide a usable environment for people of all age groups and needs.

Where possible 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. Elsewhere new areas of open space should be located at sites which are accessible to the community in which it intends to serve.

Support will be given to the development of a suitable site for a new cemetery.

3.3.4 The open spaces throughout St Neots are very important to residents and contribute to health and wellbeing. They provide green lungs within the town, areas for recreation and habitats for wildlife. Open spaces are important local amenities and offer opportunities for activities such as trim trails and green gyms.

3.3.5 It is essential that open spaces throughout St Neots are protected and where possible enhanced and that new areas of open space are created -

particularly as part of new development to ensure that no residents suffer from a deficit of open space.

3.4 River Setting

3.4.1 St Neots stands proudly on the River Great Ouse. The River Great Ouse gives St Neots a strong sense of place and a highly distinctive landscape setting in terms of visual links, public open space and recreation. The development pattern of the town has been strongly influenced by the river.

3.4.2 The River Great Ouse will be promoted as a leisure resource to enhance the leisure and tourism offer within St Neots. The community considers that they are very fortunate to have an excellent riverfront and it has been proposed by many residents that there are more riverfront bars, restaurants, cafes or eateries along the river to showcase one of the town's best assets.

3.4.3 The community has identified the potential for The Old Falcon to be utilised owing to its riverfront setting. The following ideas have been suggested by the community: Riverside Café, Restaurant & Bar, Night Club and Cocktail Bar.

Policy P3

The setting of the River Great Ouse will be promoted as a leisure resource. An active frontage will be encouraged and proposals for residential use above lower and ground floors may be appropriate providing that proposals are in keeping with the area.

All proposals for development along the riverfront or which benefit from their proximity to the river will be expected to demonstrate that consideration has been given to improving connections for people and wildlife, biodiversity enhancement and visual improvements. Proposals that improve the visual line of site to the river to improve the visual impact of the river and link it into the Town Centre will be favourably considered subject to compliance with other planning policies.

Support will be given to redevelopment of The Old Falcon for uses that would contribute to an active river frontage, enhance river use or the functional relationship with the River Great Ouse and facilities that support this. Particular encouragement is given to food and drink and leisure and recreation uses as well as residential uses on upper floors if this is compatible with other planning policies.

3.4.4 The community would like to see a variety of leisure and recreation uses along the riverfront. The Town Council will particularly encourage more food and drink outlets along the riverfront to create an active frontage. Proposals for flats and maisonettes above lower and ground floor level along the riverfront may be appropriate and will contribute to the mix of uses. It is important that proposals do not limit the potential for leisure and recreation uses and reduce the extent of the active frontage.

3.4.5 The extent to which proposals promote the River Great Ouse as a leisure resource will depend upon the nature and scale of the proposal. Every proposal has the potential to contribute towards the promotion of the river and so even small scale proposals will need to demonstrate that the setting of the river will be enhanced and access improved.

3.4.6 The Town Council will support leisure proposals for The Old Falcon such as a riverside café, restaurant and bar, night club or cocktail bar, as identified by the community. Proposals should ensure that the frontage reflects the listed building status, and the approach to the Town Centre from across the river.

3.4.7 Proposals for riverside events will be supported and encouraged by the Town Council. Some events may require temporary planning consent and where this is the case the Town Council will support the application and encourage Huntingdonshire District Council to grant planning permission promptly.

3.5 Flooding

3.5.1 St Neots is at risk of fluvial flooding from the River Great Ouse and pluvial flooding, which will increase as more Greenfield land is developed. The Great Ouse Catchment Flood Management Plan states that the flood risk in the St Neots/Little Paxton, Bedford/Kempston and Leighton Buzzard sub-area is too high. To protect the community flood risk in St Neots must be reduced.

3.5.2 The Environment Agency will investigate options to reduce the probability of river flooding. One option identified in the Catchment Flood Management Plan is to consider storing water on the flood plains upstream of communities at risk.

3.5.3 The Town Council will support the Environment Agency in reducing flood risk and will expect developers to demonstrate that proposals will not increase the risk of flooding. Wherever possible proposals should incorporate measures to reduce the risk of flooding.

"We must address how to prevent the risk of flooding, especially in residential areas."

Comment from St Neots resident

Policy P4

Development proposals will be expected to include sustainable drainage systems (SUDS). In addition to their principal role of flood risk management SUDS should offer additional benefits such as amenity value and biodiversity enhancement.

3.5.4 The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 was introduced to address the concerns and recommendations raised in the Pitt Report following the 2007 floods. The Act makes Cambridgeshire County Council the Lead Local Flood Authority. The Town Council will work with Cambridgeshire County Council and other partners to address flood risk issues.

3.5.5 Proposals that increase the risk of flooding will not be supported. Proposals within medium and high flood risk areas will need to pass the sequential test and exceptions test as set out in the NPPF. However, the Town Council strongly believes that flood risk areas should be completely avoided.

3.5.6 All proposals within areas of flood risk and on Greenfield land offer the opportunity to reduce the causes and impacts of flooding. Developers must demonstrate that every opportunity has been taken to reduce the causes and impacts of flooding in order to ensure that the existing flood risk in St Neots is not increased.

3.5.7 The SuDS Approving Body (SAB) will be responsible for approving all surface water drainage systems for new developments in line with a set of National Standards set out by government as well as any specific local standards. Approval from the SAB must be sought prior to construction and the SAB will have a duty to adopt and maintain surface water drainage features serving more than one property or otherwise ensure there is an appropriate maintenance arrangement in place.

3.5.8 Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) and SUDS features in all new development should be provided on the surface wherever technically feasible. SUDS should seek to provide amenity, design and biodiversity benefits within the development site in addition to sustainably managing the quantity and quality of surface water run-off from the new development. The Town Council will welcome discussions with developers, the SAB, planning and highways authorities, and other agencies and bodies to ensure appropriate arrangements are in place for the sustainable operation and maintenance of SUDS in new development

3.5.9 The Town Council will discuss options for works to the River Great Ouse to reduce the risk of fluvial flooding with the Environment Agency. Proposals for flood risk mitigation will be strongly supported provided that potentially adverse effects can be mitigated. Where adverse effects cannot be mitigated,

compensatory measures must be included. The Town Council will support the Environment Agency's proposals to reduce the risk of flooding. Proposals must demonstrate that any potential adverse impacts can be mitigated.



