

pride in
place

we had a strong identity
for the whole district?

our homes responded
to our needs?

WHAT IF?

we built up the
resilience of our
communities?

our high streets were the
centre of social and cultural
life?

Journey One

Distinct, unified and well-loved — by 2050, Huntingdonshire's citizens will feel proud to live and work in a place with stand-out character. We will enjoy homes that respond to our needs, great places to spend time in and a strong and safe community who take care of their surroundings.

You said...



'What is Huntingdonshire anyway?'



'I would like to be proud of where I live. I think if I did, I would be more inclined to get involved and make it better'



'You can't find an affordable home when you're young. Then when you want to downsize you can't'

What if...

we had a strong identity for the whole district?

In a world where... we are all spending more time locally, a sense of pride in our local area is fundamental. Yet we have heard that Huntingdonshire lacks a strong identity compared to neighbouring places such as Cambridge and Peterborough. Our residents, particularly our younger ones, don't feel a sense of belonging to the district.

There is a place... next to Cambridge with untapped potential including rich heritage and remarkable landscapes. We love our wide open fens and parklands, rolling claylands, and the picturesque Ouse Valley. And there's so much to enjoy about our charming market towns and villages.

Which could become... a district that people from all over the UK are drawn to, and residents are proud to call home. A place which celebrates its unique assets and competes with its neighbours — attracting employers, visitors and new residents who recognise what it means to live, work and play in true Huntingdonshire style.

But only if... we come together to recognise all the great localised initiatives taking place, and define what makes our place and people unique. The District Council, residents, businesses, cultural institutions and community groups must work together to decide what the essence of Huntingdonshire is and begin to promote our shared story.

Source: Huntingdonshire Futures Stakeholder Engagement

What could we do?

1.

Create a powerful place brand

Huntingdonshire needs a place brand that articulates the shared identity of the district. In close collaboration with the community, businesses and marketing experts a recognisable brand based on Huntingdonshire's unique identity should be developed.

Local people will feel a sense of ownership over it, and visitors can get to know the district and what it stands for through the brand. Campaign events engaging with the local community could kickstart the initiative and then maintain the momentum through regular marketing activity. The place brand could be co-created to draw on the aspects of the district that local people love.

2.

Introduce Place Champions

Nobody knows this district better than our long-standing local residents. We should seek out knowledgeable, passionate and well connected local people to become Place Champions. These champions will 'shout' about all the local activities and initiatives taking place, including the hidden treasures.

Place Champions will work together to make sure that great things do not go unnoticed, and these will reinforce the Place Brand and further inspire locals to feel proud of their district.





Guiding Lights



Raising the local profile: Visit Peak District and Derbyshire

Derbyshire County Council is working with Marketing Peak District & Derbyshire and partner authorities to develop the county's visitor economy by improving the offer, quality and identity of individual towns as part of wider destination management and place branding.

Local businesses can join the members network and enjoy benefits that help raise their profile. Support provided includes workshops, networking events, press and PR coverage and affordable advertising opportunities.

Source: Visit Peak District and Derbyshire



3.

Establish a tourism board

The establishment of a tourism board could help coordinate and promote Huntingdonshire as a place to visit.

By involving local businesses, interest groups, cultural institutions and relevant organisations we can create a unique narrative around what makes Huntingdonshire special and why visitors should come.

This board can help identify gaps in the market, generating business opportunities and help to create a clearer sense of identity for local residents, raising awareness of local leisure and culture opportunities.





our homes responded to our needs?

In a world where... affordable housing is in scarce demand, social infrastructure is under strain and the majority of new housing in England lacks design quality and distinctiveness (Housing Design Audit for England by the Place Alliance). And where people are concerned that developers focus on building homes, rather than integrated communities.

There is a place... with a high quality of life, picturesque market towns and villages with incredible character, and landscapes that can inspire the creation of beautiful new places. A place that has been delivering 1,000 new homes per year since 2018, with similar levels projected to 2030.

Which could become... a leader in high quality, affordable, adaptable and energy efficient housing, which blends with the rich local character. A place where housing responds to the residents' needs and is served by essential social infrastructure, such as GPs and primary schools. Where new developments form integrated communities within their surrounding areas.

