General Statement on the Planning System and the Referendum

The Planning System

The planning system helps guide new developments to appropriate locations whilst protecting and improving the environment and people's quality of life. Most new buildings, major changes to existing buildings or major changes to the local environment need planning permission.

Huntingdonshire District Council is responsible for deciding most planning applications in the district based on national planning policy guidance and the local development plan.

National Planning Policy Framework (2026)

The framework provides guidance for local planning authorities and decision-takers in drawing up plans and making decisions on planning applications. It supports sustainable development throughout England and provides high level guidance on the nature of acceptable development, plan making and decision making on planning applications.

The Development Plan

The Development Plan provides the framework for all development in Huntingdonshire. Development plans are used to help decide planning applications and investment decisions across the district.

The current adopted Development Plan is made up of:

- **Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (2019)**
- **Buckden Neighbourhood Development Plan (2021)**
- **Bury Village Neighbourhood Plan (2021)**
- **Godmanchester Neighbourhood Plan (2017)**
- **Grafham and Ellington Neighbourhood Plan (2022)**
- **Great Gransden Neighbourhood Plan (2023)**
- **Great Staughton Neighbourhood Plan (2025)**
- **Houghton and Wyton neighbourhood Plan (2018)**
- **Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan (2019)**
- **Sawtry Neighbourhood Plan (2023)**
- **St Neots Neighbourhood Plan (2016)**
- **The Stukeleys Neighbourhood Plan (2023)**

The locally produced documents are complemented by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Plan, (adopted July 2021), which sets out policies to guide mineral and waste management development within Huntingdonshire as part of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area.

Neighbourhood Plans

Neighbourhood Plans were introduced under the Localism Act (2011) to give local communities greater influence on future development in their local area. Neighbourhood planning enables a community to develop a shared vision for the neighbourhood and deliver the sustainable development needed through locally produced planning policies relating to the development and use of land. There is a statutory process which must be followed starting with designation of the neighbourhood area. Neighbourhood Plans can be prepared by Town or Parish Councils in consultation with local residents and businesses. There can only be one neighbourhood plan in any one designated neighbourhood area.

A draft Neighbourhood Plan must be publicised for a set six week period to allow people to submit comments. The comments are reviewed by an independent examiner who also checks whether the draft Neighbourhood Plan meets the 'basic conditions' and other requirements set out in regulations. In summary, the basic conditions are that the neighbourhood plan:

- has regard to national policies and advice
- contributes to the achievement of sustainable development
- is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority
- does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, European Union (EU) obligations (as retained under EU law); and
- should not have a significant effect on a European site or a European offshore marine site either alone or in combination with other plans or projects

The examiner may propose modifications to the draft Neighbourhood Plan to enable it to meet the basic conditions. Huntingdonshire District Council then decides whether to accept the recommended modifications and proceed to referendum. At the referendum local residents can vote on whether the Neighbourhood Plan (as modified if necessary) should be used to help determine planning applications in the area.

If more than half the votes cast are in favour of the Neighbourhood Plan then Huntingdonshire District Council must make it part of the statutory development plan for the area. The Neighbourhood Plan will then be used as a basis for making decisions on planning applications.

Additional information in relation to neighbourhood planning is available on the Government's Neighbourhood Planning webpages.