4 Rejuvenation

Rejuvenation

4.1 Economic Development



4.1.1 Employment in St Neots is largely dependent on manufacturing, retail and wholesale and the public sector. Just over half of residents work locally and there is significant out-commuting to the rest of Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire and London.

4.1.2 40% of the Neighbourhood Plan survey respondents said that the provision of jobs within St Neots was poor or inadequate. Only 5% said that the provision of jobs was good and no-one said that it was excellent.

4.1.3 The St Neots Healthcheck recognised the importance of redressing the balance between homes and employment and reducing the need for development on Greenfield land. Redressing the balance between homes and employment is reflected in the employment allocation of 25 hectares as part of the Eastern expansion. The Town Council welcomes this and will not support applications to change this allocation to residential.

Policy RD1

Proposals for economic development throughout St Neots will be favourably considered subject to compliance with other relevant planning policies. The regeneration and intensification of previously developed land will be particularly supported.

4.2 Protection of Employment Land

4.2.1 The NPPF is clear that the planning system should do everything it can to support sustainable economic growth. The Town Council strongly support this and recognise the importance of keeping the town's economy strong and

prosperous. Through this policy the Town Council is planning positively for the development needs of existing businesses and supporting future businesses in the town.

4.2.2 The St Neots Healthcheck identified the need to maintain a balanced community and reduce levels of out-commuting. Maintaining a good supply of employment land is essential to this.

Policy RD2

Existing established employment sites and premises and allocated employment sites will be protected from change of use to alternative uses.

Change of use of existing or allocated employment sites or premises will only be supported where the applicant has demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Town Council and the District Council that there is no reasonable prospect of the site or premises being used for employment uses. Applicants will be expected to demonstrate that the existing or allocated use is no longer viable and that the site has been marketed for a reasonable period of time for alternative employment uses.

Where it has been successfully demonstrated that the site or premises is no longer suitable for employment uses preference will be given to the change of use to retail or leisure use.

4.2.3 The Town Council acknowledges that the long term protection of sites allocated for employment should be avoided. However, where there is a reasonable prospect of a site being used for employment use alternative uses should be avoided to ensure the retention of employment sites and premises at accessible locations.

4.2.4 Where a site is genuinely no longer suitable for employment use and there is no reasonable prospect of the site being used for employment purposes the Town Council will support change of use. Change of use to retail or leisure purposes will be preferred as this will result in the creation of jobs within the town.

4.2.5 Applicants will be expected to demonstrate that the site has been marketed for employment use for a continuous period of at least six months and at a fair market price reflecting the employment use.

4.2.6 There are no allocated employment sites in this Neighbourhood Plan as the Huntingdonshire District Local Plan allocates land for employment uses. The Draft Local Plan lists the following sites as Established Employment Areas: Station Road Industrial Area, Cromwell Road Industrial Estate, Colmworth Business Park, Howard Road Industrial Estate, Little End Industrial Estate and Alpha Drive Business Park.

4.3 Eastern Expansion Employment Allocation

4.3.1 The Huntingdonshire Core Strategy (2009) Policy CS7 proposed 25 hectares of land for employment use as part of the Eastern expansion. The Town Council strongly supports this, which helps to balance the new homes with new jobs and in accordance with Policy RD2 this employment allocation will be safeguarded.

4.3.2 The employment land allocation is higher than the requirement identified in the Employment Land Review and reflects the significant levels of residential growth proposed for St Neots. Locating the land within the urban extension is specifically intended to integrate the sites with the new housing developments.

4.3.3 To help meet a range of business needs and support an economy fit for the 21st century the Town Council will support a diverse range of employment uses as part of the Eastern expansion employment allocation.

Policy RD3

High quality employment, business start-ups and creative industries will be encouraged as part of the Eastern expansion employment allocation.

4.3.4 High quality employment, business start-ups and creative industries will help to diversify St Neots employment base and support an economy fit for the 21st century. However, this is not a prescriptive requirement and the Town Council will support employment needs not yet anticipated to allow a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.

4.4 Training Facilities

4.4.1 The St Neots Healthcheck found that a key challenge faced by employers in St Neots relates to the lack of practical and employment related skills held by school leavers, the locally aging population and the shortage of potential replacement labour. The Neighbourhood Plan survey found that the community is concerned about post-16 education in the town.

4.4.2 The provision of opportunities for lifelong learning and skills development within St Neots and the creation of better links between education and local employers will help to align the local skills base with existing and potential employers and address concerns about post-16 education.

“We need better employment opportunities for those without experience and school leavers.”

Comment from St Neots resident

Policy RD4

Development proposals that include provision for lifelong learning and skills development or training facilities that will improve the local skills base will be favourably considered.

4.4.3 The Town Council will work with education providers within the town to help create links between them and existing and new employers. Proposals for new buildings or initiatives that will improve the skills base will be supported by the Town Council. New buildings should be accessible by a choice of means of transport.



5 Shops and Services

Shops and Services

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 The vibrant Town Centre is the heart of the community. In 2012 there were 167 occupied units within the Town Centre and over half of these were in retail use. The Town Centre is defined in the Huntingdonshire District Local Plan (1995) and will be updated through the next Local Plan.

5.1.2 There is a fairly even mix of views on shopping provision in St Neots with 37% of Neighbourhood Plan survey respondents saying that it is inadequate or poor and 28% of survey respondents saying that it is good or excellent. The Neighbourhood Plan survey findings show that the community want the history and character of the Town Centre preserved whilst updating the overall appearance of the High Street aesthetically. Policy A1 addresses the public realm of the Town Centre.



