

Urban&Civic



Wintringham

St Neots

Huntingdonshire
District Council
Local Plan

Matter 3 Statement

Examination in Public

June 2018

DAVID LOCK ASSOCIATES
ON BEHALF OF URBAN&CIVIC



Huntingdonshire District Local Plan Examination in Public

Hearing Statement on behalf of Urban&Civic plc. (Consultee 992844)

C/O:

Tom Kimber
(Respondent no. 992838)
David Lock Associates
50 North Thirteenth Street
Milton Keynes
MK9 3BP

Matter 3:

Question 2

Are the Spatial Planning Areas appropriately defined, what is the basis for them?

1. It is recognised that the definition of Spatial Planning Areas (SPA) within Huntingdonshire represents a key strategic approach – in line with the draft Local Plan's spatial vision and objectives - to concentrate development in locations which provide, or have the potential to provide, the greatest access to services and facilities.
2. The four SPAs broadly reflect the existing settlement pattern of the four largest service centres within the district (albeit that Yaxley in the north of the district has a larger resident population than Ramsey and is defined as a Key Service Centre).
3. The definition of the Huntingdon SPA containing Huntingdon, parts of Brampton and Godmanchester, and specifically the Alconbury Weald Strategic Expansion Location (SEL), is strongly supported. The designation of the Alconbury Enterprise Zone in 2011 covering 150 hectares and with potential for 8,000 new jobs (2011-2036), followed by Outline Planning Permission at the former Alconbury Airfield and Grange Farm site in 2014 for mixed used development including 5,000 homes provides a very strong basis and catalyst for additional growth within the Huntingdon SPA. Additionally, the location of both the Alconbury Weald and St Neots SELs within their respective SPA enables a holistic approach to support existing services within Huntingdon and St Neots Town Centres and the provision of new, complimentary services in the SELs – where scale allows.
4. The potential for development at RAF Alconbury is recognised. There are significant benefits to be derived from its integration in due course into the wider Alconbury Weald development.

5. The exclusion of the villages of Great and Little Stukeley from the Huntingdon SPA is supported.

6. The clarity of the SPA definitions would be considerably improved if the local plan contained a map of each SPA illustrating the location of the relevant site allocations, together with existing and proposed key transport infrastructure. This would help make clear the link between the areas of key strategic growth and strategic transport infrastructure improvements. In the case of the Huntingdon SPA this would therefore include the East Coast railway line (to be upgraded to the north of Huntingdon), the A1 (M) carriageway (currently being upgraded), the new A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon road, and the Cambridge to Peterborough guided busway. Similarly, the St Neots SPA also benefits from the location of the East Coast railway line, improvements to the A1, and further potential to duel the A428 which links St Neots to Cambridge. In the case of the Huntingdon SPA and the St Neots SPA this will also provide clear justification for the planned level of growth, which is higher than other SPAs.

Question 3

Is the approach to the scale and type of development set out in Policies LP2 and LP7 justified?

7. Policy LP2 is clear that approximately three quarters of the Objectively Assessed Need for housing and the majority of employment and retail growth will be focused in the SPAs. Despite this, the policy would benefit from articulating the level of growth allocated to each SPA.

8. As illustrated in the table below, there is a clear difference in the scale and importance of each SPA. As a consequence, the Local Plan should tailor the approach to each SPA to reflect the scale of growth and contribution that each SPA makes to meeting the overarching draft Local Plan objectives. This approach could include the re-evaluation of the SPA definition or a more hierarchical approach to the definition of the SPAs.

Allocated Sites		Residential Units		Largest site
		Number	% of OAN	
Spatial Planning Area	Huntingdon	10,354	52%	Alconbury Airfield and Grange Farm: 5,000 homes
	St Neots	4,049	20%	St Neots East: 3,820 homes
	St Ives	480	2%	St Ives West: 300 homes
	Ramsey	895	4%	Former RAF Upwood and Upwood Hill House, Ramsey: 450 homes
	Total	15,778	78%	
Key Service Centres		1,705	8%	
Local Service Centres		309	2%	
Total		17,792	88%	
HDC Objectively Assessed Need		20,100		

9. This table clearly illustrates the crucial role that the two SELs at Alconbury Weald (6680 homes with capacity for more) and St Neots East (3820 homes) make towards the Objectively Assessed Need for 20,100 homes within the plan period. The scale and role of these SELs represents an unprecedented opportunity in Huntingdonshire for large scale sustainable development.
10. There is clear justification for strong growth at these locations. The designation of the Alconbury Enterprise Zone in 2011 together with Outline Planning Permission for 5,000 homes (and potential for more) provides a strong catalyst for additional growth within the Huntingdon SPA, in a location that is supported by infrastructure improvements to the strategic road and rail network. The St Neots East SEL is similarly supported by key transport routes.
11. Policy LP7 reads as a largely generic policy in relation to development proposals on unallocated sites. It is considered that it would be improved by providing specific policy guidance in relation to each SPA, given that the Huntingdon SPA (for example) is very different in terms of size, role, and existing and proposed uses compared to, for example, the Ramsey SPA.

Question 4

What is the scale of development actually planned (including commitments) in and is this in line with the distribution set out in Policy LP2?