But only if... the council worked with stakeholders from the industry, including developers and land owners, and with other local authorities and institutions, to raise the ambition of well-designed, affordable housing which meets the community's needs.

Source: Place Alliance Housing Design Audit, Huntingdonshire Local Plan 2036

Guiding Lights



Lovedon Fields, Hampshire

The 50 dwelling development of Lovedon Fields has recently won both the RIBA South Award and RIBA National Award for 2022 for its design quality. The rural housing scheme comprises of 40% affordable and shared ownership housing, a typology mix of apartments, terraces and detached houses, including some lifetime homes. The scheme has plentiful green public space, two-thirds of the site is conceived as a wildflower meadow and roofs feature integrated solar panels. The scheme is aligned with the local vernacular and provides a sensitive edge to South Downs National Park.

Source: RIBA Architecture
Top image: Jim Stephenson



1.

Address housing affordability

An inclusive community is one where diverse groups of people can live together and enjoy life. This requires high quality of housing to be accessible and affordable to all who need it, especially young people who want to climb the housing ladder.

This could be achieved through trialling new forms for affordable housing delivery such as self-build schemes, community land trusts, council led house building and public private partnerships. New developments will be built with affordable housing, forming well-served inclusive communities.

2.

Respond to evolving needs

People's lives evolve which means that their housing needs evolve in parallel. Growing families need homes that cover their new needs, young people need flexible homes that allow them to work and play from there, and the older generation needs housing that enables them to be independent.

This requires the availability of diverse housing typologies, from flats to town houses and custom-built homes, which offer flexible spaces of the right size responding to their inhabitants' needs. Homes which are inter-generational, accessible and adaptable.

This also includes the requirement for homes to be close to the necessary infrastructure, including schools, healthcare and public transport, to foster sustainable communities.

3.

Raise the ambition for better design

The ambition and inspiration for better housing design should be reinforced across the district. The council will work with the industry and other local authorities and public institutions to promote and encourage well-designed high quality homes.

Local guidance and standards can promote a higher design aspiration and requirement utilising best practice examples from the district, the County and the rest of the country. Local towns and Parishes can enable locally led ambitious design guides, or opportunities to shape their areas through Neighbourhood Plans. Initiatives such as the Public Practice and the Eastern Design Review Panel could also be considered. Finally, a new local or joint housing expo with other authorities could be organised to showcase best practice and kickstart the discussion around better design.

What if...

we built up the resilience of our communities?

In a world where... the squeeze on income for people and businesses reduces everyone's ability to do good things for others, people can feel disconnected from where they live. Young people in Huntingdonshire particularly feel alienated here.

There is a place... with strong, conscientious communities, business forums and networks, where people are fiercely proud of their neighbourhood and actively involved in helping each other.

Which could become... a place that feels safe, inclusive and offers access to support. A place that encourages bottom-up initiatives, making sure everyone sees the value of investing in the fabric of our society.

But only if... community groups, businesses and volunteers are enabled and supported to work together. Only if programmes are established to make new engagement and collaboration easy, backed up by increased awareness of opportunities.

Source: Huntingdonshire Futures Stakeholder Engagement

What could we do?

1.

Enable citizens to shape their communities

The district could set up its very own Citizens Assembly, where anyone interested in shaping their community can get involved. This would give a voice and a sense of agency to everyone in the district, including residents, business owners, teenagers and employees and encourage participation in the political process. The Assembly could raise issues that concern its members, collectively decide which are the most important to address, seek funding and implement the improvements.

As an independent organisation it could set the priorities that mean the most to its members, hold others to account and deliver change in a more direct way.

2.

Support community and voluntary organisations

The district boasts a very strong and established volunteering sector with numerous community and volunteer groups, such as Warm Spaces, actively supporting and helping the community.

This rich sector should be supported through a digital platform with access to guidance on governance, fundraising and grants, recruiting volunteers and training. The platform could also host a network to support the different community organisations and voluntary groups to collaborate and attract volunteers, and get in touch with businesses and service providers for their needs. Venue hire, events organisation and other communications could be facilitated through the same platform.