5.1.3 The Town Council would like to see the retail offer in the Town Centre increase and diversify. There is a need for more fashion, particularly men's and children's wear, supermarkets and food/drink uses within the Town Centre and proposals for these uses will be favourably considered.

5.1.4 Many residents have requested a greater variety of shops in the town. Shops have been a recurring issue in the Neighbourhood Plan survey responses with many people referring to the fact that Burtons has recently left. Menswear and children's wear shops have been requested by many residents.

5.1.5 Many of the local community consider that independent traders appear to have higher prices than the majority of residents can afford. Therefore,

franchises that can provide affordable clothing. Other convenience stores such as Wilkinson's or Poundland have been requested by the community to offer a greater variety on a smaller budget. Almost all those who completed the survey said that the main objective should be to attract residents to shop within the Town Centre rather than going elsewhere. This is reiterated by businesses within the Town Centre, who consider their local customers to be the most positive aspect of trading in the town.

5.1.6 Through Policy SS1 the Town Council is seeking to plan positively for the future of the Town Centre to encourage economic activity and attract residents to shop in the Town Centre rather than going elsewhere.

"We do need a better variety and more affordable of shops in our town. Using two unit spaces could encourage a large business to move to the town, while maintaining the look of St Neots."

Comment from St Neots resident

Policy SS1

Support for the expansion of the Town Centre and Town Centre uses will be given.

Proposals for new town centre uses within the Town Centre will be favourably considered. The Town Council would particularly favour fashion shops, food/drink establishments, affordable franchises and supermarkets. The introduction of a market on Market Square will be supported.

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 the existing facades should be retained where appropriate.

Proposals for residential use above ground floor level will be favourably considered providing that the proposal will not result in the loss of an existing town centre use.

5.1.7 The Town Council wish to see the Town Centre expanded to increase its retail offer. Where land becomes available within the town centre, priority will be given to retail use. There are less vacant units in the Town Centre than the national average and expanding the Town Centre will ensure that it can grow

and prosper. Proposals that would constrain the Town Centre will not be supported.

5.1.8 The Town Council will support all proposals for town centre uses within the Town Centre limits. However, those which will result in an overall increase in the town's retail sector will be preferred, in particular fashion, affordable franchises and supermarkets, which are much needed in St Neots.

5.1.9 Town Centre uses are defined as retail including food, drinks, clothing, and household goods; leisure including restaurants and cinemas; tourism; cultural; community; residential development; and office. In addition the community has identified the need for a job centre, registry office and improved library and these uses will be supported by the Town Council.

5.1.10 Currently 62% of people travel to the Town Centre by car and whilst sustainable modes of travel should be encouraged the number of parking spaces in the town centre will be safeguarded to ensure that shoppers and visitors are not deterred from visiting due to lack of car parking. St Neots markets are important characteristics of the Town Centre and must be retained to preserve the Town Centre's offer. The market in St Neots has 26 traders on average, which is above the national figure.

5.1.11 Security is an important issue and the Town Council will support more CCTV in the Town Centre and indeed throughout the entire town.

5.2 Utilising Historic Buildings

5.2.1 There is a wealth of historic buildings within the Town Centre. There is a real opportunity to improve the shopping offer through bringing historic buildings back into use and sustaining the town's heritage. The NPPF recognises that heritage assets can make a positive contribution to economic vitality and this is something that the community has identified as important.

Policy SS2

The Town Council will support the re-use of historic buildings within the Town Centre for town centre uses. Any alterations to historic buildings will need to be sympathetic to the historic and architectural significance and character of the building.

5.3 Service and Provision

5.3.1 As set out in the NPPF the government attaches great importance to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Linked to this, the NPPF is clear that the planning system should plan positively for the provision and use of community facilities and local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments.

5.3.2 New schools, GP surgeries and dentists are needed in St Neots to accommodate growth. The Local Investment Framework identified a need for three two-form entry primary schools, two one-form entry primary school, one new six-form entry secondary school, an extension to the current secondary school and two new children's centres under a high growth scenario. The Neighbourhood Plan survey has found that many people believe that there is poor secondary school provision and a lack of choice and quality that will only worsen as more housing is built.

5.3.3 There are no GP surgeries within 1km south-west of the town and no GP surgeries within 1km of the Eastern expansion. The Local Investment Framework identified a need for two new four GP Primary and Social Care Facilities under a high growth scenario. The Neighbourhood Plan survey found that many people find it difficult to make an appointment with their GP and are often kept waiting up to an hour.

Policy SS3

New residential development will be delivered alongside necessary community facilities and services including improvements to existing schools, GP surgeries and dentist surgeries and/or the provision of new schools, GP surgeries and dentist surgeries within St Neots to ensure that the existing and new population have access to community facilities and services, school places, GPs and dentists.

5.3.4 Developers will need to discuss the impact proposals will have on school provision with Cambridgeshire County Council at an early stage.

5.3.5 Developers will need to discuss the impact proposals will have on GP services and dentists with the relevant Clinical Commissioning Group and Local Area Teams at an early stage. Proposals of over 100 dwellings will be expected to be submitted with a Health Impact Assessment to help assess their impact on GP and dentist surgeries.



Implementation and delivery

Implementation and delivery

The implementation and delivery section sets out what actions are required to turn this Neighbourhood Plan into reality on the ground.

The Town Council needs the help of public and private partners to create a sustainable community and deliver the policies set out in this Neighbourhood Plan. The Town Council will work with a number of partners, including the following, to implement the Plan (not exclusive):

PARTNERS		
Local	County	National
St Neots Town Council (TC)	Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC)	Environment Agency (EA)
Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC)	Cambridgeshire Police (CP)	English Heritage (EH)
Private Developers (PD)		Natural England (NE)
Local Bus Operators (LBO)		Highways Agency (HA)
Various Community Groups (VCG)		Network Rail (NR)
Chamber of Commerce (CC)		
Local Residents (LR)		

New development creates a need to provide new infrastructure, facilities and services to successfully incorporate new development into the surrounding area to benefit existing, new and future residents. Financial contributions will be sought from developers to combine with public funding to deliver the necessary facilities in infrastructure. The table below sets out the necessary projects and delivery body. The majority of the projects are required through policies in the Huntingdonshire District Local Plan and this Neighbourhood Plan adds further detail to this. Therefore this Neighbourhood Plan will not place an undue burden on developers and will not prohibit development from coming forward. The Neighbourhood Plan provides a positive framework to ensure that development in St Neots will bring positive benefits to the town.