12. Both the Huntingdon SPA and St Neots SPA are based upon a scale of development that reflects the designation of two SELs at Alconbury Weald and St Neots East.
13. Outline Planning Permission was granted in 2014 at the former Alconbury Airfield and Grange Farm site for up to 290,000sqm of employment floorspace, up to 5,000 dwellings, a mixed-use hub and neighbourhood facilities, primary schools, nurseries, a secondary school and post 16 education provision, open spaces, woodlands and sports provision, as well as new vehicular access points from Ermine Street and the A141, and a reserve site for a railway station on the East Coast Mainline.
14. Potential for the provision of an additional 1,500 homes is currently being explored – in line with the potential for more homes identified in the submission draft Local Plan – with a view to submitting a planning application later in 2018.
15. A hybrid application for outline planning permission and access arrangements on the Wintringham part of the St Neots East was submitted in November 2017. The mixed use urban extension is proposed to include residential development of up to 2,800 dwellings, up to 63,500 sqm of employment development (B1-B8), District Centre including shops, services, community and health uses (A1-A5, D1 & D2), Local Centre (A1-A5), temporary Primary School, two permanent Primary Schools, open space, play areas, and recreation facilities and landscaping. HDC's Development Management Panel resolved to grant this application in March 2018 subject to finalisation of the S106 Agreement. A separate full planning application for the construction of two vehicular access points and associated works was granted planning permission in April 2018.
16. An initial Outline Planning Application for the Loves Farm part of the St Neots East SPA for 1020 dwellings was submitted in March 2013. Permission is anticipated shortly.

Question 5

Are the strategic expansion locations at Alconbury Weald and St Neots East justified in principle? What alternative strategies for accommodating development were considered and why was this approach preferred? (detailed issues concerning these site allocations are dealt with under Matters 6 and 7)

Alconbury Weald SEL

17. The former Alconbury Airfield and Grange Farm site provides an unprecedented and justifiable opportunity within Huntingdonshire for sustainable development. The site will contribute to meeting the key dimensions of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF. The site will:
 - contribute to building a strong responsive and competitive economy;
 - coordinate development requirements including the provision of infrastructure;
 - provide the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations;
 - create high-quality built environment with accessible services that reflect the community's needs; and
 - contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment.
18. The former Alconbury Airfield and Grange Farm site will directly respond to the draft Local Plan's Vision; namely, it will support a diverse, thriving economy, provide sufficient infrastructure to support healthy communities, whilst meeting the needs of a changing population.
19. The size and location of the site to the north of Huntingdon is significant. In total, the site consists of approximately 575ha of land, and includes runways, taxiways, hard standings, hangars and other service buildings related to the former operational air base which provides a surplus of previously developed land in a location near to Huntingdon. The southern Grange Farm part of the site provides further potential and will connect the site into the A141 on the northern boundary of Huntingdon itself. The site is also strategically located between Cambridge and Peterborough and will assist in enhancing the economic linkages between those centres, via the Enterprise Zone.
20. Development at the former Alconbury Airfield and Grange Farm site is strongly supported by existing and proposed strategic transport infrastructure. The Cambridge to Peterborough guided busway will be located through the site, whilst potential for a railway station (as reserved by the Outline Planning Permission) will ensure connection with the East Coast Mainline, which is due to be upgraded to the north of Huntingdon. The A1 (M) carriageway

(currently being upgraded), and the new A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon road (linked to A1 (M)), will additionally ensure that the necessary supporting infrastructure is in place to support significant growth in this location.

21. Significantly, additional growth will help support and maximise the benefits of the Alconbury Enterprise Zone, which in itself is a key driver for significant development in this location. The former Alconbury Airfield site was designated in 2011 by the Government as one of 23 Enterprise Zones nationally. The site provides a unique opportunity to deliver a highly sustainable, mixed use development that will regenerate a significant previously developed site, directly benefit the local, regional and national economies and critically deliver transformational employment within the Enterprise Zone. The Alconbury Enterprise Zone is designed to encourage investment, attract innovative companies and will create around 8,000 jobs. It is expected that it will create a further 6,000 jobs in the local area, through local contracts, support and ancillary business. The Enterprise Zone will additionally secure a positive programme of training and skills development in combination with local providers including Huntingdonshire Regional College that will enable employment opportunities for local people.

St Neots East SEL

22. The St Neots East SEL strongly accords with the NPPF key principle of sustainable development, through the coordinated provision of homes, jobs and supporting infrastructure within an accessible location. This equally supports the draft Local Plan's Strategy Approach of concentrating development in location which provide or has the potential to provide the greatest access to services and facilities.
23. The principle of development at St Neots East has been long established. The site was originally designated within the Huntingdonshire Core Strategy 2009 as a sustainable urban extension. The principle of a mixed-use development was further established by the St Neots Eastern Expansion Urban Design Framework 2010, which set out the key planning and design considerations to be addressed on the site. Similar to the former Alconbury Airfield and Grange Farm site, St Neots East benefits from being well served by the existence of strategic transport infrastructure.
24. The site is situated adjacent to the A428 St Neots Southern Bypass which provides links to the strategic highway network including the A1 to the west. The A428 St Neots Southern Bypass has been recommended for widening and re-routing to complete the upgrading of the route between Caxton and the A1. The nearest railway station to the site is St Neots Railway Station, approximately 1 mile to the north west of the site.