Guiding Lights



Oxmoor Community Fridge

As the cost of living is rapidly increasing, more people are in need of support to put food on the table. The Oxmoor Community Fridge fills this need, by redistributing food given away by supermarkets and other donations, from Thongsley Fields Primary and Nursery School every Tuesday. The service is in very high demand, supporting approximately 45 residents every 1.5 hour session and having redistributed more than 10 tonnes of food in the past year, helping to reduce food waste. It even provides the option of home delivery to vulnerable residents.

Source: Zero Waste Initiatives, Huntingdonshire District Council



3.

Strengthen the sense of safety

The spaces we inhabit and our public spaces are an integral part of our lives, and therefore should feel safe, welcoming and well-kept. Places that look less well maintained are more likely to attract anti-social behaviour and vandalism.

Therefore, the council, the public services and other key stakeholders should work together to make improvements in the public realm's infrastructure, maintenance and supervision. It is important to keep spaces such as schools and housing estates safe, through good surveillance and clean public areas, to ensure the students' and inhabitants' wellbeing. Public realm and infrastructure interventions should have regard to attracting activity and feeling secure to use.



What if...

our high streets were the centre of social and cultural life?

In a world where... high streets are in decline, our village and town centres are no longer the heart of community life. Research by the Local Data Company and Power to Change has found vacancy rates at an all time high, due to the growth of out of town retail, online shopping and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

There is a place... that benefits from its diversity arising from a cluster of market towns and villages each with its own unique offer of markets, independent shops, picturesque historic cores and plenty of citizens with an entrepreneurial spirit.

Which could become... a district that leads the revival of the high street across the UK. Rich in diverse spaces that go beyond retail, embrace the café culture and allow people to come together. Places that attract and retain locals and visitors, both in the day and later in the night with a revived offer of night time activities.

But only if... we work together — retail is all about exchange after all. We need cross-sector collaboration between landowners, the council, businesses and community groups to identify and revamp empty spaces and create vibrant public places where people want to linger.

Source: Power to Change

Guiding Lights



Art in the High Street

The Croydon Art Store converted a four story shopping centre unit into an arts and cultural venue, created in collaboration between Croydon Council, Kingston School of Art, the local arts organisation Turf Projects and Art Halo. The project seeks to provide affordable studio space, a gallery space to exhibit work from local artists, a free bookable creative event space, and a research space to develop a Croydon biannual art exhibition with Kingston School of Art. It will also give the council an opportunity to see how arts and cultural activities can be made more accessible and regenerate sites that would otherwise be vacant.

Source: Croydon Arts Store



What could we do?

pride in place

1.

Promote meanwhile use

Empty space on our high streets creates a feeling of decline, but meanwhile use, which refers to temporary use of empty property and land, can help enliven spaces as well as provide a great resource for local people.

The council can take a closer look into its high streets and identify vacant and underused spaces, then work with landlords to support temporary use of these spaces by local community groups, businesses and organisations at affordable rates to activate the spaces before a long term solution is found. This can be facilitated by providing a register of spaces, advertising the opportunities, producing guidance and enabling planning policies.



2.

Boost the night time offer

Huntingdonshire's market towns can lack diversity. While high streets are places of activity and attraction during the daytime, we need to ensure they stay bustling with leisure opportunities also at night.

This could include promoting night markets, cultural events and a cafe and restaurant culture, including pop ups, to test out new businesses and reinstate the high street as the heart of the community, even at night. The council can work together with the local business owners, entrepreneurs, community groups and cultural institutions to identify opportunities and mobilise initiatives through events, branding and advertising, permits and adapting licences.

3.

Enhance the public realm

Physical improvements on high streets and their surrounding public realm can be crucial to create inviting and attractive spaces. Widening the pavements, dedicating more space to pedestrians and spill out activities can greatly change the experience of high streets into more people-focussed and relaxing spaces.

The addition of public furniture and incidental play facilities can attract people to linger for longer. Reallocating some parking spaces on the high street into public realm can help reduce the dominance of the car and create a more child friendly place.