**Key for priority column shown in tables below:
1 = highest priority, 5 = lowest priority**

Necessary Project	Delivery Body	Priority	Source of Funding	Is this already required but NP adds more detail?
Aesthetics:				
Develop and implement a public realm strategy	TC with support from local businesses & PD	3	To be linked to new development through planning obligations/ CIL	Partly
Explore the option of pedestrianisation of the High Street and redeveloping the Market Square	TC, CCC, HDC, PD and local businesses	3	Funding to be secured	No
Development > 50 dwellings to include landscape backdrops. Land may be transferred to SNTC to manage	PD to provide, TC may manage	1	To be linked to new development through planning obligations/ CIL	No
Parking & Traffic:				
Work with partners to improve sustainable travel links around St Neots	TC, LBO, NR, CCC	1	To be partly linked to new development through planning obligations/ CIL	Yes
Require proposals for improvements to car parks to include CCTV	TC, HDC	3	HDC or other car park operator	No

Necessary Project	Delivery Body	Priority	Source of Funding	Is this already required but NP adds more detail?
Parks and Open Space:				
New open space to be delivered as part of new development	PD	1	To be linked to new development through on site provision	Yes
Support the development of a new cemetery	TC	1	To be linked to new development through planning obligations/ CIL	No
Promote the setting of the River Great Ouse as a leisure resource	TC	2	Funding to be secured	No
Shops & Services:				
Ensure that there is sufficient school provision through expansion to existing schools or creation of new schools	PD and CCC	1	To be linked to new development through planning obligations/ CIL	Yes
Ensure that there is sufficient GP & dentist provision through expansion to existing surgeries or creation of new surgeries	PD & Clinical Commissioning Group & Local Area Teams	1	To be linked to new development through planning obligations/ CIL	Yes
Rejuvenation & Development:				
Secure environmental improvements to business areas near the railway	PD and St Neots Town Council	4	To be linked to new development through planning obligations/ CIL	

Monitoring

Continual plan review is a fundamental element of the planning system. It is important to check that the plan is being implemented correctly, ensure that outcomes match objectives and to change the plan if they are not. This Neighbourhood Plan will be carefully monitored and reviewed if it becomes apparent that the aim and objectives of the Plan are not being met.



Glossary

Glossary

The majority of the glossary is copied from the NPPF to ensure consistency.

Affordable housing: Social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Affordable housing should include provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.

Social rented housing is owned by local authorities and private registered providers (as defined in section 80 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008), for which guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime. It may also be owned by other persons and provided under equivalent rental arrangements to the above, as agreed with the local authority or with the Homes and Communities Agency.

Affordable rented housing is let by local authorities or private registered providers of social housing to households who are eligible for social rented housing. Affordable Rent is subject to rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80% of the local market rent (including service charges, where applicable).

Intermediate housing is homes for sale and rent provided at a cost above social rent, but below market levels subject to the criteria in the Affordable Housing definition above. These can include shared equity (shared ownership and equity loans), other low cost homes for sale and intermediate rent, but not affordable rented housing.

Homes that do not meet the above definition of affordable housing, such as “low cost market” housing, may not be considered as affordable housing for planning purposes.

Air Quality Management Areas: Areas designated by local authorities because they are not likely to achieve national air quality objectives by the relevant deadlines.

Archaeological interest: There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially may hold, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point. Heritage assets with archaeological interest are the primary source of evidence about the substance and evolution of places, and of the people and cultures that made them.

Best and most versatile agricultural land: Land in grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification.

Climate change adaptation: Adjustments to natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic factors or their effects, including from changes in rainfall and rising temperatures, which moderate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities.

Climate change mitigation: Action to reduce the impact of human activity on the climate system, primarily through reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Conservation (for heritage policy): The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.

Community Infrastructure Levy: A levy allowing local authorities to raise funds from owners or developers of land undertaking new building projects in their area.

Community Right to Build Order: An Order made by the local planning authority (under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) that grants planning permission for a site-specific development proposal or classes of development.

Competent person (to prepare site investigation information): A person with a recognised relevant qualification, sufficient experience in dealing with the type(s) of pollution or land instability, and membership of a relevant professional organisation.

Development plan: This includes adopted Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans and is defined in section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

Economic development: Development, including those within the B Use Classes, public and community uses and main town centre uses (but excluding housing development).

Ecological networks: These link sites of biodiversity importance.

Ecosystem services: The benefits people obtain from ecosystems such as, food, water, flood and disease control and recreation.

Edge of centre: For retail purposes, a location that is well connected and up to 300 metres of the primary shopping area. For all other main town centre uses, a location within 300 metres of a town centre boundary. For office development, this includes locations outside the town centre but within 500 metres of a public transport interchange. In determining whether a site falls within the definition of edge of centre, account should be taken of local circumstances.

Green infrastructure: A network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.

Heritage asset: A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

Historic environment: All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora.

Inclusive design: Designing the built environment, including buildings and their surrounding spaces, to ensure that they can be accessed and used by everyone.

International, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity: All international sites (Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, and Ramsar sites), national sites (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) and locally designated sites including Local Wildlife Sites.

Local planning authority: The public authority whose duty it is to carry out specific planning functions for a particular area. The local planning authority for St Neots is Huntingdonshire District Council.

Local Plan: The plan for the future development of the local area, drawn up by the local planning authority in consultation with the community. In law this is described as the development plan documents adopted under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Current core strategies or other planning policies, which under the regulations would be considered to be development plan documents, form part of the Local Plan. The term includes old policies which have been saved under the 2004 Act.

Main town centre uses: Retail development (including warehouse clubs and factory outlet centres); leisure, entertainment facilities the more intensive sport and recreation uses (including cinemas, restaurants, drive-through restaurants, bars and pubs, nightclubs, casinos, health and fitness centres, indoor bowling centres, and bingo halls); offices; and arts, culture and tourism development (including theatres, museums, galleries and concert halls, hotels and conference facilities).

Neighbourhood Development Order: An Order made by a local planning authority (under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) through which Parish Councils and neighbourhood forums can grant planning permission for a specific development proposal or classes of development.

Neighbourhood plans: A plan prepared by a Town or Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum for a particular neighbourhood area (made under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

Older people: People over retirement age, including the active, newly-retired through to the very frail elderly, whose housing needs can encompass accessible, adaptable general needs housing for those looking to downsize from family housing and the full range of retirement and specialised housing for those with support or care needs.

Open space: All open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water (such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs) which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity.

Out of centre: A location which is not in or on the edge of a centre but not necessarily outside the urban area.

Out of town: A location out of centre that is outside the existing urban area.

People with disabilities: People have a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment, and that impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. These persons include, but are not limited to, people with ambulatory difficulties, blindness, learning difficulties, autism and mental health needs.

Planning condition: A condition imposed on a grant of planning permission (in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) or a condition included in a Local Development Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.

Planning obligation: A legally enforceable obligation entered into under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to mitigate the impacts of a development proposal.

Previously developed land: Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or has been occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill purposes where provision for restoration has been made through development control procedures; land in built-up areas such as private residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously-developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape in the process of time.

Primary shopping area: Defined area where retail development is concentrated (generally comprising the primary and those secondary frontages which are adjoining and closely related to the primary shopping frontage).

Primary and secondary frontages: Primary frontages are likely to include a high proportion of retail uses which may include food, drinks, clothing and household goods. Secondary frontages provide greater opportunities for a diversity of uses such as restaurants, cinemas and businesses.

Renewable and low carbon energy: Includes energy for heating and cooling as well as generating electricity. Renewable energy covers those energy flows that occur naturally and repeatedly in the environment – from the wind, the fall of water, the movement of the oceans, from the sun and also from biomass and deep geothermal heat. Low carbon technologies are those that can help reduce emissions (compared to conventional use of fossil fuels).

Significance (for heritage policy): The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

Site of Special Scientific Interest: Sites designated by Natural England under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Stepping stones: Pockets of habitat that, while not necessarily connected, facilitate the movement of species across otherwise inhospitable landscapes.

Strategic Environmental Assessment: A procedure (set out in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004) which requires the formal environmental assessment of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

Supplementary planning documents: Documents which add further detail to the policies in the Local Plan. They can be used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites, or on particular issues, such as design. Supplementary planning documents are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the development plan.

Sustainable transport modes: Any efficient, safe and accessible means of transport with overall low impact on the environment, including walking and cycling, low and ultra-low emission vehicles, car sharing and public transport.

Town centre: Area defined on the local authority's proposal map, including the primary shopping area and areas predominantly occupied by main town centre uses within or adjacent to the primary shopping area. References to town centres or centres apply to city centres, town centres, district centres and local centres but exclude small parades of shops of purely neighbourhood significance. Unless they are identified as centres in Local Plans, existing out-of-centre

developments, comprising or including main town centre uses, do not constitute town centres.

Transport assessment: A comprehensive and systematic process that sets out transport issues relating to a proposed development. It identifies what measures will be required to improve accessibility and safety for all modes of travel, particularly for alternatives to the car such as walking, cycling and public transport and what measures will need to be taken to deal with the anticipated transport impacts of the development.

Transport statement: A simplified version of a transport assessment where it is agreed the transport issues arising out of development proposals are limited and a full transport assessment is not required.

Travel plan: A long-term management strategy for an organisation or site that seeks to deliver sustainable transport objectives through action and is articulated in a document that is regularly reviewed.

Wildlife corridor: Areas of habitat connecting wildlife populations.

Windfall sites: Sites which have not been specifically identified as available in the Local Plan process. They normally comprise previously-developed sites that have unexpectedly become available.



Appendix

Appendix

Local Green Spaces

Priory Park

Priory Park is a sub-urban public park of amenity grassland, containing several areas of mature woodland, mature trees (including the native specimens of oak, chestnut, plane and lime), a children's play area 5 football pitches, several mini soccer pitches, changing rooms and a pavilion. The pavilion contains 4 new changing rooms, referees changing rooms, a kitchen, a refreshment area/meeting room and CCTV equipment.

Priory Park is situated off Huntingdon Road and Priory Hill, St Neots, to the North-east of the Town Centre. It covers an area of 32 hectares (80 acres) and is owned by Huntingdonshire District Council. The site is accessible to the whole community and parking is available for approximately 40 cars.

Priory Park is demonstrably special to the people of St Neots and it is essential that it is protected from inappropriate development.

Priory Park is an important part of a green link, including the gardens and green spaces of two housing estates. It lies just outside the western edge of a proposed new green corridor (No 22) and every opportunity should be taken to enhance green links.

The park is regularly used by a range of people for various activities such as picnics, dog walking, bird watching, orienteering and sponsored runs as well as well as children's holiday activity clubs in the summer. St Neots Sunday League Football hire the pitches and use the changing room facilities contained within the Pavilion. The park is also available for events organised by outside groups and has been used as such, two-three times a year, in the last five years. For example, in 2007 the park was used for both the Schools, Police, cross country running championships and has recently been used for historical re-enactments.

Riverside Park

Riverside Park is close to the Town Centre and is bisected by the bridge over the River Great Ouse. It is 29 hectares (72 acres) in area and has a beautiful one mile long waterside frontage. Most of the park lies within the floodplain. Access to the main park is via a pedestrian bridge over the river. The park has a 250 space car park and public toilets.

Within the Park there is a small restaurant, a putting green, pitch and putt course, boating lake, skateboarding complex, basketball court and children's play areas. Eaton Socon Football Club also lease a pitch. Band concerts are a regular occurrence on Sundays during the summer weeks. The park is also regularly used for the Dragon Boat Racing and the Regatta.

Riverside Park is close to the community it serves being within the centre of St Neots and close to the Town Centre. It is a contained site and is not an extensive tract of land.

Riverside Park is demonstrably special to the people of St Neots, this is proven by the overwhelming number of comments as part of the Neighbourhood Plan survey that the parks in St Neots are the most special things about the town. Riverside Park is a beautiful and tranquil area and provides a green lung so close to the Town Centre. It has high recreational value evidenced by the sheer number of activities that take place within the park, including whole town activities such as the Town Carnival and Regatta.

Sudbury Meadow

Sudbury Meadow is a two acre site alongside the River Great Ouse. The site consists of a wildlife meadow & wildlife friendly garden area and has a wheelchair friendly path running through it.

Sudbury Meadow is close to the Town Centre and thus accessible to people from around the town. It is a contained site and is not an extensive tract of land.

Sudbury Meadow is demonstrably special to the people of St Neots, this is proven by the overwhelming number of comments as part of the Neighbourhood Plan survey that the parks in St Neots are the most special things about the town. It is a wildlife rich area, offering beauty and tranquillity. It provides excellent access to people who are mobility impaired. Sudbury Meadow brings local

people together in the enjoyment of the park and also the management of the habitats within the park.

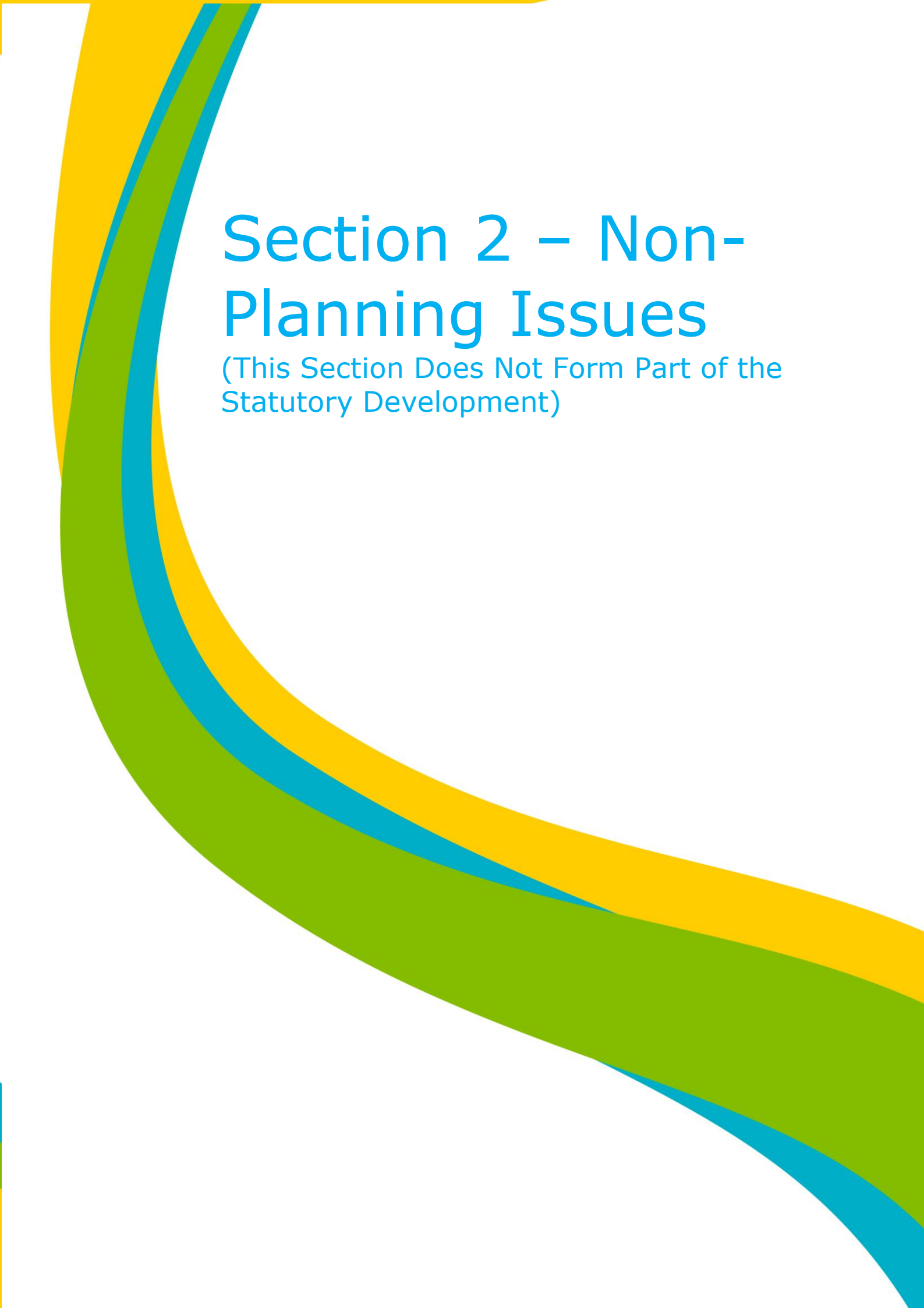
Sudbury Meadow also has historical significance. Land between Crosshall Road and the River Great Ouse which belonged to the Manor of Sudbury was mentioned in the Domesday Book. In the seventeenth century Sudbury Meadow was enclosed and used for grazing until the late 1980s. Photos in St Neots Museum suggest that Sudbury Meadow was used for community events during the 1930s.

Regatta Meadow

Regatta Meadow is located to the west of the river and to the north of Riverside Park. It frequently floods and thus provides a habitat for moisture loving flora and fauna. In the past it was used as a wet meadow for grazing and hay.

Like Sudbury Meadow, it has historical significance, once forming part of the medieval Manor of Sudbury and sharing the name Sudbury Meadow. Whilst it provides an attractive area of open space within the town, it is also important for community events. Many events take place on Regatta Meadow, such as the Regatta, and Summer Fair. .

Regatta Meadow is demonstrably special to the people of St Neots, this is proven by the overwhelming number of comments as part of the Neighbourhood Plan survey that the parks in St Neots are the most special things about the town. It is a contained site and is not an extensive tract of land. It provides a valuable and unique recreation resource for the community.



Section 2 – Non- Planning Issues

(This Section Does Not Form Part of the
Statutory Development)

Non-planning issues

(This Does Not Form Part of the Statutory Development Plan – It Contains Community Aspirations and Town Council Ambitions That Cannot be Included in Policies in the Neighbourhood Plan)

The Neighbourhood Plan survey findings identified the issues that are important to the local community. Some of the issues identified were non-planning issues and so cannot be included in the main body of the Neighbourhood Plan. However, these issues are important to local people. To show the community that their comments have been taken into account and will be addressed by the Town Council, all non-planning issues are included in this section.

Non-planning objectives

Promote the growth of high quality and sustainable employment

- Develop a distinctive St Neots brand to promote and improve visitor spending in the Town Centre
- Encourage investment from both inside and outside the town
- Provide for a balance of new homes and jobs to support the economic prosperity of our growing community and reduce the need to travel

Encourage the growth of retail, leisure and community facilities

- Encourage the development of visitor accommodation in the town

Protect and enhance St Neots' natural and historic environment, countryside and river setting

- Creation of new open spaces and the protection and improvement of existing open spaces

Improve Availability and Accessibility of Housing Stock and Improve Community Assets

- Support the continued development of community spirit
- Provide a site for allotments
- Ensure that leisure and community facilities are in place before new housing developments are completed

Improve the Provision of Sustainable Transport throughout the Town

- Work with partners to review and improve bus routes to ensure that St Neots is treated as a whole town and not separate communities
- Work with railway providers to improve facilities including parking and traffic flow at St Neots railway station
- Work with partners to provide a minimum 30 minute free stay and continue the early evening free parking to encourage footfall in the town
- Work with partners to manage on street parking in the vicinity around the railway station
- Work with partners to encourage the development of the Cambridge to Oxford Line with a stop at St Neots
- Work with partners to provide a joined up transport provision linking bus and rail travel

Aesthetics

The key issues the community raised about the aesthetics of St Neots as part of the Neighbourhood Plan survey were the need to improve roads and paths, the need for more bins in the parks and Town Centre and the need for the High Street to have a good clean – all whilst preserving the history and character of the town.

An improved public realm benefits everyone; it benefits retailers, businesses, residents and visitors. Public realm enhancements can also contribute towards creating a distinctive St Neots brand.

Consultation has shown that pedestrianising the High Street 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.

Entertainment and Leisure

Between 1961 and 2003 an outdoor swimming pool was located on the land next to Priory Park. The pool was closed in 2003 due to financial issues and an inability to secure funding to make essential repairs. In 2005 the pool was demolished and infilled. Ever since, there has been a popular public demand for the return of a (preferably outdoor) swimming pool.

This demand was demonstrated through the Neighbourhood Plan survey. Many people said that they would like an improved or additional swimming pool partnered with the return of the outdoor pool.

Proposals for a swimming pool on the site of the previous swimming pool will be supported. Further uses on this site to act as enabling development for the swimming pool will be supported by the Town Council providing that it can be demonstrated that the benefits of allowing such development to secure the swimming pool outweigh the negative impacts of departing from other policies.

Whilst St Neots has a range of leisure facilities, including the Priory Centre, Priory Park, Riverside Park, footballs clubs and ten pin bowling; the Town Centre Benchmarking survey found that the leisure and cultural offer in the Town Centre was rated as poor by 51% of respondents and very poor by 11%. This compares to the national small towns average of 37% and 8% respectively. 40% of people said that the leisure facilities were a negative aspect of the Town Centre. The findings from the Neighbourhood Plan survey were more positive than this with 41% of respondents saying that the leisure offer was excellent, 29% saying it was good, 11% saying it was inadequate and 13% saying it was poor.

In 2014 a new cinema in the town at the Rowley Arts Centre after some delays during construction.

The Huntingdonshire District Local Investment Framework found that under a high growth scenario St Neots would require a range of new social infrastructure including a new multi-purpose leisure facility with sports hall and swimming pool.

Many residents identified the need for a new swimming pool or improvements to the existing swimming pool as part of the Neighbourhood Plan survey.

An improved leisure offer in St Neots will have many benefits including reducing the need to travel to other towns for leisure, regeneration, improved economic activity and making the Town Centre more attractive to families.

Outdoor Theatre - Riverside Park is 29 hectares (72 acres) in area and has a beautiful one mile long waterside frontage. It is close to the Town Centre and has a 250 space car park, making it very accessible to the whole community. Riverside Park is an important recreation and community space. There are a range of uses and events within the Park, including band concerts during the summer weeks. The Neighbourhood Plan survey found that riverside events are thoroughly enjoyed by the majority of the community and the residents have asked for more events to increase community spirit.

The introduction of an outdoor theatre in Riverside Park would enhance the leisure and entertainment offer within St Neots. Riverside Park would also benefit from further improvements to the current leisure and recreation activities on offer, such as the introduction of crazy golf and re-introduction of boats for hire. The Town Council will support and actively encourage proposals for new leisure and recreation facilities within Riverside Park subject to compliance with Policy P1.

Bandstand - Regatta Meadow is located to the west of the River Great Ouse and to the north of Riverside Park. It provides an attractive area of open space within the town and is also important for community events. Many events take place on Regatta Meadow, such as the Dragon Boat Festival and the Regatta. A bandstand in Regatta Meadow would result in an enhanced leisure and entertainment offer and help to enhance community spirit.

Parking and Traffic

Levels of car ownership in the district are high compared with the national average, as Huntingdonshire is both a relatively prosperous and a predominantly rural area. It is therefore essential that development is designed to incorporate sufficient levels of car parking. Road parking has been taken away from many

residents in St Neots due to yellow lines or poor road markings. This has resulted in many problems such as inconvenience to residents and their visitors not being able to park close to home, a cluttered local environment and increased congestion.

Restricting the availability of parking at trip origin does not deter people from owning a car. Instead it creates the problems referred to above. To avoid this happening as part of new developments, the Town Council will consider the implications of car parking provision when commenting upon planning applications for new residential development, including proposals for change of use to residential. The design, appearance and the servicing of many recently completed residential areas has been compromised by lack of off street parking.

Residents living near the railway station are frequently inconvenienced by commuters parking close to their homes; blocking their driveways and light. Whilst yellow lines have caused problems elsewhere in St Neots, the Town Council would support the introduction of parking restrictions along Longsands Road area.

The Town Council would like all car parks within St Neots to be free of charge.

The Town Council will work with Huntingdonshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council to explore the following projects:

- (a) Opening up of Priory Lane and making this one way;
- (b) Pedestrianisation of the High Street;
- (c) Improving traffic flow through the High Street;
- (d) Dualling the A428; and
- (e) Installation of a bridge/bypass north of the town.

Parks and Open Space

The Town Council supports the St Neots Community Hydro scheme subject to compliance with other planning policies.

Rejuvenation

The Town Council wish to encourage and support initiatives that provide opportunities for lifelong learning and skills development. It is keen to foster links between employers and education providers. The Town Council will also work with schools within the town and colleges in Cambridgeshire to provide new and improved training facilities in St Neots.

Shops and Services

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.

Projects

The table, below, identifies all non-planning issues from the Neighbourhood Plan survey and includes possible actions for addressing each of these issues.

Issue	Responsibility	Action
Rejuvenation & development		
Cars parked on Monarch Road so close to bumps causes more damage than good. Remove bumps.	CCC	St Neots Town Council (SNTC) to discuss removal of bumps on Monarch Road with CCC.
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.	SNTC	SNTC to take over role of litter picking from HDC. Discuss issue of littering around Tesco Express in Eaton Socon with store manager. Potential for Tesco to contribute towards more bins to reduce likelihood of littering. Regarding wider issue of graffiti, littering & dog fouling, discuss potential for multi-agency Days of Action around St Neots.
Aesthetics		
High Street needs a good clean.	SNTC & Community Safety Partnership	Discuss idea of a multi-agency Day of Action with Community Safety Partnership to clean up High Street.
Need more bins in parks and town centre.	SNTC HDC	Provide more bins in parks & Town Centre.
Development		
Road markings need improving.	CCC	SNTC to discuss with CCC.
Better secondary education and adult education.	CCC & Adult education providers	SNTC to discuss this issue with CCC & adult education providers.
Better street lights along main roads and in parks.		SNTC to discuss with CCC.
Leisure		
More health & fitness events.	HDC & private gyms/ fitness groups	SNTC to discuss how it can help HDC and private gyms/ fitness groups hold more health & fitness events.
More social groups; Mums & Children groups. Community groups need greater support.		Town Councillors to work with existing local charities and agencies to provide more support.

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.	HDC	Discuss the introduction of roofs on ramps & CCTV with HDC.
Parking at the cinema has been a big concern. How much for a standard 2.5 hour film?	Car park operator	SNTC to discuss car parking prices with the car park operator prior to the completion of the cinema.
Delivery of an outdoor theatre in Riverside Park and improved recreation facilities including crazy golf and boats in Riverside Park	SNTC	Funding to be secured
Delivery of a swimming pool on site of outdoor swimming pool	SNTC, Swimming Pool Trust and PD	Funding to be secured possibly through planning obligations/ CIL
Delivery of a bandstand in Regatta Meadow	SNTC	Funding to be secured
Services		
Pay council tax by cash	HDC	Discuss Council tax payment options with HDC.
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.	Cambridgeshire Police	SNTC to discuss residents' concerns with Cambridgeshire Police's St Neots Neighbourhood Policing Team.
Better bus service is desperately needed. Direct routes to town, Tesco and train station. Sunday services are also needed.	Bus companies	SNTC to discuss with bus companies.
Regular shuttle bus from villages to town could be very beneficial especially as many people have issues with parking costs.	Bus companies	SNTC to discuss with bus companies.
Better service in the doctors. People are arguing that they wait up to an hour after their	GP Surgeries	SNTC to discuss residents' concerns with GP Surgeries.

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.

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.

HDC & car park operators

SNTC to discuss parking prices with HDC & car park operators, including the potential for special promotions.

Permit schemes for residents and visitors may be a positive solution.

HDC

SNTC to discuss permit schemes with HDC.

Better CCTV in every car park.

HDC & car park operators

SNTC to discuss improved CCTV with HDC & car park operators.

Traffic

Too many traffic lights. Many are requesting that the high street is pedestrianized.

CCC

SNTC to discuss possibility of pedestrianizing High St & removal of traffic lights with CCC.

A428 needs dualling.

Department for Transport

SNTC to continue working with CCC & HDC to raise the profile of the dualling of this stretch of the A428.

Priory Lane needs re opening.

CCC

SNTC to discuss with CCC.

Parks and Open Space

Litter especially around the skate park and kids play areas, we must invest in more bins.

HDC

SNTC to discuss provision of more bins with HDC.

Desperately need better street lighting, which clearly lights paths in and around the parks.

CCC

SNTC to discuss provision of better street lighting with CCC.

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.	HDC	SNTC to discuss provision of more dog waste bins with HDC. Also, a poster campaign to encourage people to clean up after dogs.
Riverside events are considered to be thoroughly enjoyed by majority of the residents and they have asked for more events to increase community spirit.	SNTC	SNTC to support riverside events.
Provision of public toilets in Priory Park		To be considered further



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